

Cross-Cultural Differences in Physical Aggression Between Partners: A Social-Role Analysis

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In developed western nations, both sexes commit acts of physical aggression against their partners. Data from 16 nations showed that this pattern did not generalize to all nations. The magnitude and direction of the sex difference was highly correlated with national-level variations in gender empowerment and individualism–collectivism. As gender equality and individualism increased, the sex difference in partner violence moved in the direction of lesser female victimization and greater male victimization. A second analysis of 52 nations showed that 3 indexes of women’s victimization were also inversely correlated with gender equality and individualism. Sexist attitudes and relative approval of wife beating were also associated with women’s victimization rates, but general levels of violent crime were not. The findings are discussed in terms of a social role approach to variations in sex differences between cultures.

In modern western societies, analyses of physical aggression between partners and its consequences are associated with two opposing perspectives. One, originating from family interaction researchers, typically assesses the possibility that both men and women can be perpetrators and victims of such aggression. The other, informed by the view that women but not men are victims of partners’ physical aggression, typically assesses only female victims and male perpetrators. Where data from both sexes has been collected, it is clear that both men and women commit a range of acts of physical aggression against their partners (Archer, 2000a, 2002), at least in samples from developed western nations, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. Although women are typically injured more frequently than men, a substantial proportion of those injured are men (Archer, 2000a).

These conclusions are based on meta-analyses of the available evidence, which is heavily biased towards modern western nations, particularly the United States. A few studies from community samples in non-Western nations indicate that in these cases the sex differ-

ence in perpetration of physical aggression is clearly in the male direction, in contrast to the typical finding for the same measures in western samples (Archer, 2000a). The first part of this article assesses whether this cross-national variability can be explained in terms of the relative position of women in different nations, specifically whether the relatively higher rates of female-against-male perpetration found in western nations are a function of women’s relatively higher societal power in these nations. This hypothesis stems from a social role analysis of sex differences (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2004; Wood & Eagly, 2002), which holds that “a society’s division of labor between the sexes is the engine of sex-differentiated behavior, because it summarizes the social constraints under which men and women carry out their lives” (Eagly & Wood, 1999b, p. 409). To test its application to sex differences in physical aggression between partners, a national-level variable indicative of women’s relative empowerment was used.

Because this analysis revealed a substantial correlation between women’s empowerment and sex differences in physical aggression between partners, the next step was to assess whether this pattern is due to variability in male-against-female or female-against-male physical aggression, or both. The following evidence is considered: (a) a cross-cultural comparison using the Human Relations Area Files (HRAFs) that yielded separate correlations between a measure of women’s power outside the home and both “wife-beating” and “husband-beating;” and (b) evidence from particular studies that compared three or more nations or ethnic groups, and included data on physical aggression against partners by both sexes. This analysis is fol-

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lowed by a consideration of whether female-against-male partner violence occurs in societies where women have low societal power.

The most extensive cross-national evidence on partner violence involves female victimization rates only, reflecting the widespread view that men are not victims of such violence. This evidence can be used to further answer the question of whether men's violence against their partners varies systematically with women's societal power. It can also enable some additional analyses to be undertaken: (a) whether cross-national variation in two possible mediating variables, attitudes towards women and attitudes towards physical aggression against women, is associated with women's victimization rates; (b) whether victimization is associated with three dimensions of culture, individualism–collectivism, power distance, and masculinity–femininity; and (c) whether women's victimization is related to cross-national differences in the general level of violence. Before describing these analyses, it is necessary to discuss issues concerning terminology and measurement that are raised by existing studies of physical aggression between partners in western nations, and to outline the social-role approach used in my analysis.

Issues Raised by the Study of Partner Aggression Studies in Western Nations

Terminology

The terms used in studies investigating physical aggression between partners are varied, and carry a number of different meanings. Family interaction researchers typically use the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) to study western samples. Although there have been modifications and updating of this scale (e.g., Morse, 1995; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), all these versions ask about specific acts of physical aggression, such as slapping, hitting, and kicking in the context of relationship conflicts. Although it has limitations (Archer, 2002), the Conflict Tactics Scale provides the most inclusive measure in common use, and typically finds higher rates of physical aggression for both sexes than other methods do. It is therefore misleading to restrict its use to male-against-female perpetration, and then to conclude only that there are very high levels of male violence against women (e.g., Mooney, 2000; Römken, 1997; Russo, 2004). Where women perpetrators have been investigated, there also exist high levels of physical aggression shown against male partners (Archer, 2000a, 2002).

Other terms used in western studies are violence, abuse, and battering. Researchers using the Conflict Tactics Scale tend to characterize their measures as *vi-*

olence, but this is misleading when relatively low-level acts of physical aggression, such as a slap or throwing something at the other, are involved. Instead, a careful distinction should be made between any act of physical aggression and its consequences. Where this has been done, for example when violence is characterized as physical aggression that results in injury (Archer, 2000a), it is clear that men are the most common perpetrators and women the most common victims (although a surprisingly high proportion of those injured are men).

Other studies have used the legal term *assault* in the context of a crime survey, and typically this has resulted in considerably lower rates reported for both sexes. Wife battering is typically a term used to imply a continuous pattern of assaults resulting in injuries, as in the phrase *battered wife*. It is largely restricted to analyses of such cases, for example from women's refugees, which are regarded as the extreme end of those who are victims of physical aggression (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003a, 2003b; Johnson, 1995).

The term *wife beating* is used in western studies as synonymous with wife battering (Brown, 1992; Campbell, 1992). But in a cross-cultural context it takes on another distinct meaning, to describe acts of physical aggression that are condoned by members of a society. In many cultures the beating of wives by husbands is viewed as a form of legitimate chastisement, analogous to the use of corporal punishment by parents to children. For example, an Egyptian study found that 86% of women agreed that a man was justified in beating his wife under some circumstances (El-Zanty, Hussein, Shawky, Way, & Kishor, 1995).

Evidence From Meta-Analyses

Two meta-analytic reviews summarize the evidence from studies that involved partner violence perpetrated by both sexes. In the first (Archer, 2000a), self, partner, and composite reports of acts of aggression were analyzed for between 75 to 80 studies, most of which were from the United States. Overall effect sizes showed slightly higher levels of female perpetration for self-reports, but no sex difference for partner reports. The effect sizes for studies of community samples were close to zero, but still showed slightly higher female perpetration ($d = -.02$). For the fewer studies ($N = 17$) recording injuries, there was greater male perpetration, but the effect sizes were small. Sixty-two percent of those injured were women, indicating that a significant minority of injured partners were men, a finding that proved controversial (Archer, 2000b; White, Smith, Koss, & Figueredo, 2000).

A follow-up meta-analysis (Archer, 2002) involved a separate examination of the different acts of physical aggression on the Conflict Tactics Scale, to assess whether the slightly higher proportion of physical ag-

gression by women applied only to lower-level, less harmful, acts such as pushing, slapping, or throwing something at the other. Across several different analytical methods, more women than men used most acts of aggression. The main exceptions were “beat up” and “choke or strangle.” Even for these acts, according to partner reports, 32 and 33% of those who committed them were women.

Both meta-analysis showed that in studies involving mainly North American students, women exceeded men in the use of any act of physical aggression, and in most acts on the Conflict Tactics Scale. Although community samples showed effect sizes more in the male direction, they still showed that women were slightly more likely than men to commit most acts of physical aggression. Injuring a partner, and specific damaging acts, were more often inflicted by men against women, although there was still a substantial minority of male victims.

Most crime scenes yield much lower overall figures than are found in studies measuring acts of physical aggression, such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1997, 1998, 1999), presumably because there is a threshold of severity before a respondent views their physical aggression as a crime (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001). For this reason, I derived figures for the cross-national comparisons from the most inclusive measures available, where possible using act-based measures such as the Conflict Tactics Scale. This is in line with cross-national comparisons of women’s victimization (e.g., Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Russo, 2004).

Explaining Cross-National Differences in Partner Violence

Social Role Theory

Social role theory has been widely used in social psychology to explain sex differences in behavior measured in experimental and naturalistic settings (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Its premise is that sex differences in social behavior are the result of the division of labor into homemaker and worker outside the home, that these roles produce expectancies that lead to different patterns of behavior in men and women, and that such expectancies are transmitted to future generations via socialization processes. These patterns can be summarized as masculine or agentic traits and feminine or communal traits. Expectancies associated with the masculine role include the use of direct aggression as part of an agentic set of responses. Expectancies associated with the feminine role inhibit direct aggression as part of a communal set of responses. The associated differential status of men’s and women’s occupations is an important route to pro-

ducing higher male than female aggression according to social role theory, higher societal status being associated with agentic characteristics.

The social role view is a broad feminist-inspired theory that seeks to explain the social behavior of men and women within a particular society. It has also been extended to analyze cross-national variations by focusing on differences in the relative status of women between nations. Eagly and Wood (1999b) examined the association between mate preferences and gender equality in 37 cultures originally studied to assess cross-cultural consistencies in men’s and women’s mate choices. They assessed whether there was a meaningful pattern of variability in mate choice criteria according to women’s degree of empowerment in that nation, measured by two national-level indexes of women’s structural power (see following section). They found that both measures of empowerment were inversely correlated with the extent to which men valued a woman being a good cook and housekeeper and the extent to which women valued men being a good provider. In addition, as women’s power increased, men showed a weaker preference for younger women, and women showed a weaker preference for older men.

