

THESIS

PERCEPTIONS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND
THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Intimate partner violence is an important social issue. There is evidence that these cases are handled differently depending on the gender of the abusing partner, and the sexuality of the couple. Previous studies have examined factors affecting arrest decisions made by police officers, but have not focused on instances of mutual violence. A study was conducted utilizing vignettes depicting mutual cases of violence to identify factors affecting likelihood of arrest, and to specifically examine the effects of gender for both the perpetrator and victim, and sexuality of the depicted couple on arrest decisions. Participants were a convenience sample of 440 men and women who found the study on Amazon mTurk. Results indicated a significant effect for the gender of the perpetrator, the gender of the victim, and the sexuality of the couple across most vignettes.

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Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious and relatively common social problem with complex ramifications. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007) estimates that as of 2005, IPV affects one in every 320 households in the United States, though other research indicates there may be significant underreporting of abuse to law enforcement (e.g. Randle & Graham, 2011). In 2007, the homicides of 1,640 women and 700 men in the United States occurred at the hands of the victim's current or former intimate partner (Catalano, Smith, Snyder & Rand, 2009).

Violence is Socially Defined

Violence is a socially defined phenomenon; the meaning given to a particular act varies depending upon certain contextual factors. The intention of the perpetrator is an easily identified factor that affects the way a violent incident is perceived. Violence is justified when the intention is self-defense, and unjustified when the goal is social control, intimidation or subjugation, or the acquisition of money, sex or power. The method of violence employed constitutes another important variable influencing attributions. In modern warfare, the use of firearms and missiles is expected, whereas the use of chemical weapons and air strikes by drones are widely shunned – irrespective of the number of fatalities caused by each.

Other contextual factors operate in a less straightforward manner. The level of emotionality apparent in the perpetrator can be either an exacerbating or a mitigating factor. Physical child abuse is often differentiated from corporeal punishment by examining whether the parent remained in emotional control (Coleman, Dodge &

Campbell, 2010). On the other hand, human aggression literature frequently distinguishes *hostile aggression*, defined as impulsive, angry behavior intended to cause harm, from *instrumental aggression*, in which the behavior is cold, premeditated, and serves as a mean to another end (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). In fact the U.S. legal system has operated on this premise for over a century, drawing the distinction between murder and voluntary manslaughter in such a way that the loss of emotional control is considered a mitigating factor whereas planning the act and calmly lying in wait is deemed exacerbating (Bushman & Anderson, 2001).

Stereotypes about perpetrators and victims also play a predictably important role in interpretations of violence. Within the context of IPV, gender is the most salient stereotype. Women are generally presumed to be less capable of inflicting damage than men, and more easily injured (Follingstad, DeHart & Green, 2004). Low arrest rates for men in simple assault compared to aggravated assault cases might indicate that police perceive mild levels of violence as natural behavior for men that does not require intervention (Black, 1980). Pattavina, Hirschel, Buzawa, Faggiani and Bentley (2007) posit that the seriousness of an offense between male partners is the strongest predictor of arrest because minor levels of violence may be tolerated. Conversely, violence is not generally considered normal for women (Pattavina, et. al., 2007), leading some to the conclusion that when women are violent, they most likely are acting in self-defense (e.g. Henning & Renauer, 2005).

Another important influence on the meaning attributed to violence comes in the form of observer characteristics. The gender of the interpreter, their attitudes about violence and adherence to traditional sex roles all play a part in the significance they

ascribe to violent acts (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005).

The factors mentioned here are not exhaustive; they merely demonstrate the variability and contradictory nature of attributions of violence. IPV has its own set of meanings derived from the aforementioned factors, each further complicated by the intersecting variables of power, gender, and sexuality. IPV is defined by the World Health Organization (2002) as “acts of physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviors such as isolating a person from family and friends or restricting access to information and assistance.” Throughout history and across the world, women have been violently controlled by men; by and large, public outcry against this subjugation is the exception rather than the rule. Even where violence against women is not tolerated, individuals are often more reluctant to stop IPV than stranger violence. This is evidenced by the emphasis self-defense courses put on the need for victims to announce, when crying for help, that they do not know their assailant.

Social rules about violence define who may be violent, against whom, to what extent, in what way, and in what context. The rules flow from the meanings we ascribe to the violence, and are therefore based on the worldview of the observer. The most important determining factors for ascribing meaning to IPV are the genders of the perpetrator and victim (Brown, 2004; Follingstad, DeHart & Green, 2004; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003), and the gender of the observer (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). The primary theories of IPV claim to offer explanations for why these incidents occur; it may be

helpful to consider the hypothesis that these theories also serve to compose common attributions of violence. Through the development of public policy and police training, these theories help to shape police officer attributions of IPV, which may consequently affect arrests and the very statistics that form the foundation of the proposed theories.

Theories of Intimate Partner Violence

Considerable debate exists between the two most prevalent theories of IPV, often referred to as the feminist theory, and the gender-symmetry or family violence theory. Those who utilize a feminist theory call attention to cultural norms that privilege men, imbuing them with greater power than women and implicit permission to dominate them (Caldwell, Swan & Woodbrown, 2012). Feminist theorists also highlight the greater physical harm typically caused by male-to-female abuse compared to female-to-male based on physical strength and type of violence (e.g. sexual assault vs. simple assault), and to the greater ratio of documented male-to-female partner violence, which is most extreme in cases of sexual violence, stalking, and murder (Caldwell, Swan & Woodbrown, 2012). On the other hand, proponents of the gender-symmetry model argue that violence is not gender-specific, pointing to data from longitudinal studies that indicate both men and women are equally likely to perpetrate IPV (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999; Randle & Graham, 2011). Feminist theorists would counter that between 1994 and 2010, approximately 80% of the victims of IPV were female (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010). An important question, then, is: why are these data so incongruent?

Brown (2004) offers a comprehensive account of the differential methods of data collection and analysis used for IPV research depending upon which theoretical lens is employed. In survey studies, for example, researchers may tally all reported acts of

violence committed within a particular timeframe, or they may select only criminal acts, which differentially account for more serious assaults (Brown, 2004). Along the same lines, researchers may survey participants directly about their experiences with IPV, or they may review police or other court documents for their data (Brown, 2004). The former method yields the similar rates of violence by each sex as reported by gender-symmetry theorists; the latter reveals the highly gender-skewed rates emphasized by feminist theorists.

Another distinction in the way IPV is quantified by each theory is whether researchers count male and female *individuals* who report being victims of IPV, versus *incidents* of partner abuse. As Brown (2004) points out, “The victimization rates will diverge between these two reporting methods whenever the frequency of victimization is significantly associated with gender. For example, if the same *number* of men and women reports having been the victim of partner abuse, but women report having been victimized twice *as frequently*, on average, then women will comprise two-thirds rather than one-half of the incidents of partner abuse,” (p. 5). These insights offer substantial challenges to the gender-symmetry model.

On the other hand, an important strength of the methods utilized in the gender-symmetry model is that they capture incidents that are not reported to police (Brown, 2004). Predictably, men and women both underreport their own perpetration of IPV to police, however both genders also underreport victimization (Brown, 2004). According to Szinovacz and Egley (1995) men underreport their own injuries more than twice as frequently as women. There is concern among gender-symmetry researchers that violent women and male victims may not be getting the research or intervention

attention needed (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999; Randle & Graham, 2011). As a result, gender-symmetry theorists often cast IPV as a problem of relationships rather than of men in particular (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999).

