# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN INTIMATE PARTNER RECIDIVISM

## A 5-Year Follow-Up

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Research shows that women perpetrate intimate partner violence (IPV) and that their pattern of offending differs from that of men. Using arrest and court records from a large Midwestern city, this study examines 596 cases of IPV, 15.5% of which were perpetrated by women. Separate logistic regression models for men and women suggest there are both similarities and differences in factors that predict recidivism. Among both women and men, non-Whites as compared to Whites and drug users as compared to nondrug users are significantly more likely to recidivate. Additionally, for men, a history of probation or parole predicts recidivism, whereas for women, severity of the assault and having ended the relationship with their victim predicts recidivism. Policy and theoretical implications are discussed.

***Keywords:*** intimate partner violence; female recidivism; IPV recidivism; gender differences

Knowing what predicts intimate partner violence (IPV) recidivism is important because an estimated 3.8 women and 1.3 men per 1,000 are victims of partner violence annually (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Furthermore, this violence can become lethal, with an estimated 1,181 women and 329 men being the victims of intimate partner homicides every year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). In addition to the emotional and physical toll on victims, the cost of IPV is estimated to exceed $5.8 billion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003). It is precisely because of the potentially fatal and costly nature of this crime that criminal justice response to IPV has changed.

During the 1980s, the combination of civil lawsuits against police departments that failed to respond in domestic violence cases, the findings of Minneapolis experiments (Sherman & Berk, 1984), and demands for police action on the part of victim advocates resulted in changes in arrest policies in domestic violence cases. Many jurisdictions adopted a "mandatory" or a "preferred" arrest policy when answering calls regarding intimate partner disputes. These new policies mandated police officers to make an arrest in domestic violence cases whenever probable cause existed. One outcome of these new pro-arrest policies is an increase in the number of women arrested for domestic violence

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(Chesney-Lind, 2002; Frye, Haviland, & Rajah, 2007; Miller, 2001). Although a number of studies have examined factors that affect recidivism among male intimate partner offenders (Garner, Gagan, & Maxwell, 1995; Gross, Cramer, Forte, & Gordon, 2000; Kingsnorth, 2006; Schmidt & Sherman, 1993; Sherman & Berk, 1984), few studies have examined predictors of recidivism among women offenders (but cf. Renauer & Henning, 2006). The current study examines what factors affect IPV recidivism in both men and women using almost 600 cases selected from attorney files in the year 2000.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Two theoretical frameworks have emerged to explain IPV: the family violence and the feminist perspective. According to the family violence perspective, there is "gender symmetry" in spousal assaults, with women equally likely to perpetrate violence as men (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Researchers adhering to this perspective typically use large, random community samples and the Conflict Tactics Scale to measure domestic violence. Meta-analyses of such research find relatively little difference in physical aggression between the sexes (Archer, 2000, 2002). Feminists and other researchers, however, critique the family violence perspective for an overreliance on community-based samples that do not adequately represent intimate partner cases found in the criminal justice system. They contend that IPV is "asymmetric," with men more likely to inflict such violence on their female partners. Using data from shelters, hospitals, and police reports, these researchers argue that IPV is gendered, with as much as 90% to 95% of perpetrators being male (R. P. Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992).

Johnson (2006) combines these disparate research findings to argue that both perspectives are correct but that they are describing different abuse configurations. According to Johnson, there are four types of intimate partner abuse: (a) situational couple violence, (b) intimate terrorism, (c) violent resistance, and (d) mutual violent control. In the case of situational couple violence, the abuse is not part of an escalating pattern of dominance and control but rather stems from isolated incidents arising from a situational confrontation. Women are just as likely as men to perpetrate this type of abuse. According to Johnson, situational couple violence is the type of violence captured when examining partner violence in large community surveys and with instruments such as the Conflict Tactic Scale used by family violence researchers.

The remaining three types are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system because of the severity and pattern of abuse. In the case of intimate terrorists, the violence is part of an escalating pattern of dominance and control that can culminate in lethality. Men most often commit this type of violence. Because of the extremely violent nature of this type of abuse, it is frequently documented in criminal justice records, hospitals, or described by victims in shelters, consistent with the feminist perspective. The two remaining types of intimate partner abuse occur less frequently but are important to the understanding of abuse committed by women. Indeed, the first of the two, violent resistance, more frequently comprises women. In this type of abuse, the offender does not instigate the original act of violence in the relationship. Rather, the offender is violent in response to the partner's control and abuse. The final group, mutual violent control, occurs when both individuals in the partnership are dominant and controlling toward each other, the violence is

part of a pattern that increases over time, and perpetrators are equally likely to be men or women (Johnson, 2006).