Patriarchal Explanations of Partner Violence

Although social role theory has been used to explain sex differences in aggression (Eagly & Steffen, 1986), with one minor exception (Eagly & Wood, 1999a), it has not been used to explain partner violence. Moreover, partner aggression in heterosexual relationships involves a different pattern of sex differences from that found in studies of aggression in same-sex relationships (Archer, 2004). The main explanatory perspective that has been applied to partner violence is feminist (like social role theory), but it differs from social role theory in one crucial respect: it seeks only to explain the aggressive behavior of men. This forms part of an approach to partner violence that involves a single construct, the historical legacy of patriarchy (e.g., R. E. Dobash & Dobash, 1980; R. P. Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Walker, 1989). Several researchers have rightly objected that such a one-dimensional perspective cannot explain many of the current findings on partner violence in modern western nations (e.g., Archer, 2000a, 2000b; Dutton, 1994; Felson, 2002; Moffitt et al., 2001; Straus, 1994). However, when we move from the level of the individual to that of nations or cultures, variations in the position of women may well explain variations in the extent of partner violence, not only by men against women but also by women against men. This prediction would be consistent with social role theory, extended to explain the pattern of

mate choice across nations (Eagly & Wood, 1999b; Eagly et al., 2004). In support of this approach, there is a tradition within anthropology of explaining variations in the status of women across societies (e.g., Whyte, 1978), and using such variations to analyze cross-cultural patterns in partner violence (Levinson, 1989). These analyses typically involve pre-industrial societies from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample or the related HRAFs.

Several studies have sought to apply a similar analysis to within-nation cultural variations. Yllo and Straus (1984) examined the association between structural inequality and women's victimization, using a sample of American states as units of analysis. They found a curvilinear association between an index of the status of women and the rate of victimization, this being highest in both low- and high-status states. The authors suggest that the high victimization in states where women's economic and political power is high arose from the breakdown of sexist structures threatening husbands' power.

Straus (1994) followed up this study with one involving 50 U.S. states, and a sample three times larger. In this case, he found that gender equality was inversely related to the level of women's victimization ($r = -.32$). Regression models, involving other state-level variables (income inequality and social disorganization), showed that gender equality was most closely related to wife assault, although there was some interaction with social disorganization.

Schuler, Hashemi, Riley, and Akhter (1996) investigated the rates of wife beating among six villages in Bangladesh where there was variation in the degree to which wives contributed to family support. There was more wife-beating where there was a higher contribution, a finding that was again explained in terms of the transformation of gender roles involving a challenge to the established order. However, membership of a credit program (whereby small groups of women get together and receive loans from development programs) was associated with a halving of the rate of wife beating (from 38 to 19%). Hadi (2000) also found that membership of credit programs decreased women's risk of sexual violence from their husbands, and suggested that this was due both to a strengthened economic role for women in the family, and to social support from the other women.

My review extends this type of analysis to a cross-national level. By considering sex differences in partner violence, as well as women's victimization, the analysis can be linked with the social role analyses of other sex differences. This analyses involved a measure of women's power relative to that of men in each nation, and a number of other national-level variables measuring dimensions of culture, gender role attitudes, attitudes to partner violence, and levels of violence.

Variables Used in This Analyses

In this section, I describe the measures used in the subsequent analyses and provide rationales and evidence where appropriate for using such measures. The first main analysis of sex differences in partner violence involved the Gender Empowerment Index (GEM), a measure of women's societal power, the associated Gender-related Development Index (GDI), and the individualism–collectivism dimension of culture. Further variables were added in the second main analysis, of women's victimization rates: traditional gender role attitudes and permissive attitudes to wife beating, two other dimensions of culture, and national statistics for assaults and homicides.

Gender Empowerment

The GEM (United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report, 1997) is a national-level variable derived from a combination of three measures: (a) the proportion of women in managerial, administrative, professional, and technical posts; (b) their share of earned income; and (c) their parliamentary representation. The associated GDI reflects equality in access to health care, education and knowledge. Of the two, GEM is regarded as a purer measure of equal participation in the economic and political life of the nation (Eagly & Wood, 1999b).

Attitudes to Women's Roles

Attitudes towards the roles of women are variable across time periods in the United States (Twenge, 1997a), and vary considerably across nations (Williams & Best, 1990b). Two sets of measures were used in my analyses. One was the Sex Role Ideology Scale (SRIS: Kalin & Tilby, 1978), used by Williams and Best (1990b) to analyze attitudes to gender roles across 14 countries. This scale involves 30 statements measuring traditional or modern attitudes to gender roles, principally the role of women. The other two measures were the Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism scales from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996); these scales address the issue that sexist attitudes can be positive (yet paternalistic) as well as negative (and hostile). However, both Hostile Sexism and BS involve a belief in restricting women's activities. There are strong negative correlations between gender empowerment and both Hostile Sexism and BS across 16 nations (Glick et al., 2001, 2004). Both sexism measures are also associated with other measures of sexist attitudes, although these associations are stronger and more consistent for Hostile Sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1997; Swim & Cohen, 1997). I would therefore expect a stronger cross-national association with male

violence against their partners for Hostile Sexism than for BS.

Attitudes to Wife Beating

It is clear that the general disapproval of wife beating—taken for granted in modern western nations—is unlikely to generalize to other cultures where patriarchal values are stronger and widely accepted (Campbell, 1992; Felson, 2002; Kahn, 1980; Morley, 1994; Schlegal, 1972). Although we would expect differences in the acceptance of wife beating to be associated with gender empowerment and gender role attitudes, they may also be influenced by other variables related to the general tolerance of violence in that society. A number of studies have reported figures for approval of wife beating in different nations (World Health Organization, 2002), and these indicate considerable variation. In this study, I used approval of a husband slapping a wife in some situations, which was taken from Straus' International Dating Violence Research Consortium (Straus, 2003). Ideally, I would have used a questionnaire measure of attitudes toward wife beating, such as the one designed for use among Palestinians (Haj-Yahia, 1998), but there were insufficient studies of attitudes to wife beating using such measures as this.

Cross-National Variables

Individualism–collectivism, from Triandis (1972, 1995) and Hofstede (1980), was used in both studies principally because Fischer and Manstead (2000) found that gender empowerment was higher in individualist than in collectivist nations ($r = .62$ for 37 nations). Collectivism represents the degree to which people view themselves as part of a community whose goals take precedence over those of individuals. Individualism represents the degree to which people see themselves as individuals with their own goals and the right to pursue these. Triandis (1995) briefly discussed some of the disadvantages of collectivism, including harsh and unsympathetic treatment of out-groups. For this reason, he suggested, wife beating will be a greater problem in collectivist than in individualist societies: initially, a wife introduced into her in-laws' home may be seen as part of an out-group, and expected to be an obedient servant. This investigation investigates the possible association between the individualism–collectivism dimension and partner violence in view of the close association between individualism and gender empowerment.

Two other dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1980, 1991) were also used in the second analysis, masculinity–femininity, and power distance. Masculinity–femininity measures the degree to which the culture as a whole values a preference for stereotypically mascu-

line characteristics such as achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success, rather than stereotypically feminine characteristics such as a preference for relationships, modesty, and caring for the weak. It is unrelated to measures of gender stereotyping (Williams & Best, 1982, 1990a), which concern how individuals view men or women, rather than how they view the culture as a whole. For this reason, I would not predict masculinity–femininity to be closely related to women's victimization, because it is a dimension that applies to both sexes rather than differentiating between them.

Power distance refers to the extent to which it is accepted that institutional and organizational power is distributed unequally. In Hofstede's (1980) study, power distance was strongly correlated with individualism–collectivism ($r = -.67$), an unsurprising finding because most collectivist societies involve more hierarchical structures ("vertical collectivism;" Triandis, 1995) whereas most individualist societies involve more egalitarian structures ("horizontal individualism"). For this reason, I would expect higher victimization rates in countries with higher power distance.

Overall Violence

It is possible that variation between nations in women's spousal victimization is more strongly related to variations in the general level of violence than to the position of women. In an analysis of 86 pre-industrial societies, mainly from the HRAFs, Masumara (1979) found moderate positive correlations between wife abuse and acts of violent crime, aggression, theft, and homicide. In my analysis, two measures were used as estimates of the overall level of violence, criminal assaults and homicide figures. Data for criminal assaults necessarily reflect differences in the criminal justice systems and arrest criteria in different nations, but in the absence of comparable survey data they are the only available source. Data from industrialized countries, mainly in the European Community, and from Eastern European and developing nations, were taken from three sources (Mayhew & van Dijk, 1997; Zvekic, 1998; Zvekic & del Frate, 1995), using the figures for 1991.

Homicides are less subject to reporting biases than are data for assaults, crime surveys, and other self-reports. There are three major sources of cross-national homicide data, INTERPOL, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization (WHO). Of these, the WHO data are regarded as the most reliable and valid, as they are taken from cause of death reports (LaFree, 2005). Homicide figures were, therefore, taken from two sets of WHO figures: first, those for 1956 to 2000 (LaFree, 2005), supplemented where such data were not available, by figures from an analysis of mainly European Union countries for 1999 to

2001, derived from statistical contacts in the countries concerned (Barclay & Tavares, 2003). A second source of homicide rates was derived from Lim, Bond, and Bond (2005), who provided figures for 56 countries obtained from WHO figures for 1992 to 1996, log transforming to accommodate a few nations with very high rates. In both analyses, composite values were used, because men's and women's homicide rates are highly correlated ($r = .94$; Bond, 2004).

