

**THIRTY YEARS OF DENIAL OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS ON PARTNER VIOLENCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND TREATMENT**

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The first objective of this article is to briefly summarize two substantial bodies of research on the prevalence and etiology of partner violence (PV). One is research on symmetry between men and women in perpetration of physical violence against a partner and symmetry between men and women in the motives and risk factors for PV. The other is research which has found spanking experienced as a child is associated with an increased probability that, when the child is an adolescent or adult, he or she will physically assault a dating or marital partner. Both these sets of results contradicted deeply held beliefs and have been denied.

The second objective is to document the fact that the deniers of the research showing gender symmetry in PV and deniers of the research showing a link between spanking and PV have dealt with the denied research results by scientifically unacceptable tactics such as concealing those results, selective citation or research, and intimidating researchers who produced the results.

The third objective is to suggest what underlies the denial of gender symmetry in PV and the harmful side effects of spanking despite the large body of scientific evidence.

The fourth objective is to suggest that efforts to prevent and treat PV could be improved by restructuring those efforts to explicitly recognize gender symmetry in PV and by efforts to end the seemingly innocuous acts of violence by parents known as spanking.

The focus of this paper is on physical assault because that is the aspect of partner maltreatment that has been the focus of the most controversy. Two aspects of gender symmetry in physical assaults will be addressed: similar rates of perpetration by men and women and parallel etiology of perpetration. The criterion of symmetry in perpetration is that the percent of women who physically assault a male partner is about the same or greater than the percent of men who physically assault a female partner. The criterion for symmetry in etiology is that an etiologic variable is correlated with assaults by women as well as by men.

THE EVIDENCE ON GENDER SYMMETRY IN PERPETRATION

The controversy over gender symmetry in PV was fueled by the 1975 National Family Violence Survey which found a perpetration rate of assault by male partners of 12% and by female partners 11.6 (Gelles and Straus 1988; Straus and Gelles 1986; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1980 (2006)). The rate of severe assaults such as kicking, punching, choking, and attacks with objects was also about the same for men and women (3.8% by men and 4.6% by women). Neither of these were statistically significant differences.

Early Failure To Recognize The Implications Of Symmetry

Behind Closed doors: Violence In The American Family presented these results on gender symmetry but did not discuss the implications either in the main text or the concluding chapter on primary prevention. Moreover, there had been two preliminary studies which also found symmetry in perpetration which also did not discuss the implications for prevention and treatment of PV (Straus 1973; Straus 1974). Why were these statistics presented and the implications ignored? An important part of the explanation was that these results contradicted the feminist analysis of PV that prevailed at the time and which I presented in an article on "Sexual Inequality, Cultural Norms, And Wife-Beating" (Straus 1976). As the title indicates, the only PV discussed was "wife-beating."

(Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 about here)

Although I had ignored my own data on gender symmetry, others did not. The 1975 results were vehemently criticized. My former colleague Suzanne Steinmetz did not ignore the data on gender symmetry (Steinmetz 1977-1978) and bore the brunt of that criticism (Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, and Bart 1978). There were also personal attacks (described in the section of this article on use of intimidation to suppress the evidence on gender symmetry).

Some of the ways these criticisms affected me are described elsewhere (Straus 2008a). Rather than silencing me, it prompted me to seek explanations for gender symmetry. One result was the introductory chapter to *The Social Causes of Husband/Wife Violence* (Straus and Hotaling 1980) which identified causes of PV that are inherent in the characteristics of family and society and which explain the high rates of PV by both men and women. Bit by bit my original assumption that PV was about men dominating women has been contradicted by a mass of empirical evidence from my own research and from research by many others which found that women physically attack partners at the same or higher rate as men and that that male-dominance is only one of the many causes. The meta analysis by Archer (2000) and the bibliography by Fiebert (2004) document about 200 studies which have found approximately equal rates of perpetration by male and female partners. Figure 1, which is a tabulation of studies in the Fiebert bibliography, shows that as early as 1986, there were 23 studies which found symmetry in perpetration, including two national surveys. Table 1 summarizes a few of the large scale studies. However, as will be shown later in this article, until recently, few have accepted this evidence, and some of those few will not publicly express their position for fear of the type of ostracism to which it will expose them. Instead, the evidence on gender symmetry in prevalence and etiology is typically ignored (as I had previously), concealed, and often explicitly denied.

Mutuality In Partner Violence

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Equal rates of perpetration do not necessarily mean mutuality in the sense of both partners engaging in physical attacks. An epidemiological survey might find about the same rates for men and women, for example 12% in the previous 12 months. However, the 12% of men could refer to one set of couples and the 12% rate of women might be occurring in another set of couples. Theoretically, there could be no couples where both are violent. Again, the analyses in *Behind Closed Doors* led the way by developing and presenting statistics which showed that, when there is violence, it is most often mutual. And again, like the results on symmetry in perpetration, the profound implications of the results on mutuality were not explicitly discussed in that book. Since then other studies have also found that, when there is PV, it is most often mutual. The percent mutual from the 1975 National Family Violence Survey and four other studies are summarized in Table 2.

ASYMMETRY IN EFFECTS

The exception to gender symmetry is that the adverse effects of being a victim of PV are much greater for women than for men. This can be considered a difference in context, but the fact that adverse effects are consequences rather than causes of PV needs to be kept in mind

Attacks by men cause more injury (both physical and psychological), more deaths, and more fear. In addition, women are more often economically trapped in a violent relationship than men because women continue to earn less than men, and because when a marriage ends, women have custodial responsibility for children at least 80% of the time.

The greater adverse effect on women is an extremely important difference, and it indicates the need to continue to provide more services for female victims of PV than for male victims. In addition, as will be explained later, the greater adverse effect on women is one of the things that underlies the reluctance to acknowledge the evidence on gender symmetry.

However, empathy for women because of the greater injury and the need to help victimized women must not be allowed to obscure the fact that men sustain about a third of the injuries from PV, including a third of the deaths from attacks by a partner (Catalano 2006; Rennison

2000; Straus 2005b). PV by women is therefore a serious crime, and a health, and social problem that must be addressed, even though the effects are not as great as the effects of assaults perpetrated by male partners. Moreover, the risk of injury to women, and the probability of the violence continuing or escalating is greatest when both partners are violent (Straus 2009b), as is true for at least half of violent couples (Feld and Straus 1989; Ross and Babcock 2009; Straus and Gozjolko 2007; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, and Saltzman 2007).

GENDER SYMMETRY IN ETIOLOGY, CONTEXT, AND MEANING OF PV

In addition to the concealment and denial to be documented later in this article, another tactic of those who reject the evidence of symmetry in PV has been to claim that the equal perpetration rates do not show symmetry because the motives, context, and meaning of PV by women are different. However, with the extremely important exception of greater adverse effects for women, research has found symmetry in risk factors, motives, context, and meanings.

Symmetry In Self-Defense

Probably the most frequently argued difference in motives of female perpetrators is the assertion that when women assault a partner it is usually an act of self-defense. For example, the influential World Health Organization report on violence states that “Where violence by women occurs it is more likely to be in the form of self-defense (32, 37, 38)” (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, and Lozano 2002). However, examination of references 32, 37, and 38 found that although all three *asserted* that women’s violence was primarily in self defense, none provided evidence for this assertion. Reference #32 (1986) reported no data on self-defense. Reference #37 (1997) does report data but it shows that only 6.9% of the women acted in self-defense, and reference #38 Johnson & Ferraro (2000) is a review article that cites references 32 and 37 and other references which also present no empirical data.

At least six other studies report data on self-defense. Like the DeKesseredy et al. study, five of the six found that only a small percentage of female violence was in self-defense

(Carrado, George, Loxam, Jones, and Templar 1996; Cascardi and Vivian 1995b; Felson and Messner 1998; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, and Sebastian 1991; Pearson 1997; Sarantakos 1998; Sommer 1996). For the one study that found high rates of self-defense, the percentage in self-defense was slightly greater for men (56%) than for women (42%) (Harned 2001).

Rather than self-defense, the most usual motivations for violence by women, like the motivations of men, are coercion, anger, and punishing misbehavior by their partner (Cascardi and Vivian 1995b; Fiebert and Gonzalez 1997; Kernsmith 2005). For example, Pearson (1997) reports that 90 percent of the women she studied assaulted their partner because they were furious or jealous, or frustrated and not because they tried to defend themselves. These motives are parallel to the motivations of male perpetrators. Research on homicides by women shows similar results. For example, Jurik and Gregware (1989) studied 24 female perpetrated homicides and found that 60% had a previous criminal record, 60% had initiated use of physical force, and only 21% of the homicides were in response to “prior abuse” or “threat of abuse/death.”

