EFFECTS OF TYPE OF INJURY, SEX OF VICTIM, AND SEX OF PARTICIPANT ON REACTIONS TO DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS

BY

JILL HEATER

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Abstract

Research has shown that victims are often the target of blame, negative emotions, and social avoidance (Dooley, 1995; Drout & Gaertner, 1994; Lerner, 1977; Weiner, 1980). Specifically, empirical evidence shows that people often blame domestic abuse victims for their own abuse. This study examined the emotional and behavioral reactions of 118 University of Manitoba students toward an alleged victim of domestic abuse. In the context of a "decision-making" task, participants encountered another male or female student (actually a confederate) who was supposedly injured as a result of either a sports accident or partner abuse. The abused confederate was portrayed as being either in control or not in control of his or her abuse. The participant rated his or her affect toward the victim, ascribed negative or positive traits to the victim, and indicated his or her choice to work alone or work with the victim. As expected, participants felt less pity and more anger, and ascribed less positive traits toward the abuse victim, than to the accident victim. In addition, they "socially distanced" themselves from the abuse victim. Surprisingly, the female but not the male participants, displayed these negative emotional and behavioral reactions to the abuse victim. In particular, female participants avoided the female victim of "controllable" abuse, and their behavior was mediated by their negative affect.

Effects of Type of Injury, Sex of Participant, and Sex of Victim on Reactions to Domestic Abuse Victims

As is evident from the media, research literature, and possibly personal experience, spouse abuse is a serious issue. Fortunately, the seriousness of physical abuse in intimate relationships has gained increasing recognition over recent decades as a result of hard work by researchers, the feminist movement, abused women, and advocates for family peace (Dutton, 1994; Sande & Howell, 1994; Sommer, Barnes, & Murray, 1992; Straus, Gelles, & Steimetz, 1980).

Social science research and literature has buttressed the increased recognition of domestic abuse victims as a social problem by providing professional attention and empirical documentation. There were 380 articles on battered wives indexed in Sociological Abstracts between 1974 and the first quarter in 1994 (Lucal, 1995). The frequency and type of spouse abuse documented in published research in the 1970's illustrated that spouse abuse was a major social problem. In 1976, Straus and Gelles (cited in Straus et al., 1980) conducted a national survey in the United States, Physical Violence in American Families, that assessed the frequency and type of violence between husbands and wives. Straus and colleagues (1980) reported that every year one in six married people in United States committed at least one violent act against his or her partner and that one in three couples in the United States would be the victim of this violence sometime in their marriage. More specifically, results revealed that 11.4% of respondents reported being victims of low levels of violence (e.g., slapping or pushing) and 4.6% reported being victims of serious violence (e.g., kicking or biting).

In response to findings such as these, the feminist movement provided the impetus for declaring that what went on behind closed doors (i.e, in the home) was a political issue and by questioning the legitimacy of husbands' violence toward their wives. The involvement of battered wives in the social movement enhanced the visibility and credibility of domestic abuse as a social problem.

Additionally, the mass media has helped focused attention on spouse abuse as a social problem (Lucal, 1995). Popular magazines and television programs have boosted the topic of battered women into greater public awareness since the late 1970's. One consequence of increased public attention to spouse abuse over the last 20 years has been a greater assistance for abused women. In many jurisdictions there are laws specifying zero tolerance for abuse, resulting in more arrests and punishment for perpetrators, more shelters for victims, and treatment and counseling programs for the victims (Lucal, 1995; Summers & Feldman, 1984). Before the active groups in the 1970's emerged, spouse abuse was often taken less seriously. At that time, there was little consistent action taken against the abusers and there were few refuges for the victims. Abuse in the home was largely regarded as a private issue. Straus' and colleagues' (1980) statement, "Proverbs such as 'A man's home is his castle,' go a long way in giving insights into human nature and society" (p.31), illustrates this point.

If victims came forth seeking help or justice, they would often be blamed or derogated. People commonly thought that if a woman was hit, she must have deserved it (Harris & Cook, 1994). People perceived victims as either provoking the abuser or as having a weak character. Instead of the victim receiving the necessary assistance when

requested, the victim would be victimized for the second time; this time not by his or her spouse but by the legal system. Straus and colleagues (1980) cited a newspaper article that said a woman who was beaten by her husband called the police to complain and was asked by the police person on duty, "Listen lady, he pays the bills, doesn't he?" If there are no laws against domestic abuse then there will be limited resources and support for abuse victims, which will further perpetuate the vicious cycle of abuse.

In the past, people generally openly blamed, derogated, and refused to help domestic abuse victims. However, time and effort have changed some of the perceptions of abuse (Lucal, 1995). Presently, abuse against women is publicly recognized as a social problem, which has alleviated some of the negative evaluations toward abused women. The constant increase in public awareness of domestic abuse from social science literature, the social movements, and mass media have resulted in considerable gains for female abuse victims: more compassion, more laws, more social support, and more resources.

Perceptions of Victims

Stigmatization. Stigma is defined as a mark of shame (Goffman, 1963; Katz, 1979). The term stigma originated with the ancient Greeks, who used it to refer to bodily brands that were designed to expose disgrace. The ancient Greeks branded slaves who were caught in their escape attempts with the letter F, for fugitive (Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988). Today the word stigma implies disgrace, not necessarily physical disgrace but the infamy of one's attributes. If a person perceives another as possessing a different and negative characteristic or behavior (e.g., being injured), then that person

may be stigmatized (Goffman, 1963; Katz, 1979; Weiner et al., 1988). People who possess stigmatized characteristics or behaviors are often avoided and can elicit hostile responses from others.

Freedman and Doob (1968; cited in Katz, 1979) demonstrated that people who are different from others are considered deviant and are rejected. In their research, small groups of college and high school students were administered non-evaluative personality tests. Students were given feedback that their own scores were average, but that another student had a score that differed markedly from the group mean. When the students were later put to work on a group task, they tended to discriminate against their partners with the different personality scores. There were more electric shock punishments than monetary rewards given to the partner with a different personality score than to the partner with the average personality score. Based on Goffman's conception of stigma, a different personality is perceived as being an attribute that is one in the same as the person's identity and which is capable of eliciting hostile reactions from others. Therefore, the student with the different personality was perceived as a different person which elicited punitive behavior from other students.

Abuse victims, like these college and high school students with different personality scores, are perceived as differing from the norm. Abuse victims are stigmatized because their actions deviate from normative behavior; abusive relationships are not deemed as normal (Weiner, 1995). Not only is abuse seen as deviant from societal norms, but also as negative; society decries and condemns violence (Summers & Feldman, 1984). Abuse disrupts the image of the "all American family" or the "all

Canadian family." Families are traditionally viewed as being a haven from upset, not as a source of harm. Because an abuse victim represents negative, unwanted effects, others tend to partially discredit the abuse victim. It is assumed that certain behavioral characteristics (e.g., being abused) are so central in people's conception of personality, that one's behavioral characteristics may represent one's entire self (Katz, 1979). The fact that abuse victims are stigmatized implies that they are socially "marked." Consequently, people search for the origin of the stigma and the possible presence of personal responsibility (Weiner, 1995). The presence of personal responsibility can lead to blame and subsequently, when people are accountable for their negative outcomes, they are often blamed.

Victim blame. There are various theories that attempt to explain why people have the tendency to blame victims for their own victimization. It could be that someone perceives another's misfortune as: (a) a sign of sickness or guilt (Heider, 1958) or (b) a deserved consequence of that person's actions or character (Lerner, 1975, 1977).

Heider's (1958) balance theory states that people like to see a balance or consistency between outcomes and virtues. A state of harmony or balance exists if things that are associated are all positive or all negative. If the relationship between two associated things are of different signs, positive and negative, then a state of tension results. A state of imbalance causes a stress to change to a state of balance. People can resolve imbalance states by changing a cognition, altering the importance of a cognition, or adding a new cognition.

The need to maintain cognitive balance motivates people to perceive a strong

correspondence between character and behavior. People like to believe that if an individual is a "good" person, then good outcomes will happen to him or her; if one is a "bad" person, then bad outcomes will happen to him or her (Lerner & Miller, 1978). For example, a woman who suffers a negative outcome (e.g., being battered) may be seen as a bad person (e.g., one who deserves to be battered). The perception of an abuse victim as positive would create a state of cognitive imbalance that would have to be resolved by: (a) changing a cognition (e.g., denying that the abuse happened), (b) altering the importance of a cognition (e.g., he did not hit her that hard), or (c) adding a new cognition (e.g., she provoked her husband).

