

CHAPTER 1

Change in Cultural Norms Approving Marital Violence From 1968 to 1994

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□ Research on change in rates of assault on marital partners found a decrease from 1975 to 1985 (Straus & Gelles, 1986), and a further decrease from 1985 to 1992 (Straus & Kaufman Kantor, 1994). These studies have raised many questions. One of the questions is the validity of Straus and Gelles's argument that part of the decrease resulted from a change in the cultural norms that had made the marriage license an implicit hitting license. Although existence of these norms has been well docu-

mented (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Straus, 1976), there is no direct evidence showing change in cultural norms.

The Battered Women's Movement and Cultural Change

■ Straus, Gelles, and Kaufman Kantor argue that the efforts by women's advocacy groups and service providers to reduce violence by hus-

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bands are themselves a reflection of change in the culture and are also part of the process that produces further change (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus & Kaufman Kantor, 1994). These efforts included both educational campaigns and new social institutions such as shelters for battered women (Schechter, 1982), and new legal and criminal justice reforms promoting greater sensitivity to rape victims (Bachman, 1993; Spohn & Horney, 1991). Battered women's advocates also promoted changes in the criminal justice and legal systems including replacement of the policy of avoiding arrest in "domestic disturbance" cases with policies recommending or requiring arrest of men who assault their wives, court-ordered treatment for violent husbands, and procedural changes to facilitate obtaining an order of protection to forbid the offender from having contact with his former victim (Sherman, 1992). These legal changes are a continuation of a long-term trend. For example, in the 1870s U.S. courts stopped recognizing the common law rule that gave husbands the right to "physically chastise an errant wife" (Calvert, 1974). The legal norms have clearly changed. However, it is not clear to what extent the informal norms of American society have changed, and that question was the primary objective of the research reported in this chapter. Specifically, we tested the hypothesis that the rate of approval of slapping a spouse decreased from 1968 to 1994.

Group Differences in Norms Approving Marital Violence

■ A second objective was to investigate differences in the degree to which approval of marital violence is part of the social norms of different segments of American society, and whether there has been differential change in these norms. The "subculture of violence" theory (Amir, 1971; Wolfgang, 1958), for example, assumes that the higher rate of homicide in the American South, and among the lowest socioeconomic strata of society, is partly a reflection of norms approving violence in these segments of society.

There is no doubt about class differences in the rate of violent crime (Blau & Blau, 1982; Hindelang, 1978) including marital violence (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). However, without independent data on cultural norms, ascribing the higher rates to differences in culture is only an inference that needs to be tested empirically (Baron & Straus, 1989; Loftin & Hill, 1974). In fact, the results of empirical research on regional and class differences in acceptance of violence have produced mixed results (Kaufman Kantor & Straus, 1987; Reed, 1971; Stark & McEvoy, 1970), and regional differences in overall violence rates have been found to vary over time (Nelson, Corzine, & Huff-Corzine, 1994; Parker, 1991). Consequently, the most appropriate hypotheses are that there are no significant differences between regions, between ethnic groups, or between educational and income groups in approval of marital violence and that each of these groups underwent parallel changes from 1968 to 1994.

Although the empirical evidence just cited on regional and class differences is mixed, the evidence on gender and age is clear. It shows that more men approve of violence in marriage than women (Straus et al., 1980) and that with age, approval of violence decreases (Stets & Straus, 1990; Sutor, Pillemer, & Straus, 1990). However, these differences do not preclude parallel patterns of change over the 26-year period covered by this research. We tested the hypothesis that approval of marital violence decreased for both men and women and among younger persons as well as older persons.

Method

■ A survey conducted for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in 1968 is the starting point for this research because it included questions on approval of slapping a spouse. The responses to these questions, when aggregated for the United States or for specific groups, provide information on the extent of adherence to cultural norms approving marital violence. Since then, four surveys conducted in 1985, 1992, and 1994 have

used the identical questions and provide an opportunity to examine trends. The surveys asked nationally representative samples of American adults, "Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face?" and "... a wife slapping her husband's face?"

Sample

Data from four surveys were combined for this study. Although the questions on approval of slapping a spouse were identical, before they could be merged into a single data file, each of the four files had to be edited to make the variable names and labels identical. In addition, some recoding of other variables and case selection had to be done to make the files comparable. For example, the studies used different categories for age, income, and education. To make them comparable, the three variables were transformed to stanine scores (Kaiser, 1958) before merging the four files. The studies used different categories for ethnic groups, but all four differentiated African Americans and Hispanic Americans. Consequently, it was possible to collapse the categories for all four into three groups: African American, Hispanic American, and Other. The Other category is overwhelmingly Whites of European ancestry. The combined data file included 9,672 cases. Deletion of cases that do not have information on one or more of the variables resulted in a sample for this chapter of 8,514.

1968 National Violence Survey. This survey was designed by Rodney Stark and James McEvoy III. The survey was conducted by Louis Harris Associates using face-to-face interviews with a national probability sample of persons age 18 and over ($N = 1,176$). Further information on the survey may be found in the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1969), Owens and Straus (1975), and Stark and McEvoy (1970). The data file used for this chapter was obtained from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan.

1985 National Family Violence Survey. This survey was designed by Richard J. Gelles and Murray A. Straus and carried out by Louis Harris Associates using telephone interviews ($N = 6,002$). The sample consisted of two parts: a national probability sample of persons age 18 and over who were married or cohabiting with a person of the opposite sex, and oversamples of married or cohabiting African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and residents of smaller states. Further information on the survey may be found in Straus and Gelles (1986, 1990). The data tape and documentation are available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, and on CD-ROM from Sociometrics Inc., Palo Alto, California.