Dominance By One Partner

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

A central feature of the feminist theory is that PV occurs because men use violence to maintain dominance in their marital relationship. This is certainly true. What it ignores is that it is only one of many risk factors for PV, and that women as well as men use violence to dominate. Figure 2 (Medeiros and Straus 2006) presents the results of a study of 854 students (312 men and 542 women) at two American universities. It shows that dominance by *either* partner is associated with an increased probability of PV. These results were replicated for the 14,252 university students in the International Dating Violence Study (Straus 2008b). Five other studies also found that dominance by either the male or female partner is associated with an increased probability of violence (Coleman and Straus 1986; Kim and Emery 2003; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1980 (2006); Sugihara and Warner 2002; Tang 1999).

Symmetry In Other Aspects Of Etiology

The previously mentioned study of 854 US university students also investigated a number of other risk factors for PV in addition to dominance by one partner (Medeiros and Straus 2006). Fourteen risk factors were found to be significantly related to an increased probability of severe assaults such as punching or choking. Twelve of the 14 were related to severe assaults by women as well as by men: Poor anger management, anti social personality, conflict with partner, communication problems, criminal history, jealousy, a history of neglect as a child, sexual abuse as a child, substance abuse, stressful conditions during the year of the study, and attitudes approving violence.

METHODS OF DENYING THE EVIDENCE ON GENDER SYMMETRY

The methods used to conceal and deny the evidence on gender symmetry are detailed in previous articles (Straus 1990; Straus 2007; Straus 2008a) and will only be summarized here. It is important to recognize that the terms “conceal,” “deny,” and “distort” apply to those who have or write about research evidence that could be concealed or denied. They are academics who know or produce the research but who conceal, deny, or distort the evidence. Thus, this section refers to the academic community, not to service providers.

(Insert Figure 3 about here)

Method 1. Conceal The Evidence

Perhaps the most frequent method of dealing with the unacceptable evidence that women assault partners at the same or higher rate as men is to conceal the evidence. The pattern was established early in research on PV by a survey conducted for the Kentucky (Schulman 1979). This excellent survey found about equal rates of assault by male and female partners, but only assaults by men were reported.

The upper half of Figure 3 shows prevalence rates by gender in the *pre*-publication version of a Canadian study (Kennedy and Dutton 1989). In the published version (lower half of Figure 3), the Wife-to-Husband data are absent.

The World Health Organization conducted a “Global School Based Survey” using questionnaires completed by students age 13 to 15. Question 38 asked the students if they had been slapped or hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months. The results for all of the first four nations (Jordan, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zambia) showed a slightly higher percent of boys than girls who reported being slapped or hurt on purpose by a girlfriend or boyfriend. Because those were only the first four nations in a planned 70 nation study, I waited until data on more nations became available. Two years later, in 2008, results for many nations were available, but Question 38 and the data on this question were nowhere to be found.

The data analysis for the article on the “Drunken Bum Theory Of Wife-Beating (Kaufman Kantor and Straus 1987) included women who were drunken bums as well as men, but the paper submitted for publication included only data on male drinking and male violence.

Although there are at least 200 papers reporting research which found gender symmetry in perpetration, I believe there are at least this many studies with similar results which were not submitted for publication. Two examples I know of were not submitted because the authors feared adverse effects on their reputation and employability (see Method 7).

Method 2. Avoid Obtaining Evidence On Female Perpetration

The Canadian National Violence Against Women Survey (Johnson and Sacco 1995) used the Conflict Tactics Scales or CTS (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman 1996) to obtain the data on PV for a sample of women. The CTS is based on family systems theory and therefore included items to measure violence by both partners. However, the designers of the Canadian study modified the CTS by deleting the questions on perpetration. The result, of course, was data on victimization of women and none on perpetration by women. Many other studies have used this strategy. The original plan for the US National Violence Against Women Survey was identical, i.e., interview women and use only the CTS questions about their victimization. Fortunately, a last minute compromise was reached between those who wanted to interview women only about their victimization and those who wanted to use the full CTS.

The compromise to proceed with the original plan of asking women only about their victimization, but to add a sample of men who were also asked only about victimization (which among heterosexual couples had to also be data on female perpetration). This created embarrassing results such as that about 40% of the violent acts documented by this study were perpetrated by women, and that the coercion scale scores of women were as high as the scores of men (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000b). These “unbelievable” results were part of the reason for the two year delay in releasing the study.

After the study data became available, concealment, became the strategy for denial, as illustrated by Johnson’s study of “intimate terrorists” (Johnson and Leone 2005). Johnson analyzed only the female participant half of the data, with the result was that all intimate terrorists were men. However, Straus and Gozjolko (2007) applied Johnson’s criteria for identifying intimate terrorists to the 14,252 participants in the International Dating Violence Study. They found about the same percent of women as men in the intimate terrorist category. Consistent with other studies, they also found that many more women were injured. Their results are also consistent with other research showing that, except for homicide, gender symmetry applies to chronic severe violence, and to police and shelter cases as well as to less severe violence (Straus and Grandmaison 2009).

Method 3. Selective Citation Of Research

Both individual researchers and government agencies deny the evidence by citing the few studies which show male predominance in PV and do not mention the huge number of studies which have found symmetry. The World Health Organization report on violence (Krug et al. 2002) is an important example because it is by leading scholars and is widely read and respected. One can read the entire report, which has impressively detailed documentation of studies of male perpetrations, and not find a citation of any of the almost 200 studies which have found that women also assault their partners, expect for the previously described section which erroneously argues that it is usually in self-defense.

The summary fact sheet on PV published by US Department of Justice presents results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, but not from the National Violence Against women survey, which was also sponsored by the Department of Justice, and is the more valid study for purposes of obtaining data on PV. I suggest that the violence against women study results were not cited because it contradicts the National Crime Victimization Survey data showing that only about 15% of PV is perpetrated by men; whereas the National Violence Against Women survey found that 40% of the partner assaults were by women. (See Straus (1999) for an explanation of the different results of these two studies). Nor does the "fact" sheet cite any of the surveys shown in Table 1, most of which are nationally representative, and which, without exception, found equal or higher rates of perpetration by women.

Method 4. State Conclusions That Contradict The Data

The article by DeKesseredy et. al. (1997) described in the earlier section on self-defense concludes that PV by women is primarily an act of self-defense, but their data but shows that only 6.9% of the women acted in self-defense.

An article by Kernsmith (2005) concludes that "Males and females were found to differ in their motivations for using violence in relationships. Females reported using violence in response to prior abuse, citing revenge and retaliation as a primary motivation." What do the results show? A factor analysis of the questions found three factors. Women have a significantly higher score just one of the three factors. It is labeled "Striking back for abuse." However, that label is misleading. It applies to only one of the five questions in the factor ("To protect yourself"). The other four questions tell a different story than the name given to the factor. They are "To get back at your partner for hurting you emotionally" (which is a measure of anger-motivated violence), "To get your partner to stop doing something" (which is a measure of coercion), "To get back at your partner for hitting you first" (which measures retaliation, not self defense), and "To show anger." So, even the only factor that is significantly different for men and women is as much or more about coercion and anger as about "striking back." The other

two factors tell the opposite story than the “response to prior abuse” conclusion. One is “Disciplining a partner” with items such as “To get your partner to do what you wanted.” The other is “Exerting power” with items such as “To feel more powerful.” Men and women did not differ on either the “Disciplining a partner” or the “Exerting Power” factor. That is, women used violence to exert power and punish a partner as much as men.

Because the erroneous conclusion quoted above was published in a reputable journal, and because most readers of the article are unlikely to carefully examine the tables, the erroneous conclusion is what will be cited as though it were scientific evidence. From then on the study will be cited as “a study by Kernsmith of 60 men and 54 women in a batterer counseling program found differences in males and females motivations for using violence,” even though the article shows similar motives. And because the article is in a reputable peer reviewed journal and has an appropriate sample, readers of the subsequent articles in which that is cited will accept it as a scientific fact. Thus fiction is converted into scientific evidence that will be cited over and over again by the deniers of gender symmetry.

Method 5. Block Publication Of Articles That Report Gender Symmetry

This method of denial mostly works through self censorship by authors who fear their article will be rejected or that it will undermine their reputation. A dramatic example occurred while this article was being written. A female colleague co-authored an article with me that dealt with gender symmetry. She probably did 60% of the work on that article. During the course of our collaboration she learned about the harassment and penalization of some researchers who have published on gender symmetry (see Method 7 below). That led her to withdraw from co authorship of an important article. She was coming up for tenure and promotion review and feared authorship of that article would adversely affect the chances for a successful review, and also a more general stigmatization that could make finding an alternative position difficult.

