

## Public Attitudes Toward Reporting Partner Violence Against Women and Reporting Behavior

*Drawing from attitude-behavior research tradition, this study used a national probabilistic sample of the Spanish adult population (N = 2,432) to test hypotheses regarding correlates of public attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women, and the relationship between attitudes toward reporting and actual reporting behavior. Results show the importance of several correlates of public attitudes toward reporting. Also, our results have suggested a potential disconnect between attitudes and behavior because failure to intervene appears to be a common response of those aware of incidents of partner violence against women.*

Public attitudes and actions with respect to cases of partner violence against women play an important role in shaping the social environment in which the victims are embedded, a social environment that can contribute either to condone and perpetuate or to reduce levels of partner violence against women in our societies (Fagan, 1989; Gracia, 2004; Lackey & Williams, 1995). In the current study, instead of focusing on attitudes and behaviors of female victims of partner

violence, issues that have received some research attention (see Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998, for a review), we focus on attitudes and behaviors of the general public toward the victims of partner violence against women, a rather neglected research area. Drawing from attitude-behavior research tradition, we use a national probabilistic sample of the adult Spanish population to examine correlates of public attitudes toward reporting cases of partner violence against women, and the relationship between attitudes toward reporting and actual reporting behavior among those who know a female victim of partner violence.

The attitude construct has been a central concept in social psychology used to explain both attitudes toward behavior and actual behavior. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1998), social psychological research has featured two traditions concerning the attitude-behavior relationship. One tradition consists of a family of expectancy-value models, among which theories of reasoned and planned behavior are best known (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the other tradition, behavior is predicted from attitudes toward the targets toward which behavior is directed, with less specification of intermediary steps. Both traditions represent efforts to understand attitudes' causal relationships to behavior, and they focus on two different types of attitudes: attitudes toward behaviors and attitudes toward targets. Hence, the object of the attitude can be the behavior itself (e.g., attitudes toward reporting a case of partner violence against women) or the target of the behavior, which is the entity to which the behavior is

---

Departamento de Psicología Social, Facultad de Psicología, Universidad de Valencia, Avda. Blasco Ibáñez 21, 46010 Valencia, Spain (enrique.gracia@uv.es).

\*Facultad de Psicología, Universidad de Oviedo, Despacho 212, Plaza Feijoo s/n, 33003 Oviedo, Spain.

*Key Words:* domestic violence, intimate partner/marital abuse, logistic regression, social psychology (family), survey research, western European families.

directed (e.g., attitudes that people hold toward the issue of partner violence against women).

Expectancy-value models such as the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) focus on the attitude toward the behavior, which is the attitude that is more proximal to behavior. Attitudes toward the behavior would influence behavior through their influence on intention to engage in a behavior. In turn, attitudes toward the behavior would be "a function of the value assigned to the perceived consequences of the behavior and the subjective probabilities one attaches to these consequences" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, p. 297). In general, expectancy-value models emphasize a conscious reasoning process to explain the relationship between attitude and behavior. A second tradition in exploring the attitude-behavior relationship focuses on attitudes toward targets as predictors of behavior and emphasizes attitudinal accessibility and automatic activation of attitudes. The work of Fazio (1995) is representative of this tradition. Fazio stressed the importance of the direct experience with the target attitude object in producing accessible attitudes, which would be the attitudes more highly correlated with behavior. An important difference from the expectancy-value models is that, according to this tradition, attitudes toward targets can influence behavior without active attention or conscious thought. Both traditions, however, bring relevant components to understand the attitude-behavior relationship, and according to Eagly and Chaiken (1998) "a more complete understanding of attitudes as causes of behavior would emerge from joining these two traditions" (p. 302). Following Eagly and Chaiken's (1993, 1998) recommendations, in this study, we take into account both attitudes toward targets (attitudes toward partner violence against women) and attitudes toward behaviors (attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women) as they may relate to actual reporting behavior.