Because of the potentially injurious nature of the violence perpetrated, intimate terrorist, violent resistant, and mutual violent control are the configurations most likely subject to criminal justice intervention and subsequent recidivism. Research suggests that when women are arrested for IPV, they are most likely part of a violent resistant configuration (Dasgupta, 1999; Hamberger, 1997; Miller, 2001). For example, in Hamberger's (1997) study of 41 women arrested for battering, 73% indicated the reason for their assault was self-defense/protection or in retaliation for previous assault or emotional abuse. If arrested women are using violence in self-protection or retaliation, they may recidivate for different reasons than their male counterparts who primarily use violence to dominate and control their victims. Moreover, if women are being arrested primarily for self-defensive violence, it suggests that pro-arrest policies may not be having the intended effect of reducing primary aggressors' violent behavior.

## BACKGROUND ON IPV POLICIES

Prior to the imposition of pro-arrest policies, many police officers did not arrest offenders in intimate partner cases because they considered it a "private" matter. This practice began to change in the mid 1970s when victims' advocates began to demand police action in these cases. Their efforts were bolstered in the 1980s by several civil liability cases (e.g., *Thurman v. the City of Torrington et al.*, 1984), wherein police departments were sued for failure to provide adequate protection in spite of victims' repeated calls for assistance.

These two historic factors, coupled with the results of the Sherman and Berk (1984) study on the effects of arrest on domestic violence recidivism provided the catalyst for change in arrest policies. In their original study, Sherman and Berk examined the effects of three police responses to domestic violence calls. For each domestic violence call, police were randomly assigned to respond in one of the following ways: (a) provide advice and mediation, (b) order the offender off the premises for 8 hours, or (c) arrest and hold the offender in the local jail for several hours. In a 6-month follow-up, the authors found reduced rates of recidivism among those arrested. Sherman and Berk's study was replicated in five coordinated field experiments, known collectively as the Spouse Assault Replication Program (SARP). Even though several of these replication studies failed to find beneficial effects of arrest (Garner et al., 1995; Schmidt & Sherman, 1993), most states implemented mandatory or preferred arrest policies with domestic violence suspects (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003).

An outgrowth of these pro-arrest policies has been "dual arrest" practices found in many jurisdictions. That is, when responding officers cannot determine who the primary aggressor is, there is a tendency to arrest both members of the couple. Research suggests that women are more likely affected by dual arrest policies (Henning & Feder, 2004; Martin, 1997; Melton & Belknap, 2003). For example, Melton and Belknap (2003) found that female offenders were significantly more likely to be arrested as part of a dual arrest than were their male counterparts. Consequently, an unintended outcome of these mandatory and pro-arrest policies has been the increased arrest of women for domestic violence (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Frye et al., 2007; Miller, 2001). For example, data from Minnesota indicate that women's arrest comprised 13% of arrestees the first year and 25% of arrestees

the second year following the implementation of pro-arrest policies (Saunders, 1995). Similar increases were found in California, where the percentage of women arrested for IPV went from 6% in 1988 to 16.5% in 1998 (Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis, 1999). Although several studies have investigated IPV recidivism more generally (Kingsnorth, 2006; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2005), fewer studies have examined recidivism specifically focusing on women who commit this crime (but see Renauer & Henning, 2006). Although there is some overlap in recidivism predictors, researchers have identified important differences across gender, which are discussed below.

#### PREDICTORS OF IPV

Beginning with the landmark study by Sherman and Berk (1984), considerable research has examined IPV recidivism (Kingsnorth, 2006; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2005). Researchers have found mixed results with regard to the effects of criminal justice intervention. For example, with regard to the effects of arrest, some researchers found no beneficial effects (Hirschel, Hutchison, & Dean, 1992), whereas others found that arrest only had a deterrent effect among those with a stake in conformity (Sherman, Schmidt, & Rogan, 1992). Maxwell, Garner, and Fagan's (2002) reanalysis of the SARP found that arrest reduced future violence. However, the decrease was not always statistically significant and was modest when compared to other variables, such as offenders' prior criminal record.

Although fewer studies have investigated the effects of other criminal justice interventions (Kingsnorth, 2006; Ventura & Davis, 2005; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2005), here, too, the results have been mixed. For example, Ventura and Davis (2005), in their 1-year follow-up of 519 cases, found that court conviction reduced the likelihood of recidivism. On the other hand, Kingsnorth (2006) found no effect for prosecutorial decisions or judicial impositions of jail or treatment among the 872 cases in his 18-month follow-up. Yet, both Ventura and Davis (2005) and Kingsnorth (2006) did find that characteristics about the offender, such as prior criminal history, were predictive of recidivism.