Method 6. Prevent Funding Of Research To Investigate Female PV

In December 2005, the National Institute of Justice invited grant proposals to investigate PV and sexual violence. It stated that studies involving male victims are not eligible for funding. I protested, as did some other people. But instead of modifying it, they decided to not to fund anything.

A proposal I submitted to the National Institute Of Mental Health was not funded because, among other criticisms, one of the reviewers strongly objected to the premise PV is a human relationships issue, as much or more than a gender issue. In the tough competition for funding, if one reviewer out of the panel gives a proposal a very low rating, that is enough to push the priority score below the funding line.

Others have had similar experiences, for example, Amy Holtzworth-Munroe (Holtzworth-Munroe 2005)

Method 7. Harass, Threaten Or Penalize Researchers Who Publish Evidence On Gender Symmetry

The most extreme example was the experience of Susan Steinmetz. When she was at the University of Delaware and was being reviewed for promotion and tenure, there was an organized attempt to block her appointment through unsolicited letters to her department and the University president. They asserted that Dr. Steinmetz was not a suitable person to promote because her research showing high rates of female perpetration was not believable. In short, they accused her of scientific fraud. Even more extreme, there was a bomb threat at a daughter's wedding.

At the University of Manitoba a lecturer's contract was not renewed because of protests about her research which found approximately equal rates of PV by women and men.

I have been repeatedly harassed and penalized.

- I was invited to speak at the University of Massachusetts, but was prevented from doing so by hoots and stamping. Repeated requests to the audience to allow me to speak and respond to their questions were ignored, and the presentation was finally canceled.

- The Chair of the Canadian Commission On Violence Against Women told two public hearings that I could not be believed because I was a misogynist, beat my wife, and sexually exploited students. Fortunately, when I brought this to the attention of the Minister of Women's affairs, she required her to cease and write a retraction letter.
- Two of my graduate students were warned that they will never get jobs if they do their PhD dissertation with me.
- When I was president of the Society For The Study Of Social Problems, the members seated in the first two rows stood up and walked out as I started to give the presidential address.
- When that paper was to be published in the society's journal *Social Problems*.(Straus 1991b), the editor commissioned three critiques. This was probably the only instance in 55 years of publishing presidential addresses that critiques were published. I do not object to that. What I found shameful was that the plan was hidden from me. Moreover, my request to see the critiques and write a rejoinder was refused. Only after I said that I would ask the society's board of directors to require the editor to publish a rejoinder did that happen. A final bitter touch is that my presidential address was not on PV. It was on spanking children. Why would a paper on spanking elicit a critique by the deniers of gender symmetry in PV? Correctly or incorrectly, I believe the main motivation was to discredit me as a means of discrediting the politically intolerable research evidence on gender symmetry.

SPANKING INCREASES THE PROBABILITY OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, there is a second body of research which offers great promise for primary prevention of PV, but which has also been denied, concealed and distorted. This is the large number of studies which have found that spanking and other legal forms of corporal punishment are associated with an increased probability of the child being physically aggressive and, later as a teenager or adult, physically assaulting a dating or martial partner.

Spanking a child to correct misbehavior is probably the most ignored risk factor for PV. Ironically, and sadly, it is also the most widely prevalent risk factor for PV because over 90% of American parents spank toddlers and at least a third start when the child is less than one year old (Straus and Stewart 1999). Therefore, it is a risk factor that affects 90% of the population, not 10, 20, 30, or 40%. This has tremendous implications for primary prevention because of the principle (to be discussed below) that the greatest benefits to public health come from eliminating or reducing risk factors with the broadest prevalence.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Table 3 summarizes the results of a meta analysis by Gershoff (2002). The second row of the section on Effects On Children summarizes 27 studies of the relationship between spanking and aggression by the child. It is remarkable that all 27 of these studies found that spanking was associated with an increased probability of aggressive behavior by the child. In the Effects On Adults Section, the first row shows four studies of the relation of spanking to aggression as an adult. Again, all four found a significant relationship. The last row in that section shows that all five studies of the relation of spanking to abuse of a child or spouse found that spanking is associated with an increased probability of child abuse or spouse abuse. I have read a number of meta-analyses, and none of them come close to the 93% agreement between studies of spanking documented in this meta-analysis.

The other variables in Table 3 are also part of the explanation of the link between spanking and PV because they are risk factors for PV that may mediate the relation of spanking to PV. For example, the studies in the second row of Part B show that spanking is associated with an increased probability of antisocial behavior and crime. This is part of the etiology of PV because other studies show that persons with antisocial and criminal behavior are much more likely to physically assault a partner (Hotelling, Straus, and Lincoln 1990; Kim, Laurent, Capaldi, and Feingold 2008; Straus and Ramirez 2004).

(Insert Figures 4 and 5 about here)

Figures 4 and 5 present the results of two studies of the relationship between spanking and PV. Figure 4 shows results for the 6,002 couples in the second National Family Violence Survey (Straus 2001). It shows that the more spanking, the greater the probability of assaulting a partner in the preceding 12 months, and that this applies to women as well as men. Figure 5 presents results for 13,252 students in the 32 nations of the International Dating Violence Study (expanded version of data in Douglas and Straus 2006). It shows that the higher the percent of university students in a nation who reported that they had been spanked or hit a lot by their parents, the higher the percent in the nation who physically assaulted a partner.

What explains the link between spanking and PV? A number of mediating processes are involved (Straus and Yodanis 1996), one of the most important is social learning, i.e. following the model of parents correcting misbehavior by spanking. That model applies to PV because, sooner or later, almost all partners misbehave, at least as perceived by their partner. Most PV occurs as a means of correcting what the offender thinks of as misbehavior by the partner; for example infidelity, refusing sex, chronic failure to do household chores. If, after repeated attempts, the desired correction does not occur, physical violence is likely to be used to coerce the partner into compliance, and as with parents spanking, as an expression of anger and frustration. It follows the script of “Johnny I told you will get a spanking if you do it again” that almost all American children experience countless times. In short, when parents spank, in addition to teaching whatever is intended, they teach that it is morally appropriate or at least permissible, to hit someone you love who misbehaves. Violence, like charity, begins at home. That is why the title of my forthcoming book is *The Primordial Violence: Corporal Punishment, Cognitive Development, And Crime*.

CONCEALMENT AND DENIAL OF THE HARMFUL SIDE EFFECTS OF SPANKING

Because this article is in a journal on partner abuse, and because of space limitations, only a part of the evidence will be described.

Concealing The Prevalence Of Spanking

A content analyses studied ten or eleven child development text books published in each of the following periods: 1980-1985, 1990-1995, and 2000-2005. Neither the prevalence of spanking nor the harmful side effects are in these books. There has been only a slight increase in coverage of spanking over this period. In respect to prevalence, none 2000-2005 books presented the results from any of the three national surveys which found that over 90% of American children are spanked, nor any of the many other studies since the 1930's that have found similar rates.

The space given to spanking ranged from one sentence to one book with four pages. The average was less than half a page, which is a miniscule proportion of the typical 500 page book. Two thirds did not have any entry in the index on spanking or corporal punishment. Thus, parent-child relationships that are part of the developmental experience of almost all American children, and which for many continue for ten years (Straus and Stewart 1999), are virtually ignored.

Concealment Of Harmful Side-Effects of Spanking

The omission of information on the almost universal prevalence of spanking should be evaluated in the light of a meta-analysis summarized in Table 3 which found 93% agreement between studies in the harmful side effects of spanking (Gershoff 2002). This nearly complete agreement between 88 studies conducted with diverse samples and methods is parallel to the nearly complete agreement among the approximately two hundred studies of perpetration of PV by men and women. There is little else in child development research with such a high degree of agreement in results. Yet those results are not covered in child development textbooks, just as gender symmetry in PV is not covered in family violence textbooks.

As for the implications of the results summarized in the meta analysis, only one of the eleven advised not spanking, two suggested it be avoided when possible, implying there are situations when it is not possible to avoid spanking. None of the eleven books advised *never* spanking, despite the overwhelming evidence on harmful side effects. Paradoxically, advising

parents of toddlers to avoid spanking when possible virtually guarantees spanking toddlers. This is because, the recidivism rate for whatever a two-year old is corrected for, is about 50% within two hours and 80% within the same day (Larzelere, Schneider, Larson, and Pike 1996). Therefore, after three or four attempts at non-violent correction, even parents who accept the advice to avoid spanking, end up spanking. They think that spanking will work when other methods have failed. However, the Larzelere et. al. study also found the same high rate of repeating the misbehavior after spanking. As I have argued in more detail elsewhere, the way to avoid this paradox is to end all spanking. This was the purpose the landmark no-spanking law passed by Sweden in 1979. It has been remarkably successful (Durrant 2008; Hart, Durrant, Newell, and Power 2005). Twenty-three other nations have now also banned all spanking by parents.