Relevant correlates of attitudes toward behavior identified in the literature are attitudes toward targets and beliefs concerning the attitude object (Ajzen, 1996; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), subjective norms (i.e., one's perception of others approval) (Feather, 1982), and direct behavioral experience with the target attitude object (Fazio, 1995). Following this framework, we first analyze the following correlates of attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women: public tolerance of partner violence against women, per-

ceived frequency of partner violence against women in society, public discussion of the issue, trust in authorities, and personal exposure to incidents of partner violence against women. Attitudes toward reporting may depend on *public tolerance* of all or only certain types of incidents. For example, if partner violence against women is considered as such only when it involves extreme, severe, or repeated violence, it is more likely that some violence toward women in intimate relationships may be acceptable in certain circumstances (Loseke, 1989; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Relatedly, *trust in authorities* in dealing with partner violence against women cases may influence attitudes toward reporting. For example, if authorities are perceived as responsive only in extreme cases, or as incompetent, unsympathetic, or biased, attitudes toward reporting may be affected (Dobash & Dobash, 1981; Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002). *Perceived frequency* of partner violence against women in society may also help shape public attitudes toward reporting. As Klein, Campbell, Soler, and Ghez (1997) put it, "public recognition of the pervasiveness of domestic abuse reflects the level of violence that people acknowledge in their own lives" (p. 21). For these authors, the greater the prominence of the problem, and the belief that the problem is widespread and constitutes a threat for the community, the greater the sense of responsibility. *Public discussion* of the issue may also be a relevant indicator of attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women. According to Staub (2003), "when there is limited public discussion of an issue, a condition of pluralistic ignorance exists. If no one is concerned, the issue seems unimportant and action unnecessary.... Given inaction, individuals shift awareness away from these issues to lessen their feelings of danger, personal responsibility, and guilt" (p. 491). Finally, *personal exposure* to incidents of partner violence against women may be also a relevant factor in determining attitudes toward reporting because domestic violence tends to be visible to the social circle of the victims (relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc.), perhaps long before any agency becomes aware, as they tend to be approached for support (Kelly, 1996). According to Fazio, direct experience with the target attitude object produces more accessible attitudes and increases the consistency between an attitude and relevant behaviors. Following these ideas, we hypothesize

that positive public attitudes toward reporting will be more likely among those respondents who are less tolerant, trust the authorities, perceive partner violence against women as a pervasive problem in society, discuss publicly the issue, and have been personally exposed.

In the second part of our study, we analyze whether public attitudes toward reporting translates into actual reporting behavior, among those who know victims of partner violence against women. The attitude-behavior relationship is a complex one (see Ajzen, 1996; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, for reviews). The attitude-behavior relationship is not always straightforward and may depend on a number of factors such as attitude-behavior compatibility, attitude accessibility, the role of intentions, or perceived control over the behavior (see Ajzen, 1996; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, for reviews). Research in social cognition has also shown that attitudes, although linked to behavior, are not always adequate in predicting many real-world behaviors (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). According to Ajzen (1996), attitudes toward a given course of action (i.e., reporting) capture only a part of the cognitive and motivational processes involved in complex decision situations. Because our data set does not capture all these processes, we view the second part of our study as exploratory in which we hypothesize that attitudes, although partially linked to reporting behavior, will not always necessarily translate into reporting behavior as this is often a complex and conflictive decision.

Finally, we used four demographic controls (gender, age, education, and size of locality) that might be related to both predictors and outcome variables. Research shows that women have lower levels of acceptance of violence in intimate relationships (Gracia & Herrero, 2006; Straus, Kaufman Kantor, & Moore, 1997). Also, research has revealed gender differences in helping behavior, indicating that men tend to help more than women (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Empirical evidence shows that with age, approval of violence decreases (Suito, Pillemer, & Straus, 1990). With respect to education, a "subculture of violence" theory (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982) asserts that the observed class differences in partner violence (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980) is partly a reflection of norms approving violence in these sectors of society, so differences in attitudes and behaviors concerning partner violence against women could be expected. Finally, research suggests that the likelihood of helping behavior is lower as the size of cities increases (Batson,

1998; Latané & Nida, 1981). In this study, we explore whether these variables are related with reporting both attitudes and behavior in a similar way.