In the mid-1960's, Lerner began to empirically test Heider's theory regarding the perceived correspondence between one's attributes and outcomes (Lerner, 1977). From numerous empirical experiments, the just world hypothesis was formulated. The hypothesis states that individuals have a self-protective need to believe that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve and, hence, deserve what they get (Lerner, 1975; Lerner & Lichtman, 1968; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Lerner & Simmons, 1966). As injustices impose on one's world, people have a need to explain or make sense of these events in order to maintain a cognitive balance (Lerner, 1975). For example, if someone was injured, it is comforting to think that the person deserved to be injured. The justice of others' fates has clear implications for the future of the observer's own fate: If your friend was injured by his or her partner for no apparent reason, then it is possible that you could be injured by your partner for no apparent reason. Unjustified abuse then, would not make sense and would instill fear and confusion.

An anecdote by F. Lee Bailey (1971; cited in Lerner & Miller, 1978) exemplifies people's belief in a just world. Bailey described the reaction of U.S. fighter pilots in World War II to the news that a comrade had been killed in a plane crash. A common first reaction from the pilots was that the crash must have resulted from pilot error. The pilots attributed behavioral blame to their comrade. The pilots' attribution of blame to their comrade's character would have been a betrayal of their comrade. Similarly, the pilots' attribution of blame to the comrade's plane would be threatening to all pilots. If a malfunction could happen on the comrade's plane, then a similar malfunction could happen on their plane. In this anecdote, the pilots were motivated to find a behavioral explanation for their comrade's tragedy to protect themselves from the threat that their plane might malfunction.

The need to believe in a just world secures the notion that good things happen to good people and that bad things happen to bad people. The belief in a just world results in the perception that victims deserve the negative events inflicted upon them; consequently, victims are blamed for their own victimization. Victims are thought to deserve their fate because they either engage in an instigating behavior (behavioral blame) or possess a particular character trait (characterological blame; Lerner & Miller, 1978).

Behavioral blame. The just world hypothesis states that one may justify another's suffering by believing that the victim deserved his or her misfortune as a consequence of engaging in "bad" acts (Lerner & Miller, 1978). The victim is seen as being responsible in the production-of-action sense for his or her own suffering (Janoff-Bulman, 1979,

1982). If the victim did not act in a particular way, then maybe the victim would not have to suffer. Behavioral blame can be exemplified in many instances: Rape victims have been blamed for their fate because of "provocative" clothing that they were wearing or being at the places where they were attacked, such as the apartment of a male friend (Janoff-Bulman, 1982) and AIDS victims have been blamed for engaging in promiscuous or unprotected sex (Connors & Heaven, 1995).

Perceivers attribute behavioral blame to victims with the belief that they, themselves, would never behave in such a manner (Lerner & Miller, 1978). Behavioral blame represents the observers' future behavior, such that they could exert control to avoid a recurrence of a negative outcome (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). In essence, behavioral blame acts as a defense mechanism. It is comforting for people to believe that they would act differently than the victim did, therefore, altering the consequences that would lead to personal victimization. For example, when people hear of someone in an abusive relationship they often automatically think, "I would never let that happen. He/she should not have come home late." People try to exempt themselves from possible victimization by believing that they would not act in a way that would deserve suffering.

Characterological blame. The just world hypothesis also states that one may justify another person's suffering by believing that the victim deserved his or her misfortune as a consequence of possessing a "bad" character (Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1982; Lerner & Miller, 1978). The victim's traits are seen as being reprehensible. People often justify another's suffering by believing that the victim is inherently prone to suffer by virtue of a faulty disposition. Unlike behavioral blame, characterological blame is

focused on past outcomes and the qualities of the victim's self that render the victim deserving of the negative outcome (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Perceivers distance themselves from the likelihood of similar victimization by believing that they are characterologically different from the person who is suffering. The victim is perceived as having a bad disposition, whereas, the perceiver perceives himself or herself as having a good disposition. For example, a perceiver of an abused victim may attribute the victim's suffering to the victim's irritable temperament. Meanwhile, the perceiver will see himself or herself as possessing an easy-going temperament and thus, would be unlikely to suffer a similar fate.

The relationship between behavioral blame and characterological blame. The decision to attribute either behavioral or characterological blame to a victim depends on the perceiver and their interpretation of the victimization, the perceived victim controllability, and the interpersonal relationship and the physical distance between the victim and the perceiver (Lerner & Miller, 1978). If one witnesses and acknowledges injustices in environments that are removed from oneself, then there will be little threat to the perceiver. As injustices come closer to one's own life, there will be a greater threat to the perceiver and a greater need to make sense of events. Whether the perceiver attributes behavioral blame or characterological blame to the victim depends on which victim causation appears more salient to the perceiver (Lerner & Miller, 1978). For example, if an abuse victim is known to act in a hostile or provocative manner, then behavioral blame will be attributed to the victim. Alternatively, if an abuse victim is known as an unfriendly person then characterological blame will be attributed to the victim.

However, the distinction between behavioral blame and characterological blame is not always as clear as previously illustrated. A person's behavior can be perceived as the result of his or her character (e.g., a person acts violently because he or she has bad disposition) or a person's character can be perceived as the result of his or her behavior (e.g., a person has a bad character because he or she acts violently). Behavioral blame appears to be attributed to victims more frequently than characterological blame, possibly because one's behavior is more observable and amenable to change than one's character. This behavioral blame prevalence is evident in a series of experiments conducted by Janoff-Bulman, Timco, and Carli (1985), which examined the hindsight effect as a cause of victim blame. In Janoff-Bulman's and colleagues' experiments, after participants read various rape scenarios they consistently attributed more behavioral blame rather than characterological blame to the rape victim.

The relationship between behavioral blame and characterological blame is also demonstrated in an experiment by Lerner and Matthews (1967; cited in Lerner & Miller, 1978). Lerner and Matthews showed that people attributed either characterological blame or behavioral blame to a victim, depending on whether the victim was perceived as having a more salient behavioral fault or a more salient characterological fault. In this experiment, the participant and confederate could either draw a "shock" slip (where they would be shocked) or a "control" slip (where nothing would happen to them) out of a bag. When the confederate chose the shock slip first, the participant did not derogate the confederate's character. On the other hand, when the confederate picked second (the participant picked first) and picked the shock slip by default, the participant derogated the

confederate's character. The results imply that when an attribution of behavioral blame is made impossible by the victim's situation, an attribution of characterological blame will be made in order to justify the victim's suffering. If the victim's actions caused his or her suffering, then the victim will be attributed with behavioral blame. Again, people tend to attribute behavioral blame more than characterological blame, possibly because one's behavior is more observable than one's character.

A serious consequence of victim blame is that people are reluctant to help victims. Victims who are blamed are perceived as deserving their victimization. Abuse victims are often blamed for their abuse and subsequently, they receive little help. Until about 20 years ago, abuse victims were commonly seen as deserving their abuse and were often blamed for their victimization. As a consequence, little help was extended to them, there were no shelters and no emotional support.

Several studies have shown that victims who are perceived as responsible for their victimization receive little or no help. Weiner et al. (1988), measured people's helping behavior toward physically-based stigma (i.e., blindness) and mental-behavioral stigma (i.e., drug abuse). People rated victims of mental-behavioral causes as more responsible than victims of physically-based causes. Mental-behavioral stigma were perceived as being onset-controllable, whereas, physically based stigmas were perceived as being onset-uncontrollable. Consequently, people were more likely to withhold helping behaviors from victims of mental-behavioral causes and more likely to help victims of physically-based causes.

Similarly, Dooley (1995) measured people's emotional reactions and helping

behavior toward AIDS victims. It was found that people who believed AIDS victims to be responsible for their disease (i.e., intravenous drug users) were disinclined to help them. Conversely, people who believed AIDS victims to not be responsible for their disease (i.e., blood transfusion) were more inclined to help them.

Factors Affecting Blame

The just world hypothesis states that people blame victims to justify the victims' misfortunes. People perceive victims as getting what they deserved and consequently, victims are blamed for their tragedies. There are two qualifications that precede blame attribution: (a) the perceived controllability of the victim's fate (Weiner, 1985, 1986, 1995) and (b) the perceived similarity of the perceiver to the victim (Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966).

Victim controllability. People often attribute blame to a victim if the perceivers believe the victim to be in control and responsible for his or her misfortune (Weiner, 1995). Victims who are perceived as being responsible for their misfortune are seen as being in control of their misfortune and consequently, are often blamed. Alternatively, people often do not attribute blame to victims if the perceivers believe they are not in control and responsible for their misfortune. It is difficult to justify blame attribution to a victim who does not appear to be in control and responsible for his or her victimization.

Controllability is defined by Weiner (1985, 1995) as the amenability to a volitional change. A cause of an outcome that has no volition or choice is uncontrollable, whereas, a cause of an outcome that can be willfully changed is controllable. There are two significant effects that follow from people's discernment of the victims'

controllability: emotional reactions and behavioral reactions (Weiner, 1985, 1995; Weiner et al., 1988). Perceived victim controllability can give rise to anger or pity and helping behaviors. A person who attributes responsibility to a victim usually feels more anger and less sympathy toward the victim, blames the victim, is more likely to socially distance himself or herself from the victim, and is less likely to help the victim. A person who does not attribute responsibility to the victim usually feels more sympathy and less anger toward the victim, does not blame the victim, is more likely to socially interact with the victim, and is more likely to help the victim (Weiner, 1995).