Whereas gender-symmetry researchers typically use longitudinal self-report data, feminist model researchers often rely on arrest reports and conviction rates. However, due to the significantly higher reluctance by men to report their own victimization, police reports may not be representative of IPV rates by sex (Brown, 2004). Because of the reliance on self-reports of victimization, the large difference in underreporting between men and women may significantly alter the findings that use these methods (Brown, 2004).

Though both the feminist and gender-symmetry literature add invaluable insight, neither theory captures the full complexity of violent relationships. Some researchers take issue with the feminist explanation that IPV is caused by powerful men using violence to exploit and control nonviolent women. This view does not seem to fit with data that show the highest rates of IPV in couples wherein the woman has achieved higher educational attainment than the man, whereas relationships in which the man's professional status is greater than the woman's have significantly less violence (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999). Further, Kingsnorth and MacIntosh (2007), examining cases of individuals charged with domestic violence found "no gender differences in the severity of the attack or the victim's need for medical attention, women are more than twice as likely to use a weapon," (p. 469). And although gender-symmetry proponents are quick to call attention to studies which find similar self-report incident rates of violence perpetrated by women and men (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw,

1999; Randle & Graham, 2011), the theory does not account for the reality that women are far more likely to be victims of sexual abuse, stalking, and homicide at the hands of current or former partners than are men (Caldwell, Swan & Woodbrown, 2012). Additionally, gender-symmetry theory largely ignores contextual constraints to accessing resources that disproportionately affect women and other marginalized groups.

Moreover, although much research has been conducted on the negative outcomes of IPV for heterosexual victims and their children, there is relatively little research into the effects on individuals from same sex relationships. What research does exist suggests similar rates and severity of violence in same sex relationships (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999), but less likelihood of reporting incidents to police, particularly by gay men (Pattavina, et. al., 2007).

Stereotypes that guide the application of social meaning do not exist for same sex IPV to the extent they do for heterosexual partner violence. Feminist and gender-symmetry theories have in some cases been adapted to try and explain same sex violence, but these attempts appear inapt and post-hoc at best. Younglove, Kerr and Vitello (2002) comment that heterosexual stereotypes are sometimes poorly adapted to same sex couples in ways that discount victimization: by the feminization of gay partners, masculinization of lesbian partners, or discrediting of same sex relationships as transitory. This may help explain past inconsistent findings. The gender-symmetry model's obliviousness to the influence of gendered contextual factors is a glaring omission when considering same sex IPV. By contrast, the feminist model's attention to contextual stressors proves to be an asset in its applicability to same sex IPV. Randle

and Graham (2011) suggest contextual stressors such as the dual stigma of being in a same sex and violent relationship may reduce help-seeking behavior for victims of same sex IPV.

The types of abuse that occur in same sex relationships may also differ, for example abusers in same sex relationships may threaten to reveal the sexual minority status of the victimized partner to family, friends, or employers (Pattavina, et. al., 2007). Pattavina et. al. (2007) go on to explain that even without direct threats of exposure, victims of same sex IPV may be reluctant to report abuse to police due to fear of rejection by friends and family who may not be aware of their sexual minority status. Lack of community interventions and resources that are appropriate for the LGBTQ community may further worsen outcomes (Oswald, Fonseca & Hardesty, 2010). For example, the family court system has been slow to recognize issues unique to families headed by same sex couples, a fact that creates unique problems for LGBTQ victims of IPV. A mother in a violent same sex relationship may be reluctant to report the abuse if her partner is the biological parent of their children out of fear that the family court system will not recognize her rights of parenthood (Oswald, Fonseca & Hardesty, 2010). Although the feminist model's contextual stressor focus fits here, violence in female same sex relationships does not fit with the feminist theory view that men are the perpetrators of violence (Oswald, Fonseca & Hardesty, 2010). Pattanina et al (2007) further argue that the strong association between partner violence and men serves to create the illusion that lesbians cannot experience IPV, and has therefore contributed to the relative dearth of support for victims of same sex violence.

Reciprocal Violence

As a phenomenon, partner violence is very complex and context-specific, with overlapping and contradictory meanings attributed to any incident, which are dependent upon the characteristics of the observer. As a result, both of the primary explanatory theories used to explain IPV offer limited value. Some research has found that approximately half of all violent relationships have a pattern of reciprocal violence, in which both partners abuse and are victimized by the other, undermining the common narrative of dichotomized victim and abuser roles (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999; Randle & Graham, 2011).

Violence is a social problem for victims, perpetrators, and victim-perpetrators alike. The psychological problems that accompany violence perpetration, such as inadequate emotion regulation, poor decision-making, and mental illness likely impact other parts of the perpetrator's life, most notably in relationships, parenting and employment. Failure to recognize violence is a problem for everyone. Examining partner violence through the pluralistic lens of social attribution may help to bridge the relatively limited utility of existing theories without losing what insight these theories do offer.

Intimate Partner Violence in the Legal System

Because violence is a socially defined and controlled phenomenon, it is essential to examine the ways in which the rules are applied and enforced. The criminal justice system is the most powerful regulator of IPV, from the decision of a police officer to make an arrest, to the district attorney's decision to prosecute, to a judge's decisions regarding plea deals and sentences.

Commonly held beliefs about the meaning of violence may contribute to the differential application of laws that are written to be gender-neutral, but whose application is highly gender-skewed. Several researchers have remarked that the prominence of male perpetrators and female victims in cultural explanations of domestic violence has subverted the impartiality of the justice system, resulting in a greater likelihood of arrest when an IPV victim is female (Pattavina et. al., 2007), and harsher treatment of male perpetrators (Brown, 2004).

The feminist perspective is built on the notion that violence against women, or tactics used by men to control women is widely culturally accepted. While this may certainly be the case sometimes, many studies have found that IPV is actually considered more serious and violent when committed against women than men,(Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Sorenson & Thomas, 2009). Other researchers have pointed out that violence by women toward men is culturally accepted; that injuries sustained by men are perceived to be trivial and even humorous (Brown, 2004; Saenger, 1963). Brown (2004) offers the example that people would not likely classify a man being struck in the genitals as sexual assault; to the contrary, this is often depicted as comical in popular media.

Tolerance of female perpetrated violence also appears to extend through the criminal justice system. Kingsnorth and MacIntosh (2007), in a study that examined 8,461 criminal IPV cases filed with a regional district attorney's office, noted that female perpetrators of IPV receive statistically significant prosecutorial leniency compared to men at every step of the judicial process, from the decision to file charges, the decision to file as a misdemeanor versus a felony, the decision to dismiss the case for

insufficient evidence, and the decision to reduce felony charges to a misdemeanor or probation violation after controlling for prior arrests, convictions, and offense severity.

Henning and Renauer (2005) examined 576 cases of IPV over a one-year period in Shelby County, Tennessee. They found that female perpetrators with male victims were more likely to have their cases declined by prosecutors than male perpetrators with female victims, even after controlling for the perpetrator's criminal history, whether both partners were arrested in the incident, use of a weapon, age, and employment status of the perpetrator. Overall, they found that female defendants with male intimate partner victims were least likely to face prosecution; more than half of these cases were either turned down for prosecution (47%), or dismissed by a judge (16%), and of the cases in which a female defendant was dually arrested with a male partner, 84% were declined for prosecution (Henning & Renauer, 2005). Female defendants whose victims were either female intimate partners or other family members were not treated as leniently, but because these categories were combined, no specific statements can be made about female perpetrators of same sex IPV (Henning & Renauer, 2005).

Reporting for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Langan and Dawson (1995) found that women charged with the murder of their spouse had a lower conviction rate than men charged with the same (70% vs. 87%), and when convicted, they received far shorter average sentences (6 years vs. 16.5 years). The familiar narrative of self-defense was provided to help explain the differential conviction rate, however the average 10-year difference in prison sentences remained even after controlling for provocation (Langan & Dawson, 1995).