## METHOD

### *Sample*

We used data from a Spanish national survey about partner violence against women (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2004) commissioned by the Spanish Government to address attitudes of the Spanish population toward domestic violence. In Spain, it is estimated that between 4% and 12.4% of women are victims of partner violence every year (Instituto de la Mujer, 2003). Although the survey did not provide a general definition of domestic violence against women, it was presented to respondents as comprising five different types about which they were asked their opinion: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, threats, and restricted freedom. Respondents were asked questions about the general label of "domestic violence against women" (as it comprises the five types mentioned before). The survey did not examine gender-symmetric violence, nor did it distinguish between different types of violence against partners as those defined by Johnson and Ferraro (2000).

Multistage clustered sampling with a selection of sampling primary units (cities) and random proportional sampling of secondary units (census tracks) was used. Final sampling units (individuals) were sampled by random routes and quotas of gender and age. For each census track, a starting block was drawn at random and further blocks were selected by taking alternate left- and right-hand turns. Households were randomly selected within blocks calling at every  $N$ th household (i.e., first right on the first floor, then first left on the second floor). One respondent in each household was selected by quotas of gender and age. A total of 2,500 home face-to-face interviews were planned, and 2,498 were finally conducted. Sampling error was  $\pm 2.0\%$  for a 95% confidence interval. All participants were 18 years of age or older.

### *Measures*

Because a sizable number of respondents chose the category response *do not know* in some of the study variables, we treated these variables as categorical in order to avoid having a significant

number of missing cases. To do so, we collapsed category responses to reflect lower and higher levels of the variable and retained *do not know* as a valid category. Descriptive statistics for all variables in this study are shown in Table 1.

*Public tolerance of partner violence against women.* We used as an approximation of tolerance of partner violence against women a question that asked, "Under what circumstances do you think a female victim of violence from her partner should report it to the legal authorities?" The response categories are 1 = *as soon as the*

*woman feels she is being threatened by her partner even if there is not physical aggression, 2 = if there is physical aggression though non-severe, 3 = only if severe physical aggression is present, and 4 = do not know.* We formed four groups: low, medium, high, and do not know.

*Trust in authorities.* This was measured by asking respondents, "Do you feel that a woman who reports against her (abusing) partner can trust the authorities and the legal system?" The response categories are 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *a bit*, 3 = *a lot*, 4 = *very much*, and 5 = *do not know*. Because the response *do not know* is of different nature from the other four, this variable cannot be treated as continuous. We therefore reduced category responses by collapsing them into seemingly similar responses: *low* (1 = *not at all* or 2 = *a bit*), *high* (3 = *a lot* or 4 = *very much*), and *do not know* (5).

*Perceived frequency of partner violence against women.* This was measured with the following question: "As far as you know, what is the frequency of domestic violence against women within Spanish families?" The response categories are 1 = *nonfrequent*, 2 = *somewhat frequent*, 3 = *frequent*, 4 = *very frequent*, and 5 = *do not know*. As with trust in authorities, category responses were collapsed into *low* (1 = *nonfrequent* or 2 = *somewhat frequent*), *high* (3 = *frequent* or 4 = *very frequent*), and *do not know* (5).

*Public discussion of partner violence against women.* Respondents indicated whether they talked about partner violence against women with family, friends, or coworkers: "Do you talk about this topic (domestic violence against women)?" The response categories are 1 = *never*, 2 = *a little*, 3 = *often*, and 4 = *a lot*. Category responses were collapsed into *low* (1 = *never* or 2 = *a little*), *high* (3 = *often* or 4 = *a lot*).

*Personal exposure to partner violence against women.* Respondents were asked, "Do you know a case of domestic violence against women?" (1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*).

*Attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women.* These were measured with the following question: "Would you be willing to report someone who beats his wife often?" (1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*, 3 = *do not know*).

Table 1. Study Variables: Descriptive Statistics Based on Complete Cases (N = 2,432)

Variables	n	% or SD
Gender		
Male	1175	48.3
Female	1257	51.7
Tolerance		
Low	1920	78.9
Medium	385	15.9
High	62	2.5
Do not know	65	2.7
Trust in authorities		
Low	1848	59.5
High	782	32.2
Do not know	202	8.3
Perceived frequency		
Low	600	24.7
High	1760	72.3
Do not know	72	3.0
Public discussion		
Low	1161	47.7
High	1271	52.3
Personal exposure		
No	1869	76.9
Yes	563	23.1
Attitudes toward reporting		
Negative	230	9.5
Positive	1848	76.6
Do not know	336	13.9
Reporting behavior		
No	403	73.4
Yes	147	26.6
Age (years)	46.09	18.19
Education <sup>a</sup>	3.11	1.37
Size of locality <sup>b</sup>	3.92	1.77

<sup>a</sup>1 = *no educational background*, 6 = *graduate school*.