Offender characteristics also significantly predicted recidivism in a large study examining court disposition and recidivism completed by Wooldredge and Thistlethwaite (2005). In this study, the authors examined seven court dispositions (e.g., acquitted at trial, sent to a batterer intervention program, sent to jail) to investigate their effect on the prevalence, incidence, and time to domestic violence rearrest, while controlling for a number of offender characteristics in their sample of 3,662 cases. Although results demonstrated that not filing charges increased the risk of rearrest and that probation with or without parole decreased the likelihood of rearrest, many of the offender characteristics also predicted recidivism. Specifically, younger males with prior conviction who were living with their partner at the time of initial arrest were more likely to recidivate according to all three measures (prevalence, incidence, and time to arrest). These findings demonstrate the importance of offender characteristics on reoffending.

The presence of gender effects in two of the studies discussed above (Ventura & Davis, 2005; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2005) suggests that it may be fruitful to examine predictors of recidivism separately for men and women. Unfortunately, the authors of these studies did not include any gender interaction terms in their analysis; thus, it is impossible to know whether different factors predicted recidivism for men and women. Gender differences were reported, however, in one of the few studies to compare IPV recidivism for men and women

(Renauer & Henning, 2006). In their study, Renauer and Henning compared male and female IPV suspects from two locations, Memphis and Portland. In both locations, men were more likely to reappear as suspects, whereas women were more likely to be listed as victims in future police reports.

Although there is a paucity of research examining gender differences in IPV recidivism, a few studies have focused on gender differences in IPV more generally (Hamberger, 2005; Henning & Feder, 2004; Melton & Belknap, 2003). Results from these studies suggest that different factors may contribute to women's abusive behavior. For example, in their qualitative and quantitative analysis of 2,670 cases of IPV from pretrial services, police, and prosecutor information, Melton and Belknap (2003) found that male offenders were significantly more likely to make threats and to use violent actions (e.g., strangling), whereas women were more likely to use other actions (e.g., throwing objects) and to use a weapon. With regard to qualitative differences, men's actions were deemed more serious and to cause greater fear for victims than were women's actions. Finally, as compared to men, women indicated the use of violence was more frequently due to self-defensive measures.

Self-defensive violence was a recurrent theme in the 52 women arrestees interviewed in Hamberger's (1997) study. In this study, self-defense was the most common reason given for the assault. Moreover, 55% of the women indicated that their male partner initiated assaults more than half of the time, and 51% reported that their partners originated the abusive behavior in their relationship.

Gender differences were also documented in a study of 6,704 men and women arrested for domestic violence in Tennessee (Henning & Feder, 2004). Female arrestees were more likely than males to be arrested as part of a dual arrest, were more likely to have been charged with a felony, and were more likely to have used a weapon. For their part, male arrestees were more likely to engage in serious violence, were more likely to have made homicidal threats, and were more likely to have children in the home during the incident than were female arrestees. In addition, men were more likely than women to have a prior arrest for violent offenses, nonviolent offenses, and domestic violence offenses as well as prior probation and parole violations, substance abuse charges, and gun ownership. Thus, men and women arrested for domestic violence appear to have different motivations for their crimes. Yet few studies have examined whether these different motivations for abuse also translate into different reasons for, rates of, and predictors of recidivism.

In sum, both family violence and feminist IPV perspectives suggest that women do sometimes abuse their partners. In addition, current pro-arrest policies have resulted in an increase in the number of women arrested for this crime. Consistent with Johnson's (2006) violent resistant typology, research suggests that women arrested for IPV are violent for different reasons than their male partners (Hamberger, 2005; Henning & Feder, 2004; Melton & Belknap, 2003). However, little research has examined whether these different motivations also result in different patterns of recidivism between men and women. The current study helps to fill this gap in knowledge by examining demographics, offense characteristics, and offender criminal justice involvement as predictors of recidivism in a 5-year follow-up among 596 male and female IPV offenders. The study investigates predictors separately for men and women to determine if the same factors predict recidivism for both genders.

## METHOD

### DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected as part of a larger evaluation project for the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) in Douglas County, Nebraska. The total population of cases was about 3,000. Thus, to ensure sufficient power even allowing for missing information, approximately 50 cases were selected randomly for each month by coding every fifth one processed in the year 2000, resulting in a sample of 607 cases. It is important to note that the month associated with the case represents the month and year in which the case was processed through the domestic violence unit in the County Attorney's Office and not the month and year of the actual domestic violence incident. Therefore, the follow-up period, from 2001 to 2005, likely represents a 5-year time frame since the original assault in all cases. The County Attorney DV unit paper files provided a rich source of data, as they contained police Uniform Crime Report forms, DV supplementary reports, criminal history information, and bond/sentencing forms as well as other documents (e.g., Protection From Abuse orders). Same-sex couples, other relationships, and missing relational data resulted in the exclusion of 11 cases from the original sample, bringing the final sample down to 596 (80 women and 516 men). We had to reduce the sample size in the multivariate analyses, however, due to missing data on other predictor variables.