The Role of Police

Clearly, arrests often do not translate to prosecution or sentencing. But arrest rates by perpetrator sex are skewed before the cases even arrive in the court system. As first responders to IPV, police officers are in a unique position of social power to determine whether unacceptable violence has taken place. Mandatory arrest laws, in which officers are required to make an arrest when there is reasonable evidence that IPV has taken place, take away some of this power. In ambiguous cases, however, such as when the partners involved do not cooperate or blame each other, officers still have considerable leeway in determining who the victims and perpetrators are, and whether there is enough evidence to make an arrest.

Researchers have found that arrests of female perpetrators increased following the implementation of mandatory arrest laws (Henning & Renauer, 2005; Pattavina et. al., 2007). Pattavina et. al. (2007) found that the presence of a mandatory arrest law accounted for the largest increase in arrests of women in same sex IPV incidents, whereas the law had a very small impact on arrests of men involved in same sex IPV. The seriousness of the incident was the strongest predictor of whether men would be arrested in same sex IPV incidents, rather than the existence of a mandatory arrest law (Pattavina, et. al., 2007).

Several previous studies have used vignettes to examine the way the sex of the perpetrator and victim and sexuality of the couple shape attitudes toward IPV. Most of these studies have investigated the perceptions of undergraduates using vignettes with an obvious perpetrator and victim (e.g. Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). However, due to the introduction of

mandatory arrest laws in many states, the current study utilizes vignettes in which the victim and perpetrator role are ambiguous. The single study located that selected police officers as participants did use an ambiguous vignette, however participating officers were asked to indicate what the officer responding to the fictional scene would likely do, rather than soliciting how they themselves would respond (Younglove, Kerr & Vitello, 2002). This study also collapsed the arrest possibilities into a single question, so that participants rated the likelihood of an arrest of either or both parties on one scale rather than rating the likelihood of arrest of each party separately. Moreover, the study used a single vignette in a between-subjects design and did not measure officer variables.

Previous Studies

The present study has several goals: to validate important scenario variables in ambiguous IPV vignettes, to act as a pilot study measuring the impact of proposed predictor variables on ratings of likely police responses to depicted cases of IPV, and to examine how responses vary within participants as a function of the sex of the victim and perpetrator, and the sexuality of the couple. The present study represents the first step in a process that will investigate how the sex and sexual orientation of individuals interact with individual police officer variables to influence decisions in ambiguous IPV cases.

Results of previous studies indicate that when the level of violence is constant across scenarios, the gender of the victim is the strongest predictor of punitive responses in cases of IPV. Participants rated perpetrators actions as more violent (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003), and less reasonable (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003), when the victim was female rather than male. Participants

were also more likely to recommend police intervention in general, and more punitive interventions in particular (e.g. issue a citation, make an arrest versus issue a warning or talk to the couple) when the victims were female rather than male (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). They also rated injuries to female victims as more likely to be serious, and themselves as more likely to help the victim personally if she was female rather than male (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). In contrast, participants felt more strongly that abused men should stay with their violent wives, and that male victims were more responsible than female victims for incidents of IPV (Harris & Cook, 1994). They also rated incidents with male victims as less violent (Harris & Cook, 1994) and less unreasonable (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003).

Perpetrator sex is also an important factor in attributing meaning to violent acts. Seelau, Seelau and Poorman (2003) found that victims were held more responsible when the perpetrator was female than male. Harris and Cook (1994) found that female perpetrators were seen as less responsible than male perpetrators. Violence perpetrated by men was also rated more as more serious, and more likely to result in injury than violence perpetrated by women (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Further, participants felt most strongly that male perpetrators should be convicted of assault regardless of victim sex (Harris & Cook, 1994). For their study, Follingstad, DeHart and Green (2004) surveyed clinical psychologists with two versions of a questionnaire listing behaviors by either a husband or wife that could be considered psychologically abusive. They found that psychologists rated the actions committed by the husband as more pathological, dangerous, abusive and severe than the same actions committed by the wife.

Interactions between victim and perpetrator sex are less straightforward. Seelau, Seelau and Poorman (2003) found that the main effect for victim sex on participant ratings of seriousness disappeared when the perpetrator was female, but that there was a significant interaction of victim sex when the perpetrator was male, with male-male (MM) violence rated less serious. Harris and Cook (1994) did not examine female-female (FF) violence, but they found a drastic change in participant attitudes between male-female (MF) violence that was not a mirror image reversal of female-male (FM) violence. They also found that MM violence was rated least serious (Harris & Cook, 1994). In contrast, Sorenson and Thomas (2009) found in a recent random-digit-dialed experiment with 3,679 respondents that IPV is generally perceived as a more serious crime when it is perpetrated against gay men than heterosexual men. This discrepancy is likely due to the different methodologies employed by the studies. Seelau and Seelau (2005) noted that the main effects of victim and perpetrator sex did not interact in their study, although they also posit that MF violence may be perceived differently than all other combinations of victim and perpetrator sex.

In addition to the main effects of victim and perpetrator sex, studies have found main effects for observer characteristics. All previous studies that have examined the effect of participant sex have found that females responded more strongly than males to vignettes of IPV (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Stith (1990) examined the influence of personal factors on how male police officers reacted to vignettes of MF partner violence, and found that officers who used violence at home were less likely to arrest perpetrators. Although this study took

place prior to the enactment of mandatory arrest laws, individual officer characteristics are still likely to shape judgments in ambiguous situations.

Predictions

In order to study the contribution of gender and sexuality to perceptions of IPV, vignettes were written to depict scenarios in which each partner was as likely as the other to have initiated or participated in violence toward the other. In other words, the roles of perpetrator and victim were intentionally undefined. This approach is novel, and this study represents an exploratory examination of the effects of participant gender, gender of the depicted partners, and sexuality of the couple on perceptions of and arrest-decision reactions to IPV. Previous findings did allow for a few specific hypotheses, however. Earlier studies have demonstrated that males are generally considered more responsible than females in partner violence, and so it was hypothesized that participants would rate a greater likelihood of making an arrest of male partners than female partners. It was also predicted that there would be a significant main effect for participant sex. In particular, female participants were predicted to rate a higher likelihood of making an arrest than male participants across vignettes. The mixed previous findings and scarcity of data rendered predictions about interaction effects of gender and sexuality premature.

Method

Vignettes

Participants read a series of vignettes depicting incidents of IPV, in which they were asked to imagine that they are a police officer responding to the described scene. The vignettes, which were field-tested for mutuality of violence, and tested to have an eighth grade reading level using the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Test, varied by three factors: the gender of the partners (and, by implication, their sexual orientation), the types of injuries sustained (and by implication, the level of violence that occurred), and whether there are firearms in the home. The levels of violence / injury depicted had three levels, ranging from a threat to beat the other, a black eye or swollen lip, to a large cut on the head or neck. A total of six unique vignettes (three levels of violence x two levels of firearms) were combined with four combinations of the sex of the partners (FF, FM, MF, MM) to yield 24 vignettes. Examples can be found in Appendix A. Vignettes were assigned to participants via a random block method, with each participant receiving all 24 vignette combinations.

After reading each vignette, participants answered a series of questions. Participants rated their responses to the following questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very unlikely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = neither likely nor unlikely, 4 = likely, to 5 = very likely:

- How likely are you to recommend the couple seek counseling?
- How likely are you to arrest the first individual?
- How likely are you to arrest the second individual?