<sup>b</sup>1 = *less than 2,000 inhabitants*, 7 = *more than 1 million inhabitants*.

*Reporting behavior.* Respondents who knew a case of partner violence against women ( $n = 572$ ) were asked, "Could you tell me whether you reported it?" (1 = no, 2 = yes).

*Sociodemographic controls.* Age was in years, and gender was coded 1 = men and 2 = women. Educational level was coded 1 = no educational background, 2 = elementary school, 3 = middle school, 4 = high school, 5 = college, and 6 = graduate school. Size of locality was coded 1 = less than 2,000 inhabitants, 2 = 2,000 – 10,000, 3 = 10,000 – 50,000, 4 = 50,000 – 100,000, 5 = 100,000 – 400,000, 6 = 400,000 to 1 million, and 7 = more than 1 million inhabitants. All participants were of the same ethnic background.

Gender, age, and education were similarly distributed when compared to Spanish census data (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2001). In Spain, men represent about 48.9% of the adult population 18 years and older (48.3% in our study), about 13% of adult Spaniards have no educational background (11.6% in our study), and 40.2% of the Spanish population live in localities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (43.4% in our study). Overall, participants in this study were representative of the Spanish population.

*Attrition analyses.* From the original 2,498 respondents surveyed, about 2% ( $n = 66$ ) had non-valid data on some of the variables in this study. Missing values were equally distributed across gender, age, education, size of locality, personal exposure to partner violence against women, trust in authorities, perceived frequency, tolerance, public discussion, and reporting behavior of partner violence against women. Given the small amount of total missing values, no missing data imputations were made.

### Preliminary Results

Overall, descriptive statistics summarized in Table 1 suggest that respondents were highly aware of partner violence against women as a serious problem in Spain. Most showed low levels of tolerance (78.9%) and perceived a high frequency of partner violence against women within Spanish families (72.3%), a percentage close to that obtained in the European Union (70.7%) (European Commission, 1999). About three in four respondents (76.6%) expressed to the interviewer that they would report a case of partner violence against women if they were aware of

it. Also, there were relatively low levels of public discussion of partner violence against women within the respondent's social circle (low public discussion = 47.7%) and a rather pessimistic view of the authorities' helpfulness in such cases (low trust in authorities = 59.5%). The rates of personal exposure found in our study seem to be similar to those found in other western countries. About one in three Americans (30%) say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year (23.1% in our study) (Klein et al. 1997). In the European Union, one in five Europeans knows a female victim of partner violence in their close circle of friends and family (European Commission, 1999). Finally, three in four participants (73.4%) personally exposed to partner violence against women did not report it to the police.

### Statistical Analysis

For the analysis of the correlates of *attitudes toward reporting*, we used multivariate multinomial logistic regression. Attitudes toward reporting were treated as a nominal variable. We compared the probability of membership in the *positive attitude* and *I don't know* categories with the probability of membership in the reference category *negative attitude*. For the analysis of the correlates of *reporting behavior* (no, yes), we used multivariate binomial logistic regression.

Noncontinuous predictor variables were modeled as categorical to estimate "whether the effect of being in a certain category is statistically significantly different from being in the reference category" (Menard, 1995, p. 52). For assessing model fit, we estimated model  $\chi^2$ , which is analogous to the multivariate  $F$  test for linear regression. If we reject the null hypothesis, we can conclude that the information about the independent variables allows us to make better predictions than we could make without them (DeMaris, 1995). Analyses were performed using the SPSS 12 software package.

## RESULTS

### *Correlates of Attitudes Toward Reporting Partner Violence Against Women*

We first checked for potential multicollinearity problems among predictors assessing Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Although there is no formal cutoff value to use with VIF, values

exceeding 10 are often regarded as indicating multicollinearity. In weaker models, which are often the case in logistic regression, values above 2.5 may be a cause for concern (see, Allison, 1999). No multicollinearity problems were found as suggested by VIF values in the range 1.13 – 1.48. Correlations among variables in the study are available from the authors.