### VARIABLES

We dichotomized IPV recidivism, with 0 indicating the offender had not recidivated during the 5-year follow-up period (2001-2005) and 1 indicating the offender had recidivated in that time. Recidivism included any type of crime as long as the offender and victim were involved in some intimate relationship and the police and county attorney's office flagged the event as a domestic violence incident. This recidivism measure reflects the fact that domestic violence can involve behavior other than assault and homicide, such as property crimes and violations of protection orders.

We created several predictor variables representing offender demographics, offense characteristics, and offender prior criminal justice involvement. With regard to demographics, offenders' age was measured in years according to their age at the time of case processing in the year 2000. Offenders' race was coded 0 if the offender was White and 1 if the offender belonged to any other racial group. We coded information about the victim–offender relationship using eight categories: spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, dating/engaged, former dating/engaged, same sex, and other. These categories were then dichotomized to indicate whether the victim and offender had ended their relationship, labeled "former" (coded 1) or if the relationship was intact (coded 0). Offenders' employment was dichotomized and coded 1 if the offender was currently unemployed and 0 if the offender had some form of employment. The severity of the offense was measured using four variables indicating whether the offender had threatened harm or death, created a need for medical attention, tried to strangle the victim, or if the incident involved a weapon. These four variables were recoded into a single variable called "severe" (coded 1) if the offense was deemed severe based on the presence of any of these four variables and coded 0 if not. The presence of children at the time of the assault was also measured dichotomously, with 1 indicating the presence of children during the incident and 0 if not.

In addition to offense characteristics, we also examined a number of offender criminal justice involvement variables. Whether the offender's file contained evidence of driving under the influence (DUI) or other alcohol problems was included and coded 1 if such evidence was found and 0 if not. Offender's use of drugs was coded 1 if past drug use was found and 0 if no such evidence was found in the offender's file. Finally, we also measured whether the offender had a history of probation or parole. History of probation or parole was dichotomized, with a 1 indicating the offender had such a history and 0 indicating no such history was found.

### ANALYSIS

We compared men and women on all variables using *t* test and chi-square tests as appropriate. Because men and women differed significantly on most variables and because the dependent variable was dichotomous, we used hierarchical logistic regression to predict recidivism separately for men and women.

For each model, variables were entered in the same order. The first model contained demographic variables, including age, race, and unemployment. The second model comprised offense characteristic variables, including whether a child was present during the assault, whether the relationship between the victim and offender had previously been terminated (formers), and whether the incident was classified as severe (i.e., presence of threat, need for medical attention, use of strangulation, or use of a weapon). The final model contained information regarding the offender's prior criminal justice involvement, such as whether or not the offender had a history of an alcohol problem (e.g., DUI), whether or not the offender had a history of a drug problem, and whether or not the offender had previously been on probation or parole. Although we were interested in the effects of dual arrest on recidivism, we were not able to include this variable in the multivariate analyses because none of the women arrested as part of a dual arrest policy recidivated.

## RESULTS

### GENDER COMPARISON

We used a *t* test for age and chi-square tests for all remaining variables to investigate differences between men and women in the sample. As seen in Table 1, there were gender differences for several of the variables, most commonly among offender characteristics. The only demographic variable that differentiated men and women was race or ethnic background, where men were significantly more likely than women to be a member of racial or ethnic group other than White.

With regard to the offense characteristics, men were significantly more likely than women to have committed the offense in the presence of children (31% versus 19%) and to have used severe violence (i.e., threatened death, caused injury requiring medical attention, used strangulation, or used a weapon) in the abuse incident (37% versus 23%). With regard to offender characteristics, men were significantly more likely to have evidence of alcohol problems, to have evidence of drug problems, and to have a history of probation or parole

**TABLE 1: Mean Comparison of Men and Women**

| *Variables* | *Males* (N = *516*) | *Females* (N = *80*) | t *or* $\chi^2$ *Values* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | 37.48 | 35.38 | 1.82 |
| Race (non-White) | 56% | 44% | 4.33* |
| Unemployment (yes) | 34% | 33% | 0.03 |
| Children present (yes) | 31% | 19% | 4.66* |
| Former relationship (yes) | 40% | 39% | 0.05 |
| Severe (yes) | 37% | 23% | 6.10* |
| Alcohol (yes) | 34% | 13% | 13.93*** |
| Drug (yes) | 49% | 23% | 17.94*** |
| History of probation or parole (yes) | 59% | 31% | 21.12*** |
| Dual arrest (yes) | 3% | 11% | 12.45*** |
| Recidivate (yes) | 48% | 19% | 22.58*** |

*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

as compared to women. Men were also significantly more likely to recidivate than were women (48% versus 19%). The only variable for which men had lower rates as compared to women was dual arrest. Specifically, 3% of men compared to 11 % of women were part of a dual arrest, and this difference was statistically significant.

#### MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

We computed models predicting recidivism in the 5-year follow-up separately for men and women. In all models, demographic characteristics were entered first, followed by offense characteristics and by offender criminal justice involvement. As seen in Table 2, among men, in the first model, recidivism was significantly predicted by race and unemployment, with non-Whites being 1.80 times and those who are unemployed being 1.49 times more likely to recidivate.

Although this first model was significant, it only resulted in chance (50%) classification of those who recidivated. The addition of offense characteristics did not significantly add to the predictive power of the model. In fact, the addition of these variables resulted in a slight decrease in the correct classification of recidivism to 49%. The coefficient for race and unemployment, however, maintained significance.

The third model introduced offenders' criminal justice involvement, which significantly contributed to the predictive power of the model. Offenders whose files indicated evidence of drug use and a history of probation or parole were significantly more likely to recidivate. Specifically, those with previous drug use compared to those without evidence of prior drug use were 1.71 times more likely to recidivate, and those with a history of probation and parole were 1.66 times more likely to recidivate than were those without such histories. Even when controlling for all variables in the model, offenders' race still significantly predicted recidivism. Although unemployment was no longer significant ($p = .07$), the relationship was in the same direction, and the coefficient only dropped by .024 from the previous model, suggesting unemployment may still play an important role in men's recidivism. The final model accounted for approximately 9% of the Cox and Snell pseudo variance and resulted in the correct classification of recidivists 54% of the time.

Table 3 presents recidivism models computed for women. Among women, compared to Whites, those of other racial or ethnic membership were more likely to recidivate. Only this

**TABLE 2: Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of Recidivism for Men (*N* = 453)**

| *Variables* | b | SE | Wald | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model 1 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | –0.018 | 0.010 | 3.065 | 0.982 |
| Race | 0.590 | 0.198 | 8.867 | 1.803** |
| Unemployment | 0.402 | 0.206 | 3.791 | 1.494* |
| Constant | 0.072 | 0.426 | 0.029 | 1.075 |
| Model 2 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | –0.017 | 0.010 | 2.790 | 0.983 |
| Race | 0.587 | 0.199 | 8.739 | 1.799** |
| Unemployment | 0.407 | 0.208 | 3.833 | 1.503* |
| Offense characteristics | | | | |
| Children present | –0.163 | 0.212 | 0.594 | 0.849 |
| Former relationship | 0.071 | 0.212 | 0.127 | 1.073 |
| Severe | –0.246 | 0.202 | 1.485 | 0.782 |
| Constant | 0.155 | 0.448 | 0.120 | 1.168 |
| Model 3 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | –0.016 | 0.011 | 2.004 | 0.984 |
| Race | 0.485 | 0.207 | 5.492 | 1.624* |
| Unemployment | 0.383 | 0.213 | 3.231 | 1.467 |
| Offense characteristics | | | | |
| Children present | –0.244 | 0.217 | 1.265 | 0.783 |
| Former relationship | 0.028 | 0.203 | 0.020 | 1.029 |
| Severe | –0.274 | 0.207 | 1.749 | 0.761 |
| Offender criminal justice involvement | | | | |
| Alcohol | 0.054 | 0.246 | 0.048 | 1.055 |
| Drug | 0.537 | 0.212 | 6.407 | 1.710* |
| History of probation or parole | 0.505 | 0.238 | 4.511 | 1.657* |
| Constant | –0.355 | 0.483 | 0.539 | 0.701 |

*Note*. Model 1: $\chi^2 = 19.87$***; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .04$; correct classification of yes = 50%. Model 2: $\chi^2 = 2.23$; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .05$; correct classification of yes = 49%. Model 3: $\chi^2 = 19.44$**; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .09$; correct classification of yes = 54%. *b* = coefficient from the logistic regression; *SE* = standard error.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

demographic variable predicted recidivism and contributed to the prediction of the model. However, the model did not improve the correct classification of recidivists, which was 0% and explained only 11% of the variance. Next, we added offense characteristics, and they made a significant contribution to the predictive power of the model, explaining about 27% of the variance. For women, those who previously ended their relationships with their victims (formers) were more likely to recidivate than those who were still involved with their victims at the time of the original assault. In addition, severity of the assault also predicted recidivism, with those who committed more severe assaults being more likely to recidivate.