Selective Citation Of Context As A Moderator. Just as deniers of gender symmetry in PV often implicitly justify PV by women as acts of self-defense, even though the evidence shows that is rarely the case, deniers of the harmful effects of spanking also have a favorite way of justifying spanking: that spanking is not harmful when it is culturally approved. This is especially frequent as a justification for the high spanking rates of African American Parents (Gunnoe and Mariner 1997; Polite 1996). Although there are a few studies which show such a “contextual effect,” most studies have found that the harmful effects apply regardless of cultural approval, even though as shown in the next paragraph, those results are sometimes denied in the very article which reports them.

Conclusions That Contradicts Actual Results. A study co-authored by one of the world’s leading development psychologists tested the theory that the cultural context mitigates the harmful side-effects of spanking. It examined the relation of spanking to anxiety and aggression of children in six nations that varied greatly in the extent to which spanking was culturally approved and prevalent (Lansford, Chang, Dodge, Malone, Oburu, Palméus, Bacchini, Pastorelli, Bombi, Zelli, Tapanya, Chaudhary, Deater-Deckard, Manke, and Quinn

2005). The results showed that “Countries with the lowest use of physical discipline showed the strongest association between mothers’ use and children’s behavior problems, but in *all* countries higher use of physical discipline was associated with more aggression and anxiety” (emphasis added). Despite these results, the concluding sentence asserts that the findings “...*suggest potential* problems in using physical discipline even in contexts in which it is normative”(emphasis added). Thus, in the conclusion, unambiguous results have become something that is only “suggested” by the findings. The contradiction of the actual results is further evident in saying that spanking pose only a “potential” problem. An even more clear and more crucial contradiction of the evidence was in the press release on this study. The press release is a crucial aspect of denial because few parents can read the journal in which this article was published and must depend on the press coverage. What they read in newspaper articles based on the Duke University press release completely contradicted the actual results by stating "A particular parenting practice may become a problem *only* if parents use it in a cultural context that does not support the practice..." (emphasis added).

BIASED MEDIA COVERAGE OF SYMMETRY AND SPANKING

Media coverage is influenced by many things, including the beliefs and perceptions of reporters and editors, and by what they think will sell papers or increase viewers, both of which have led to biased reporting of crime, PV, and spanking.

Biased Press Coverage Of Partner Violence

An example of a bias resulting from publishing articles that are likely to attract an increased readership or audience was documented in study of homicide trends in the 1990’s During this decade. Because of the preceding two decades of increasing crime, crime was high in public concern and interest. Recognizing this, television stations around the U.S. competed by increasing their coverage of crime. As a result, from 1990 to 1998, TV coverage of

homicides *increased* by 473%, whereas during this period the homicide rate *decreased* by 33% (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001).

A study of newspaper coverage of 785 homicides in Cleveland, Ohio from 1984 to 1992 (Lundman 2000) found that, of homicides in which a male killed a female, 79% made it into the newspaper, whereas only half of homicides in which a female killed a male were covered. Of those which were reported, much more space was given to cases of men killing women: an average of 3.6 articles for male homicides of females, but only 1.7 articles for female homicides of males. Women kill partners in only a third of the instances of partner homicides, but the biased coverage makes it seem even more rare.

An article "And Then He Hit Me" in the American Associated of Retired People magazine on PV among the elderly declared flatly that women-on-man domestic violence among the elderly is negligible. The basis for this is given as a study of elder abuse in Boston by my colleagues Karl Pillemer and David Finkelhor (Pillemer and Finkelhor 1986). I was certain that was incorrect and looked up the study again. What the study actually shows is that 43% of physical violence cases were the wife assaulting the husband, i.e., it shows gender symmetry.

Another misrepresentation of PV by the press is the emphasis on horrific cases of men who virtually enslave and torture female partners. Those cases sell newspapers and attract TV audiences, but are less than half of 1% of the segment of couples who experienced an incident of PV in the previous 12 months (Straus 1991a). This leads the public to think that the typical PV case is a beaten down, physically injured and virtually enslaved female victim. It is very likely that almost all the perpetrators of those rare cases are men. However, featuring them leads the public to think that men predominate in all cases of PV.

A commentary on two recent celebrity cases also illustrates the biased press coverage of PV. (Angelucci 29): "Female abusers and male victims are not only politically incorrect; they also don't "sell" well. That would explain why hardly anyone heard about the two celebrity domestic violence arrests of women that occurred shortly after the Rihanna incident. Kelly

Bensimon, who plays in the Bravo reality show "Real Housewives of New York City," was arrested for giving her boyfriend a black eye and a bloody gash on his cheek. And the girlfriend of Tampa Bay linebacker Geno Hayes was arrested for stabbing Hayes in the neck and head. Where was the outcry? Nowhere. In fact, most of the media coverage ...incidents did not even call these incidents "domestic violence."

In my opinion, the biased press coverage of PV is not deliberate falsification. Rather, they result from errors in perception of PV to be explained in the next section. Regardless of why the biased coverage occurs, it is one of the reasons the public thinks PV is almost entirely a male crime.

Biased Coverage Of Spanking

Many surveys over the past few decades have found that about three quarters of Americans believe that spanking is sometimes necessary. For example, a 2005 national survey and found that 72% of Americans approve of spanking (SurveyUSA 2005). It is likely that reporters and editors, like most other Americans, believe that spanking is sometimes necessary and, also like most other Americans, they do not believe the research. I have not done a systematic content analysis of press coverage of spanking research, but I know that almost all newspaper and TV coverage of my own research has been accompanied by a denial of the validity of the evidence, and some has also been derisive. A recent Wall Street Journal article is an example (Bialik 2009). The denial and ridiculing of spanking research starts with title: "New Research on Spanking *Might Need a Time Out*. Studies Aim to Settle the Longstanding Debate Over the Disciplinary Practice's Effects, but *Statistical Shortcomings Persist*" (emphasis added). "Might need a time out" illustrates poking fun at research on spanking. Featuring "statistical shortcomings" illustrates a method of denial of studies by two leading researchers. The denial is elaborated in the following two paragraphs:

Three recent, widely reported studies on spanking children claimed to show that the disciplinary practice impairs cognitive development in children. Together, they held out the

promise of providing the latest, definitive word on a passionate debate. Yet the three aren't likely to resolve anything.

Many statisticians say they find in them less a firm conclusion than further proof of the difficulty of measuring spanking's impact. Statistical analysis of spanking's effects on cognition are clouded by many complicating factors. Effects can be attributed to the wrong cause, statisticians say; rather than spanking causing problems in children, it is possible that their existing cognitive problems can make spanking more likely. Moreover, any effects of spanking are difficult to measure and probably small. And unlike, say, a study on prescription drugs that removes a misleading placebo effect, no ethical study can assign some children to be spanked. Instead, parents must be trusted to remember and share their disciplinary practices.

The first sentence does state the rare event that three different studies come to the same conclusion, but almost all of the criticisms which follow are wrong. The article resumes the process of denial initiated in the headline by stating that these three studies “claimed” to show, rather than saying that they “found” that discipline practices impair cognitive development. This is followed by a sentence which declares that these three studies are “aren’t likely to resolve anything.”

The next paragraph gives reasons for doubting the results, but three of the five are not correct.

- Spanking can be an effect rather than a cause. This is certainly correct in general but not for two of the three studies. These are longitudinal studies which dealt with the causal direction problem by controlling for Time 1 cognitive ability and determining the subsequent effects of spanking.
- The effects of spanking are difficult to measure. This ignores the fact that these studies used standardized and proven measures of cognitive ability.

- The effects are probably small. This applies a double standard. It ignores the fact that a low effect size is typical of health risk-factor research results. The correlation of spanking with cognitive development is .23, which is actually higher than the correlations that are the basis of extensive public health prevention efforts such as the correlation of exposure to lead and IQ scores (.12), the correlation of passive exposure to smoking at work and lung cancer (.13), and use of a nicotine patch and smoking cessation (.11).

The problem with this article is not that it is critical of the research on spanking, but that it is more an editorial than a news report. Editorial writers are expected to take a position, even ridiculing the opposite position. However, newspaper reporters covering an issue on which there is disagreement are expected to cover both sides and avoid ridiculing one side.

WHAT UNDERLIES THE DENIAL AND THE BIASED PRESS COVERAGE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE AND SPANKING?

The explanations fall into two categories. The first is why almost everyone fails to perceive the symmetry in PV and the harmful effects of spanking. The second is why academics who do know the evidence on symmetry and spanking conceal or deny it. (The sections on PV are a slightly revised part of a previous article (Straus 2009b).