In Table 2, we present the results from multivariate multinomial logistic regression analysis of the correlates of attitudes toward reporting. Model  $\chi^2$  was significant ( $\chi^2 = 207.97$ ,  $df = 26$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Tolerance, perceived frequency, public discussion, and personal exposure were significantly associated with attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women. Respondents with high and medium tolerance of partner violence against women had 63% and 42%, respectively, lower odds of having a positive attitude toward report-

ing as compared to respondents with low tolerance. Respondents who perceived a high frequency of partner violence against women showed more than two times the odds of having a positive attitude toward reporting as compared with respondents who perceived a low frequency. A high level of public discussion was associated with 68% increased odds of having a positive attitude toward reporting.

A sizable number of respondents were unsure whether they would report ( $n = 336$ , 13.9%). When compared to those respondents with a negative attitude toward reporting, these individuals were less personally exposed to partner violence against women and were unsure whether to trust the legal system, after controlling for all remaining correlates.

Personal exposure had a significant negative association with attitude toward reporting. The odds of having a positive attitude toward

Table 2. Summary of Logistic Regression Analyses for Correlates of Attitudes Toward Reporting Partner Violence Against Women (N = 2,432)

Predictor	Attitudes Toward Reporting					
	Positive			Do not know		
	B	SE B	e <sup>B</sup>	B	SE B	e <sup>B</sup>
Age	-.01**	.00	.99	-.00	.01	1.00
Male	.30*	.15	1.34	.14	.18	1.14
Education	.18*	.07	1.19	.09	.08	1.10
Size of locality	.01	.04	1.01	.01	.05	1.01
Tolerance						
Do not know	-1.31***	.36	.27	-.25	.38	.78
Medium	-.53**	.18	.58	-.22	.22	.80
High	-.99**	.35	.37	-.57	.44	.57
Trust in authorities						
Do not know	-.10	.27	.94	1.04**	.29	2.72
High	.07	.16	1.07	.05	.20	1.05
Perceived frequency						
Do not know	.35	.74	1.42	.65	.74	1.91
High	.77**	.25	2.16	.29	.27	1.33
Public discussion	.52**	.15	1.68	.24	.18	1.26
Not personally exposed	.68***	.16	1.97	.63**	.21	1.87
Constant	.75			-.66		
$\chi^2$				207.97		
df				26		
% positive attitudes toward reporting		88.9				
% do not know					59.3	

Note: e<sup>B</sup> = exponentiated B. Female, low tolerance, do not trust the authorities, low perceived frequency and personally exposed are the reference categories.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

reporting were almost two times greater for people not personally exposed to partner violence against women as they were for people personally exposed. This result suggests that being personally exposed is strongly associated with a negative attitude toward reporting partner violence against women.

#### *Attitudes Toward Reporting Partner Violence Against Women and Actual Reporting Behavior*

In the final step, we were interested in the actual reporting behavior of those respondents exposed to partner violence against women with complete data on attitudes toward reporting and all other correlates ( $n = 550$ ). Most respondents personally exposed to partner violence against women did not report it to the police ( $n = 403, 73.3\%$ ). A higher percentage of reported cases was found for respondents with a positive attitude toward reporting (30.6%). Further, only 11.3% of respondents with a negative attitude toward reporting reported a known case of partner violence against women. To test for the statistical significance of the relationships between attitudes toward reporting and actual reporting behavior, we conducted a logistic binomial regression with attitudes toward reporting as a predictor and reporting behavior as the dependent variable. Model  $\chi^2$  was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 15.63, df = 2, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant association between attitudes toward reporting and reporting behavior. Adding all potential correlates of attitudes toward reporting as predictors with the exception of personal exposure did not significantly improve model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 4.19, df = 11, ns$ ), and these correlates were not retained in the analysis.