Gender Empowerment in Relation to Sex Differences in Partner Violence

In this section, I assess the hypothesis that cross-national differences in sex differences in physical aggression between partners will be closely associated with gender empowerment, a measure of the relative emancipation of women in different nations. An extension of the social role analysis to cross-national sex differences (e.g., Eagly & Wood, 1999b) predicts that there will be more male relative to female victims as women's equality increases across nations. A second prediction, derived from the close association between gender empowerment and individualism, is that sex differences in physical aggression between partners will also be highly correlated with individual-

ism-collectivism: that is, it will be more in the male direction in collectivist nations. These hypotheses were tested in two cross-national samples, the primary one involving community-based studies, and the secondary one taken from an existing study of dating violence among university students.

Sex Differences in Physical Aggression Against Partners in Community Samples

I located studies of community samples from different nations that would enable effect sizes to be calculated for the sex difference in physical aggression against partners, using DSTAT (Johnson, 1989). These studies used the broad definitions of physical aggression that is characteristic of the Conflict Tactics Scale. Where there was more than one study available for that nation, the largest-sample community study that involved the Conflict Tactics Scale or similar measures was used.

The effect sizes for 16 nations are shown in Table 1, which also shows the two measures of the emancipation of women in the different nations, the GEM and the GDI. Figure 1 shows a scatter plot for the 1997 GEM figures and the d values for sex differences in partner aggression from the 16 studies listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender Empowerment (GEM), Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Sex Difference (d Value) in Physical Aggression Against Partners in Community Samples.

| Country | GEM | GDI | d Value | Sample | Coding | Reference |
|-------------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|--|
| PNG | .23 | .51 | .53 | 368/298 | 2112 | Ranck and Toft (1986) |
| India | .23 | .42 | .16 | 204/161 | 1411 | Kumagai and Straus (1983) |
| Jordan | .27(E) | .56(E) | .16 | 342/342 | 1412 | Araji and Carlson (2001) |
| Nigeria | .30(E) | .36 | .23 | 150/150 | 1211 | Efoghe (1989) ^a |
| Korea | .30 | .83 | .31 | 609/707 | 1322 | Kim and Cho (1992) |
| Honduras | .42 | .54 | .02 | 231/231 | 1412 | Steinmetz (1981) |
| Poland | .43 | .82 | .00 | 331/414 | 2112 | Falkowska (2002); Kirwil (personal communication) |
| Japan | .47 | .90 | .19 | 370/369 | 1411 | Kumagai and Straus (1983) |
| Israel | .48 | .87 | .05 | 127/127 | 1412 | Steinmetz (1981) |
| Ireland | .52 | .85 | -.04 | 122/122 | 1112 | McKeown, Haase, and Pratschke (2001) ^b |
| U.K. | .54 | .90 | -.08 | 894/971 | 1132 | Carrado et al. (1996) |
| Germany | .66 | .89 | .07 | 1902/2104 | 1342 | Wetzels, Greve, Mecklenburg, Bilsky, and Pfeiffer (1995), from Krahé, Beineck, and Möller (2004) |
| U.S. | .67 | .93 | -.02 | 6002/6002 | 1122 | Straus and Gelles (1988) |
| Canada | .70 | .94 | -.07 | 562/562 | 1222 | Brinkerhoff and Lupri (1988) ^c |
| Finland | .72 | .93 | -.06 | 44/44 | 1412 | Steinmetz (1981) |
| New Zealand | .72 | .92 | -.25 | 436/435 | 1122 | Magdol et al. (1997) |

Note: GEM figures are from 1997. Where more than one study was available, values were taken from the largest sample study that involved measures of physical aggression comparable with the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). Where possible, values are from composites of self and partner reports; where both values are available the mean of the two is used; where only partner or self or offspring reports are available these were used. Coding: 1 = measure of physical aggression (1 = any act of physical aggression, comparable to Conflict Tactics Scales; 2 = hit); 2 = source of data (1 = composite of self and partner; 2 = self, i.e. perpetrator; 3 = partner, i.e. recipient; 4 = adult offspring); 3 = time span (1 = current or most recent relationship; 2 = year; 3 = all; 4 = last 5 years); 4 = d value calculated from interval or nominal (proportion) data (1 = interval; 2 = nominal)

^aThe scale used in this study is unclear in terms of its validity and its applicability for partner aggression. It is included here in the absence of other data from an African country.

^bA sample of couples undergoing relationship counseling.

^cThese figures are likely to be inflated because they included threatened to hit or throw something.

^dA young sample, with a high proportion in dating relationships.

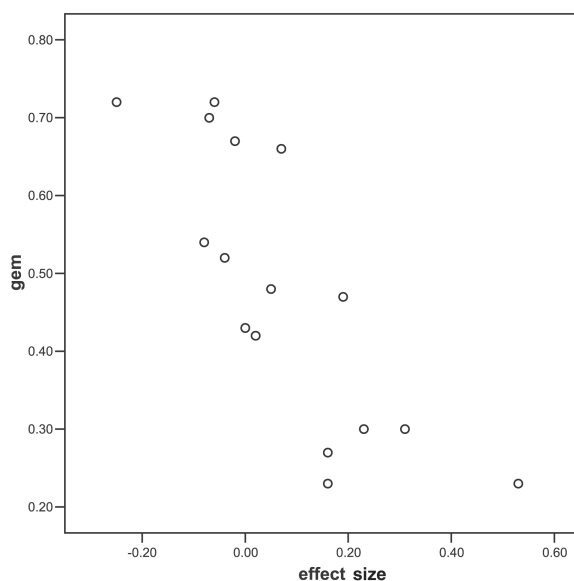


Figure 1. Cross-national association between Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) and effect size (d) for sex differences in partner physical aggression.

There is a high negative correlation ($r = -.79$; $p < .001$) between GEM and d values, and a smaller negative correlation between GDI and d values ($r = -.58$; $p = .02$). GEM and GDI are highly correlated ($r = .81$; $p < .001$). Thus, the higher the degree of gender empowerment in a country, the more in the female direction is the sex difference in physical aggression against partners. A lower value ($r = -.66$; $p = .02$; $N = 12$) was found for 2004 GEM figures (United Nations Development Programme, 2004).

To test the second hypothesis, that there would be an association between sex differences in physical aggression against a partner and individualism–collectivism, I used two sets of values: (a) those from Peabody (1999), which were taken from Hofstede (1991); (b) those supplied by Triandis and reported by Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995). National individualism–collectivism scores were highly correlated with the d values shown in Table 1 (Hofstede's measure: $r = -.87$; $p < .0001$; $N = 13$; Triandis' measure: $r = -.81$; $p < .0001$; $N = 14$), indicating effect sizes more in the female direction in more individualistic societies.

Because GEM and individualism–collectivism were very highly correlated (Hofstede's measure: $r = .80$; $p < .001$; $N = 13$; Triandis' measure: $r = .90$; $p < .0001$; $N = 14$), partial correlations were carried out for GEM and d values, with Hofstede's individualism–collectivism scores controlled: the value was $r = -.40$ ($N = 10$). Controlling for GEM scores produced partial correlations of $r = -.63$ between Hofstede's individualism–collectivism and d values. In practice, however, both variables were so closely associated in this sample of nations that they are best considered as one set of

variables that are associated with the pattern of sex differences.

Thus, both predictions were supported. The correlations between d values for the sex difference in partner violence and both gender empowerment and individualism–collectivism were both high, despite various measurement inaccuracies and inconsistencies associated with the data. Although the preferred effect size was that derived from a composite of self and partner reports (Archer, 2000a), in some cases values from self-reports or values from children reporting on their parents' behavior had to be used. The gender empowerment values for Jordan and Nigeria were not listed, and so values from comparable geographically close countries were used instead. Sample sizes and methods of selection also differed across these samples. Nevertheless, very high correlations were found with both cross-national indexes.

The high correlation between gender empowerment and individualism replicates a previous finding (Fischer & Manstead, 2000), indicating that individualism is closely connected with higher societal power for women, and collectivism with lower societal power for women. Both gender empowerment and individualism were closely associated with the sex difference in physical aggression against partners found in community studies from these cultures, so that the two variables appear to represent different aspects of the same cultural dimension.

Sex Differences in Physical Aggression Between Partners in Dating Samples

Straus and his colleagues (1996) collected data on the prevalence of physical aggression among students from 31 universities in 16 countries, using the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales. The International Dating Violence Research Consortium (IDVRC; Straus, 2003) is a study of dating relationships rather than longer-term partnerships. Table 4A of Straus (2003) shows the prevalence rates for both males and females, and a sex difference measure; female perpetration expressed as a percentage of male perpetration. I used these values to assess whether the pattern found for community samples occurred in these student samples. It clearly did not. Straus' sex difference measure was unrelated both to gender empowerment ($r = -.14$; $N = 14$) and individualism–collectivism ($r = -.12$; $N = 14$). Male perpetration was similarly unrelated to gender empowerment ($r = -.18$; $N = 14$) and individualism–collectivism ($r = .02$; $N = 14$). Although female perpetration showed a trend in the direction of more perpetration in lower gender empowerment countries, this was nonsignificant ($r = -.46$; $p = .102$; $N = 14$), and was in the opposite direction to that predicted from social role theory and the main analysis using community samples.

This discrepancy between the findings from university and community samples is consistent with a com-

ment made by Williams and Best (1990b) concerning the use of university samples for cross-national comparisons. They argued that although it is appropriate to use university students to report on attitudes within a culture, it is inappropriate to use students' reports of personal characteristics or behavior as representative of their culture. In a later section, I show that an attitudinal measure taken from the same dating violence study does produce meaningful associations with cross-national variables, thereby supporting Williams and Best's distinction. It is acknowledged that the present analysis provides no data that would enable further investigation of Williams and Best's hypothesis.