Weiner's (1979; cited in Weiner, 1980) classic homework experiment demonstrates the interaction between victim controllability and subsequent helping behavior. Generally, the less control a person has over his or her misfortune, the more help that person will receive from others. In this experiment, a student who missed a class asked a fellow student if he could borrow the class notes that he missed. The student who missed class explained that he missed the class because either he could not resist going to the beach on such a beautiful day, or because he was ill. The potential note lender could either agree or disagree to lend his class notes. The results showed that the student ("helper") was more willing to lend class notes when the other student ("victim") said he missed class due to an illness than when he said he went to the beach.

A decade later, Weiner et al. (1988) performed two experiments examining the relationships between people's perceptions of victim controllability, emotional reaction, and helping behavior toward 10 stigmata. In the first experiment, it was found that university students perceived physically-based stigmata (e.g., blindness or paraplegia) as

onset-uncontrollable. Students felt more pity and were more inclined to help people with physically-based stigmata. Conversely, mental-behavioral stigmata (e.g., drug abuse or obesity) were perceived as onset-controllable. Students felt more anger and were more resistant to help people with mental-behavioral stigmata.

In the second experiment, the manipulation of perceptions of causal controllability resulted in attributional changes of affective reactions and behavioral judgements. Physically-based stigmata and mental-behavioral-based stigmata were manipulated to be either onset-uncontrollable or onset-controllable. For example, one of the mental-behavioral stigma, drug abuse, was manipulated such that the development of drug abuse was perceived as either onset-uncontrollable (i.e., pain medication) or onset-controllable (i.e., recreational use). Victims in the onset-controllable condition were judged by other students as being more responsible, were blamed more, generated greater anger, and received less personal assistance than victims in the uncontrollable conditions.

In a more recent study, Dooley (1995) manipulated the onset-controllability of AIDS transmission and measured students' positive (pity) and negative (anger) affect as predictors of helping judgements. Dooley found that the perceived controllability of AIDS transmission did not directly influence behavior (i.e., helping) but was mediated by affective reactions. The influence of controllability on helping behaviors was mediated by the affective reaction of pity but not by anger. Overall, the conclusions showed that students were more willing to help people with AIDS if they felt pity toward them, than if they felt anger towards them. However, students' feelings of anger toward people with AIDS did not inhibit their reported help-giving to such people.

The cause of spouse abuse can be perceived as either controllable or uncontrollable. For example, a victim may have been abused numerous times previously. The cause of abuse in this case is controllable; the victim has knowledge that their partner may hit them again but nonetheless, they still stay with the partner. On the other hand, a victim may have been abused for the first time. The cause of abuse in this case is uncontrollable; the victim was hit with no warning to avoid the abuse. The present experiment manipulated the abuse victim's controllability of his or her abuse and measured the participants' subsequent emotional reactions, blame attribution, and social distancing. This study predicted that people would feel more anger and less pity toward the abuse victim with controllability, and would physically distance themselves from the abuse victim with controllability.

Similarity to victim. Although victims of abuse are often blamed, derogated, and avoided, not all people feel negatively toward them. One significant factor that accounts for a person's perception of a victim is the person's perceived similarity to the victim (Lerner, 1975). The concept of identification with a victim refers to fate-of-situational similarity, not personal similarity. Some people may blame and derogate victims who are perceived as being similar to them, while other people may empathize with victims who are perceived as being similar to them. Walster (1966) states that identification with a victim leads an individual to respond to a victim with rejection. Conversely, Shaver (1970) posits that the more one sees oneself as being similar to the victim, the more one will respond with compassion.

Rejection and blame are two reactions to victims who appear to be similar, which

consequently, leads to less sympathy and assistance (Walster, 1966). Victim blame and derogation can provide the similar perceiver, who feels vulnerable to victimization, with a sense of illusory control over the likelihood of his or her own potential victimization (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990). The knowledge of a similar other being victimized can be threatening to oneself. If a person perceives himself or herself as being similar to a victimized person, then it may seem more likely that that person could be victimized as well. Blaming the victim ensures the perceiver that the victim did in fact deserve his or her victimization, and that presumably, in a similar situation, the perceiver would somehow prevent his or her victimization. It appears that blame and derogation are thrust upon victims by similar perceivers out of the perceivers' fear of a similar fate. One's sex is a variable that is commonly used as a measure of similarity to another person. Janoff-Bulman (1982) for example, found that females felt less vulnerable to rape the more they blamed the raped woman's behavior. Based on Walster's belief that people reject perceived similar victims, a woman may blame an abused woman as a defense to distance herself from her own likelihood of being abused.

On the other hand, sympathy (and consequently more assistance) is another perception that people may have toward victims who appear similar to them. Empirical evidence regarding Shaver's defensive attribution theory, however, are inconsistent (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990; Lerner & Miller, 1978). When research does support the defensive attribution theory, the findings explaining why people avoid blaming the victim are inconsistent. It is unclear whether people do not blame similar victims to ward off the prospect of being blamed themselves should they ever be victimized, or if people do not

blame similar victims in order to maintain a cognitive balance. Based on Shaver's belief that people have compassion toward perceived similar victims, a woman may avoid blaming an abused woman in the possible event of being abused herself. For example, Mary avoids blaming an abused woman in the hope that, if she is ever abused, others will not blame her.

Overview

In summary, it is argued that victims are stigmatized because they are associated with negative events. Victims who are perceived as being in control of their victimization generally evoke anger from others (Weiner, 1985, 1995). Subsequently, people often blame victims, socially distance themselves from victims, and do not provide help-giving behavior toward victims (Janoff-Bulman & Hanson Frieze, 1987, chap. 7). In the present experiment, male and female students encountered either an alleged abuse victim or an accident victim. The abuse victim appeared either in control or not in control of his or her abuse. Students' emotional reaction toward the abuse victim, trait ascriptions to the abuse victim, and social distancing from the abuse victim were compared to the students' reactions to the accident victim. The sex of participant, the sex of victim, and the type of injury, which included the cause of injury and the victim's controllability, were the independent variables. In half of the experimental conditions there was a man posing as a victim and in the other half of the experimental conditions there was a woman posing as a victim.

As noted, it is a commonly accepted belief that men are the perpetrators of spouse abuse and women are the victims of spouse abuse. However, there is abundant empirical

research that rebuts the widespread belief that only women are victims of domestic abuse. Straus and Gelles (cited in Straus et al., 1980) for example,conducted a national survey (i.e., in the United States) on domestic violence and showed that men and women are violent in 49% of violent scenarios between spouses, with equal violence against men and against women. A Canadian study showed that 38% of domestic violence consists of mutual abuse compared to 35% of husband abuse and 27% of wife abuse (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988). Another Canadian study surveyed Winnipeg, Manitoba women and found that 39% of the women had participated in some form of abuse against their male partners at some point in their relationships (Sommer et al., 1992).

Even though scientific literature over the last 20 years has shown that men are abused by their partners as frequently and as severely as women are abused, the issue of male abuse has still not entered into public awareness (Sommer et al., 1992). There are three main reasons why people have inaccurate perceptions of male abuse victims. One reason is that the media seldom report men being abused and when they do, male victims are often vilified, blamed, or disbelieved. For example, a newspaper article from the Winnipeg Free Press reported that a judge openly laughed at a man who was beaten so badly by his wife that he was left physically disabled ("Hubby Bashing," 1991). The judge said that his "petite wife could not hurt anyone." A second reason why people have inaccurate perceptions of male abuse victims is that the abuse of males in social science literature is often trivialized (Lucal, 1995). Although the abuse of men is mentioned in the literature, it is often mentioned without compassion; meanwhile, scepticism of the prevalence and severity of male abuse takes precedence (Lucal, 1995; Mills, 1984). A

third reason why people have inaccurate perceptions of male abuse victims is because of the lack of reports of abuse made by males (Sommer et al., 1992). Men may not report their abuse due to embarrassment or a misunderstanding of what constitutes abuse (Janoff-Bulman & Hanson Frieze, 1987, chap. 7). Generally, men enduring domestic abuse are in the same position as women were 20 years ago: vilified, blamed, disbelieved, and with limited resources. In the following experiment, the students' reactions to male abuse victims and female abuse victims were contrasted.

Janoff-Bulman and Hanson Frieze (1987, chap. 7) propose that men would react more to male victims than females would react female victims. Men are commonly stereotyped as being strong and powerful which is challenged when men are victimized. A man's gender-related self-concept is threatened upon witnessing another man's victimization because of the possibility of his self-concept being altered from strong and powerful, to helpless and weak. A victim is seen as powerless and helpless--the opposite of the male image. Because women are typically stereotyped as passive and helpless, victimization is less of a challenge to their gender schema. Therefore, Janoff-Bulman and Hanson Frieze believe that women would not react as much to female victims as men would react to male victims.