Results are shown in Table 3. The odds of reporting a known case of partner violence against women increased as much as three times for those with a positive attitude toward reporting as compared with those with a negative attitude toward reporting. There was no significant difference between those not knowing whether to report and those with a negative attitude toward reporting. Although this result suggested a positive association between attitudes toward reporting and reporting behavior, it should be analyzed along with the overall percentages of reporting behavior among those who knew a case of partner violence against women. Briefly, most respondents personally exposed to a case of partner vio-

Table 3. Summary of Logistic Regression Analyses for Correlates of Reporting Behavior ( $n = 550$ )

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$e^B$
Attitudes toward reporting			
Do not know	.60	.49	1.81
Positive	1.25**	.39	3.47
Constant	-2.06		
$\chi^2$	15.63		
<i>df</i>	2		
% reporting	36.5		

Note:  $e^B$  = exponentiated *B*.

\*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

lence against women did not report it to the police (76.5%), but most respondents who reported it belonged to the group with a positive attitude toward reporting (30.6%).

## DISCUSSION

Drawing from the attitude-behavior research tradition, this study used a national probabilistic sample of the Spanish adult population ( $N = 2,432$ ) to test hypotheses regarding correlates of attitudes toward reporting partner violence against women and the relationship between attitudes toward reporting and actual reporting behavior. Hypotheses were supported, although we also found some unexpected results.

Results indicated that low tolerance of partner violence against women was significantly associated with a positive attitude toward reporting partner violence against women. Tolerance was measured with questions concerning how severe a violent act would need to be to deserve being reported to the authorities (ranging from threats to severe physical aggression). Our findings showed that a higher level of tolerance was associated with a negative attitude toward reporting. Accordingly, for a number of respondents, some violence (e.g., threats, nonsevere physical aggression) seemed to be tolerated to a higher degree. We also found that perceived frequency of partner violence against women was significantly related to positive attitudes toward reporting. In addition, public discussion of partner violence against women turned out to be a relevant correlate of positive attitudes toward reporting. Trust in the authorities did not show a significant relationship with attitudes toward reporting.

Interestingly, we found that the odds of having a positive attitude toward reporting were almost two times as large for people not personally exposed to partner violence against women as they were for people personally exposed. The multivariate controls used in the analyses suggested that among people with the same levels of tolerance, perceived frequency, public discussion, and sociodemographic characteristics, those who are not personally exposed would probably show a positive attitude toward reporting partner violence against women. Although the statistical controls are helpful, other possible lines of inquiry cannot be addressed properly with our data and should be addressed in future research.

Finally, a sizable number of respondents declared themselves as being hesitant toward reporting ( $n = 336$ , 13.9%). Results indicated that not being personally exposed and being hesitant whether to trust the authorities was positively associated with not knowing whether to report partner violence against women. Being unsure whether to trust the legal authorities in dealing with cases of partner violence against women increased almost two times the odds of not knowing whether to report. Also, respondents not knowing a victim had 87% greater odds of not knowing if they would report as compared to those respondents knowing a victim of partner violence against women. Along with the results already discussed, it seems that those personally exposed to partner violence against women have greater odds of having a negative attitude toward reporting.

The second part of this study analyzed the relationship between attitudes toward reporting and actual reporting behavior among those respondents who knew a case of partner violence against women. Results indicated that the probability of reporting a case was greater in respondents with a positive attitude toward reporting as compared to those respondents with a negative attitude toward reporting. The most common response to a known case of partner violence against women in this subsample, however, was not to report it (73.3%). These results partially support the idea that, at least in the case of partner violence against women, attitudes toward the behavior of reporting are a relevant antecedent to the behavior of reporting itself. This is not sufficient on its own, however, in explaining why this attitude-behavior relationship holds for only 26.7% of the participants. This illustrates the complexity of the attitude-behavior relationship

pointed out by different scholars (see Ajzen, 1996; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, for reviews). It also suggests the need to invoke other theoretical perspectives, such as bystander intervention and prosocial behavior research traditions, to understand reporting behavior of partner violence against women (e.g., Batson, 1998; Latané & Darley, 1970).