Is Gender Empowerment Related to Variations in Male or Female Physical Aggression?

The cross-national variations found in the analysis of community samples could be a result of variability in male or female physical aggression, or both. It was not possible to disaggregate the values for male and female perpetration from the studies in Table 1, because the measures used were not comparable from study to study.¹ However, there is separate evidence on male-against-female and female-against-male violence in an existing cross-cultural analysis using the HRAFs. In addition, there is some more limited comparative data available on levels of partner physical aggression by women and by men in two studies comparing a small number of nations or cultures. I evaluate these two sources of evidence, before considering some individual studies involving men's victimization in cultures with low emancipation of women.

Levinson's Analysis of Partner Violence

Levinson (1989) used the HRAFs to study partner violence in 90 small-scale and peasant societies. Although the main emphasis in this analysis was on physical aggression by husbands against wives, there were also figures for physical aggression by wives against husbands. This received little attention in Levinson's text, and (as far as I know) has not been commented on elsewhere. One variable Levinson used in his analysis was the participation of women in exclusively female work groups, which means that women are likely to have a support group, and often an independent means of wealth (Levinson, personal communication, September 5, 2002). In such societies, women are more likely to beat their husbands ($r_s = .36$; $p < .05$), and less likely to be beaten by their husbands ($r_s = -.30$; $p <$

$.05$)². In other words, when women work together, there is a more equal pattern of partner beating, which parallels what was found in the analysis of effect sizes in Table 1, but which also disaggregates the sex difference into associations with both wife and husband beating.

Further Evidence on Physical Aggression Against Partners by Men and Women

More limited comparative data on levels of partner physical aggression by women and by men are available from two studies comparing a small number of nations or cultures. Kumagai and Straus (1983) compared frequencies of physical aggression against partners, using Conflict Tactics Scale ratings by teenagers about their parents, in samples from the United States, Japan, and India. These countries have high, medium, and low gender empowerment respectively. Effect sizes were higher (in the male direction) in India and Japan than in the United States (Table 1). However, the means for both men and women in the U.S. samples were considerably higher than means for either men or women in the Japanese and Indian samples. American men were reported to use more physical aggression than Japanese ($d = .24$) and Indian men ($d = .42$). American women were reported to use more physical aggression than Japanese ($d = .48$) and Indian ($d = .56$) women. Although the researchers rightly note that there was more variation in the women's than the men's level of physical aggression, it is clear that both varied between the samples. Women's aggression did so in the order predicted from the gender empowerment indexes of the countries concerned, but men's was the reverse of that expected from the analysis of 16 nations in Table 1.

An analysis of the 1996 British Crime Survey (Mirrlees-Black, 1999) showed variations in partner aggression for four ethnic groups in Britain, designated as White (Anglo-Saxon), Black (Afro-Caribbean origin), Indian, and Pakistani-Bangladeshi. Figure 2 shows the proportions of men and women from each ethnic group who stated that a partner had assaulted them during the previous year. Although sample sizes are not entirely clear, those for the main White sample (4,958 men; 5,886 women; p. 93), and the additional one from the three ethnic groups (a total of 2,608; p. 92) were stated. From these, it was possible to calculate approximate sample sizes for each ethnic group, and then to calculate the separate victimization rates for the men and the women in the three groups. Among males there were significant differences in victimization rates from those in the majority White population, but no differences in

¹Although the values were therefore not suitable for comparing across countries, they were suitable for calculating within-study effect sizes for the first analysis.

²The correlation was taken from Table 4.1 of Levinson (1989), and its direction from page 58 and from Levinson (personal communication, September 5, 2002).

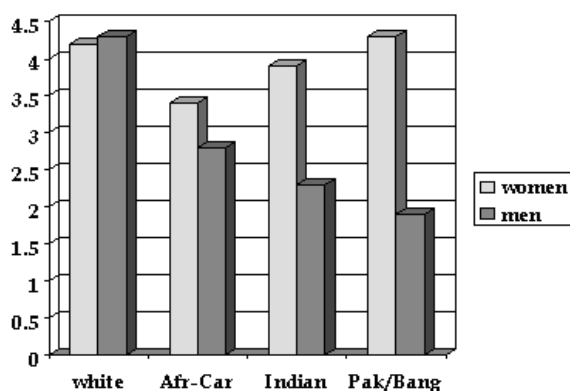


Figure 2. Victimization rates of men and women from four ethnic groups; Percentage reporting being assaulted by partner in last year (based on data from Mirrlees-Black, 1999; p. 29)

female victimization. Table 2 shows the log odds ratios and confidence intervals for each of these comparisons. Male victimization declined in the order of White, Black, Indian, and Pakistani-Bangladeshi, the odds ratios for comparisons with the Whites becoming larger in each case. There was little difference in female victimization rates between the four samples. Taken at face value, these patterns indicate variations in male victimization rates only. Consistent with earlier findings, this was greater in the group whose origin was a higher GEM nation (the United Kingdom), than those who originated from the low gender empowerment nations, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In both studies, differences in women's aggression or men's victimization provided the main source of variation. This contrasts with Levinson's (1989) finding that both higher male and lower female victimization were associated with increased women's empowerment.

Women's Physical Aggression Against Partners in Countries With Low Gender Empowerment

The analysis of sex differences in community samples from different nations and Levinson's (1989) HRAFs analysis clearly support the prediction that sex differences in physical aggression against partners is a function of women's economic and political emancipation. Levinson's analysis suggested that both lower levels of women's victimization and higher levels of men's victimization characterize societies with greater female emancipation. If this applied to the nations in Table 1, it would not rule out the possibility that women aggress physically (to some extent) against their male partners in nations where the sex difference for perpetration is very much in the male direction. In fact, there is evidence that husbands are frequently assaulted, even in nations where women's power is low

and hence the rate of male-against-female perpetration is high.

Ranck and Toft (1986) found high levels of male victimization and female perpetration in three samples from Papua New Guinea, although the even higher rates of female victimization and male perpetration meant that the effect size for the sex difference was high in the male direction (Table 1). In an urban low-income sample,³ the male victimization rate (based on whether their spouse had ever hit them) was 37%, and female perpetration was 24%. In an urban elite sample, the figures were 50% for male victimization, and 49% for female perpetration. Higher levels were found among two squatter settlements (Au, 1986), 58% for both male victimization and female perpetration. Figures for husbands' hitting wives were again higher (victims: 73%; perpetrators: 64%).

Araji and Carlson (2001) asked a sample of single Jordanian students whether various forms of family violence were viewed as a problem in their country. Although 70% viewed husbands harming their wives as very much a problem, almost 60% viewed wives physically harming their husbands as very much a problem. The authors commented that this was unexpected in view of the patriarchal nature of the society.⁴ Araji and Carlson offered two possible explanations: that their sample was reflecting recent changes that are a consequence of Jordan's ties with the United States or that husband abuse is more widespread in many societies than is believed. Although 29.5% of the students said they had witnessed physical aggression from their father against their mother, 21.6% said they had witnessed such aggression from their mother against their father, which is still a high level of female perpetration.

Consistent with reports of male victimization in patriarchal societies is the analysis by George (1994). He showed that in historical records from the early modern period in Britain and northern Europe there were many accounts of women beating their husbands, and that there were rituals designed to shame and ridicule the victims (see also George, 1999). George suggested that recognition of men as victims became suppressed from the mid-19th century onwards. Up until the second half of the 20th century, Britain had the characteristics of a present-day low gender empowerment nation, both in terms of women's earned income and their political and professional representation. It is therefore interesting to note that there are extensive reports of men's victimization even in such times. Other historical sources describe the widespread occurrence of men's violence towards women during the early modern period

³This was the sample shown in Table 1.

⁴Although there is no GEM listed for Jordan in the UN report, all the values for surrounding Arab countries are very low (United Nations Development Programme, 1997).

Table 2. Log Odds Ratios (ln ORs) and 95% Confidence Intervals (CIs) for Comparisons Between Victimization Rates (for Past Year) Between Three Ethnic Groups and the Main White Sample, from the 1996 British Crime Survey (Mirrlees-Black, 1999), Separately for the Two Sexes

| Sex | | Afro-Caribbean | Indian | Pakistani/Bangladeshi |
|-------|-------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Men | ln OR | .46 | .65 | .87 |
| | CI | -.14 / 1.05 | .00 / 1.29 | .16 / 1.59 |
| Women | ln OR | .20 | .07 | -.04 |
| | CI | -.33 / .74 | -.43 / .58 | -.53 / .44 |

in Europe, when the legal system supported a man's absolute power over his wife (Ruff, 2001).

From these studies, it is apparent that assaults by women on their male partners occur both in countries and historically when women have little freedom or emancipation. However, assaults by husbands on wives were even more common in such contexts. This raises the question of whether in such societies female perpetration is the consequence of self-defense. Although this was one of the reasons for women hitting their husbands in Ranck and Toft's (1986) New Guinea study, others, such as sexual jealousy and men not fulfilling their obligations, were more often mentioned. This study also found that most incidences of hitting spouses were infrequent, about once a year, for both sexes. This fits the pattern referred to as "common couple violence" identified in studies from the United States and the United Kingdom (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003a, 2003b; Johnson, 1995), rather than the one-sided wife beating that we might associate with patriarchal societies.