Pilot study. The impetus for the following study comes from the results of a pilot study (Heater & Sande, 1997). In the pilot study, the 89 participants were students from the University of Manitoba's introductory psychology participant pool. In the context of a "group problem-solving" task, participants encountered another student (male or female confederate) who had been injured as the result of either a sports accident or partner

abuse. The participants filled out a trait ascription measure and a social distance measure. An analysis of variance yielded (ANOVA) two main effects. The first main effect was for sex of victim: participants attributed less positive traits to the male victim than to the female victim. The second main effect was for cause of injury: participants attributed less positive traits to the abuse victim compared to the accident victim. In addition, a planned contrast showed that participants ascribed less positive traits to the male abuse victim than to the male accident victim, the female accident victim, and the female abuse victim. There were no effects on the social distance measure.

The present study. The present experiment is a 2 x 2 x 3 design that examined the effects of the sex of the participant, the sex of the victim, and the type of injury (cause and controllability) on the perceptions of domestic abuse victims. In this study, the participant encountered another male or female student (actually a confederate) with a fake injured arm who participated with him or her in an alleged "decision-making" experiment. During the experiment the confederate disclosed how his or her arm was broken to the experimenter just loud enough so that the other participant could overhear from an adjoining room. The confederate had an injured arm as a result of a controllable incident of partner abuse, an uncontrollable incident of partner abuse, or a sports accident. After the manipulation the participant filled out the questionnaires measuring: (a) positive or negative trait ascriptions to the victim; (b) emotional reaction toward the victim; and (c) the choice to work together or alone in the second half of the experiment.

Experimental controls. Extraneous variables in this study were controlled to ensure that each participant experienced the same experimental procedure. There was a

script for both the confederates and the experimenter to ensure that the conversation was as similar as possible from one session to the next. All the confederates (three men and four women) were as similar looking as was possible (i.e., roughly same age and clothing style), so that varying looks did not impose on the participants' perceptions. Additionally, each confederate was paired with equal numbers of male and female participants and was in each type of injury condition an equal number of times.

Hypotheses. On the basis of previous research in this area, there were four hypotheses:

1. The first hypothesis was that there would be main effects on the trait ascription and social distance measures for type of injury, collapsed across sex of participant and sex of victim. The two abuse conditions would be combined. (a) Students would ascribe less positive traits to the abuse victims than to the accident victim, and (b) students would request more social distancing from the abuse victims than from the accident victim.

2. The second hypothesis was that there would be main effects on the trait ascription and social distance measures for sex of victim, collapsed across sex of participant and type of injury: (a) Students would ascribe less positive traits to the male victim than to the female victim, and (b) students would request more social distancing from the male victim than from the female victim.

3. The third hypothesis was that there would be main effects on the trait ascription, emotional reaction, and social distance measures, for controllability in the abuse conditions collapsed across sex of participant and sex of victim: (a) Students would ascribe less positive traits to the controllable-abuse victim than to the uncontrollable-

abuse victim, (b) students would have more anger and less sympathy toward the controllable-abuse victim than toward the uncontrollable-abuse victim, and (c) students would request more social distancing from the controllable-abuse victim than from the uncontrollable-abuse victim.

4. The fourth hypothesis was that planned contrasts on the trait ascription, emotional reaction, and social distance measures would show differences between the male controllable-abuse victim and the male uncontrollable-abuse victim, the male accident victim, the female accident victim, and the female abuse victim in both the controllability conditions: (a) Students would ascribe less positive traits to the male controllable-abuse victim than to the victims in other conditions, (b) students would have more anger and less sympathy toward the male controllable-abuse victim than toward the victims in the other conditions, and (c) students would request more social distancing from the male controllable-abuse victim than from the victims in other conditions.

Method

Participants

Introductory psychology students from the University of Manitoba voluntarily participated in a study called "decision-making measurement and assessment" for course credit. There were 118 students for the final total--with 66 women and 52 men. One male participant's data were eliminated due to suspicions of the experimental manipulation; his response on the suspicion check indicated possible prior knowledge of the experimental manipulation. There were six experimental conditions to which the participants were randomly assigned: (a) male accident victim; (b) female accident

victim; (c) male controllable-abuse victim; (d) female controllable-abuse victim; (e) male uncontrollable-abuse victim; and (f) female uncontrollable-abuse victim.

Materials

The materials for this study were a script for the experimenter and the confederates (see Appendix A), the Lost-on-the-Moon task (see Appendix B; Sande & Howell, 1994), the Personal Information Questionnaire (see Appendix C), and the dependent variables, the First Impressions Questionnaire (see Appendix D), the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire (see Appendix E), and a social distance measure (see Appendix F).

Script. There was a pre-written dialogue for the experimenter and confederates to adhere to during the experimental sessions.

Lost-on-the-Moon task. The Lost-on-the-Moon (LOM) task was a decision-making task that served as the alleged purpose of the study. On the LOM, participants had to imagine that they had landed on the moon and then rank 10 items in order of importance for survival.

Personal Information Questionnaire. On the Personal Information Questionnaire (PIQ), participants provided their age, place of birth, scholastic major, future plans, sports and hobbies, work experience, and social activities.

First Impressions Questionnaire. The First Impressions Questionnaire had seven trait adjectives on 9-point Likert scales that measured the student's positive and negative trait ascriptions to the victim. The trait adjectives were leader, strong-character, independent, self-confident, honest, unassertive, and easy-to-get-along-with, with anchors

of 1 (not at all) and 9 (completely).

Emotional Reaction Questionnaire. The Emotional Reaction Questionnaire had six emotional reaction items on 9-point Likert scales that measured the student's positive (sympathy) and negative (anger) affect toward the victim. The six emotional reaction items on the pity and anger measure were used in Dooley's (1995) experiment, based on Weiner's (1985; 1988) attributional model, which examined the mediation of people's affect on their helping behavior toward people with AIDS. The three emotional reaction items (α = .92; Dooley, 1995) for the pity measure were compassionate/uncompassionate, sympathetic/unsympathetic, and understanding/not understanding. The three emotional reaction items (α = .86; Dooley, 1995) for the anger measure were angry/calm, agitated/tranquil, and annoyed/comfortable.

Social distance measure. The social distance measure consisted of two answer components. On the first component, participants had to indicate whether or not they wanted to work with the confederate on the second half of the LOM. On the second component, participants had to indicate how strongly they felt about their previous decision on a 6-point Likert scale, with anchors of very strongly want to work alone and very strongly want to work together.

Procedure

The participants met in a waiting room. The confederate always read a book in the waiting room before the other participant arrived, so that conversation before the experiment was minimized and controlled. Then, the experimenter entered and made sure that the participants were signed up accordingly. As the experimenter was checking the participants' names, she pretended to recognize one of the participants (the

confederate) and verbally established that they had met previously through her sibling. The experimenter's sibling had apparently attended high school with the confederate. The experimenter then took the confederate and participant to the laboratory.

In the laboratory, the participant and confederate sat at the same table where they followed along while the experimenter read a brief introduction. This introduction informed the students of the alleged purpose of the study (the measurement and assessment of decision making) using the LOM and summarized the content of the experiment. For the first half of the experiment, the students were told that they would fill out the Personal Information Questionnaire, the First Impressions Questionnaire, the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, and then work independently on the LOM in separate rooms. The participant and confederate worked in separate rooms for the purpose of having a private space for the manipulation to take place (the confederate disclosing cause of injury and controllability of injury to the experimenter). It was more plausible for the confederate to disclose personal information (i.e., abuse) by having the experimenter and confederate in a separate room from the participant. For the second half of the experiment, the participants were told that they would work either alone or together on the LOM.

After the instructions, the confederate moved to a separate adjoining room. The door separating the two rooms was left slightly ajar during the experiment except for when the experimenter exchanged the PIQ for the participants. The experimenter gave each student the PIQ and the LOM task. The PIQ, the First Impressions Questionnaire, and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire were completed before the LOM commenced so that the manipulation would be fresh in the participant's memory when the participant

was filling out the dependent measures. Once the PIQ was completed, the experimenter exchanged these forms between the students and then handed out the First Impressions Questionnaire (trait ascription) and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire. As the experimenter picked up the PIQ form from the confederate, she asked how the confederate hurt her or his arm. The confederate either replied that she or he was hurt in a squash accident or by her or his partner hitting her or him with a broom (cause of injury). If the confederate mentioned that he or she was hit by his or her partner then the confederate added that either the abuse had happened before or that it had never happened before (controllability). After the First Impressions Questionnaire and Emotional Reaction Questionnaire were completed, the students completed the first half of the LOM.

After the first half of LOM was completed, the experimenter began the second half of the experiment. The students were given the third dependent variable measure: the option to work together (i.e., working together using both responses to LOM) or alone (i.e., working alone using a copy of the other student's responses to LOM). The option to work together or alone measured the student's desire to socially interact with or socially distance themselves from the victim.