The study presents some potential limitations. First, most of the variables were measured with a single item, which makes reliability of the indicators questionable. Also, because of the existence of a sizable number of *do not know* responses, some of the independent variables responses could not be treated as continuous and were transformed into categorical variables. Some variability may have been lost in the process. Second, the probabilistic nature of our sample makes it feasible that some of the respondents may have been victims of partner violence against women, which is a limitation that needs to be taken into account. Third, this research focuses only on partner violence against women and does not examine gender-symmetric violence, as well as other types of intimate partner violence. Correlates of reporting attitudes and the relationship between reporting attitudes and reporting behavior may not be the same in all forms of partner violence. Future research would benefit from distinguishing between different types of domestic violence (see Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Marshall, 1996). Fourth, the inclusion of other relevant correlates of attitudes toward reporting is warranted. A closer examination of the processes involved in decision making leading to intervention or non-intervention decisions, the influence of social categories, contextual effects, and the influence of emotional factors on the bystanders' behavior would also help to better understand the relationship between reporting attitudes and behavior (Gracia & Herrero, in press; Levine, 1999; Weiner, 1980). Fifth, the cross-sectional nature of our study does not allow us to clarify temporal priority issues, and other alternative explanations are also possible. For example, one possibility is that the behavior is fostering the attitude. That is, engaging in the reporting behavior may prompt a more positive attitude toward this behavior (Bem, 1972). In fact, the phrasing of the questions leaves open the possibility that the behavior-attitude direction would be more likely than the attitude-behavior direction. In this respect, a majority of respondents

who reported a case of partner violence against women indicated a positive attitude toward reporting. The correlational nature of the data, however, does not allow us to ascertain if those respondents changed their attitude after reporting or, alternatively, already held a positive attitude before reporting. In any case, this aspect of the study was exploratory in nature, and future longitudinal research would help to disentangle these relationships. Finally, results from this study refer to the Spanish population and more research is needed to ascertain if the relationships found here may be replicated in other cultural contexts.

In conclusion, in this study we have approached a rather neglected area of scholarly attention in the field of domestic violence. Our research focused on the social context in which partner violence against women occurs, in particular, on public attitudes and behavior concerning reporting cases of partner violence against women. Domestic violence thrives on a social climate of secrecy, tolerance, and passivity (Gracia, 2004). A greater public sense of responsibility and accountability, however, and a greater public involvement in helping victims could contribute to increase the exposure and social control of partner violence against women (Klein et al. 1997). The present study has illustrated the importance of several correlates of reporting attitudes such as tolerance, perceived frequency, and personal exposure. Also, our results have suggested a disconnect between attitudes and behavior because failure to intervene appears to be a common response of those aware of incidents of partner violence against women. A better understanding of the factors influencing public attitudes and behaviors toward partner violence against women, and the relationship between those attitudes and behaviors, would add relevant knowledge to the literature on the social conditions that foster or discourage partner violence against women and would be useful to orient public education and prevention initiatives. Clearly, those educational and preventative initiatives would be better informed through a greater research effort examining some of the issues we have outlined in this study.

#### REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179 – 211.
- Ajzen, I. (1996). The social psychology of decision making. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 297 – 325). New York: Guilford.
- Allison, P. D. (1999). *Multiple regression: A primer*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Batson, C. D. (1998). Altruism and prosocial behavior. In D. T. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (Vol. II, pp. 282 – 316). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bem, D. J. (1972). Self-perception theory. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 6, pp. 1 – 62). New York: Academic Press.
- Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. (2004). *Barómetro de Marzo. Estudio n° 2,558* [Barometer of March. Study n° 2,558]. Madrid, Spain: Author.
- DeMaris, A. (1995). A tutorial in logistic regression. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 956 – 968.
- Dobash, E. R., & Dobash, R. P. (1981). Social science and social action: The case of wife beating. *Journal of Family Issues*, 2, 439 – 470.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Forth Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1998). Attitudes structure and function. In D. T. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (Vol. I, pp. 269 – 322). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Eagly, A. H., & Crowley, M. (1986). Gender and helping behavior: A meta-analytic review of the social psychological literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, 283 – 308.
- European Commission. (1999). *Europeans and their views on domestic violence against women. Eurobarometer 51.0*. Brussels, Belgium: Author.
- Fagan, J. A. (1989). Cessation of family violence: Deterrence and dissuasion. In M. Tonry & L. Ohlin (Eds.), *Crime and justice: An annual review of research* (pp. 377 – 425). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fazio, R. H. (1995). Attitudes as object-evaluation associations: Determinants, consequences, and correlates of attitude accessibility. In R. E. Petty & J. A. Krosnick (Eds.), *Attitude strength: Antecedents and consequences* (pp. 247 – 283). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Feather, N. T. (Ed.). (1982). *Expectations and actions: Expectancy-value models in psychology*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Felson, R. B., Messner, S. F., Hoskin, A. W., & Deane, G. (2002). Reasons for reporting and not reporting domestic violence to the police. *Criminology*, 40, 617 – 647.

- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gracia, E. (2004). Unreported cases of domestic violence against women: Towards an epidemiology of social silence, tolerance, and inhibition. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 58*, 536 – 537.
- Gracia, E., & Herrero, J. (2006). Acceptability of domestic violence against women in the European Union: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 60*, 123 – 129.
- Gracia, E., & Herrero, J. (in press). Perceived neighborhood social disorder and attitudes towards reporting domestic violence against women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
- Instituto de la Mujer. (2003). *La violencia contra las mujeres. Resultados de la macroencuesta. II Parte* [Violence against women. Results from the macro-survey. Part II]. Madrid, Spain: Author.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística. (2001). *Censo de población y viviendas* [Population and household survey]. Retrieved March 26, 2005, from <http://www.ine.es/censo/es/listatablas.jsp>
- Johnson, M. P., & Ferraro, K. J. (2000). Research on domestic violence in the 1990s: Making distinctions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 283 – 294.
- Kelly, L. (1996). Tensions and possibilities: Enhancing informal responses to domestic violence. In J. L. Edleson & Z. C. Eisikovits (Eds.), *Future interventions with battered women and their families* (pp. 67 – 86). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Klein, E., Campbell, J., Soler, E., & Ghez, M. (1997). *Ending domestic violence: Changing public perceptions/halting the epidemic*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lackey, C., & Williams, K. R. (1995). Social bonding and the cessation of partner violence across generations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*, 295 – 305.
- Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1970). *The unresponsive bystander: Why doesn't he help*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Latané, B., & Nida, S. (1981). Ten years of research on group size and helping. *Psychological Bulletin, 89*, 308 – 324.
- Levine, M. (1999). Rethinking bystander nonintervention: Social categorization and the evidence of witnesses at the James Bulger murder trial. *Human Relations, 52*, 1133 – 1155.
- Loseke, D. R. (1989). “Violence” is “violence”...or is it? The social construction of “wife abuse” and public policy. In J. Best (Ed.), *Images of issues: Typifying contemporary social problems* (pp. 191 – 206). New York: de Gruyter.
- Marshall, L. L. (1996). Psychological abuse of women: Six distinct clusters. *Journal of Family Violence, 11*, 379 – 409.
- Menard, S. (1995). *Applied logistic regression analysis. Series: Quantitative applications in the social sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Muehlenhard, C. C., & Kimes, L. A. (1999). The social construction of violence: The case of sexual and domestic violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*, 234 – 245.
- Rhodes, N. R., & McKenzie, E. B. (1998). Why do battered women stay? Three decades of research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 3*, 391 – 406.
- Staub, E. (2003). *The psychology of good and evil*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Straus, M. A., Gelles, R. J., & Steinmetz, S. K. (1980). *Behind closed doors: Violence in American family*. New York: Doubleday/Anchor.
- Straus, M. A., Kaufman Kantor, G., & Moore, D. W. (1997). Change in cultural norms approving marital violence from 1968 to 1994. In G. Kaufman Kantor & J. L. Jasinski (Eds.), *Out of darkness: Contemporary perspectives on family violence* (pp. 3 – 16). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Suitor, J. J., Pillemer, K. A., & Straus, M. A. (1990). Marital violence in a life course perspective. In M. A. Straus & R. J. Gelles (Eds.), *Physical violence in American families: Risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 Families* (pp. 305 – 320). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Weiner, B. (1980). A cognitive (attribution)-emotion-action model of motivated behavior: An analysis of judgments of help giving. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*, 186 – 200.
- Wolfgang, M., & Ferracuti, F. (1982). *The subculture of violence* (2nd ed.). London: Tavistock.