Questionnaire

After rating all vignettes, participants were asked what they believed the purpose of the study to be. Participants also completed the Bem sex-role inventory (60 items), the Attitudes Toward Lesbians Inventory (10 items), the Attitudes Toward Gays Inventory (10 items), and the Intimate Violence items from the Revised Attitudes Toward Violence scale (12 items) as control measures.

Participants

Participants over the age of 18 were recruited from Amazon's Mturk worker pool, an online marketplace on which requesters post tasks with an estimate of the time commitment and the compensation offered for completing the task. Participants were informed that they would be compensated \$1.00, and that the task was estimated to take one hour. They were also notified that the study depicts episodes of violence and given a disclosure of the possible risks and discomforts of the study, as well as a list of mental health and counseling resources available to them. They then completed a short questionnaire about their demographics, including their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and past experience with domestic violence. For the sensitive question of sexual orientation, participants were queried as recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (McDermott, 2011): Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself: heterosexual or straight; gay or lesbian; bisexual; other; prefer not to say. Screening questions automatically ended the survey for participants who had a history of experiencing partner violence or witnessing it as a child. A total of 782 participants were excluded for having experienced or witnessed partner violence. Another 332 participants discontinued the study before completing it.

Sixty-eight participants, identified by their IP addresses, were excluded from analysis for retaking the survey after being disqualified for past experience ($n = 64$), or taking the survey multiple times ($n = 4$). After excluding these cases for analysis, a total of 440 participants were included in the study.

Participants included in analysis ranged in age from 18 to 76, with a mean age of 35 and a median of 32. The majority of participants were White ($n = 352$), an additional 31 individuals identified as being of African descent, 24 of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, 14 as being multi-racial, 10 as “Other/ Not Listed”, eight as Latino/Latina, and one declined to identify. Participants were overwhelmingly female ($n = 273$) rather than male ($n = 167$), and heterosexual ($n = 385$) rather than bisexual ($n = 25$), or gay/lesbian ($n = 22$), with four identifying their sexuality as “other” and four declining to disclose.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

In order to investigate whether participant dropout was likely to have biased the results of the study, a logistic regression was estimated using the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality as predictors and completion of the study as the outcome variable. Participant dropout was predicted only by participants being female, $p=.048$. However, a power analysis for statistical significance criterion calculated based on the sample size, effect size, and power of .95 indicated that this result does not reach significance. Moreover, use of Amazon's Mturk represents a sample of convenience, and is likely to be biased; demographic variables in the completed surveys are not normally distributed, and the sample skews female. Therefore imputing missing data for responses of participants who dropped out was not indicated. No other participant variables predicted dropout.

This experiment was designed as a randomized complete block design, in which every participant saw each vignette in a randomized order. Because participants saw and responded to all 24 vignettes, it was necessary to analyze the data for an order effect caused by participant fatigue. A factor analysis of the outcome variables was run, and a linear combination of the weighted outcome ratings was calculated to create a single outcome score per participant per vignette. A sub-sample ($n = 20$) was selected at random using the True Random Number Generator from Random.org. A linear mixed-effects model was then estimated on the sub-sample with demographic variables, control variables (scores on BEM sex-role inventory, attitudes towards gays

and lesbians inventories, and attitudes towards violence), and vignettes as fixed effects, and participants as a random effect. The residuals were then plotted by the order of the vignettes each participant saw, and examined for decreasing variance. The plot, which can be found in Figure 1, revealed random scatter across the order of vignettes, indicating no decrease in the variance of residuals. A second sub-sample ($n = 20$) was selected and tested via the same method and the residuals plotted with the same result. No evidence for participant fatigue was present, indicating it was unnecessary to include vignette order as a variable in the statistical model.

During analysis of variables of interest, inclusion of the variable of whether the couple keeps firearms in the home was reconsidered. The primary concern with this variable was that it does not represent information an officer would typically have when responding to a domestic disturbance call. Vignettes including the variable that the couple keeps firearms in the home were discarded from further analysis. Notably, the vignettes that remain included in analysis state, “The couple does not keep any firearms in the home” and should be interpreted accordingly.

Proportional Odds Mixed Model

The response variables in this study are participant ratings of likelihood of arresting the first partner in the vignette, the likelihood of arresting the second partner, and the likelihood of recommending the couple seek counseling. Because these outcomes were measured on a Likert-type scale, the data is best described as being ordinal rather than numerical (i.e. the number rating of 4 has no real numerical meaning, but indicates a greater likelihood of arrest than 3, 2, or 1). There is significant debate regarding the best way to analyze ordinal data, however the most commonly used is the

cumulative odds model (O'Connell, 2006), also known as the proportional odds model. This model is flexible enough to accommodate the violations in normality of the data (for which multiple linear regression is contraindicated) by applying a log-transformation to the odds of a participant's response being in a higher category (e.g. rating likelihood of arrest as a "2 = unlikely" versus a "1 = very unlikely"). This model can also be adapted to include random effects, which is necessary in a randomized complete block design as this accounts for idiosyncratic differences in responses by each participant. The end result of this method of modeling data is a set of comparison statements about how a change in the level of a predictor variable influences the odds of an increase in the rating level of the outcome variable (e.g. odds of participant rating of "4" rather than "3").

The assumption of the proportional odds model is that each predictor variable affects the log-odds of a rating increase in a proportional way across all possible ratings. Analysis of the violence factor revealed that it interacted with the vignette variables of gender and sexuality, such that the pattern of change in the odds ratio varied as it interacted with these other variables, suggesting a violation in the proportional odds assumption for the factor of violence. There are several ways to handle a violation of the proportional odds assumption (see O'Connell, 2006); the best method for the purposes of this study was to split the omnibus model by level of violence and analyze separate regressions for each explanatory variable to investigate patterns of effects across the different models. All models analyzed in this study utilized the maximum-likelihood estimate and were fitted with the adaptive Gauss-Hermite quadrature approximation with 10 quadrature points, which is indicated in models that have only one random effect. Hessian measures, which are a basic measure of whether

the variables included in the model fit the data, were used to measure the empirical identifiability of the models. Hessian measures for each model were small enough ($>10^4$) to conclude that the included variables adequately explained the variance in each model.

Participant Variables

None of the participant demographic variables (age, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender) were predictive of arrest or of recommending the couple seek counseling. Notably, the demographic variables of the participants: White (80%), heterosexual (87.5%) and/or female (62%) are not representative of the greater population, or of police officer populations, who tend to be overwhelmingly male and White (United States Department of Justice, 2011). Due to the majority of participants identifying themselves as White and/or heterosexual, the remaining numbers were likely too small to reveal significant differences in response patterns by group. Participant's attitudes towards lesbian women and gay men were measured, along with their attitudes toward domestic violence and their adherence to sex-role stereotypes. These attitudes did not predict likelihood of making an arrest of either of the partners depicted in the vignettes or of participants recommending the couple seek counseling. The Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL) and Attitudes Toward Gays (ATG) inventories measure explicit bias against lesbian women and gay men on a scale from 10 – 50, with lower scores indicating less bias. Responses skewed low for overall bias on the ATL ($M = 16.99$, $SD = 9.38$) and ATG ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 11.15$), however some participants reported high bias. Histograms of participant responses on these measures can be found in Figures 2 and 3. Participants also rated very low agreement with attitudes supporting IPV on the ATV-

R scale, which has a scale ranging from 12 – 49, with lower scores indicating less agreement ($M = 14.53$, $SD = 4.76$). This finding is not surprising given that the present study excluded participants who reported ever being involved in or witnessing IPV.