Why Symmetry In Partner Violence Is Not Perceived

Men Predominate In Almost All Other Crimes. For almost every other type of crime, and especially violent crime, men predominate. For some types of crime, such as homicide, and sexual assault, the gender ratio is as high as ten to one (Dawson, Straus, and Fauchier 2007; Ellis and Walsh 2000). Consequently, there is a tendency to think this also applies to PV.

Male Predominance In Police Statistics On Partner Violence. Men also predominate in hospital and police statistics on PV. Most tabulations of police data show that in 80-99% of PV cases reported to police, men are the perpetrators. This is not because of more physical attacks by men. It is because of the greater probability of injury from attacks by men and greater fear for safety by women (Straus 1999), both of which are characteristics that lead to police

intervention. In addition, there is less police intervention for attacks by women because men are even more reluctant than women to involve the police when they are victims of an assault by a partner to the police (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000a). Police are involved in, at most, five percent of PV cases (Kaufman Kantor and Straus 1990). Despite the unrepresentative nature of police statistics, they are usually taken as representative of all cases of PV. This gives the impression that PV is almost exclusively men who physically assault their partner. Similarly, hospital data show a preponderance of male victims, reflecting the greater probability of injury from an attack by a man, the fact that the issue is usually investigated only for female patients, and that if men are asked about the source of their injury, they are even less likely than women to say it was an attack by a partner.

Women Injured More And Fear More. As just indicated, women are physically injured by PV more frequently and more severely than men. Empathy for victims results in greater concern and sympathy for female victims, as it should because women are more often injured. Empathy also leads the press and the public to focus on assaults perpetrated by male partners. If violence is defined as by whether the assault resulted in an injury, it adds to the perception that men are the predominant offenders. The much lower probability of injury from attacks by a female partner is probably a large part of the explanation for the greater cultural acceptance of violence by women than by men in developed nations (Greenblat 1983; O'Keefe 1997; Straus 1995; Straus, Kaufman Kantor, and Moore 1997)

Violence by a male partner produces an appropriate fear of injury among women. Among men, the much lower (coupled with greater cultural acceptance of women's PV just mentioned) leads to trivialization of physical attacks by women and hinders perception of PV by women. It also reduces the probability of men (and others) perceiving attacks by women as dangerous or "violent," even though men sustain a third of the homicides and a third of the non-fatal injuries inflicted by romantic partner (Catalano 2006; Rennison and Welchans 2000; Straus 2005b). Witnesses are less likely to call police for female-to-male PV than for male-to-female

PV unless the incident is very serious (Felson 2002). The lower injury rate results in men not fearing injury and men not taking protective steps, such as calling the police or ending the relationship. The fact that about a third of partner homicide victims are men indicates that the neglect of self-protective steps can be fatal.

Overshadowed By Ending Cultural Norms Tolerating Male Violence. Until nearly the end of the 19th century, husbands were allowed to use “reasonable chastisement” to deal with errant wives (Calvert 1974). Thus, even though female PV has been documented since the middle ages (George 1994), men who “allowed” this were ridiculed. “Physical chastisement” of a misbehaving wife, like spanking of children then and now, was an accepted part of the culture. It has taken a major effort by feminists and their academic colleagues such as myself (Straus 1976) to change the continuing implicit cultural norm accepting a certain amount of male PV. I suggest that the necessary intense focus on this effort interfered with recognizing PV by women, and interfered with recognizing the large body of evidence showing that there are many causes of PV in addition to male dominance (Dutton 2006; Hamel and Nicholls 2006; Lutzker and Whitaker 2008).

Men have the predominant power in society as judged by many indicators (Archer 2006; Sugarman and Straus 1988; United Nations Development Programme 2006; Yodanis 2004). The cognitive discrepancy between male power and high rates of PV by females, even in extremely male dominant societies (Straus 2008b; World Health Organization 2006) blocks recognition of the equal rates of violence. In many societies or segments of societies around the world, high levels of male control over women and of male violence against women is still culturally accepted (Archer 2006; Sugarman and Straus 1988; United Nations Development Programme 2006; Yodanis 2004). In these countries, there is an urgent need to promote empowerment of women. That need also exists in the USA and other advanced industrial nations, but as end in itself more than as a means of ending PV.

Gender Stereotypes. Most cultures define women as “the gentle sex,” making it difficult to perceive violence by women as being prevalent in any sphere of life. More specifically, as noted previously, there are implicit norms tolerating violence by women, on the assumption that it rarely results in injury (Greenblat 1983; Straus, Kantor, and Moore 1994a). This assumption is largely correct, but as previously noted, it is also correct that about a third of homicides of partners are perpetrated by women, and also about a third of non-fatal injuries (Catalano 2006; Rennison and Welchans 2000; Straus 2005b).

Evidence Not Available To The Public. As explained in the section on Biased Press Coverage, a major factor contributing to the public not perceiving the extent of female PV is that the information has not been made available or has been distorted in the media. This reflects and reinforces the gender stereotypes described previously.

Difficulty Of Correcting False Information. Research on persistence of false information has found that it is difficult to correct the false information. Experiments by Schwarz (2007) and others have found that denials and clarifications of false information, although necessary, can paradoxically, contribute to the resiliency of popular myths. This may partly result from the fact that denials inherently require repeating the bad information. Consequently, even when the evidence on gender symmetry is presented by an authoritative source such as the Centers For Disease Control, there will be only limited success in changing beliefs about female perpetration.

Taken together, the seven blocks to perception of PV by women just listed obscure perception of PV by women and are part of the explanation for the denial of symmetry in PV.

Explanations Of The Denial Of Symmetry

Failure to perceive PV by women is part of the explanation for the denial. But much more contributes to the denial, and the concealing and distortion of evidence cannot be attributed just to perceptual limitations. This section suggests four additional explanations for

the fact that reputable scholars deny the overwhelming evidence on gender symmetry, including evidence from their own research.

Focus On Extreme Cases. One of the most important reasons for denial of gender symmetry is that the deniers tend focus on the relatively small proportion of overall PV that is visible to the criminal justice system, shelters, batterer treatment programs, and other service providers. These tend to involve female victims. Although they also usually involve male victims, that is not known to service providers because the service providers do not know about, and are forbidden to ask female victims, if they have also attacked their partner. However, the few studies that have obtained data from female partners of men in batter treatment programs or men arrested for PV have found from a quarter to two-thirds of the women have assaulted their partner (Straus and Grandmaison 2009). In contrast, the research showing gender symmetry has been based on general population samples where the predominant form of PV is minor. The findings of these general population studies are not believed by battered women's advocates because they are inconsistent with the characteristics of the unrepresentative sample of cases they work with every day.

Defense Of Feminist Theory. I suggest that one of the explanations for denying the evidence on gender symmetry is because it is to defend feminism in general. This is because a key step in the effort to achieve an equalitarian society is to bring about recognition of the harm that a patriarchal system causes. The removal of patriarchy as the main cause of PV weakens a dramatic example of the harmful effects of patriarchy. Any weakening of efforts to achieve gender equality is unfortunate, but by no means critical because the effort can continue to be made on the basis of many other ways in which women continue to be subordinate to men (e.g., pay differential).

Protecting Services And Avoiding Harm To Women Victims. There is a fear that, if the public, legislators, and administrators knew about and believed the research on gender symmetry, it would weaken funding of services for female victims, such as shelters for battered

women, and weaken efforts to arrest and prosecute violent men. I know of no evidence that funding for services for female victims has ever been decreased because "women are also violent." Nevertheless, I have been told on several occasions that I am endangering services for battered women by publishing the results of research showing equal perpetration and insisting that PV by women must also be addressed. At a meeting of the Society For Study of Social Problems. One panel member said that this type of phalli-centric research was undermining efforts to help battered women. This was followed by vigorous applause.

Arrests of women for PV have been increasing nation-wide (Martin 1997; Miller 2001). In California between 1987 and 1997, the ratio of male to female arrests for PV decreased from 1 female arrest to 18 male arrests to a ratio of 1 female arrest to 4.5 male arrests (Deleon-Granados, Wells, and Binsbacher 2006). The increase is not a result of more female PV because rates of both fatal and non-fatal PV declined during this period (Catalano 2006; Rennison and Rand 2003; Straus and Gelles 1986; Straus, Kantor, and Moore 1994b; Straus and Kaufman Kantor 1994). It is most likely a result of the successful effort by the women's movement to change police practice from one of avoiding interference in "domestic disturbances" to one of mandatory or recommended arrest (Deleon-Granados, Wells, and Binsbacher 2006). The deniers fear that if the evidence on symmetry becomes widely known and accepted, it will justify more arrests of women for PV. In my opinion, if criminal prosecution is an appropriate part of the effort to reduce PV, that policy should apply to female as well as male perpetrators.

