The relationship between trait aggression in men and bystander intervention

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Introduction

- Violence against women is a significant issue; about 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted in their lifetimes (RAINN, 2016).
- 1 in 3 women are physically harmed by an intimate partner (NCADV, 2015).
- Being an active bystander can prevent the victimization of women.
- Gender is associated with aggressive tendencies; males have higher levels of trait aggression than females (Keatley, Allom & Mullan, 2017).
- Men who perceive themselves to be stronger, aggressive and more sympathetic than others are more likely to intervene in situations perceived as physically or sexually aggressive (Laner, Benin, & Ventrone, 2001).
- Trait aggression is positively correlated to physical aggression.
- Prior research has not investigated a relationship between trait aggression in men and bystander intervention.

General Hypothesis

- Men with higher trait aggression will be more likely to physically intervene than males with lower trait aggression.
- Men with higher trait aggression will be less likely to verbally intervene than males with lower trait aggression.

Method

Participants

- N= 652 men
- Age: M = 23.87, SD = 7.6, range 18-73
- Race/Ethnicity: Black or African American: 25.5%; White or European American: 46.6%; Asian American: 18.7%; Latino: 10.9%; Middle Eastern: 1.8%; Native American: 1.4%; and Other: 1.8%. (7.8% of participants identified with more than one race/ethnicity)

Procedure

1. Participants were recruited through Amazon MTurk and SONA for this online study.
2. Participants completed the Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire.
3. Participants watched a video of a heterosexual couple engaging in a conflict that became progressively more violent (Figure 1).
4. During the video, participants were asked to indicate whether they would intervene.
5. Following the video, participants were given a list of intervention methods and asked to select which method(s) they would use if they were to intervene in the recorded scenario.
6. We used logistic regression to explore the relationship between trait aggression and intervention methods endorsed (e.g., verbal and physical intervention methods).

Measures

- Buss-Perry Questionnaire: self reported scale of trait aggression; on a 1-5 scale (1) meaning less aggressive to (5) meaning more aggressive.
- Video Task Response: “In what ways would you intervene in the video”.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p Value</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>-0.277</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Con)</td>
<td>1.582</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>4.865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. BPA scores predicting intervention tactics. We used Bonferroni adjusted alpha of .025 for all statistical tests. We ran a total of 10 logistic regressions.

- As predicted, higher trait aggression scores predicted an increased likelihood that men will use physical force against the boyfriend.
- Trait aggression scores did not significantly predict men’s likelihood to verbally point out the boyfriend’s disrespectful or aggressive behavior as wrong.
- For each 1-point increase in aggression scores, men are approximately 72% more likely to intervene using physical force and only about 25% less likely to intervene verbally.

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Discussion/Implications

- These results allow us to better understand how trait aggression influences men's intervention behavior in an instance of intimate partner violence.
- Understanding this relationship inform violence and harm reduction strategies.
- The use of physical force as an intervention method within already violent situation may result in additional physical harm. In the future, the goal of this research program is to facilitate safer intervention methods among those high in trait aggression.
- Future studies should also explore this relationship among women, as they too are potential active bystanders.

Intervention Methods

Verbal
- Verbally point out boyfriend’s disrespectful or aggressive behavior as wrong
- Use physical force against boyfriend

Physical Force
- Use physical force against boyfriend

Aggressive Video

Figure 1. Male and Female companion engaging in a conflict