Vignette Variables

The strongest overall predictor of likelihood of arrest was the depicted level of violence, with higher levels of violence leading to higher ratings of arrest likelihood for both depicted partners. For the first depicted partner in each vignette (regardless of their gender and the gender of their partner), the odds of arrest increased at a low level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 38.63, $p = .000$), and at a high level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 127.51, $p = .000$). For the second depicted partner in each vignette, the odds of arrest similarly increased at low level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 38.20, $p = .000$), and at a high level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 166.96, $p = .000$). Higher levels of violence also predicted significantly higher likelihood of recommending the couple seek counseling. For all couples combined (regardless of sexuality), the odds of recommending counseling increased at a low level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 2.55, $p = .000$), and at a high level of violence compared to threat level (odds ratio = 6.45, $p = .000$). A summary of odds ratios for each outcome by level of violence can be found in Table 1.

The gender of the potential arrestee and the gender of their partner (i.e. the “victim” in each scenario) also affected the likelihood of arrest, although the significance of these effects varied across violence levels. A summary of these results can be found in Table 2. Neither the gender of the potential arrestee nor the gender of their partner

significantly affected the likelihood of arrest at the threat level. These effects became significant at a low level of violence, however, with the odds of arrest decreasing when the potential arrestee was female (partner 1 odds ratio = 0.642, $p = .000$; partner 2 odds ratio = 0.680, $p = .000$) and the odds of arrest increasing when the partner of the arrestee (i.e. “victim”) was female (partner 1 odds ratio = 1.43, $p = .000$; partner 2 OR = 1.39, $p = .002$). At the high level of violence, a female “victim” still significantly increased the odds of arrest (partner 1 odds ratio = 1.45, $p = .000$; partner 2 odds ratio = 1.304, $p = .017$), and a female arrestee still decreased the odds of arrest, but this finding only reached significance for the first partner depicted in each high-violence vignette: (partner 1 odds ratio = .662, $p = .000$; partner 2 odds ratio = .812, $p = .062$).

Despite generally low reported bias, there were significant differences in likelihood of making an arrest and recommending counseling for vignettes depicting same sex couples compared to heterosexual couples. In the threat and low violence conditions, odds of arrest decreased when the vignette depicted a gay male or lesbian female couple compared to a heterosexual couple. A summary of results for odds of arrest by sexuality by violence level can be found in Table 3. For depictions of gay male relationships, the difference in arrest likelihood reached significance for the second depicted person but not the first. The high violence condition yielded mixed results, with the first depicted partner more likely to be arrested and the second partner less likely to be arrested, however none of the odds ratios were significant in the high violence condition.

Across all depicted levels of sexuality of the couple (heterosexual, lesbian female and gay male), the odds of recommending counseling increased as the depicted level of

violence increased. However, both gay male couples and lesbian female couples were less likely to be referred to counseling. This general trend was found for all levels of violence, however it only reached statistical significance at threat level. In the threat condition, the odds of participants recommending a gay male couple compared to a heterosexual couple to counseling were 0.68 ($p = .004$), and the odds of recommending a lesbian female couple compared to a heterosexual couple to counseling were 0.642 ($p = .001$).

Discussion

Pilot Study

The primary purposes of this study were to pilot a study that will later be conducted with police officers, and to explore which vignette and participant variables are most predictive of arrest. Several issues with the design of the present study became apparent in this pilot. Despite preliminary field-testing for reciprocal equivalence, there is evidence that the high violence condition was problematic; participants generally attributed greater blame to the first partner than the second in these vignettes. As a result, it does not appear that this condition was judged to depict mutual violence. The high violence condition likely needs to be updated and re-tested, or simply discarded from future study. Additionally, the use of a five-point Likert-type scale to measure the outcome variables precluded use of parametric statistics, and make analysis of the results more cumbersome. It is generally accepted that linear regression modeling is robust enough to estimate effects on ordinal outcomes so long as there are at least seven points on the outcome scales (Norman, 2010). The follow-up study is intended to ask police officers about their arrest decisions; given that officers face arrest / citation decisions as a typical part of their work, soliciting an unequivocal yes/no arrest response to the vignettes in the next study may yield more meaningful results. Specifically, the likelihood of arresting both partners rather than only one can be examined with a binary arrest outcome variable.

Significant Variables

Previous studies have found that the gender of research participants is predictive of arrest decisions (e.g. Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005), with female participants rating vignettes as more violent overall than their male counterparts. The results of this study found no evidence for the effect of participant gender. It is possible that the participants in this study are part of a younger cohort with less gendered attitudes about violence than the participants in the earlier studies. The earlier studies also did not vary the level of violence depicted between vignettes, so another possibility is that the violence variable had the effect of calibrating participants' sense of how violent each scenario was, thereby attenuating any tendency for male participants to be less reactive than female participants.

Participant's attitudes towards lesbian women, gay men and domestic violence were measured, along with their adherence to sex-role stereotypes. None of these attitudes significantly predicted likelihood of making an arrest of either of the partners depicted in the vignettes or of recommending the couple seek counseling. These measures were taken after participants had already seen and responded to all 24 vignettes to avoid a priming effect; it may be, however, that the vignettes primed participants' responses to these measures, as most were able to correctly decipher the objective of the study. The follow-up study will not be a complete block design, i.e. participants will read a small selection of vignettes to avoid revealing the purpose of the study.

Unsurprisingly, the level of violence was the single strongest predictor of likelihood of arrest by a large margin. The gender of each potential arrestee, the gender

of the arrestee's partner, and the sexuality of the couple were also predictive of arrest, although they interacted with violence, such that the significance of these effects varied across levels of violence.

Previous studies, in which vignettes depicted only one level of violence and unambiguous perpetrator and victim roles, found the gender of the victim was the strongest predictor of arrest (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003). This finding was further substantiated by the present study; when a potential arrestee's partner was female (regardless of the arrestee's gender) the odds of arrest increased at the low and high violence levels, but not for the threat condition. Research has suggested that women are perceived to be more physically vulnerable than men (Follingstad, DeHart & Green, 2004), however the level of violence depicted in the vignettes for this study was varied by explicitly describing the injuries of each partner, so this stereotype is less likely to have been at play. Instead, the stereotype that violent acts by women represent self-defense appears more salient for these scenarios. The finding that having a female partner did not significantly alter the odds of arrest at the threat level (compared to higher levels of violence) appears to support this hypothesis, because self-defense is not necessary in the threat condition and therefore this rationalization does not fit.

Female potential arrestees were much less likely to be arrested at the low level of violence, a finding that also supports the hypothesis that females were more likely to be seen as engaging in self-defense rather than acts of deliberate aggression. There was no significant change in the odds of arrest by gender of the arrestee at the threat level, possibly suggesting participants did not find threats warranted direct intervention.

Results were mixed at the high level due to the aforementioned issue with the high violence condition not appearing reciprocal.

Potential arrestees in both male and female same sex relationships were significantly less likely to be arrested at the threat level. Both partners in lesbian relationships were also significantly less likely to be arrested at the low violence level. On the surface, this appears to suggest that female perpetrators are more predictive of arrest than female victims, however lesbian relationships are probably perceived very differently from heterosexual relationships, so this comparison is likely not apt. Rather, it may show that participants view lesbian relationships as less deserving of intervention. Because women are perceived as less violent than men in general (Pattavina, et.al., 2007), acts of violent aggression between women may be perceived as rare events, and therefore unlikely to be part of a larger pattern of violence in the relationship, and less concerning. In male gay relationships, each partner was less likely to be arrested at low level of violence but it only reached statistical significance for the second partner. This may imply that participants perceived gay male relationships in a stereotyped way: by feminizing one partner, they may have selected to place more blame on the first rather than second partner. This hypothesis appears unlikely, however, in that participants should have been just as likely to blame the second partner as the first, so that this effect evened out between the partners. Rather, this mixed result for gay male partners at the low violence level may indicate that participants did not judge the low violence condition to depict equal levels of violence between partners.