Why Harmful Effects Of Spanking Are Not Perceived And Denied

The failure to perceive the harmful side-effects of spanking, and the motivations of the deniers of the harmful effects of spanking differ in specifics from the explanations for not perceiving and denying gender symmetry, but tend to follow parallel principles. A number of explanations for denying the evidence on spanking are presented in Straus (2005a). Three will be mentioned here.

The Fallacy Of Personal Experience. An almost universal basis for denying the evidence is that most people can say “I was spanked and I’m ok” That is correct, but the implication that spanking is harmless is false. One can see this from research on smoking. About a third of heavy smokers die from a smoking related disease. This also means that two-thirds do not. So most heavy smokers can correctly say “I have smoked all my life, and I am ok.” What this indicates is not that smoking is harmless, but that they are part of the lucky two-thirds. The same applies to those who deny the harmful effects of spanking by stating that they do not suffer from any of the harmful side effects. Moreover, even when they suffer from one of the harmful side-effects, the idea that it might be an effect of having been spanked as a child does not occur. In fact, if when I have suggested this to a few violent men or women, they regarded it as preposterous.

Long-Term Effects Are Not Observable. A key reason spanking is perceived as harmless is that parents cannot see the long-term effects. If an effect such as delinquency, depression, or PV is going to occur, it rarely does so until months or years down the road. Moreover, when these problems arise, as just noted, the possibility that it is the result of CP is so inconsistent with the cultural myth that spanking by loving parents is harmless that it is regarded as preposterous. The only way parents can know about the links between spanking, delinquency, and PV is by being informed of the results of the research. Unfortunately, as was shown in section on denial of the research on harmful side-effects, that information is not provided to parents.

Avoiding Blaming Parents and Self. Another part of the denial may be a reluctance to come to terms with the fact that one’s parents may have done something harmful in spanking them (as is true for over 90% of the population), and a reluctance to come to terms with the possibility that they have been doing something harmful when they spanked their own children, which is also the case for over 90% of the population (Straus 2001; Straus and Stewart 1999).

Cultural Beliefs And Norms Require Denial. The belief that spanking works when other methods of correction have failed, and that spanking is sometimes necessary for the sake of the child is deeply rooted in American and many other cultures. These aspects of the culture almost require denying the harmful effects of spanking. Parents never spank say are regarded as odd. One strategy used to avoid that negative evaluation is to not tell others about it. When it become known, persons close to those parents worry about how the children will turn out, and frequently offer advise spanking (Carson 1986; Carson 1989; Walsh 2002).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Research on treatment programs for perpetrators of PV has found that they have limited or no effect (Babcock, Green, and Robie 2004; Dutton 2006; Feder and Dugan 2002). This section suggests ways in which attention to three aspects of the misperception and denial could increase the efficacy of prevention and treatment of PV. A more extensive discussion is in Straus (2009a).

Gender Symmetry In Partner Violence

With rare exception, current prevention and treatment efforts are based on the assumption that PV is perpetrated almost entirely by men. Thus, they proceed under an erroneous assumption because, as shown earlier, about the same percentage of women as men physically attack a partner, most PV is mutual and, among young women, a higher percent of women than men are the sole perpetrator. To substantially reduce PV, prevention and treatment efforts must be directed to women as well as men.

Prevention. Most PV prevention programs focus on violence by boys and men. In 2009, for example, the British Government announced that “Every school pupil in England is to be taught that domestic violence against women is unacceptable”

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8376943.stm Downloaded 25 November 2008).

Nevertheless, some programs are becoming at least partly “gender neutral.” The *Love Is Not Abuse* program sponsored by Liz Claiborne has replaced language which specified boys as the

offender with gender neutral terms such as “abuse” and “domestic violence.” However, as explained earlier, such gender neutral terms are perceived by program recipients as referring to male perpetration. Moreover, the examples continue to be of boys hitting girls, and the statistics are all about female victims and ignore the results of their own survey which found gender symmetry. It is insufficient for prevention programs to be gender neutral. They need to be *explicitly* directed to girls and women as well as men. In addition, more than just awareness of female perpetration is needed. The target audience also needs to be informed that PV by a women increases the probability that her partner will be violent (Straus 2005b).

Treatment. In respect to programs for offenders, a fundamental change is to replace the default assumption that there is only one perpetrator and it is almost always a man. The default assumption should be that it could be male-only, female-only or mutual. Once safety has been assured, the first step is to establish who is doing the hitting and to what extent is it bidirectional. Only then can treatment proceed on the basis of the actual pattern of relationships

Multiple Causes Of PV

As shown in the section on symmetry in etiology of PV, there are multiple causes. “Patriarchy” and male-dominance in the family are clearly one of the causes, but only one of many. However, with rare exception, current offender treatment programs are based on the assumption that the primary cause is male-dominance. Thus they proceed under an erroneous assumption. Illustrative of the fallacious “single cause” approach are the state-mandated offender treatment programs which forbid treating other causes, such as inadequate anger-management skills.

Ordinary Partner Violence. Most PV involves minor attacks such as slapping or throwing a plate of food at a partner. The etiology of this level of PV is likely to be different than the etiology of PV characterized by a pattern of chronic severe assaults, injury, and domination of the partner. The “ordinary” violence that occurs in so many families is likely to be traceable to inadequate relationship skills, such as non-violent methods of resolving conflicts with a partner

and poor anger management. This is because the predominant proximal motives for "ordinary" or "common couple" violence, by women as well men, are frustration and anger at some misbehavior by the partner, and are efforts to coerce the partner into doing or not doing something (Cascardi and Vivian 1995a; Fiebert and Gonzalez 1997; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, and Sebastian 1991; Kernsmith 2005; Stets and Hammons 2002). Almost all studies that have tested both men and women using the same instrument have found that women engage in coercive control as much as men (Ehrensaft and Vivian 1999; Felson and Outlaw 2007; Laroche 2005; Oswald and Russell 2006; Stets and Pirog-Good 1990; Stets 1991).

Clinical Level Partner Violence. The chronic, severe, and subjugating level of PV is likely to be traceable to risk factors such as antisocial personality traits, chronic excessive drinking, social disadvantage, a propensity to crime, and psychopathology of varying degrees of severity (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, and Caspi 2004; Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, and Stuart 2000; Hotaling, Straus, and Lincoln 1990; Kim, Laurent, Capaldi, and Feingold 2008; Kim and Capaldi 2004; Straus 2009a; Straus and Ramirez 2004).

Despite these differences in etiology between ordinary PV and chronic severe PV, it is important to keep in mind that they are only general tendencies. Consequently, treatment of PV needs to start by empirically assessing dangerousness by means of an instrument such as the Danger Assessment (Campbell 1995; Campbell 2001), assessing symmetry by means of an instrument such as the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus and Douglas 2004; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman 1996), and assessing risk factors for PV by means of an instrument such as the Personal and Relationships Profile (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman 1999 (Revised 2007); Straus and Mouradian 1999).

Equality in relationships needs to be a focus because research has repeatedly shown that dominance by *either* partner is associated with an increased probability of violence (see earlier section on Dominance By One Partner). However, to maintain equality requires relationships skills. Thus, a main focus of both prevention and treatment needs to be on

relationship skills addressed to girls and women as well as boys and men. Moreover, as will be argued in the next section, learning those skills needs to start at birth.

Prevention Of Partner Violence And Other Violence Must Start At Birth

As shown in the section on Spanking And Partner Violence, spanking is the primordial violence because it is the first experience with violence experienced by at least 90% of the population. The research cited has found that spanking is associated with an increased probability of PV. Consequently, even though spanking is only one of many risk factors for PV, prevention of PV needs to start by ending or reducing PV. I believe it will also contribute to ending all other types of violence, ranging from school yard bullying (Pepler, Craig, Connolly, Yuile, McMaster, and Jiang 2006; Stevens, Bourdeaudhuij, and Oost 2002) to murder.

The link of spanking to murder is suggested by the results of a pioneer study of homicides in Philadelphia (Wolfgang 1958). Wolfgang found that about 70% of homicides occur as part of an interpersonal conflict. The predominance of conflict as the context of homicides has also been shown by in-depth studies which trace out the sequence of events in specific cases. It is shown every year by homicide statistics in the annual Uniform Crime Reports which, like the Wolfgang study, indicate that about 70% of homicides take place in the context of a conflict. The fact that most murders take place as part of a conflict suggests that most murders follow a script that is similar to the script followed by used by parents when they correct misbehavior by spanking.