Cross-National Variations in Women's Victimization by Male Partners

The most extensive evidence on partner violence in different nations consists of victimization rates for women. This research can be used to further investigate whether the association between gender empowerment and sex differences, found in the first analysis, is reflected in a comparable relationship between gender empowerment and women's victimization. Levinson's (1989) analysis of the HRAFs found that both wife beating and husband beating were significantly correlated with a measure of female emancipation. The two other limited comparisons found that it was mainly physical aggression by women against their spouses that varied. The next analysis provides evidence on women's victimization for a wider sample of nations than was available for the analysis of sex differences. In addition, attitudes toward gender roles and men's violence against women were assessed as possible mediators between the structural position of women and their victimization rates. Dimensions of culture, such as individualism–collectivism (associated with sex differences in the first study), power distance (related to individualism–collectivism), and masculinity–femininity (as a

characteristic of the whole society rather than men or women), were also assessed in relation to victimization, as was the general level of violence in each nation, as indicated by violent crime and homicide statistics.

Gender Empowerment and Women's Victimization by Male Partners

The World Health Report on Violence and Health (2002) listed prevalence rates for female victimization by a male partner from studies in different nations published between 1982 and 1999 (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999). This source, along with additional studies, forms the basis of Table 3. Where there have been subsequent sources that involved larger samples and Conflict Tactics Scale-type measures, these are used rather than older figures. Following the format of the WHO report, the percentage of women who were victims of a male partner's physical aggression are listed for the previous year, for a current relationship, and for adult lifetime experience. I chose these three time periods in view of doubts about the validity of the most widely used measure, the adult lifetime (Moffitt et al., 2001). Those countries for which both the GEM and the GDI were available are shown in Table 3.

There were significant negative correlations between the three victimization values and GEM for 1997 (Table 3; $r = -.63, -.69, \text{ and } -.48$ for current partner, the previous year, and adult lifetime respectively), indicating that higher gender empowerment is associated with lower prevalence rates for assaults on women by partners. The correlation was lowest for the more numerically numerous lifetime figures, consistent with the view that these are the least reliable (Moffitt et al., 2001). Figure 3 shows the scatter plot for the 1997 GEM figures and lifetime victimization rates from the 40 studies listed in Table 3. The correlations with more recent GEM values (for 2004) were similar to those for 1997 (Table 3). GEM and GDI were highly correlated (Table 3) but GDI was less closely associated with victimization rates than was GEM. These analyses indicate a strong negative association across a wide range of nations between women's power relative to men's and their spousal victimization rates. It is therefore clear that variation across nations in women's victimization is a strong contributor to the association be-

Table 3. Gender Empowerment (GEM), Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), and Frequency (Percent) of Partner Violence Against Women in Community Samples From Different Nations, Over Three Time Periods.

| Country | GEM | GDI | Year | Current | Ever | Source | Measure ^a |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|----------------------|
| Pakistan | .18 | .39 | | | 34 | 9 | 2 |
| India | .23 | .42 | 12.5 | 37.3 | 40 | 1,2 | 4 |
| Papua New Guinea | .23 | .51 | | | 61.5 | 1,2 | 2 |
| Turkey | .25 | .74 | | | 58 | 1 | 4 |
| Bangladesh | .27 | .34 | 19 | 42 | 47 | 1 | 2 |
| Egypt | .28 | .56 | 16 | | 34 | 1,3 | 5,2 |
| South Korea | .30 | .83 | 38 | 42.2 | 42.2 | 1,2 | 7 |
| Zambia | .30 | .36 | 26.5 | 40 | 48.4 | 2,3 | 2 |
| Sri Lanka | .31 | .69 | | | 60 | 2 | 2 |
| Kuwait | .33 | .77 | | | 33 | 20 | 6 |
| Paraguay | .34 | .65 | | | 10 | 1 | 4 |
| Bolivia | .35 | .56 | 17 | | | 1 | 4 |
| Haiti | .35 | .33 | 21 | | 28.8 | 3 | 1 |
| Cambodia | .36 ^e | .56 ^e | 15.4 | | 17.5 | 3 | 1 |
| Chile | .38 | .79 | 23 | 26 | 60 | 2 | 5 |
| Brazil | .38 | .73 | | | 30 ^f | 8 | 6 |
| Peru | .41 | .66 | 31 | | 42 | 1,3 | 4,1 |
| Uruguay | .41 | .84 | 10 | | | 1 | 4 |
| Dominican Republic | .42 | .66 | 11 | | 22.3 | 3 | 1 |
| Honduras | .42 | .54 | | 39 ^e | | 19 | 1 |
| Malaysia | .42 | .78 | 39 | | | 2 | 2 |
| Thailand | .42 | .81 | | 20 ^f | 18.8 | 17,1 | 4,1 |
| El Salvador | .43 | .56 | | 57 | 57 | 18 | 2 |
| Poland | .43 | .82 | | 17 | | 10 | 3 |
| Zimbabwe | .43 | .50 | | | 17 | 1 | 4 |
| France | .45 | .93 | 2.5 | | | 12 | 9 |
| Philippines | .46 | .65 | | | 18 | 1 | 4 |
| Columbia | .46 | .81 | | 19 | 44.1 | 1,2,3 | 5,1 |
| Nicaragua | .46 ^g | .52 | 27 | | 52 | 22 | 1 |
| Japan | .47 | .90 | | | 58.7 | 2,4 | 5 |
| Mexico | .47 | .77 | 15 | | 22 | 1 | 4 |
| Russia | .47 ^c | .79 ^c | 18 ^d | 18 ^d | | 16 | 10 |
| China | .48 | .62 | 21 | | 38 | 6 | 1 |
| Guatemala | .48 | .51 | | | 36 | 2 | 5 |
| Israel | .48 | .87 | | 22 ^e | 19 | 1 | |
| Costa Rica | .49 | .83 | | | 54 | 2 | 5 |
| Lithuania | .51 ^c | .84 ^c | | | 33 | 21 | 6 |
| Ireland | .52 | .85 | | 15 | | 15 | 5 |
| South Africa | .53 | .68 | 17 | | 21.8 | 1 | 4 |
| United Kingdom | .54 | .90 | 12 | | 30 | 1 | 4 |
| Belgium | .59 | .89 | | | 25 | 2 | 6 |
| Barbados | .60 | .89 | | | 30 | 1,2 | 7 |
| Switzerland | .64 | .87 | 6 | | 21 | 1 | 4 |

(continued)

tween sex differences and gender empowerment as found in the first study.

Attitudes Toward the Role of Women and Women's Victimization by Male Partners

The first of the two measures of attitudes to women's roles, the SRIS (Kalin & Tilby, 1978) was, as expected, highly positively correlated with GEM for the 11 nations where both measures were available (Table 4). These correlations were higher for women's than men's ideology scale ratings. For eight nations,

there were high negative correlations between SRIS scores and women's lifetime victimization (Table 4), which were slightly higher for women's than men's scores. Although in the same direction, values for the previous year were lower, but were available for only six nations. These findings indicate that more modern (as opposed to traditional) gender role attitudes are associated with lower rates of lifetime victimization of women by their male partners.

Table 4 also shows the values for the two scales of the Ambivalent Sexim Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Consistent with previous findings, Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism were strongly corre-

Table 3. (Continued)

| Country | GEM | GDI | Year | Current | Ever | Source | Measure ^a |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|------------------|---------|-------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Australia | .66 | .92 | 6 | 8 | 42 | 14,1,1 | 1,4,1 |
| The Netherlands | .66 | .90 | | | 21 | 1,2 | 4 |
| Germany | .66 | .89 | | | 23 | 11 | 1 |
| United States | .67 | .93 | 1.3 | | 22 | 1 | 4 |
| Canada | .70 | .94 | 3 | | 28 | 1,2 | 5 |
| New Zealand | .72 | .92 | | | 20.1 | 2 | 3,5 |
| Finland | .72 | .93 | 3.4 ^b | | 12.6 ^b | 7 | 8 |
| Sweden | .78 | .93 | 3 | 7 | | 13 | 1 |
| Norway | .80 | .93 | | | 18 | 1 | 1 |
| Correlation with GEM (1997) | | | -.63** | -.69* | -.48* | | |
| N | | | 25 | 15 | 40 | | |
| Correlation with GDI (1997) | | | -.47* | -.73* | -.23 | | |
| N | | | 25 | 15 | 40 | | |
| Correlation with GEM (2004) | | | -.67* | -.75* | -.45* | | |
| N | | | 18 | 13 | 29 | | |

Note: Data are from victims' reports except where indicated. Sources for partner violence figures: 1 = World Health Organization (2002), from Heise et al. (1999); 2 = Heise, Pitanguy, and Germain (1994); 3 = Kishor and Johnson (2004); 4 = Yoshihama and Sorenson (1994); 5 = El-Zanty, Hussein, Shawky, Way, and Kishor (1995); 6 = Xu, Zhu, O'Campo, Koenig, Mock, and Campbell (2005); 7 = Heiskanen and Piispa (1998); 8 = Venturi (2001), cited in Barker and Acosta (2002); 9 = Fikree and Bhatti (1999); 10 = Kirwil (personal communication, October 21, 2004; based on Falkowska (2002); the figures are from a nation-wide random sample of adult females undertaken in 1993; similar figures were reported for 1996); 11 = Krahé, Bieneck, and Moller (2004) from BMFSFJ (2004); 12 = Enquête Nationale sur les Violences Enver les Femmes (2001); 13 = Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand, and Kalliokoski (2002); 14 = Mouzos and Makkai (2004); 15 = Smyth (1996), derived from unpublished study by Bradley et al. (1994); 16 = Butovskaya (personal communication, November 20, 2004; based on data from the internet site: newsru.com/criminal); 17 = Hoffman, Demo, and Edwards (1994); 18 = Cañas (1990), cited in Heise (1993); 19 = Steinmetz (1981); 20 = United Nations (1989), derived from unpublished study by Al-Awadi at University of Kuwait; 21 = Seager (1997); 22 = Ellsberg, Peña, Herrera, Liljestrand, and Winkvist (1999); Ellsberg, Caldera, Herrera, Winkvist, and Kullgren (1999).