There was no significant change in the odds of arrest by sexuality of the couple in the high violence condition. It appears that once the violence is severe enough, the

stereotyped beliefs about these couples become less salient than the need to prevent harm. If this effect holds true among police officers, it could lead to a lack of intervention with gay and lesbian couples until the violence is highly escalated.

The odds of participants recommending counseling for same sex couples in the threat condition were lower. It appears that in the low and high violence conditions, there was a ceiling effect with likelihood of recommending counseling in general so that the significance of differences between recommendations for heterosexual, gay and lesbian couples could not be detected. The significant difference at threat level may suggest that same sex couples are seen as less serious and less enduring, as posited by Younglove, Kerr and Vitello (2002). Or, as suggested above, same sex partnerships may be perceived as less likely to fit an ongoing pattern of violence, so the couple appears unlikely to experience continual and escalating violence, and counseling may not be necessary. Alternatively, the reference group can be shifted and question asked: why are the odds of a heterosexual couple being referred to counseling higher than a same sex relationship at threat level? Harris and Cook (1994) found that participants felt that men who were victims of abuse by women should stay in those relationships; it is possible that in cases where violence appears reciprocal, the primary blame is still placed on men, and therefore the idea that men should stay in abusive relationships may have prompted participants to feel more strongly about recommending counseling for these couples.

General Discussion

Given that female perpetrators of violence are less likely to be prosecuted (Henning & Renauer, 2005), less likely to be convicted, serve less time when they are

convicted (Langan and Dawson, 1995), and are more likely to receive prosecutorial leniency both before and after a conviction (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2007), even a small gender bias in arrest decisions can snowball into a very large discriminant difference in the application of the law. Although these same data are not available for individuals arrested for same sex IPV, some reports (e.g. Pattavina et. al., 2007) suggest these individuals experience discriminant treatment as well.

An important contribution by this study is the randomized complete block design. Because all participants saw every vignette, there is a built-in control mechanism; it is clear that these results are due to differences in the perception of violence by the gender and sexuality of the depicted partners. There is preliminary evidence that participants applied stereotypes of IPV to these vignettes, which offers support for the idea that theories of IPV may shape the narratives projected onto violent incidents even as they attempt to explain them. This is important to recognize, because the impact of this phenomenon is not only discriminant application of the law (a sizeable problem unto itself); it may also results in a lack of intervention where it is needed.

Society's tools for reducing IPV are generally blunt and punitive. In some states, specialized domestic violence courts have emerged in an attempt to better meet the needs of individuals in these cases. The setup of any court system is adversarial, however, and relies upon the assignment of victim and perpetrator roles, which may not fit the circumstances of many cases. In the realm of IPV, female perpetrators, male victims, and individuals in same sex relationships evade simplistic, stereotyped explanations. These cases also have the potential to stimulate real change in the way IPV is perceived and responded to, because they are unexpected and therefore can

inspire more curiosity and attention to what is a very important but often poorly understood social problem.

One potential solution is to work toward a broader theory of IPV, one which focuses less on a dichotomized view of victim and perpetrator, and more on the needs of the partners, their available resources, their differential realities, and the intersections of their respective power and disempowered statuses, which may not always follow straightforward lines. Even when the interpretation of IPV is not gendered, the stereotype that these relationships comprise a fixed abuser and victim engender a particular view of the victim, and prescribe a particular intervention: namely, there must be something wrong with the victim who stays, and the intervention of choice is to separate the couple. This stereotype is not always wrong, however the data suggest that the benefits of this somewhat rigid view are limited. In the field of counseling, there are many interventions designed to treat victims and abusers, however the treatment of couples engaged in reciprocal violence receive very little research focus. Taking a broader, more flexible view of partner violence could lead to effective and life-saving interventions for individuals in violent relationships who are not willing to end the relationship, or who engage in patterns of mutual violence. In some ways, this is analogous to the development of harm-reduction approaches to drug and alcohol use once it became apparent that abstinence is not the only path to overcoming addiction.

Future studies in this area should examine alternatives to reliance on arrest as the intervention of choice for IPV. Alternatives include primary care based interventions, and educational and psychological treatment for partners. Additionally, qualitative studies on police officer attitudes in states with mandatory arrest will help elucidate

some of the barriers to equality in cases of IPV. For example, officers may feel more apathetic about intervening in cases where it appears unlikely that either partner will assist with an investigation. Their attitudes can also be solicited about alternative types of intervention, such as a citation that requires the couple to undergo a brief psychological evaluation to determine appropriate next-steps, including providing access to community resources where necessary and appropriate.

Limitations

The present study is limited in its focus on sex and sexual orientation. The potential effects and interactions of ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status are beyond its scope, however future studies should examine these and other variables as well. Additionally, as this is a pilot of the eventual experiment, it does not directly measure the responses of police officers, although this is a limitation that will be ultimately addressed in the follow-up study. Another limitation of this study stems from the convenience sample of Amazon mTurk workers, whose responses cannot be assumed to generalize to the public, or to police officers. Moreover, a recent survey of mTurk worker demographics revealed that the majority of workers were female and both younger and slightly more educated than the general U.S. population (Ross, Zaldivar, Irani & Tomlinson, 2010). Importantly, this is a population who may be especially sensitized to issues of gender and intimate partner violence. As previously stated, these individuals cannot be assumed to represent the general population or police officers. Additionally, the ethics-based decision to exclude of participants who had experienced IPV themselves is likely to have biased the results, and is another way in which this participant pool is likely different from police officers as a group.

An important possible interaction not examined in previous studies is the likelihood of officers making an arrest of both parties. Patterns of reciprocal violence have been reported in a number of studies (Goodyear-Smith & Laidlaw, 1999; Randle & Graham, 2011), yet there is very little research into this phenomenon. Other researchers note that officers frequently arrest both parties in IPV incidents in which reciprocal violence is suspected (Henning & Renauer, 2005; Pattavina et. al., 2007). The outcome measures used in the present study did not allow for examination of this effect. Utilizing a binary yes/no arrest decision measure in the next study will allow for examination of the odds of mutual arrest as a function of the gender of each partner, and sexuality of the couple.

A final limitation of this study is that there was no embedded manipulation check to ensure participants noted the differences between each vignette. Although the effect size of most comparisons made in this study appear to suggest that this was not an issue, it is important to note that the results could have been skewed if enough participants misinterpreted individual vignettes.