The conflicts that lead to homicide are typically over things such as an insult, flirting with a girlfriend or wife, not paying back a loan. An example which illustrates the process was a case involving two men who rented an apartment. One smoked and the other didn't. They agreed there was going to be no smoking. However, a few weeks later, the smoker smoked, and then did it again. The non-smoker demand and apology and a promise to not do it again. It turned into a fist fight. One of them happened to have a gun, and it turned into a murder. I suggest that this murder, like over 70% of all murders, followed a script that is modeled by

parents when a child repeats a violation of an important rule. They demand the child agree to not do it again. If the child does not show contrition and promise not to, a spanking is likely. As shown previously, most PV follows a similar script, even though it rarely results in murder.

CONCLUSION

It is time to make the effort to end all family violence, not just violence against female partners. This must include PV by women and violence in the form of spanking, both of which are widely viewed as mostly harmless because they rarely result in physical injury. On the contrary, even when they result in no physical injury, ending PV by women and spanking by parents are basic steps to reduce violence against women, and all other human beings. This is starting to happen. Some national organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, have recently endorsed a report recognizing the harmful effects of spanking and recommending that parents not spank (Gershoff 2008). A growing number of articles and books recognize the importance of gender symmetry in PV (e.g., Dutton 2006; Ehrensaft, Moffitt, and Caspi 2004; Felson 2002; Hamel and Nicholls 2006; Straus 2009a; Stuart 2005). These changes and the inauguration of the journal *Partner Violence* signal a process that will ultimately end the current pattern of denying gender symmetry and denying the harmful effects of spanking, both of which will contribute to reducing all types of interpersonal violence, including violence against women.

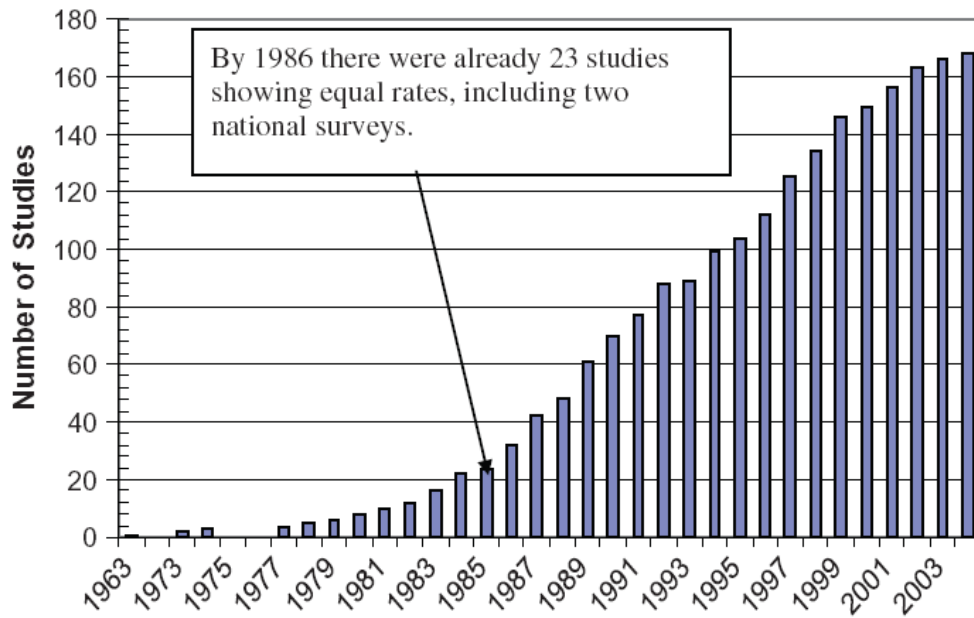


FIGURE 1 Cumulative number of studies showing similar rates of assaulting a partner by women and men.

Figure 2. Relationship Between Dominance Scale Score and Probability of Severe Assault on a Partner by Gender

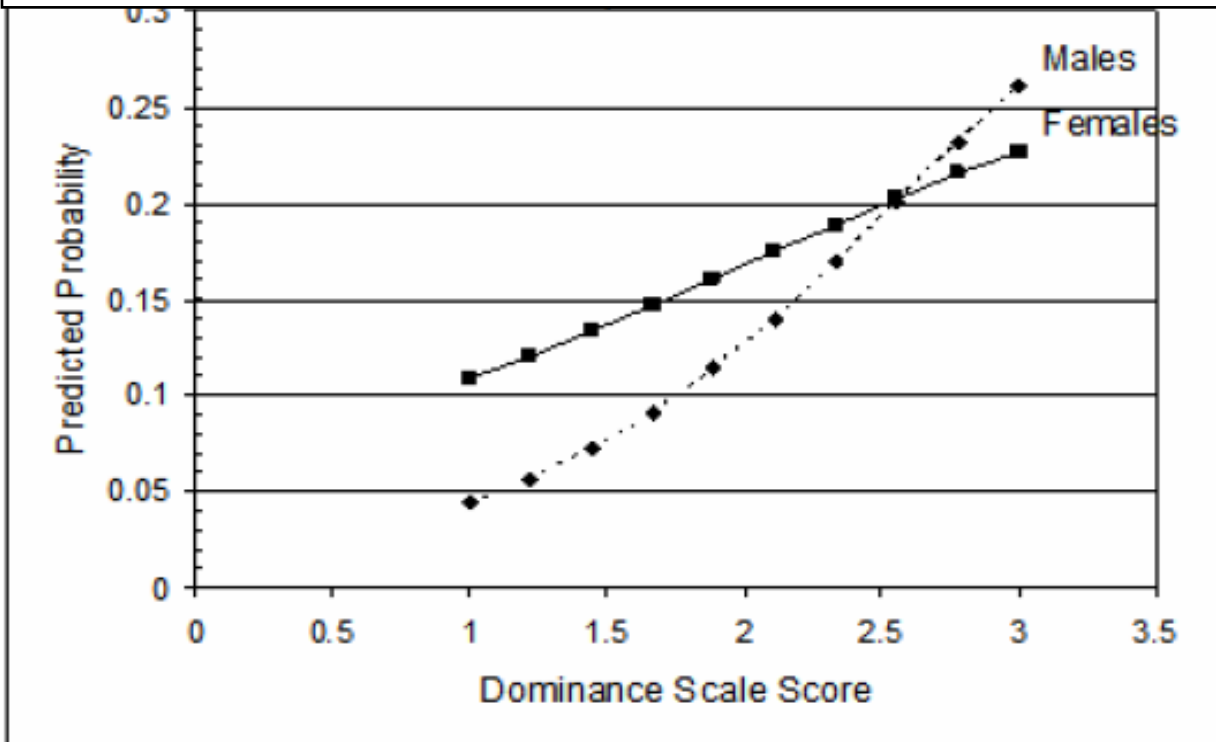




Figure 3. Disappearance of Female Violence From A Published Paper

		<u>Marital violence indexes for 1985 U.S. and 1987 Alberta survey</u>		
		U.S.	ALBERTA	
Pre-publication version (1987) Includes "Wife-to-Husband" rates	A. Husband-to-Wife			
	Overall Violence	11.3	11.2	
	Severe Violence "wifebeating"	3.0	2.3	
	B. Wife-to-Husband			
	Overall Violence	12.1	12.4	
	Severe Violence	4.4	4.7	
Published (1989) Wife-to-Husband rates have disappeared	C. Couple			
	Overall Violence	15.8	15.1	
	Severe Violence	5.8	5.5	
			<u>Marital violence indexes for 1985 U.S. and 1987 Alberta survey</u>	
			Rate Per 100 Couples U.S. Alberta* (1985) (1987)	
	A. Husband-to-Wife			
Overall Violence		11.3	11.2	
Severe Violence "Wife Beating"		3.0	2.3	
B. Couple				
Overall Violence		15.8	15.5	
Severe Violence		5.8	5.5	



Figure 4. The More Corporal Punishment as a Child the Greater the Probability of Hitting a Spouse