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

^aMeasure: 1 = comparable to any Conflict Tactics Scales item; 2 = beaten; 3 = hit; 4 = assaulted; 5 = physical abuse; 6 = violence; 7 = battered; 8 = slap; 9 = physical aggression ("agressions physiques"); 10 = regular physical aggression.

^bComposites that were available in this report included items that were not physical aggression: therefore the most commonly reported act of physical aggression ("slapped") was used; the figures for beating or kicking were 1.8 for the last year and 5.8 for ever.

^cNo GEM or GDI values were available for 1997; instead those for 2004 were used instead.

^dFigures are for regularly receiving physical aggression from their husbands, and are therefore likely to be an underestimate.

^eFrequencies were obtained from university students reporting on their parents.

^fFrequencies were obtained from perpetrators' reports.

^gNo GEM values were available for either 1997 or 2004, so the mean for the two surrounding countries, Costa Rica and Honduras, were used.

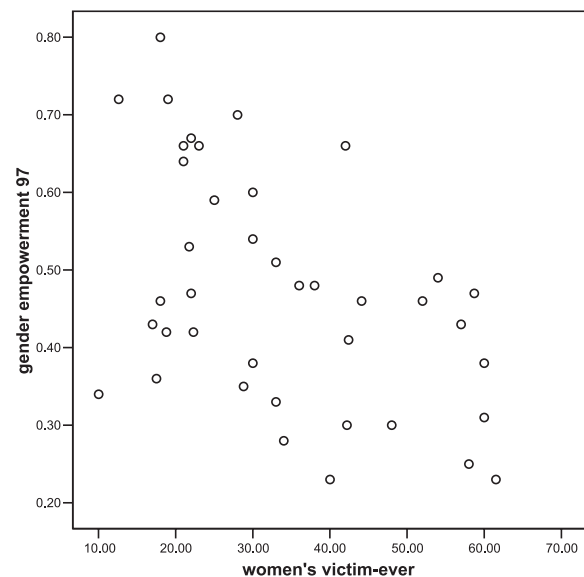


Figure 3. Cross-national association between Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) and lifetime female victimization rates for partner physical aggression in 40 studies (Table 2).

lated with gender empowerment. These correlations were considerably higher than those for 19 nations reported by Glick et al. (2000), and for 16 nations by Glick et al. (2004). I used values for only those nations with GEM values for 1997 or 2002, and one or more of the victimization measures, so that the numbers are smaller than in these previous studies. Women showed stronger correlations than men, and those for Hostile Sexism were higher than those for Benevolent Sexism. Table 4 also shows that, although based on only a few nations, there were high correlations between Hostile Sexism and women's victimization rates for a year and lifetime. The strength of these correlations is remarkable considering that Glick et al. (2000, 2004) used mainly student samples from the countries concerned, whereas the victimization rates were collected from community samples by different researchers at different times. These correlations were also considerably higher for women's than for men's Hostile Sexism. The pattern is less clear for Benevolent Sexism: there is a high correlation for the

Table 4. Correlations Between Gender Empowerment (GEM), Women’s Victimization by Partners Across Three Time Periods, and National-Level Variables

| Variable | | GEM1997 | GEM2004 | Year | Current | Ever |
|---------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| SRIS (men) | <i>r</i> | .71** | .77** | -.28 | | -.73* |
| | <i>N</i> | 11 | 10 | 6 | | 8 |
| SRIS (women) | <i>r</i> | .83** | .86*** | -.53 | | -.80* |
| | <i>N</i> | 11 | 10 | 6 | | 8 |
| HS (men) | <i>r</i> | -.68* | -.70* | .53 | | .53 |
| | <i>N</i> | 12 | 12 | 5 | | 9 |
| HS (women) | <i>r</i> | -.88*** | -.83*** | .88* | | .69* |
| | <i>N</i> | 12 | 12 | 5 | | 9 |
| BS (men) | <i>r</i> | -.53 | -.48 | .74 | | .27 |
| | <i>N</i> | 12 | 12 | 5 | | 9 |
| BS (women) | <i>r</i> | -.64* | -.62* | .91* | | .49 |
| | <i>N</i> | 12 | 12 | 5 | | 9 |
| AWS (men) | <i>r</i> | -.58* | -.36 | .39 | .53 | .58* |
| | <i>N</i> | 13 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| AHS (women) | <i>r</i> | -.11 | .17 | -.19 | .23 | .23 |
| | <i>N</i> | 13 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| IC (Triandis) | <i>r</i> | .75*** | .77*** | -.73*** | -.70* | -.04* |
| | <i>N</i> | 35 | 30 | 18 | 11 | 25 |
| IC (Hofstede) | <i>r</i> | .69*** | .79*** | -.80*** | -.64* | -.50** |
| | <i>N</i> | 37 | 31 | 16 | 11 | 27 |
| MF | <i>r</i> | -.16 | -.15 | -.04 | .02 | .02 |
| | <i>N</i> | 37 | 31 | 16 | 11 | 27 |
| PD | <i>r</i> | -.61*** | -.62** | .65** | .58 | .24 |
| | <i>N</i> | 37 | 31 | 16 | 11 | 27 |
| Assault | <i>r</i> | -.02 | .53* | -.21 | -.95* | .21 |
| | <i>N</i> | 25 | 19 | 12 | 4 | 20 |
| Homicide (1) | <i>r</i> | -.26 | -.35 | .51 | .19 | .04 |
| | <i>N</i> | 29 | 26 | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| Homicide (2) | <i>r</i> | -.32 | -.45* | .10 | .01 | .05 |
| | <i>N</i> | 29 | 26 | 13 | 9 | 20 |

Note. Homicide (1) are figures from the WHO for the a longer period 1956–2000 (LaFree, 2005), supplemented by data from police figures for 1999–2001 (Barclay & Tavares, 2003). Homicide (2) are log (to base 10) transformed figures from the WHO for years 1992–1996, used by Lim et al. (2005). SRIS = Sex Role Ideology Scale (Kalin & Tilby, 1978); HS = Hostile Sexism Subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Scale (Glick & Fiske, 1996), values derived from Glick et al. (2004; Fig. 3); BS = Hostile Sexism Subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Scale (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Values derived from Glick et al. (2004; Fig. 4); AWS = Approval of a husband slapping his wife (Straus, 2003); AHS = Approval of a wife slapping her husband (Straus, 2003); AWS-p: Partial correlations for approval of a husband slapping his wife, with approval of a wife slapping her husband controlled; IC (Triandis) = Individualism-collectivism (Triandis’ ratings, from Diener et al., 1995); IC (Hofstede) = Individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 1991; Peabody, 1999); MF = masculinity-femininity (Hofstede, 1991; Peabody, 1999); PD = power distance (Hofstede, 1991; Peabody, 1999).

†*p* ≤ .1. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

past year, but this is based on only five nations, and the values for lifetime victimization are considerably lower (Table 4).

Approval of Slapping a Partner and Women’s Victimization by Male Partners

The measure of approval of physical aggression is sensitive to low degrees of approval, and involves one of the least harmful acts (slapping). Table 4 shows that the proportion of men approving⁵ of a husband slapping his wife is strongly negatively correlated with

gender empowerment across 12 nations, indicating more approval in countries where women have less power. There is, therefore, a clear association between women’s relative power and attitudes to male-against-female violence that parallels the strong association with hostile sexism. Although there were only six nations for which both measures were available, there was a high positive correlation between approval of a man slapping his wife and men’s HS (*r* = -.75; *p* = .09). Table 4 also shows a value of *r* = .58 (*p* = .06; *N* = 11) between approval of a man slapping his wife and lifetime prevalence rates for women’s victimization. The values for the other two time periods are comparable but for smaller samples. Paralleling the close association between gender empowerment and IC, both IC measures showed moderate (but

⁵More precisely “not disapproving.”

nonsignificant) correlations with approval of a husband slapping his wife (Hofstede's IC: $r = -.44$; $N = 13$; Triandis' IC: $r = -.49$; $p = .09$; $N = 13$). There were no significant correlations between approval of a man slapping his wife and national measures of violence (assault: $r = -.37$; $N = 9$; homicide [1]: $r = -.025$; $N = 11$; homicide [2]: $r = -.17$; $N = 12$).

Men's approval of a husband slapping his wife was positively correlated with women's approval of a wife slapping her husband ($r = .64$; $p = .02$; $N = 13$), thus indicating some cross-national consistency in general approval of slapping irrespective of sex of perpetrator. However, unlike men's approval of a husband slapping his wife, women's approval of a wife slapping her husband showed little or no association with prevalence rates for men's violence against women (Table 4). It showed no association with either gender empowerment ($r = .11$; $N = 13$) or with individualism–collectivism (Hofstede's individualism–collectivism: $r = .04$; $N = 13$; Triandis' individualism–collectivism: $r = .001$; $N = 13$). There were also no significant correlations with national-level measures of violence (assault: $r = -.30$; $N = 9$; homicide [1]: $r = -.39$; $N = 11$; homicide [2]: $r = -.36$; $N = 12$).