Once the second phase of the LOM was complete, the students completed a sequential suspicion check to ensure that they had not discerned the manipulation (see Appendix H). At the end of all of the experimental sessions, written feedback explaining the rationale and results, was made available to all participants (see Appendix I).

Results

The sequential suspicion check revealed that one participant was suspicious of the

manipulation. Accordingly, the data from this participant were omitted from the analysis. Preliminary analyses including race of participant as a factor revealed no main effects or interactions involving race of participant. Therefore, data from participants of all races were used.

Descriptive Statistics

The frequencies for the dichotomous social distance measure are presented in Table 1. The descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, possible range, and actual range) for the continuous measures are presented in Table 2.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Table 1

Frequencies for Dichotomous Social Distance Measure (N = 118)

	Frequency	Percent
Work Together	84	71.2
Work Alone	34	28.8

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Dependent Measures (N = 118)

Variable	M	SD	Possible Range	Actual Range
Social Distance [a]	4.02	1.15	1 - 6	1 - 6
Emotional Reaction [b]				
Pity	18.82	5.00	3 - 27	3 - 27
Anger	5.59	2.60	3 - 27	3 - 15
Trait Ascription [c]	46.57	7.80	7 - 63	21 - 61

Note. [a] low values indicate preference to work alone.

[b] low values indicate less pity and less anger.

[c] low values indicate ascriptions of less positive traits.

Inferential Analyses

Dichotomous Social Distance Measure. A series of chi-square analyses were performed to determine the effects of sex of participant, sex of victim, and type of injury on the participants' decision about whether to work alone or work with the victim on the second half of the LOM. The first analysis revealed a significant effect due to type of injury collapsed across sex of participant and sex of victim, χ^2 (4, N = 118) = 15. 61, p < .004. More participants choose to work with the accident victim (92%), than with the uncontrollable-abuse victim (68%) or with the controllable-abuse victim (55%). There were no significant differences due to sex of victim, χ^2 (2, N = 118) = .10, ns, or due to sex of participant, χ^2 (2, N = 118) = 1.54, ns.

Separate chi-square analyses were computed for the female and male participants to see if the type of injury effect would hold for both sexes of participants. The chi-square for the male participants yielded no effects for type of injury collapsed across sex of victim. Eighty-seven percent of male participants chose to work with the accident victim, 67% chose to work with the uncontrollable-abuse victim, and 74% chose to work with the controllable-abuse victim. The chi-square for the female participants yielded a significant effect for type of injury collapsed across sex of victim, χ^2 (2, N = 66) = 16.50, p < .001. Ninety-six percent of the female participants chose to work with the accident victim, 64% with the uncontrollable-abuse victim, and 38% with the controllable-abuse victim. There was no significant difference between the female participants' choice to work with the uncontrollable-abuse victim or the controllable-abuse victim.

Separate follow-up chi-square analyses for female participants were performed to

see if the type of injury effect was the same for both sexes of victims. The chi-square analysis for the female victims yielded an effect for type of injury, $\chi^2(2, N = 33) = 16.86$, $p < .002$. More female participants chose to work with the female accident victim (100%), than with the female uncontrollable-abuse victim (75%) or the female controllable-abuse victim (22%). Furthermore, the female participants chose to work with the female uncontrollable-abuse victim (75%) more than the female controllable-abuse victim (22%), $\chi^2(1, N = 20) = 4.07$, $p < .05$. There was no effect for type of injury for the male victims $\chi^2(2, N = 33) = 4.61$, ns. Female participants chose to work with the male accident victim 90% of the time, the male uncontrollable-abuse victim 60% of the time, and the male controllable-abuse victim 50% of the time.

Continuous Social Distance Measure. Responses from the continuous social distance measure were analysed by using a 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sex of victim) x 3 (type of injury) ANOVA. There was a significant main effect for type of injury $F(2, 106) = 3.23$, $p < .05$. A Neuman-Keuls test revealed that participants more strongly preferred to work with the accident victim ($M = 4.37$), than with the uncontrollable-abuse victim ($M = 3.90$) or the controllable-abuse victim ($M = 3.80$). There was also a significant Sex of Participant x Type of Injury interaction, $F(2, 106) = 5.24$, $p < .01$. Neuman-Keuls tests revealed that the female participants more strongly preferred to work with the accident victim ($M = 4.52$), than the controllable-abuse victim ($M = 3.24$). Additionally, the male participants more strongly preferred to work with the controllable-abuse victim ($M = 4.42$), than did the female participants ($M = 3.24$; see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3

Mean Scores from Sex of Participant x Type of Injury on the Continuous Social Distance Measure

	Sex of Participant	
Type of Injury	Female	Male
Accident	4.52_{a}	4.13
Uncontrollable Abuse	3.77	4.06
Controllable Abuse	3.24_{b}	4.42_{a}

Note. Mean scores that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Neuman-Keuls multiple comparison method.

Emotional Reaction Measure. The analyses on the emotional reaction measure were conducted separately for the anger and pity items. The three anger items--angry, agitated, and annoyed, were summed into an anger index. The inter-item reliability of the three anger items yielded a standardized item alpha of .67. Although the internal consistency among the anger items is not high, it does meet the minimum alpha level of .65 to be considered a useful measure (Aron & Aron, 1994).

A 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sex of victim) x 3 (type of injury) ANOVA on the anger index yielded a main effect for type of injury, F (2, 106) = 4.10, $p < .02$. A Neuman-Keuls test showed that participants had less anger toward the accident victim (M = 4.63), than toward the uncontrollable-abuse victim (M = 5.80) and the controllable-abuse victim (M = 6.30). In general, participants had low levels of anger toward all victims, as shown in Table 2.

The three pity items--compassionate, sympathetic, and understanding, were summed into a pity index. The standardized item alpha for the three pity items was .72. A 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sex of victim) x 3 (type of injury) ANOVA on the pity index yielded a main effect for type of injury, F (2, 106) = 11.68, $p < .000$. A Neuman-Keuls test showed that participants had more pity toward the accident victim (M = 21.87), than toward the uncontrollable-abuse victim (M = 17.32) and the controllable-abuse victim (M = 17.42).

Trait Ascription Measure. The seven trait items--dishonest, hard-to-get-along-with, independent, leader, self-confident, strong-character, and unassertive, were summed into a trait index. The negative trait item values--dishonest, hard-to-get-along-with, and unassertive--were reversed so that higher scores on the index represent more positive trait

ascriptions. The standardized item alpha for the seven trait items was .72. A 2 (sex of participant) x 2 (sex of victim) x 3 (type of injury) ANOVA for the trait index yielded a main effect and an interaction. The ANOVA revealed a main effect for type of injury, F (2, 106) = 21.36, $p < .000$. A Neuman-Keuls test showed that participants ascribed more positive traits to the accident victim (M = 52.26), than to the uncontrollable-abuse victim (M = 44.45) and the controllable-abuse victim (M = 43.27). The ANOVA also showed a Sex of Participant x Type of Injury interaction, F (2, 106) = 3.211, $p < .05$. A Neuman-Keuls test showed that female participants ascribed more positive traits to the accident victim (M = 54.26), than to the uncontrollable-abuse victim (M = 43.45) and the controllable-abuse victim (M = 42.76; see Table 4). The female participants also ascribed more positive traits to the accident victim (M = 54.26), than the male participants ascribed to the accident victim (M = 49.20), the uncontrollable abuse victim (M = 45.67), or the controllable abuse victim (M = 43.84). Participants generally attributed more positive traits to all victims, as shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 4 about here

Table 4

Mean Scores from Sex of Participant x Type of Injury on the Trait Ascription Measure

	Sex of Participant	
Type of Injury	Female	Male
Accident	54.26_{a}	49.20_{bx}
Uncontrollable Abuse	43.45_{b}	45.67_{b}
Controllable Abuse	42.76_{by}	43.84_{b}

Note. Mean scores that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Neuman-Keuls multiple comparison method.

Predictors of Trait Ascription and Social Distance. Weiner's (1980) attribution model states that an observer's emotional reaction toward a victim affects the observer's subsequent responsibility and blame attribution to the victim, and that the observer's blame attribution to the victim then affects the observer's subsequent help-giving behavior to the victim. Two multiple regression analyses were performed to determine if the participants' trait ascriptions to the victims were predicted by their emotional reactions toward the victims, and if the participants' social distancing from the victims was predicted by their emotional reactions and trait ascriptions to the victims (see Table 5 and 6).

The first regression analysis examined participants' emotional reactions toward the victims as predictors of their trait ascriptions. Participants' pity ($\beta = .45$) and anger ($\beta = .19$) toward the victim accounted for 28 % of the variance of their trait ascriptions toward the victim, $F (2, 115) = 22.85$, $p < .000$. Separate regression analyses were performed to see if emotional reaction as a predictor of trait ascription would hold for both sexes of participants. A regression analysis for the female participants showed that pity ($\beta = .50$) and anger ($\beta = .23$) toward the victim accounted for 34 % of the variance of their trait ascriptions to the victim, $F (1, 63) = 16.28$, $p < .000$. A regression analysis for the male participants showed that pity ($\beta = .39$) accounted for 23 % of the variance of their trait ascription toward the victim, $F (1, 50) = 12.45$, $p < .001$. Anger ($\beta = .17$) had no significant effect on male participants' trait ascription toward the victim.