In the final model, offenders' criminal justice involvement variables were added and they provided significant predictive power. Similar to men, women offenders whose files contained evidence of drug use were significantly more likely to recidivate than those without a history of drug use. This was the only criminal justice variable that significantly predicted recidivism. The addition of these variables did not diminish the effects of race, formers, or severity, which all stayed significant. The final model accounted for approximately 36% of the variance and resulted in the correct classification of recidivists 61% of the time.

**TABLE 3: Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of Recidivism for Women ($N = 70$)**

| *Variables* | b | SE | Wald | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model 1 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | 0.001 | 0.033 | 0.001 | 1.001 |
| Race | 1.933 | 0.724 | 7.137 | 6.909** |
| Unemployment | –0.295 | 0.712 | 0.171 | 0.745 |
| Constant | –2.492 | 1.290 | 3.736 | 0.083 |
| Model 2 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | –0.026 | 0.038 | 0.467 | 0.974 |
| Race | 1.932 | 0.835 | 5.357 | 6.901* |
| Unemployment | 0.115 | 0.828 | 0.019 | 1.122 |
| Offense characteristics | | | | |
| Children present | –0.731 | 1.188 | 0.378 | 0.482 |
| Former relationship | 1.969 | 0.830 | 5.625 | 7.162* |
| Severe | 1.846 | 0.803 | 5.287 | 6.336* |
| Constant | –3.156 | 1.526 | 4.279 | 0.043 |
| Model 3 | | | | |
| Demographics | | | | |
| Age | –0.066 | 0.053 | 1.534 | 0.936 |
| Race | 2.587 | 1.150 | 5.063 | 13.290* |
| Unemployment | 0.045 | 1.051 | 0.002 | 1.046 |
| Offense characteristics | | | | |
| Children present | –0.038 | 1.420 | 0.001 | 0.963 |
| Former relationship | 3.151 | 1.237 | 6.494 | 23.364* |
| Severe | 2.103 | 1.000 | 4.423 | 8.187* |
| Offender criminal justice involvement | | | | |
| Alcohol | 1.009 | 1.661 | 0.369 | 2.744 |
| Drug | 2.534 | 1.184 | 4.583 | 12.609* |
| History of probation or parole | 0.528 | 1.393 | 0.144 | 1.695 |
| Constant | –4.217 | 2.275 | 3.434 | 0.015 |

*Note*. Model 1: $\chi^2 = 8.54^*$; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .11$; correct classification of yes = 0%. Model 2: $\chi^2 = 13.52^*$; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .27$; correct classification of yes = 46%. Model 3: $\chi^2 = 9.28^*$; Cox & Snell $R^2 = .36$; correct classification of yes = 61%. *b* = coefficient from the logistic regression; *SE* = standard error.
$^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$.

Comparing across gender models using the Wald statistics to examine the effect size of the different predictors for men and women, it can be seen that for men, evidence of drug problems has the largest effect (Wald = 6.41) followed by race (5.49), history of probation and parole (4.51), and unemployment (Wald = 3.23). The order of predictor importance is slightly different for women, with prior termination of the relationship (formers) being the most impactful (Wald = 6.49), followed by race (5.06), drug use (4.58), and severity of the original assault (4.42). Thus, even variables that overlap in their prediction of recidivism for men and women (i.e., race and drugs) have somewhat different effects.

## DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates the importance of looking at men and women separately when examining IPV recidivism. Although there was some overlap (i.e., offenders' racial

membership and drug use), different factors predicted men's and women's recidivism. In fact, a number of gender differences emerged beginning from the original offender files to their rates and predictors of recidivism. First, most offenders (84.5%) were men, with only 15.5% being women. This finding is consistent with the feminist perspective and with prior research using criminal justice data that suggests that IPV is gendered in nature, with men more likely to commit this crime (R. P. Dobash et al., 1992; Henning & Feder, 2004; Melton & Belknap, 2003). Second, proportionally more women were arrested as part of a dual arrest than were men. This gender difference is also consistent with prior research that finds that women are more likely to be affected by this practice (Henning & Feder, 2004; Melton & Belknap, 2003). Although more women were arrested as part of a dual arrest, it is also noteworthy that none of these women recidivated (as compared to 41.7% of male dual arrestees who recidivated). Third, women were less likely to recidivate than men in general (19% vs. 48%). Men's recidivism rate of 48% is a bit higher than that found in other studies (e.g., Maxwell et al. [2002] found that 23.1% of offenders' recidivated according to official police records). However, this elevated rate may be due to the longer follow-up period of 5 years used in the current study.