These analyses indicate that men's approval of a husband striking his wife is greater in countries where women's power is lowest, but that there is no comparable relationship between women's approval of a wife slapping her husband and women's power. The most obvious explanation is an attitude–behavior link, with the stronger disapproval found in high gender empowerment countries inhibiting men's use of violence against their partners. However, because these are correlations, it is possible (but unlikely) that the attitudes stem from justifications of existing partner violence that is caused by a third variable, such as general tolerance of violence. This is unlikely in view of the absence of a positive association between national-level measures of violence and approval of slapping a spouse. However, there was a positive association between both approval measures, indicating a general approval of partner violence, although this was unrelated to the overall level of violence in that nation. I also note that there was little indication that approval of a wife slapping her husband was greater in high GEM nations.

Dimensions of Culture and Women's Victimization by Male Partners

Individualism–collectivism was highly correlated with GEM in the first analysis, and also with sex differences in physical aggression against partners. Table 4 shows the correlations between both GEM and victimization measures with: (a) individualism–collectivism values from Hofstede and Triandis; (b) masculinity–femininity; and (c) power distance.

GEM was strongly and positively correlated with individualism, although the values were slightly smaller than with the sex differences in the first analysis. As expected from this close association, collectivism showed moderate to high significant correlations with victimization rates, for all except Triandis' individualism–collectivism measure and lifetime victimization (Table 4). Masculinity–femininity was unrelated to GEM scores (Table 4), and showed no significant correlations with measures of women's victimization. Power distance was negatively related to GEM (Table 4), as it was to a similar extent to individualism–collectivism ($r = -.63$; $p < .0001$; $N = 32$), a finding consistent with the value of $r = -.70$ found by Hofstede (1980). Power distance was significantly correlated with one of the three victimization measures (previous year) but not with the other two (Table 4).

Collectivism is therefore the strongest predictor of women's victimization, and the degree to which a culture as a whole endorses stereotypically masculine or feminine values (masculinity–femininity) is unrelated to victimization levels. Acceptance of unequal power in societal institutions (power distance) is negatively correlated with gender empowerment, indicating that general acceptance of inequality does tend to be associated lower power for women. As Triandis (1995) noted, collectivist societies tend to have more hierarchical structures than the more egalitarian individualist ones. It was unclear whether power distance was consistently associated with women's victimization.

Entering all three cultural dimensions and gender empowerment into a multiple regression, with the lifetime victimization values as the criterion, produced an overall adjusted R^2 of .40 ($F [4, 22] = 5.41$; $p = .003$), with gender empowerment ($\beta = -.71$; $t = -2.87$, $p = .009$) and power distance ($\beta = -.58$; $t = -2.39$, $p = .026$) being the significant predictors.

National Violence Rates and Women's Victimization by Male Partners

There were signs of low negative correlations between homicide rates and GEM values from 1997 and 2004, although only one was statistically significant (Table 4). Thus there was a trend for homicide rates to be higher when women's power was lower. Hofstede's individualism–collectivism was more closely correlated (again negatively) with both sets of homicide figures (1: $r = -.40$; $p = .042$; $N = 26$; 2: $r = -.46$; $p = .022$; $N = 25$), which tended to be higher in collectivist societies, although not as closely related as in a previous study (Bond, 2004). Triandis' individualism–collectivism measure was more strongly associated with the first set of homicide figures (1: $r = -.49$; $p = .01$; $N = 27$) than with the second (1: $r = -.27$; $p = .17$; $N = 28$).

There was little sign of an association between women's victimization from a partner and the overall assault or homicide rates in that nation, although the yearly rate did show a moderate but nonsignificant correlation with homicide over 12 countries. Assault rates were positively associated with the first set of homicide figures, which were from a longer time-period ($r = .69$; $p < .001$, $N = 19$) despite being derived from very different sources using different methods. The second data set, from 1992–96, showed only a low and nonsignificant correlation with assault rates ($r = .16$, $N = 19$), although the two sets of homicide figures were highly correlated with one another ($r = .83$; $p < .001$, $N = 19$).

It is difficult to go beyond zero-order correlations with this data-set, but partial correlations between gender empowerment and women's lifetime victimization with homicide controlled produced high values, similar to the zero-order correlations⁶ in both cases (1: $r = -.74$; $p < .001$; $N = 17$; 2: $r = -.71$; $p < .001$; $N = 17$).

Discussion

Cross-Cultural Variation in Partner Violence and Women's Empowerment

The first analysis of sex differences in physical aggression against partners supported predictions from social role theory that effect sizes would show a negative correlation with gender empowerment. Women's victimization relative to men's was higher in countries where women had less power. This pattern was found for data from community samples in 16 nations. However, it was not replicated in data from a cross-national study of dating violence in 14 nations (Straus, 2003), a discrepancy that may be due to cross-national data on the behavior of university students being unrepresentative of those nations (Williams & Best, 1990b). The findings from the first analysis were supported by Levinson's (1989) analysis of the Standard Cross-cultural Sample, in which he found that increased power of women outside the home was related to lower levels of women's victimization and greater perpetration of partner violence.

The first analysis of cross-national variation in sex differences was unable to separate male and female perpetration. However, Levinson's (1989) analysis provided separate figures for male and female perpetration, and showed that both were associated with women's power. In contrast, the data from two small-sample cross-cultural comparisons indicated that the association between sex differences in partner aggression and national levels of women's power arose from variations in male rather than female victimiza-

tion. In the second main study, an extensive analysis of national figures for women's victimization showed that it was inversely related to national-level gender empowerment, for three time periods, the previous year, current relationship, and throughout the adult life. The values of $r = -.63$, $-.69$, and $-.48$ showed considerable association between women's victimization and their lack of power, despite the inconsistent data collection methods used in the studies.

The finding that husbands' physical aggression against wives is inversely related to women's societal power is also supported by Straus' (1994) analysis of 50 U.S. states, although the association was smaller in this case. It is also consistent with two recent analyses by Vandello and Cohen (2005). The first was a cross-national study of 54 nations,⁷ similar to my Study 2, but using a different measure of the status of women from the present one (GEM); the second was, like Straus' study, an analysis of 50 US states, although using spousal homicide rates rather than Conflict Tactics Scale scores. In the first study, women's lifetime victimization increased as the status of women decreased ($r = -.52$); in the second, women's spousal homicide rates increased as the gender equality in the states decreased ($r = -.59$). There is, therefore, converging evidence that across nations, states, and cultures, women's empowerment is associated with their lower victimization rates from their partners.

These analyses of women's victimization clearly support the link between patriarchal values and physical aggression by husbands that has formed the basis of explanations offered by feminist researchers (R. E. Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Walker, 1989; Yodanis, 2004). The link between women's victimization and gender attitude measures, although based on only a few nations, also showed an association between traditional gender attitudes and women's victimization, which was especially marked for hostile sexist attitudes. Although attitudes to wife beating were based on a restricted measure available for only a few nations, they also showed a positive association between women's empowerment and disapproval of a husband striking his wife. As suggested earlier,

⁷Vandello and Cohen (2005) used only one measure of women's victimization, lifetime prevalence rates. These were checked against the ones used in my study. In most cases there was agreement, although a few discrepancies arose from different values being used when multiple studies were involved. Also, some of the values Vandello and Cohen used were placed in one of the other categories used in my analysis. When my analyses were recalculated using Vandello and Cohen's figures, most values were similar to those found for my victimization figures: for example, for GEM, $r = -.66$ ($N = 29$; $p < .001$); for GEM 2004, $r = -.67$ ($N = 21$; $p < .001$); for Hofstede's individualism–collectivism, $r = -.61$ ($N = 23$; $p = .002$); for PD, $r = -.43$ ($N = 23$; $p < .04$); for MF, $r = -.02$ ($N = 22$; NS). The low correlation with Triandis' individualism–collectivism measure was also replicated ($r = -.29$; $N = 20$; NS).

⁶These were $r = -.72$ and $-.68$ ($p < .001$).

these widespread beliefs are likely to act as psychological mediators between structural equality and the likelihood of women's victimization by their partners.

Cross-Cultural Variation in Partner Violence and Other National-Level Variables

Because a previous study found the GEM to be highly correlated with individualism across nations (Fischer & Manstead, 2000), two measures of individualism–collectivism were used in each analysis. In both cases, high correlations were found with GEM, replicating the previous finding, and also the high negative correlation between collectivism and a national level status of women index reported in Vandello and Cohen's (2005) study. In most cases, collectivism was also strongly correlated with victimization rates for each country. This is again consistent with a correlation of $r = .56$ between lifetime prevalence and collectivism found by Vandello and Cohen, and a slightly lower value ($r = .47$) for a measure of collectivism applied to U.S. states. These findings indicate that individualism is closely associated cross-nationally (and across states) with women's empowerment, and that both are associated with lower victimization rates. Vandello and Cohen suggest that the emphasis on loyalty and self-sacrifice to the goals of the extended family in collectivist societies extends to obligations for a woman to accept her place in life, even if this involves physical violence from her husband. Women are also freer to leave an abusive relationship in individualist societies. However, the explanation is likely to be more complex. For example, existing collectivist societies embrace more traditional values, and these values include the unquestioning acceptance of religious and other historically ancient belief-systems that involve women's subservience.