The second regression analysis examined participants' emotional reactions and trait ascriptions, as predictors of their social distancing from the victims. The participants' anger ($\beta = -.13$) and pity ($\beta = .05$) toward the victims were not predictive of

their social distancing from the victims. However, participants' trait ascriptions (β = -.23) to the victim accounted for 8 % of the variance in their choice to work alone or work with the victim, F (1, 116) = 7.72, $p < .006$. Separate regression analyses were performed to see if trait ascription as a predictor of social distancing would hold for both sexes of participants. Female participants' trait ascriptions (β = -.28) accounted for 9 % of the variance in their choice to work alone or work with the victim, F (1, 64) = 5.11, $p < .03$. Male participants' trait ascriptions (β = -.20) had no effect on their choice to work alone or work with the victim.

Insert Table 5 and 6 about here

Table 5

Summary of Regression Coefficients of Predictor Variables on Trait Ascription

Predictors	B	SE	β
All Participants (N = 118)			
Trait Ascriptions (R^2 = .28)			
Anger	.57	.25	.19*
Pity	.70	.13	.45***
Female Participants (N = 66)			
Trait Ascriptions (R^2 = .34)			
Anger	.79	.36	.23*
Pity	.84	.18	.50***
Male Participants (N = 52)			
Trait Ascriptions (R^2 = .23)			
Anger	.43	.34	.17 n.s.
Pity	.54	.19	.39***

Note. *p < .05. ***p < .000.

Table 6

Summary of Regression Coefficients of Predictor Variables on Continuous Social Distancing

Predictors	B	SE	β
All Participants (N = 118)			
Social Distance (R^2 = .08)			
Anger	-.06	.04	-.13 n.s.
Pity	.01	.02	.05 n.s.
Trait Ascription	-.04	.02	-.24**
Female Participants (N = 66)			
Social Distance (R^2 = .09)			
Anger	-.05	.06	-.11 n.s.
Pity	.02	.04	.08 n.s.
Trait Ascription	-.04	.02	-.28*
Male Participants (N = 52)			
Social Distance (R^2 = .09)			
Anger	-.07	.06	-.19 n.s.
Pity	.00	.03	.02 n.s.
Trait Ascription	-.03	.02	-.20 n.s.

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine people's emotional and behavioral reactions to domestic abuse victims. In particular, the first research question that provided the impetus for this experiment was whether or not participants, after a real-life encounter with an alleged victim, would avoid an abuse victim more than another victim? The second research question was if they were to avoid an abuse victim more, would their emotional reactions and victim blame act as mediators of their avoidance behavior? Theories and past research state that people generally avoid others who have endured a negative event, especially those who appear to be responsible for their mishaps (Connors & Heaven, 1995; Goffman, 1963; Weiner, 1980; Weiner et al., 1988). Additionally, people may avoid a stigmatized person (i.e., victim) if they have negative affect toward this person or perceive themselves as being similar with the victim (Walster, 1966; Weiner, 1980; Weiner et al., 1988). Is it that everybody avoids every abuse victim? The present study revealed that some people avoid some abuse victims. Precisely which type of people avoided which type of abuse victims is discussed in the ensuing paragraphs, with explanations from supporting theories on people's attributions to victims.

Based on past research on reactions to victims (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Weiner, 1980; Weiner et al., 1988), it was hypothesized that participants would perceive the accident victim and the abuse victims differently. In particular, it was hypothesized that more participants would choose to work alone when with the abuse victims than with the accident victim and that participants would ascribe less positive traits to the abuse victims than to the accident victim. These hypotheses were partially supported by this study.

Overall, it was found that participants more strongly preferred to work alone when with the abuse victims than with the accident victim. As well, participants ascribed less positive traits and felt more anger and less pity toward the abuse victims than toward the accident victim. Post-hoc analyses for the sex of participant, sex of victim, and type of injury variables revealed unexpected, yet interesting differences, due to the sex of participant and the sex of victim. It was found that the female participants, but not the male participants, ascribed less positive traits to the abuse victims than to the accident victim and that the female participants' anger mediated their trait ascriptions. Additionally, the female participants' trait ascriptions to the abuse victims were less positive than were those made by the male participants. Consequently, more female participants chose to work alone when in experimental sessions with the female abuse victims than with the female accident victim and all male victims. Male participants' choices to work alone were not affected by the sex of victim or type of injury.

The most striking result of the experiment is that the female participants' anger affected their behavioral reaction toward the abuse victims, such that they ascribed less positive traits and avoided the abuse victims more than did the male participants. Further, the female participants avoided the female abuse victims more than they avoided the male abuse victims. However, the female participants did not avoid every female abuse victim, but in particular, avoided those who appeared to be in control of their abuse. Why is it that the female participants seem to avoid the female controllable-abuse victim more than any other victim?

One might be tempted to conclude that the avoidance behavior from the controllable-abuse victim represents a callousness by the female participants. However,

this can be disputed given that the female participants did not avoid the male abuse victims. Thus, it appears that the female participants displayed more sympathy toward the abuse victims of the opposite sex than toward those of the same sex, and they tended to avoid abuse victims of the same sex.

Generally, when people hear of another's misfortune, a chain of reactions results--responsibility attribution, affect, and degree of behavioral interaction with the victim (Weiner, 1980; Weiner et al., 1988). However, an observer's reactions toward a perceived similar victim may be altered because of the implied threat that a similar victim poses to the observer (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966). Observers who perceive a victim as being similar to them (i.e., same sex), may blame and distance themselves from the victim as a form of self-defense or reassurance against similar victimization (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Walster, 1966). Victim blame and social distance can allow the observers to feel a sense of illusory control over the likelihood of their personal victimization by believing that they do not possess a similar character or behaviors (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990; Walster, 1966). In fact, in a separate study Janoff-Bulman (1982) found that females who blamed a similar victim felt less vulnerable to victimization themselves.

The female participants in this experiment may have ascribed less positive traits to, and avoided the female victims because they are more similar to them than to the male victims. The female participants may have felt threatened by knowing that another university female was abused by her boyfriend. If another university female was abused, then it may make the female participant think twice about her own relationships and her own vulnerability to abuse. Trait derogation may have allowed the female participant to

believe that the female abuse victims were responsible for their abuse, and social distance may have allowed the female participant to feel reassured that abuse would not happen to her by believing that she is not the type of person to be abused. By ascribing negative traits to the female abuse victims the female participants engaged in one of two types of blame (i.e., characterological and behavioral; Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Lerner & Miller, 1978). By viewing the victim as possessing different (and negative) traits, the threat arising from seeing oneself as similar to the female abuse victim can be relieved. Additionally, the victim's abuse can be justified by believing that she deserved her abuse by virtue of a faulty character (Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Lerner & Miller, 1978). In future studies, the employment of a similarity measure or a manipulation of perceived similarity could ascertain the relationship between participants' perceived similarity and their emotional and behavioral reactions to the victims.

In addition to perceived similarity, the female participants' social distancing from the female controllable-abuse victim may in part be an expression of their anger toward the abuse victims. Regression analyses showed that the female participants' anger predicted their trait ascriptions, and that their trait ascriptions predicted their social distancing. The female participants may have expressed their anger toward the female abuse victims because the victims were of the same sex as the participants and were therefore, perceived as being similar. Given that one's sex is a source of personal and group identification, the female participants may have felt anger toward the female abuse victim for reinforcing the stereotype of women as weak and submissive to males.

Conversely, the regression analyses did not show the male participants' anger as a mediator of their emotional or behavioral reactions to the victims. The male participants'

anger may not have affected their behavioral reactions because of the common belief that abuse victims are women and not men. Since abused men are often ignored, disbelieved, and not taken seriously, it may have been easier for the male to feel dispassionate and to not be guided by their emotions toward male abuse victims (Lucal, 1995; Sommer et al., 1992). Perhaps the male participants may not have felt that the male abuse victim was stigmatizing the male sex to the same extent that the female participants' felt that the female abuse victim was stigmatizing the female sex.

The external validity of this experiment is enhanced by the real-life ambience of the experimental interaction between the participant and the alleged victim. However, the use of a university student participant pool may limit the generalizability of the results. The participants in this study were undergraduate university students and therefore, may not be representative of the general population of adult Canadians. University students tend to be younger, are more exposed to recent research literature, and have less crystallized social and political attitudes than a population from the later stages of life (Sears, 1986). The young age of university students may contribute to their greater understanding and less prejudicial attitudes toward issues such as victimization, which may account for their lack of difference in their perceptions of the male and female abuse victims. Consequently, systematic replication using other populations and situations could better assess the reliability and generalizability of this study's empirical findings.