In addition to the rates of IPV and recidivism, other gender differences were also found according to the predictive models. Among men, race, unemployment, drug use, and history of probation or parole played an important role in recidivism. With regard to the effects of race, other studies have also found racial differences in recidivism (Kingsnorth, 2006; Maxwell et al., 2002). However, these racial effects may be an artifact of bias in the criminal justice system. For example, in Maxwell et al.'s (2002) reanalysis of the SARP data, they found that men of color were more likely to recidivate according to official arrest information, whereas White men were more likely to recidivate according to victim interview data. Other studies have found racial differences in victim reporting IPV to the police (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Rennison & Welchans, 2000). For example, using the National Crime Victimization Survey data from 1993 to 1998, Rennison and Welchans (2000) found reports of IPV to the police varied by race, with 67% of African American and 65% of Hispanic, as compared to 50% of White women contacting the police. Thus, it is unclear whether the racial effect found here is due to police officers' greater willingness to arrest minority offenders or whether it is due to minority victims' greater likelihood to call the police when they experience IPV. Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer this question with the current data, but it is notable that racial effects were found for both men and women.

Men's unemployment significantly predicted recidivism in two of the three models and approached significance in the final model, when offenders' criminal justice history was added. This suggests that employment is important to men's reoffending. This result is consistent with prior research that finds that men are more likely to recidivate when they are unemployed than when they are employed (Maxwell et al., 2002).

Although evidence of alcohol problems (e.g., DUI) did not significantly predict recidivism, evidence of drug use did. Prior research has found that those with a history of intoxicant use, either drug or alcohol, are more likely to recidivate than those without such histories (Maxwell et al., 2002). Finally, among men, having a history of probation or parole increased the risk of recidivism. Prior criminal justice involvement has been found to predict IPV recidivism (Hirschel et al., 1992; Kingsnorth, 2006). However, as previously discussed, results have not always been consistent, even accounting for the different ways this construct has been measured (e.g., arrest versus court conviction).

Among women, race, drug use, having previously terminated the relationship with victims (formers), and the severity of the original assault predicted recidivism. With regard to the effects of race, as discussed above, it is unclear whether this finding is due to real differences in IPV recidivism or due to differences in police or victims response to IPV. Similar to men and consistent with prior research, drug use increased recidivism among women (Stuart, Moore, Gordon, Ramsey, & Kahler, 2006). This finding is not surprising, as research consistently finds that substance abuse and dependency are especially problematic for female offenders of all types (Benda, 2005; Covington & Bloom, 2006; Koons, Burrow, Morash, & Bynum, 1997).

The fact that women no longer being involved with the offender (i.e., formers) predicted their recidivism is consistent with prior research on male batterers (R. E. Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Medina-Ariza, 2007; Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, & Campbell, 2005), which finds that relationship termination is a risk factor for increased violence. Indeed, in their study comparing lethal versus nonlethal violence against women, R. E. Dobash et al. (2007) found that separation was predictive of men who killed their partners. These results suggest that the threat of separation may cause abusive partners to escalate the level of violence to try to convince partners to stay in the relationship or risk being killed consistent with the adage "if they can't have them, then no one can." Interestingly, this variable was not significant for men in our sample. Furthermore, $z$ tests (Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 1998; not shown) indicate that the regression coefficients for men and women were significantly different ($z = 2.49$, $p < .05$). Combined, these results suggest that relationship dissolution may result in more extreme forms of violence, and it may be that only the most extreme forms of abuse by women result in criminal justice intervention.

In addition to former relationships, the effects of severity of the original assault also predicted recidivism among women in this study. This finding illustrates the importance of looking at men and women separately when predicting recidivism. Among women, severity of the original assault significantly increases the risk of recidivism, whereas among men, severity decreases recidivism, albeit the relationship between severity and recidivism was not significant for men (i.e., for women $b = 2.103$, $p = .035$, whereas for men $b = -0.274$, $p = .186$). The $z$ test (Paternoster et al., 1998; not shown) of the gender difference in the regression coefficients for severity was significant ($z = 2.33$, $p < .05$), suggesting severity has different effects on men's and women's recidivism. Although assault severity is a common characteristic found among both men and women arrested for IPV (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004), it has not been found to be a consistent predictor of recidivism (e.g., threatened to kill and strangled did not predict recidivism in Ventura & Davis [2005], but weapon use did predict recidivism in Kingsnorth [2006]).