A second national-level dimension of culture, power distance, was associated with both GEM and individualism–collectivism, although it was less clearly related to victimization rates than were these two variables. Power distance refers to the extent that unequal power structures are accepted. It may be correlated with collectivism because most existing collectivist cultures are hierarchical in structure, involving a strong belief in acceptance of authority (Triandis, 1995), which will typically be male authority.

A third dimension of culture, masculinity–femininity, captures the extent to which cultures value stereotypically masculine features, such as achievement and assertiveness, rather than feminine ones, such as modesty and caring for the weak. Masculinity–femininity was unrelated to women's victimization, a finding that is consistent with the lack of association between masculinity–femininity and the

extent of gender stereotyping in different nations (Williams & Best, 1982, 1990a). It would seem, therefore, that whether the culture as a whole is viewed as masculine or feminine is unrelated to the extent to which men and women within these cultures are differentiated in terms of these attributes.

Although homicide rates tended to be higher in collectivist societies, where women's empowerment was lower, they were largely unrelated to women's victimization. The same applied to cross-national assault statistics. Controlling for homicide rates also had minimal impact on the association between gender empowerment and women's victimization. The associations between GEM, individualism–collectivism, and women's victimization are therefore unlikely to be a consequence of higher rates of violent crime in these societies.

A Social Role Explanation of Cross-Cultural Differences in Partner Violence

Although the analysis of women's victimization provided the most extensive data sets, where evidence on male victimization was available, it generally showed a complementary picture. First, across 16 nations, sex differences in partner violence were associated (in the direction of higher female perpetration) with individualism and gender empowerment. Second, in the pre-industrial societies represented by the HRAFs, husband beating was positively associated with women's independent work outside the home. Third, in two other small-scale studies, men's victimization by their wives was associated with more elevated levels of women's empowerment. This evidence cannot be accounted for by explanations conceived only in terms of male perpetrators and female victims, be they feminist (e.g., R. E. Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Walker, 1989) or evolutionary (e.g., Wilson & Daly, 1993). Such explanations consider the impact of either patriarchal values or mate-guarding motives, but only concerning men's violence against women. A wider explanation is required for all the findings presented in this article. The social role theory explanation (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Wood & Eagly, 2002), introduced earlier in this article, explains all the cross-national and cross-cultural data.

The social role perspective has a further advantage over explanations that only address women's victimization: it includes mediators between structural variables, such as gender empowerment, and the individual's actions. In the second analysis described previously possible mediators were explored, such as attitudes to the role and status of women and specific attitudes to a man's right to strike his wife. Although the data sets were small, cross-national variations in both types of attitude were related to the variation in

women's victimization. We can view these attitudes as the individual-level manifestations of societal gender empowerment, representing belief-systems that are the main causal agents of cross-national differences in women's levels of victimization. An alternative interpretation, that the attitudes provide rationalizations for men's generally higher rates of violence in these countries, is rendered unlikely by the lack of association between women's victimization and general indexes of violent crime.

The measure of attitudes to partner physical aggression used in this study was the degree of disapproval of slapping a wife or a husband under any circumstances. Although this measure had the advantage of providing consistent data for 13 nations, it was limited to a single act of lesser severity than is typically covered by terms such as *wife beating* or *violence*. Nevertheless, it showed a correlation of $r = .58$ with women's lifetime victimization rates, and the same value (in the opposite direction) with gender empowerment. Studies using more extensive measures of approval of violence against women typically concern only a few nations, usually those where this is high. For example, in Egypt, a country with low gender empowerment (.28), 86% of a representative sample of women aged 15 and 49 agreed that a man was justified in beating his wife in certain circumstances (El-Zanty et al., 1995). There were also high levels of agreement that a man is justified in beating his wife if she refuses sex (70%), or answers him back (69%). These findings provide a stark contrast with those from New Zealand, a country with high GEM values (.72), where the approval rates for the same questions among a sample of men were 1%. Such figures illustrate the enormous cultural divide between low and high GEM nations.

Figures for approval of wife-beating in other low GEM nations are not as high as those reported for Egyptian women, but nevertheless much higher than would be expected in a western nation (World Health Organization, 2002). For example, the approval rates for beating a wife who refuses sex were 33% and 43% for men and women in Ghana, 28% for male Palestinians, 5% to 10% for female Nicaraguans (GEM = .46), and 5% for men from Singapore. For approval if a wife answers her husband back, they were 59% among high school girls and 63% among boys from Papua New Guinea (GEM = .23), 57% among male Palestinians and between 10% and 50% in different regions of India (GEM = .23).

Although these figures are too few to analyze quantitatively, they support the current findings of a correlation between approving slapping, gender empowerment, and women's victimization; countries where women's emancipation is low tended to show considerable approval of wife beating. This relatively clear picture is complicated by findings that acceptance of husbands hitting wives was accompanied by accep-

tance of wives hitting husbands. The correlation between approval of a husband slapping his wife and of a wife slapping her husband was .64 over 13 nations. In two urban samples from Papua New Guinea (Ranck & Toft, 1986), there were very similar rates of acceptance of both forms of partner violence (around 40% in men and lower for women). However, most studies of attitudes to partner violence do not consider wives' physical aggression.

Traditional gender attitudes and approval of wife beating in certain circumstances do not exist in isolation from the historical and cultural traditions in which they are embedded. The major religions legitimize the power of men over women as God-given, and there are strong historical traditions indicating approval of men beating their wives—within certain limits—as a way of controlling their behavior. There is a well-known excerpt from the Koran that instructs a man how to treat his wife when her behavior is deemed unacceptable, including the limited use of corporal punishment as a last resort. The influential 12th-century English legal scholar Gratian stated that “A man may chastise his wife and beat her for her own correction” (Ruff, 2001, p.133). Like the Koran, he also stated that such chastisement should be moderate. Both legal and religious texts are open to different interpretations, and as Ruff (2001) commented, “there was a tremendous potential for ‘moderate correction’ to escalate into a fatality” (p. 134). In addition, the belief that women are expected to be subservient to, and should be controlled by, their husbands lays the foundation for treating women like children who may from time to time need disciplining, by force if necessary.

Running counter to attitudes encouraging wife beating, there is also a strong norm found throughout history (Felson, 2002) of disapproval and the prevention of men's physical aggression against women. These so-called chivalrous attitudes seem to have arisen from a need to ensure the safety of unattached women in societies where there was no effective rule of law. Where behavior in private has become the concern of the state, as in modern western nations, this has extended to seeking to protect women from violence by family members and male partners. It is likely therefore that attitudes countering men's aggression against their wives form part of general attitudes towards men hitting women. In this way they form part of what Glick and Fiske (1996) termed *benevolent sexism*: one item on their scale measuring such attitudes is “Women should be cherished and protected by men.” Chivalrous attitudes can also explain the different pattern of sex differences found at younger ages for physical aggression against members of the same and the opposite sex (Archer, 2004). Sex differences are strongly in the male direction for same-sex opponents, whereas for the opposite-sex, girls show more physical aggression against boys than boys show against girls: this is

largely accounted for by the very low levels of male-against-female aggression. It is reasonable to assume that this arises (in part) from strong attitudes discouraging male-against-female aggression from an early age.

These considerations tell us why women are likely to be victimized to a lesser extent in high GEM societies. But they do not explain why women are also more likely to be perpetrators of physical aggression in the very same societies. There is evidence that women in the United States have become more agentic (i.e., stereotypically masculine) since the mid-1960s (e.g., Feingold, 1994; Twenge, 1997b). Because agentic traits include aggression, women may have become generally more prone to using direct aggression. This explanation is again consistent with the social role analysis.

However, this explanation may not be the whole story. For example, there is a reduced likelihood of retaliation in societies where a man hitting a woman is viewed as a serious assault. Fiebert and Gonzalez (1997) found that a common reason female American college students gave for their physical aggression against partners was the anticipated lack of retaliation. There is also a common view that a woman assaulting a man is trivial, so that men who complain about it lack the desirable masculine characteristic of being able to suffer a minor injury in silence. This attitude operates alongside the belief that a man who allows his wife to dominate him is lacking in masculinity and deserves to be ridiculed (George, 1994).

To summarize, the cross-national and cultural differences in both the relative difference between men's and women's partner aggression, and the level of men's physical aggression against their partners, appear to be strongly influenced by the predominant beliefs of each society. If there is a general belief that any form of physical aggression by men against their partners is unacceptable, and this is accompanied by sanctions, this will lower the frequency of men's physical aggression. It will also increase the frequency of women's physical aggression against partners, because fewer men will hit back when their partner has hit them. If on the other hand, there is a general belief that hitting women is an acceptable way of controlling them, even if there are limits to what is acceptable, physical aggression by men against women will be encouraged. Women will not be in a good position to retaliate, through lack of societal power, the legitimizing of their husband's actions, and their lesser size and strength. It is also likely that in such societies, women's physical aggression against a partner would be seen as less acceptable than it is in a western society, because it undermines patriarchal values, and if publicized would lower the man's status in the eyes of other men.

Some Final Implications

One important feature of this analysis is that most of the research on partner violence has been carried out in western nations characterized by an individualist outlook and relatively high empowerment of women. These societies are not typical of all nations, which are predominantly collectivist in cultural orientation (Triandis, 1995), and have relatively low empowerment of women. Thus the findings of high levels of men's victimization from countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand are not typical of the majority of collectivist, low gender empowerment, nations. Therefore the debate over the plight of male victims is a mainly western concern, and the current emphasis on women's victimization in lower gender empowerment nations is appropriate in terms of policy issues, although not necessarily in terms of providing a broad and coherent explanation of partner violence.

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