In conclusion, the results showing that some of the participants are somewhat angry and unsympathetic toward victims through victim derogation and avoidance is in accordance with previous research literature (Connors & Heaven, 1995; Heater & Sande, 1997; Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Weiner et al., 1988). The

unique finding of this study was that more women avoided the female victim of controllable abuse and it is suggested that their perceived similarity mediated their emotional and behavioral reactions.

Twenty years ago, it was typical for abused women to be disbelieved, derogated, and blamed for their abuse. Consequently, there were few resources and people for abuse victims to turn to for assistance. Today, however, it appears that people's reactions to abused women have changed, as is evident by the number of shelters, counseling services, and laws enforced to aid abuse victims. Similarly, the results of this study show that men's emotional and behavioral reactions are not negative toward the abuse victims. It is good news that the male participants' behaviors toward the abuse victims are different than the common past belief, that the victim deserved his or her abuse--the men did not derogate their character or avoid working with them. Unfortunately, the bad news is that although the female participants also did not have negative emotional and behavioral reactions to the male abuse victims, they surprisingly had negative reactions to the abused women.

The results of this study are paradoxical. It is a common belief that men are the perpetrators and women are the victims of spouse abuse. Subsequently, one would think that women would feel more sympathetic to abused women than men would. However, it was the men, more than the women, who were more sympathetic to the abused women. It is counterintuitive to think that women would avoid abused women and disturbing, if women went as far as to not assist abused women. If a woman was injured, it would seem only natural for her to turn to a peer or fellow woman for help. Unfortunately, if this study's results are representative of women's behavior toward abused women, then

an abused woman may not receive the help that she needs from another woman.

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Appendix A

Script

The experimental sessions will always begin in a waiting room. In the waiting room will be one real participant and one confederate with a bad bruise and inflammation on his or her forearm, requiring bandaging. The confederate will always be reading in the waiting room before the other participant arrives, so that there will be no encouragement of conversation prior to the experiment.

Experimenter: I am looking for ____ and ____ for the Duncan experiment. (Participants raise hands). Didn't you used to go to high school with my sister? (Directed at confederate; sister, if female confederate and brother, if male confederate)

Confederate: Yes. I thought you looked familiar. How is your family doing?

Experimenter: Quite well, thank you. How about your family?

Confederate: Pretty good. My sister moved to Toronto, so it is just my parents and I in the city.

Experimenter: Are you working at Safeway still?

Confederate: Yes. They pay pretty good, you know.

Experimenter: That is good to hear, I suppose. Well, you are both here so we might as well get started. If you just want to follow me to the laboratory, please.

The experimenter will take the participant and the confederate to the laboratory and together they will go over the outline for the experimental session. They will be told that the purpose of the experiment is to assess and measure decision making using the

Lost-on-the-Moon (LOM) task. In the first half of the experiment, the students (one confederate, the other the real participant) will fill out the Personal Information Questionnaire, the First Impressions Questionnaire, the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, and work on the LOM task independently. In the second half of the experiment, the participants will have the opportunity to work together or alone on the LOM (social distance measure).

Experimenter: Alright. If you can both sit at this table, where I can describe to you the overview of this experiment. The experiment is composed of three questionnaires and two parts to the Lost-on-the-Moon (LOM) task, which is the primary purpose of this study. The LOM is a decision-making task that measures and assesses how people reach decisions. It should take approximately half an hour to complete everything.

In the first half of the experiment one of you will move to the other room and the other person will stay in this room. You will both fill out a Personal Information Questionnaire, the First Impressions Questionnaire, the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, and the independent half of the LOM task. The reason you will be working in separate rooms is to try to make your independent work on the LOM seem as individualized as possible. For the second half of the experiment you will have a choice when working on the LOM, but I will tell you more about that when the time comes. Any questions at this point?

Confederate: Do we have the same amount of time for both parts of the LOM?

Experimenter: Yes. You will have approximately 10 min for both sections.

First the participants will fill out the Personal Information Questionnaire. Once these are completed the experimenter will exchange each of their forms to the other student as a guide for the First Impressions Questionnaire. As the experimenter is picking up the confederate's questionnaire, she will ask the confederate how he or she injured his or her arm. The confederate will either reply that he or she hurt himself or herself playing squash or that his or her partner hit him or her with a broom during an argument. If the arm is injured due to an argument with his or her partner, the confederate will indicate whether or not he or she was in control of the argument (i.e., abuse has never happened before or abuse has happened before).

Experimenter (once in the room with the confederate): How did you hurt your arm, ___?

A. Confederate: Oh, I took a bad trip playing squash yesterday.

A. Experimenter: Is everything going to be O. K.?

A. Confederate: Oh yeah. Just a little time.

B. Confederate: Oh. My boyfriend/girlfriend and I had an argument last night. He/she hit me with a broom.

B. Experimenter: Is everything O. K.?

B. Confederate: Oh yeah. I should have known better not to have shown up late. I have been through it before with him/her. He/she spazes over things like being late.

OR

B. Confederate: Oh yeah. It was quite a shock. He/she never has done anything like that before.

A. and B. Experimenter: I hope things get better.

Once each participant has a moment to look over the other participant's Personal Information Questionnaire, they will then fill out two of the dependent variables, the First Impressions Questionnaire and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire. Following the completion of the First Impressions Questionnaire and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, the experimenter will pick up their completed questionnaires and distribute the independent half of the LOM to each of the participants (who are still in separate rooms).

After the first half of the experiment is complete, the participants will be told of their option to work together (i.e., working together using both responses from the first part of the LOM) or alone (i.e., working alone using a copy of the other's responses to the first half of the LOM) for the second half of the LOM. The students will indicate whether they would like to work together or alone for the second half of the LOM on the social distance measure. The participants will be told that each of their decisions does count but ultimately the decision is up to a "randomization chart." The alleged reason for the randomization is to make sure that overall there are even numbers of experiments where students work together and alone.

Experimenter: I told you earlier that in the second part of the experiment you would have some choice. You will be doing the LOM task again, under somewhat different conditions. One choice you have is for you and the other participant to work together, and to combine your answers into a group decision. The other choice is to complete the LOM task again, but this time you will have a copy of the other participant's answers from the first part, and you can take these into consideration when doing the task a second

time. You both get to vote on which option you prefer, and your preferences will be taken into account. For this experiment, we need people in both options. Just mark your choice on this slip of paper and I will be back to collect it in a minute.

(After slips are collected). It turns out that we need people in the alone condition, so you will be doing the second phase by yourself. I will give you the other person's answers from the first phase, and I want you to take them into consideration when doing the task again.

Once participants finish the second part of the LOM independently they must fill out a suspicion check to make sure they were not aware of the manipulations. They are informed of the written feedback that they will receive after all the experimental sessions are completed and are dismissed.

Appendix B

Lost-on-the-Moon

Your space ship has just crash-landed on the moon. You were scheduled rendezvous with the mother ship 200 miles away on the lighted side of the moon, but the rough landing has ruined your ship and destroyed all the equipment on board, except for the 10 items listed below.

Your crew's survival depends on reaching the mother ship, so you must choose the most critical items available for the 200-mile trip. Your task is to rank the 10 items in terms of their importance for survival. Place Number 1 by the most important item, Number 2 by the second, and so on through Number 10, the least important.

___ Box of matches

___ 50 feet of nylon rope

___ Solar-powered portable heating unit

___ One case of dehydrated milk

___ Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)

___ Magnetic compass

___ Signal flares

___ First-aid kit containing injection needles

___ Parachute silk

___ Two .45 caliber pistols

Appendix C

Personal Information Questionnaire

Please briefly answer the following questions in point form or sentences.

1. What is your age?

2. Where were you born?

3. What are you planning to get your major (degree) in?

4. What are your plans for the new year?

5. What sports do you play, or what are your hobbies?

6. Did you have a summer job? If you answered, "yes," where?

7. What sort of social activities do you like to partake in (i.e., clubs, theater, etc.)?

Appendix D

First Impressions Questionnaire

We are curious to know how people's first impressions of other people affect decision-making (i.e., impression management, indecisiveness, reliability, results, etc.) involved in solving problems. People are constantly making decisions with other people around. We are interested in how the perception of other people's personalities toward people in close proximity influence decisions. We are interested in how your first impressions will affect your completion of the Lost-On-The-Moon task.

Please indicate honestly how you would rate the other student, based on what you know of him or her at this time. Your answers will be confidential.

Circle one number on each scale.

1. **Dishonest**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

2. **Leader**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

3. **Unassertive**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

4. **Independent**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

5. **Hard-to-get-along-with**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

6. **Strong-character**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

7. **Self-confident**
not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 completely

Appendix E

Emotional Reaction Questionnaire

We are curious to know how other people's emotional reaction to others in close proximity affects their decision-making abilities. Please indicate honestly how you would rate your feelings toward the other student based on your brief introduction with him or her. Circle one number on each scale.