Tables and Figures

Table 1

Odds Ratios by Level of Violence

		Level of Violence			
		Low		High	
		OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>
	Arrest 1	38.63	.000***	127.51	.000***
Outcome	Arrest 2	38.20	.000***	166.96	.000***
	Counseling	2.55	.000***	6.45	.000***

Arrest 1: Likelihood of arresting the first partner depicted in the vignette

Arrest 2: Likelihood of arresting the second partner depicted in the vignette

Counseling: Likelihood of recommending the couple seek counseling

All outcomes are in comparison to Threat Level

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001

Table 2

Odds Ratios by Level of Violence and Gender

		Level of Violence					
		Threat		Low		High	
		OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>
Female Arrestee	Arrest 1	0.85	.194	0.64	.000***	0.66	.000***
	Arrest 2	0.83	.113	0.68	.000***	0.81	.062
Female Partner	Arrest 1	1.1	.310	1.43	.000***	1.45	.000***
	Arrest 2	1.2	.200	1.39	.002**	1.30	.017*

Arrest 1: Likelihood of arresting the first partner depicted in the vignette

Arrest 2: Likelihood of arresting the second partner depicted in the vignette

Female Arrestee: Likelihood of arresting a female compared to a male with a partner of either gender

Female Partner: Likelihood of arresting a partner of either gender with a female compared to a male partner

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001

Table 3

Odds Ratios by Level of Violence and Sexuality

		Level of Violence					
		Threat		Low		High	
		OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>
Gay Male	Arrest 1	0.72	.025*	0.84	.160	1.13	.348
	Arrest 2	0.57	.000***	0.74	.018*	0.88	.340
Lesbian Female	Arrest 1	0.69	.013*	0.77	.037*	1.09	.519
	Arrest 2	0.55	.000***	0.70	.005**	0.93	.600

Arrest 1: Likelihood of arresting the first partner depicted in the vignette

Arrest 2: Likelihood of arresting the second partner depicted in the vignette

Gay Male: Likelihood of arresting a man in a gay relationship compared to a partner of either gender in a heterosexual relationship

Gay Female: Likelihood of arresting a woman in a lesbian relationship compared to a partner of either gender in a heterosexual relationship