Although this study has several strengths, including an almost 5-year follow-up period and the use of multivariate statistics, there are also a number of limitations that need to be discussed. First, the sample obtained may not be representative of all domestic violence cases in this area. In spite of the use of random selection, missing information may have resulted in a biased sample. Second, because the data come from only one jurisdiction in one Midwestern state, jurisdictional differences in the definition, enforcement, and prosecution of domestic violence cases may affect the generalizability of the findings. Third, because of the small number of female recidivists, it was not possible to complete some analyses (e.g., multivariate analysis with dual arrest), thereby leaving certain questions unanswered. Future research should endeavor to have a larger sample of male but especially female offenders to allow for the testing of additional hypotheses.

**THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Both family violence and feminist perspectives suggest that women do perpetrate IPV. Johnson's (2006) typology provides insight into the different configurations that women's and men's violence may take. Although our data cannot adequately address this issue, the fact that some women were arrested as part of a dual arrest policy and then never recidivated suggests that they may fall under Johnson's violent resistant type. That is, their violence may not be part of a pattern of dominance and control but rather a self-defense response to their partners' abuse. Moreover, the fact that other women did recidivate suggests that they may fall under Johnson's intimate terrorist configuration. Similar to Johnson's findings using Frieze's 1970s Pittsburgh data, researchers examining women arrested for IPV found that although some women's violence may be characterized as self-defensive, other women initiated the violence and as such were considered the primary aggressors in the assault (Renauer & Henning, 2006).

It is noteworthy that even though there were gender differences in the models predicting recidivism, there was also overlap, suggesting that women who recidivate may be more like their male counterparts. That is, although the bulk of intimate terrorists may be men, some women may also fit this typology. Indeed, the significance of former relationships as a predictor of recidivism is consistent with research on domestic violence that finds that relationship dissolution is related to domestic abuse (R. E. Dobash et al., 2007; Walton-Moss et al., 2005). That is, abusers who are faced with the possibility of losing their partners may become more violent in an effort to keep their relationships intact. Research also finds considerable overlap between IPV and stalking, with a portion of IPV offenders stalking their victims following the termination of the relationship in an effort to reestablish the relationship (Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2000; Melton & Belknap, 2003). If women are recidivating with a victim they are no longer involved with, it may be that they are stalking them or in some other way trying to dictate or control the nature of the relationship (Glass, Koziol-McLain, Campbell, & Block, 2004; Walby & Allen, 2004), a pattern frequently documented among male intimate terrorists (Logan et al., 2000; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007).

The different patterns of offending—that is, dual arrestees who did not recidivate and nondual arrestees who did—suggest that different configurations of IPV exist among women, consistent with Johnson's (2006) typology. Although our data cannot confirm the source of this difference, they do suggest that future research should include information about the nature and context of the relationship, because violent resistant offenders likely have very different criminal justice treatment needs than do intimate terrorists.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The fact that proportionally more women were arrested as part of a dual arrest but that none of them recidivated suggests the need to reexamine this practice. Dual arrest practices emanated from pro-arrest policies designed to encourage police to take action in domestic violence cases to keep victims safe. Yet, in some jurisdictions, these policies have resulted in the increased arrest of women, when police choose to arrest both parties and put the burden on the courts to determine the ultimate offender. Because of the complexity of IPV, information about the nature, context, and initiation of violence may be helpful in determining who is the predominant aggressor, who poses the greater risk for future violence,

and consequently, who should be arrested. Because research also finds that jurisdictions vary in their use of dual arrest, suggesting that police department policy likely influences this practice, greater effort should be made to encourage police to consider these factors when making arrest determinations (Martin, 1997).

Although women had lower recidivism rates overall, the fact that prior criminal justice involvement for drugs predicted recidivism for both men and women suggests that programs with these offenders should include substance abuse treatment. Substance abuse problems are a recurrent theme in recidivism research more generally (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996) as well as among IPV offenders (Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2005), emphasizing the importance of this problem when trying to reduce partner violence. However, much of the focus of traditional IPV offender programs is on the reduction of offenders' need for power and control in the relationship as well as on reducing offenders' negative attitudes toward women. Although such treatment plans make sense when dealing with male offenders and may be equally effective with women intimate terrorists, they are not likely to be as effective with violent resistant women who are arrested for this crime, especially if their arrest is part of a dual arrest policy. More research is needed on women's IPV recidivism to determine the kinds of programs that are most effective with them. As with most criminal justice interventions, it is likely that a one-size-fits-all approach will not adequately address the needs of all offenders—male or female—and that customized interventions, based on the offender's history, substance abuse problems, and offending pattern will be most effective at reducing this crime.

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