Your answers will be confidential.

1. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Compassionate **Uncompassionate**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Angry **Calm**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Understanding **Not Understanding**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Agitated **Tranquil**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Sympathetic **Unsympathetic**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. You feel_____ toward the other student.

Annoyed **Comfortable**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix F

Social Distance Measure

In the second half of the experiment you have the opportunity to work alone or together on
the Lost-on-the-Moon task. Please indicate below what condition you would make you feel most comfortable to work in. Your answer will be confidential.

_____ ALONE _____ TOGETHER

Based on the answer you just indicated, either "alone" or "together," how strongly do you feel about your answer (how much is your answer how you really feel)? Please circle one number below, regarding how you feel about your answer.

I feel _____ about working alone or working together in the second part of the Lost-on-the-Moon task.

____(+3) Very strongly want to work together

____(+2) Strongly

____(+1) Slightly

____(-1) Slightly

____(-2) Strongly

____(-3) Very strongly want to work alone

Appendix G

Sequential Check

Do you have any questions or comments about your experience in this study?

In your own words, state what you believe is the purpose of this study.

Was there anything about the research procedure that puzzled you or seemed unusual to you?

Appendix H

Information Form

In the 1997-98 academic year, you participated in a Psychology study code-named Duncan. For the study you participated in, you were involved in a decision-making task, the Lost-on-the-Moon, and completed various information sheets and questionnaires. There was the Personal Information Questionnaire, the First Impressions Questionnaire, and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire.

The purpose of this study was to measure people's perceptions of male and female spouse abuse victims. In the past, many people seemed to blame and derogate abuse victims. However, as time goes by, the recognition of domestic abuse is increasing and resulting in lower victim blame and derogation. Victim blame and derogation recognition mostly pertains to female abuse victims not male abuse victims. The other participant you were working with was actually a confederate. A confederate is a person who pretends to be a participant but actually works with the experimenter. The confederate, if you can recall, was injured either due to a squash accident or by his or her partner hitting him or her with a broom. If the confederate in your experiment was in a fight with his or her partner, then the confederate would have also mentioned that either the abuse has happened before or that the abuse has never happened before.

There is one prime reason why a confederate was used in the experiment. The most important reason is that if you knew that the other participant (the confederate) was actually a confederate and not truly injured, then your marked impression of the injured confederate would not have been the same. When you filled out the First Impressions Questionnaire and the Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, we were measuring your perception of male and female abuse and accident victims and your emotional reaction to the victim. If you had known who the confederate actually was, you might have answered in a different way. You might have answered in a fashion that you thought was more "appropriate" (demand characteristics). In order to obtain results that generalize to most other types of "real" life settings, the measured situations have to be as close to real life as possible. An imagined situation is not quite the same as a true situation.

Another reason why a confederate was used is because experimental control is very important when conducting experiments. By using a confederate we can help ensure that every experimental session is the same. In addition, it would be extremely difficult and unlikely to find men and women who have had their arms injured at the same time due to a squash accident or partner abuse.

We were measuring your negative or positive trait ascriptions made to the other student (the confederate) and your emotional reaction to the other student. These trait ascriptions and emotional reactions were indicated on the First Impressions Questionnaire and Emotional Reaction Questionnaire, respectively. We also measured your desired social interaction with or social distancing from the other student. The choice you made on the second half of the Lost-on-the-Moon task indicated your desired social interaction

with or social distancing from the confederate. A suspicion check at the very end of the experiment assessed whether you discovered that we were manipulating the cause of injury of the victim.

In general we found that participants had less pity and more anger, attributed less positive traits, and requested more social distancing from the two abuse victims than from the accident victim. Results also showed that female participants preferred to work alone more often when in the experimental condition with the female abuse victims than with any other male or female victim. Additionally, female participants also ascribed less positive traits to the abuse victims than the male participants' trait ascriptions to the abuse victims.

Thank you for participating in this study. We appreciate the time and effort you put into helping me with my project. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact Dr. Sande at the Department of Psychology (474-9006).

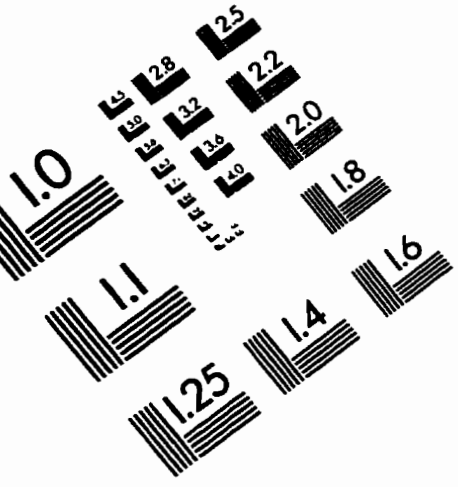
If the materials of this study have caused you distress or concern for whatever reason, please feel comfortable in talking to someone from the Peer Advisors or the Counseling Services on campus. Their services are free of charge.

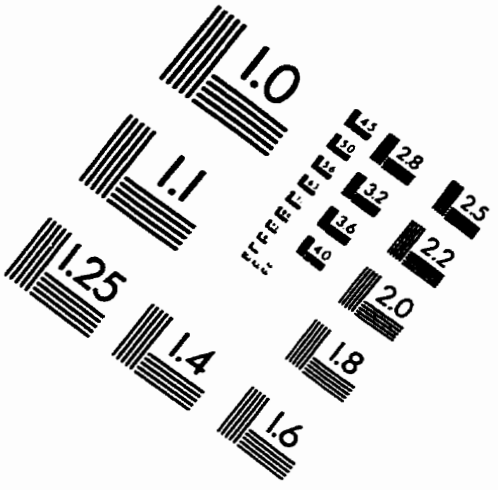
Peer Advisors 150 University Centre----------474-6696

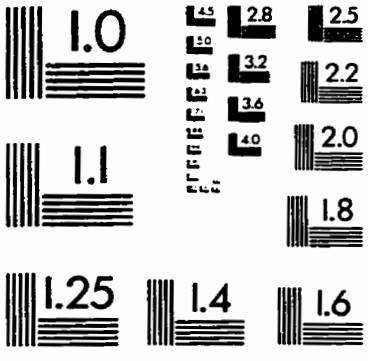
U of M Counseling Service 474 University Centre----------474-8592

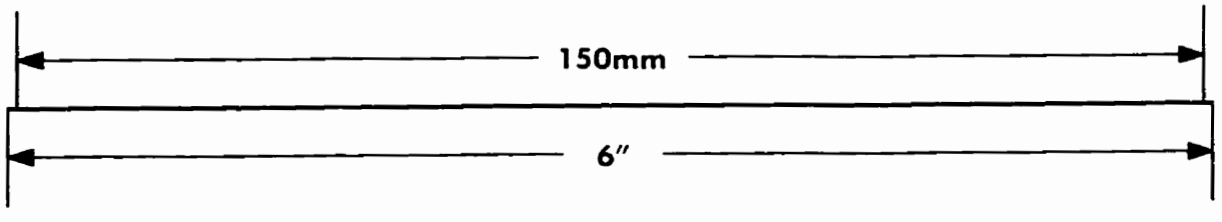
Dr. Gerry Sande
Ms. Jill Heater
Department of Psychology

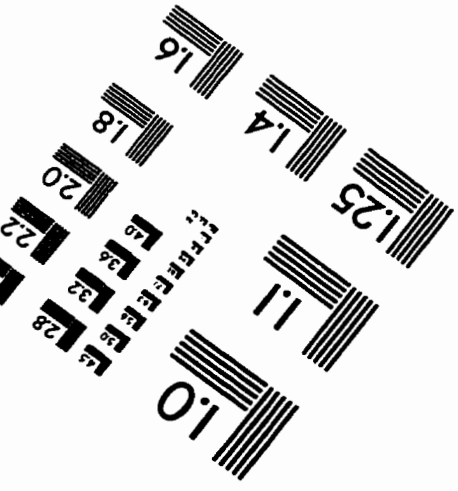
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

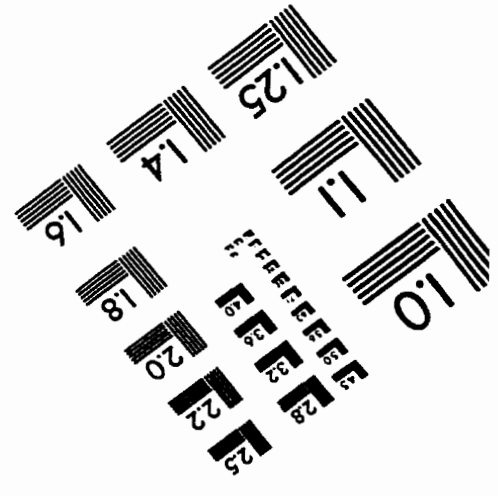












APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989