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001

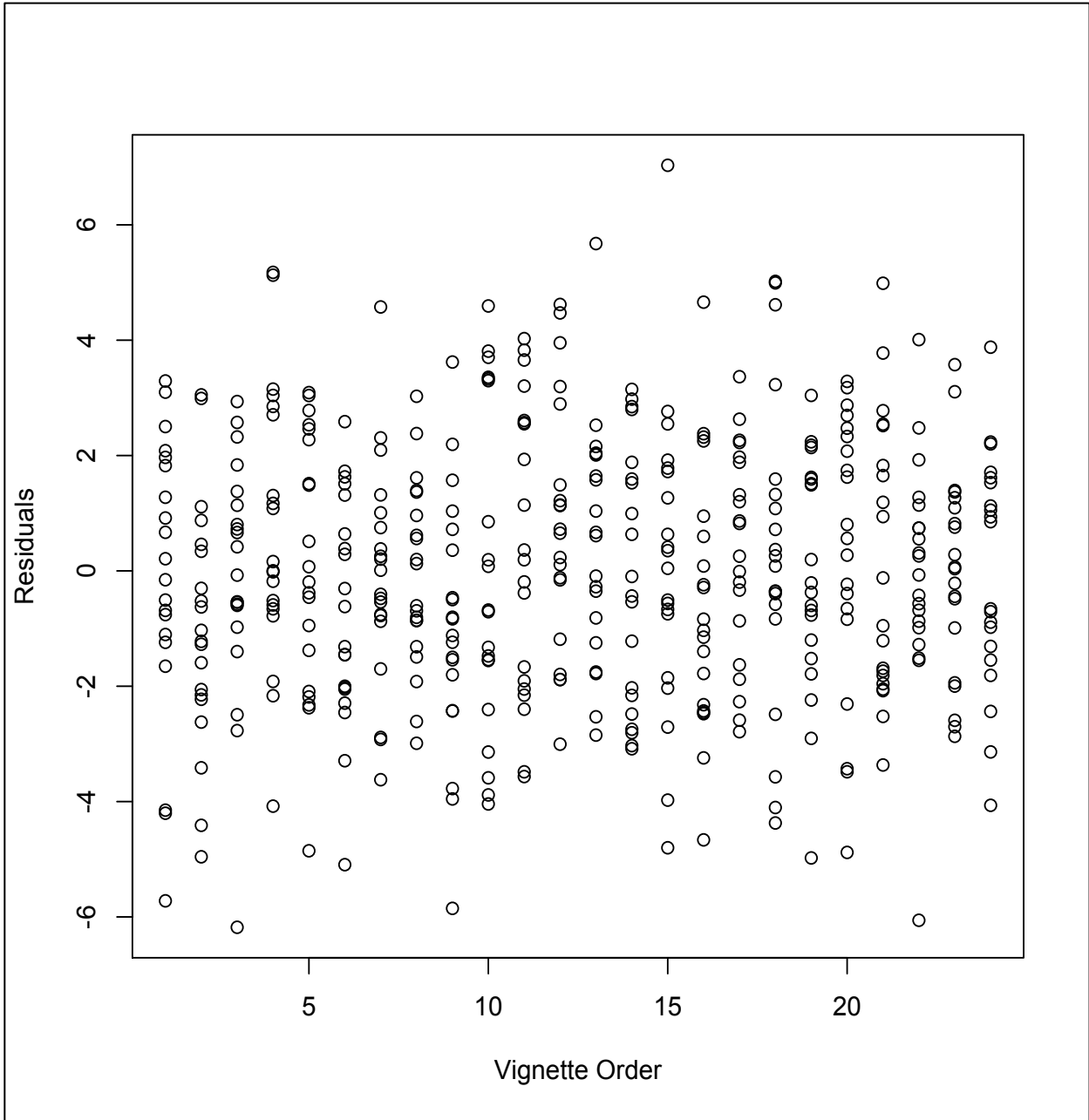


Figure 1

Residuals by Vignette Order

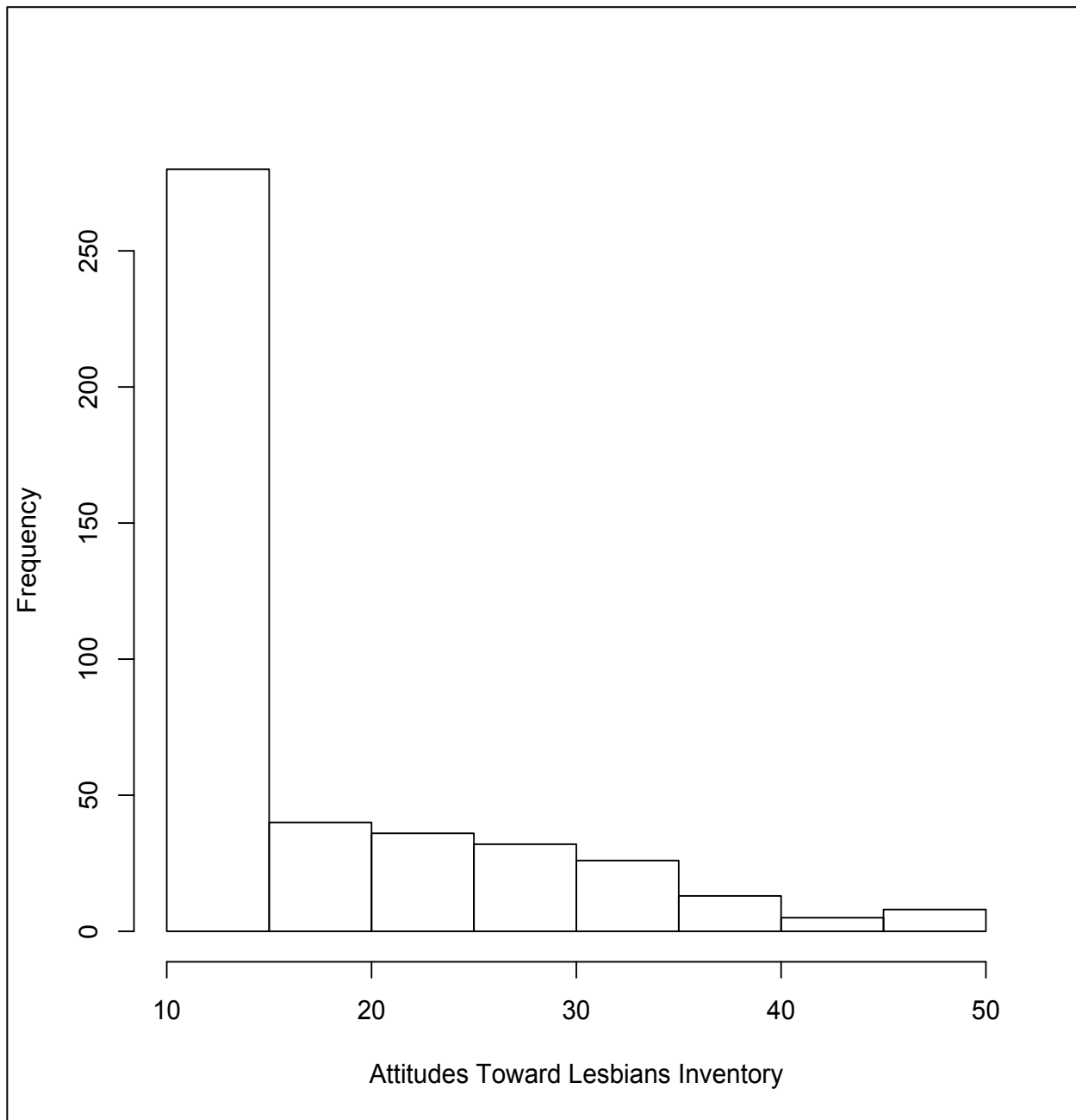


Figure 2

Histogram of Attitudes Towards Lesbians Inventory

n = 440

Range of scores 10 – 50

Lower scores indicate lower level of bias

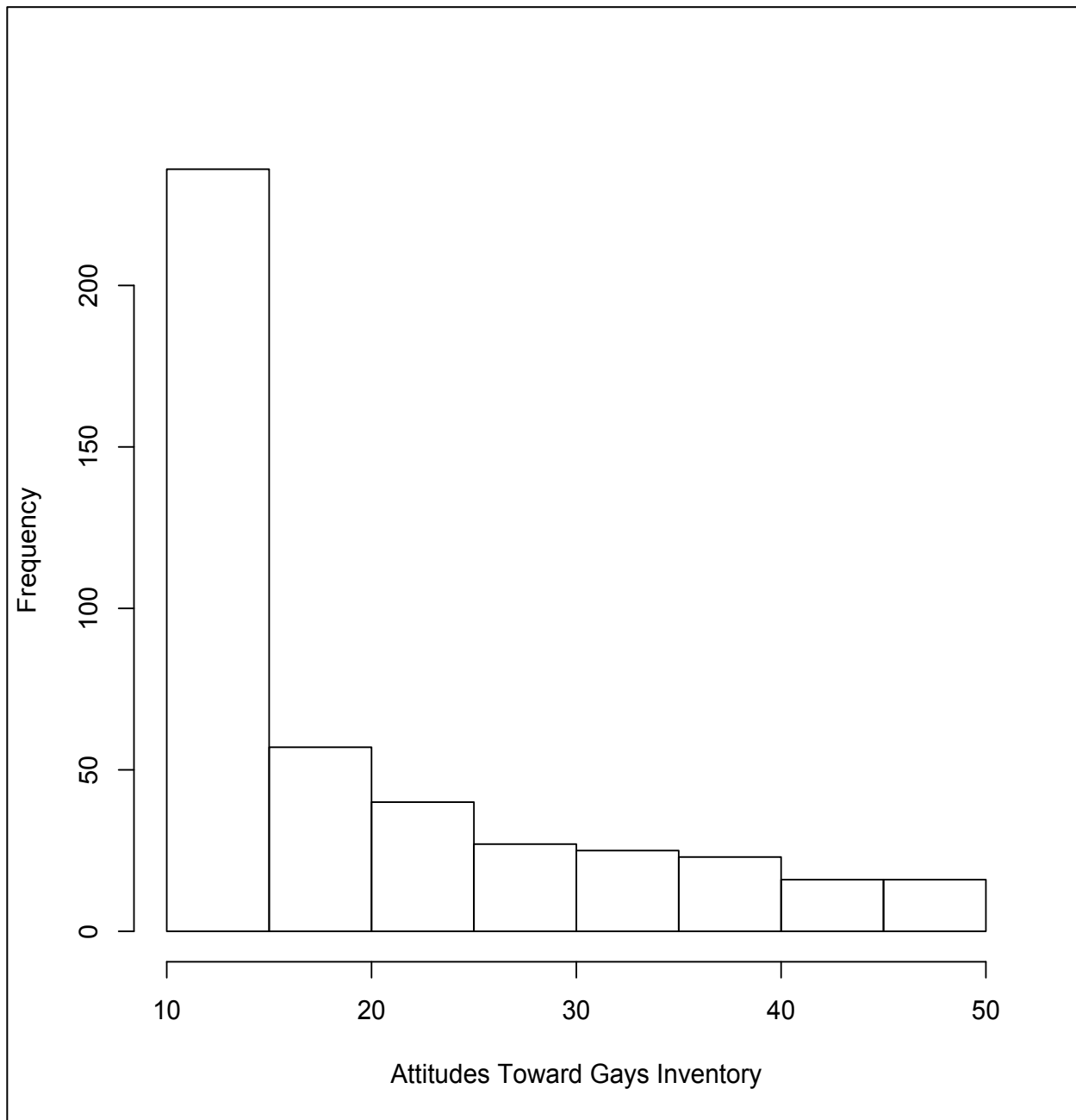


Figure 3

Histogram of Attitudes Towards Gays Inventory

n = 440

Range of scores 10 – 50

Lower scores indicate lower level of bias

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Appendix A

Vignettes

Complete variable vignette:

You are a police officer responding to a domestic dispute call. Upon arriving to the scene, you first encounter a (man / woman) who appears upset. ([He/She] tells you that [his/her] partner threatened to beat [him/her]. / [You observe that [he/she] has a puffy and discolored eye. / You observe that [he/she] has a large laceration and knot on the back of [his/her] head.) After obtaining a statement from the first partner, you then speak with the other individual, a [man / woman] who is also distressed. ([He/She] states that it was the other individual who made threats. / You observe that [he/she] has a swollen and cut lip. / You observe that [he/she] has a laceration on the side of [his/her] neck.) The couple (does not keep any / keeps) firearms in the home. They are both cooperative, but each individual blames the other for the incident, and claims they responded in defense.

Example 1:

You are a police officer responding to a domestic dispute call. Upon arriving to the scene, you first encounter a man who appears upset. He tells you that his partner threatened to beat him. After obtaining a statement from the first partner, you then speak with the other individual, a man who is also distressed. He states that it was the first individual who made threats. The couple does not keep any firearms in the home. They are both cooperative, but each individual blames the other for the incident, and claims they responded in defense.

Example 2:

You are a police officer responding to a domestic dispute call. Upon arriving to the scene, you first encounter a man who appears upset. You observe that he has a puffy and discolored eye. After obtaining a statement from the first partner, you then speak with the other individual, a woman who is also distressed. You observe that she has a swollen and cut lip. The couple keeps firearms in the home. They are both cooperative, but each individual blames the other for the incident, and claims they responded in defense.

Example 3:

You are a police officer responding to a domestic dispute call. Upon arriving to the scene, you first encounter a woman who appears upset. You observe that she has a large laceration and knot on the back of her head. After obtaining a statement from the first partner, you then speak with the other individual, a woman who is also distressed. You observe that she has a laceration on the side of her neck. The couple does not keep any firearms in the home. They are both cooperative, but each individual blames the other for the incident, and claims they responded in defense.