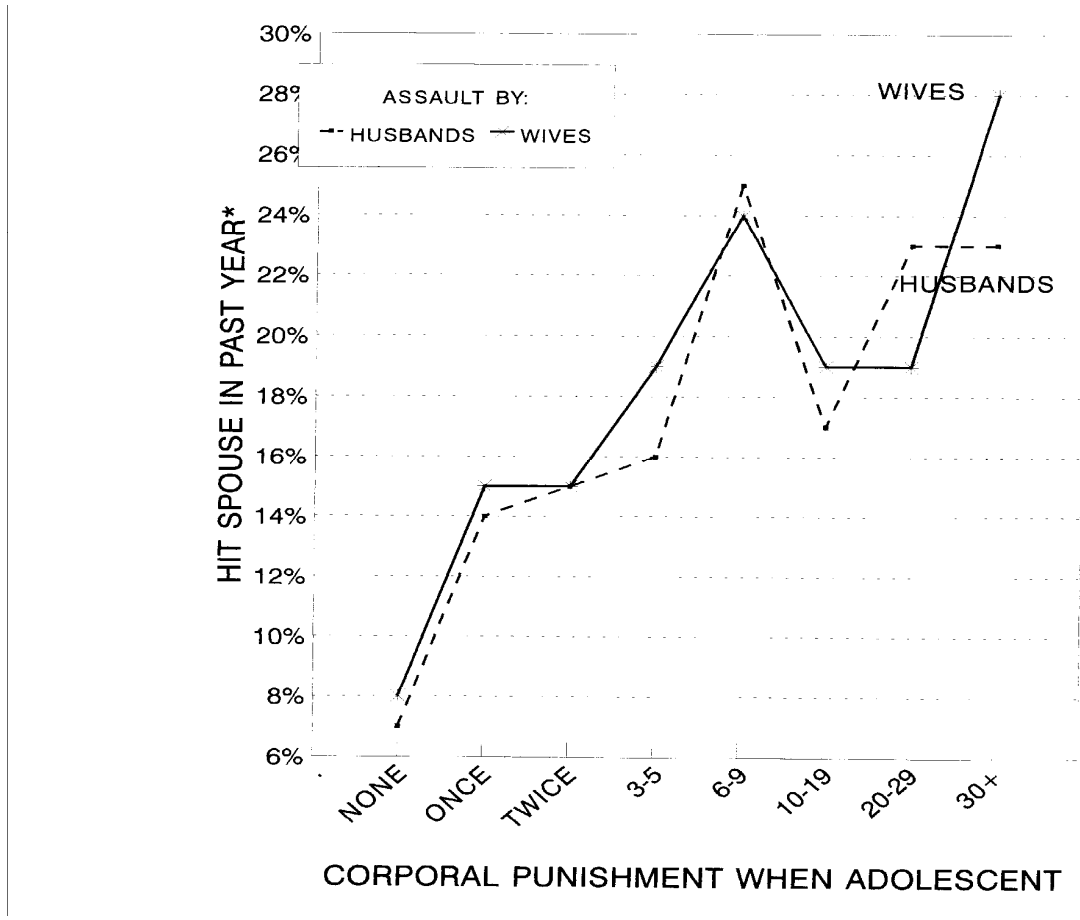
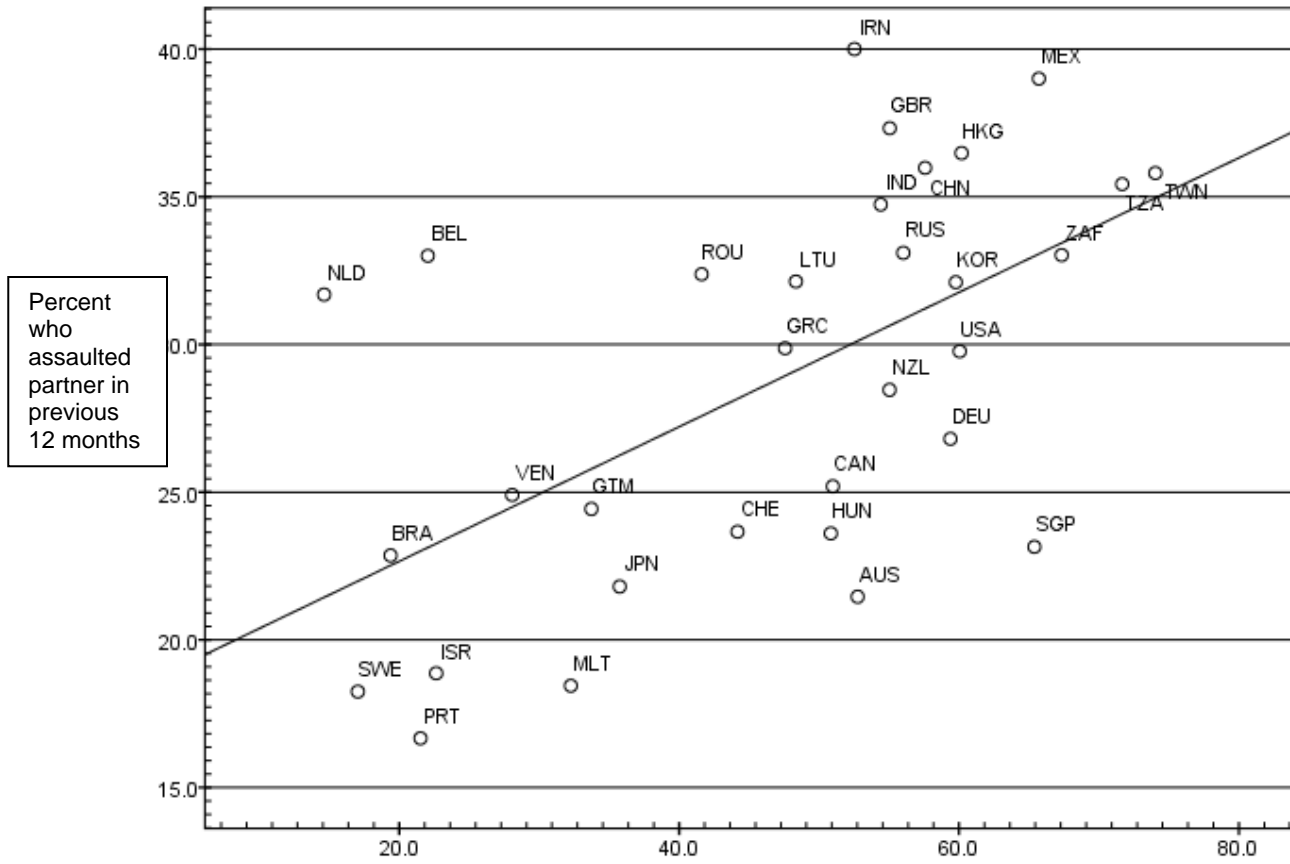


Figure 5. Nations Where More Parents Use Corporal Punishment Tend to be Nations



Where More Students Hit Dating Partners

Table 1. Ten Other Examples of the Approximately 200 Studies Showing Gender Symmetry in Assault

Study	Severity Of Assault	Perpetrator	
		Male	Female
Canadian National Survey (Lupri, 1990)	Minor	17.8%	23.3%
	Severe	10.1%	12.9%
Canadian General Social Survey (1999)	Overall rate	7.0%	8.0%
British Crime Survey (1996)	Overall rate	4.2%	4.1%
National Co-morbidity Study (Kessler, 2001)	Minor	17.4%	17.7%
	Severe	6.5%	6.2%
National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey (Straus, 1995)	Overall rate	9.1%	9.5%
	Severe	1.9%	4.5%
Dunedin Health and Development Study (US Dept of justice 1999)	Overall rate	27.0 %	34.0%
National Violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000)	Overall rate	1.3%	0.9%
Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Centers For Disease Control, 2006)	Overall rate	8.8%	8.9%
National Youth Survey (Wofford-Mihalic, Elliott, & Menard,1994)	Overall	20.2%	34.1%
	Severe	5.7%	3.8%
% of Emergency room visits for PV (Annals of Emergency Medicine, 2000)	Injury	19.0%	20.0%

Table 2. FIVE OF THE 17 GENERAL POPULATION STUDIES SHOWING MUTUAL VIOLENCE PREDOMINATES

Study	<u>Among Violent Couples:</u>		
	Both Violent	Male Only	Female Only
1. National Family Violence Survey, 1975	48%	25%	27%
2. National Co-morbidity Survey. 1990-02	54%	23%	24%
3. National Long. Study of Adolescent Health, 2001	50%	15%	35%
4. International Dating Violence Study, 2001-06	55%	16%	29%
5. International Parenting Study 2008	60%	11%	29%

Table 3. SUMMARUY OF GERSHOFF META ANALYSIS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT STUDIES

OUTCOME MEASURED	# OF STUDIES	HARMFUL EFFECT
A. EFFECTS ON CHILDREN		
Less Moral Internalization	15	87%
Aggression	27	100%
Delinquent and antisocial behavior	13	92%
Quality of parent-child relationships	13	100%
Mental health	12	100%
Victim of child abuse	10	100%
B. EFFECTS ON ADULTS		
Aggression	4	100%
Criminal and antisocial behavior	5	80%

Mental health	8	100%
Adult abuse of own child or spouse	5	100%
C. CP MORE EFFECTIVE THAN OTHER DISCIPLINE		
Compliance	5	40%

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