1992 National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey. This survey was designed by Glenda Kaufman Kantor. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Survey Research of Temple University, using face-to-face interviews ($N = 1,970$). Hispanic American respondents had the choice of being interviewed in Spanish or English. The sample consisted of two parts: a national probability sample of persons age 18 and over who were married or cohabiting with a person of the opposite sex, and an oversample of 846 married or cohabiting Hispanic Americans. Further information on the survey may be found in Kaufman Kantor, Jasinski, and Aldarondo (1994).

1994 Gallup Survey. This survey was designed by David Moore and Murray A. Straus. The survey was conducted January 6-8, 1994 by the Gallup Organization using telephone interviews. It used random-digit dialing to select a national probability sample of persons age 18 and over. A "split ballot" design was used. The sample for this study consisted of the half of the sample who were asked the questions on approval of violence exactly as in the other three surveys ($N = 524$). Further information on the survey may be obtained from the Gallup Organization.

Comparability of Surveys. The four surveys differ in respect to several characteristics: size of the sample (from 524 to 6,002), universe sampled (all persons age 18 and over vs. married or cohabiting persons age 18 and over), method of interviewing (face-to-face vs. telephone), monolingual versus choice of English or Spanish, the organization conducting the survey, and the context in which the approval of violence questions were asked (a survey on violence, a survey on family problems, and a political opinion survey). These differences raise questions about the appropriateness of analyzing them as a single data set. For example, the Hispanic American sample interviewed in 1992 is likely to be less acculturated than the sample interviewed in 1985 because bilingual face-to-face interviews were conducted in 1992, and telephone interviews were conducted in the earlier, 1985 survey. However, as will be shown below, the findings follow uniform patterns over time, and this suggests that the trend findings are unlikely to be the result of confounding with one or more of the differences just listed.

Measures

Approval of Marital Violence. All four surveys asked: "Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a husband slapping his wife's face?" and "Are there any situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a wife slapping her husband's face?" Respondents could answer yes or no. These questions are direct measures of approval of marital violence. Moreover, they are probably more appropriate for measuring approval of marital violence than would be questions that asked about more severe forms of violence such as punching or kicking. This is because even persons who approve of punching and kicking are likely to be reluctant to admit that. However, there are also some potential problems. One is that the wording does not rule out self-defense. Fortunately, that possibility did not materialize. As will be shown below, when those who said yes were asked about the situation, none mentioned self-defense. However, the questions

themselves do not specify the situation under which the respondent might approve of slapping. Research by Greenblat (1983) and Arias and Johnson (1989) suggests that this affects the percentage who agreed. Greenblat, for example, found a much higher percentage approving if the question specified infidelity compared to other problems. Another limitation of the questions is that they are very obvious and direct and are not embedded in a justifying context phrase such as, "No matter how much a person may love his wife, there may be times when . . ." The latter two problems suggest that the rates of approval of marital violence reported below should be regarded as lower-bound estimates.

Independent Variables. In addition to the year in which the survey was conducted, the following characteristics were used to test the hypotheses concerning group differences in norms approving marital violence: age, gender, education, income, ethnic group (African American, Euro-American, and Hispanic American), and region (Northeast, North Central, South, and West).

Statistical Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using logistic regression (logit) because the dependent variable is a dichotomy. The eight independent variables provide information on whether each is associated with approval of violence. In addition, they are important as controls for changes in the demographic composition of American society during the 26-year period of the study. For example, if fewer older persons approve of violence, there might be a decrease in approval of violence because of the aging of the population even if there is no difference in approval of violence by persons of the same age in 1968 and 1994. The same possibility applies to changes in the average education of the population, income, ethnic composition, and regional shifts in population. With these demographic sources of variation controlled, the decrease in the rate of approval of violence probably represents a change in the culture rather than change in the population composition.

Findings

Correlations

We first examined the zero-order correlations between the independent variables, covariates, and dependent variables (see Table 1.1). This allowed for a preliminary inspection of potential multicollinearity problems. It also provided a means to examine bivariate associations. The results of this analysis do not suggest that any potential problems with multicollinearity exist. The strong and significant correlation between approval for slapping by a husband or approval for slapping by a wife suggests that the underlying variable is approval of violence rather than anything specific to the role of husband or wife.

The correlations for approval of a husband slapping his wife's face indicate that approval of slapping by men declined over time, and was less often approved of by women, the poor, or older members of the population. The correlations for approval of slapping by wives showed that there is less approval for slapping by a wife in the South, and among men, older Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The positive correlations between education, income, and approval of a wife slapping her husband's face suggest that higher education and income increase approval of slapping by women.

Trends

Figure 1.1 shows that the percentage of the U.S. population who approve of a husband slapping his wife's face (lower line) decreased steadily from the high of just over 20% in 1968 to half that rate in 1994.¹

The decrease is statistically significant (see the row for year in Table 1.2, part A). Because the analysis controlled for changes in eight demographic variables, the significant decrease in the percentage approving a husband slapping his wife's face is more likely to indicate a change in the culture rather than a change in demographics.

Although approval of husband-to-wife violence decreased sharply from 1968 to 1994, that is not the case for wife-to-husband violence. The

upper line in Figure 1.1 and the nonsignificant logit coefficient in part B of Table 1.2 show that the percentage of the U.S. population who approve of a wife slapping her husband's face remained almost identical over the 26 years.

What sort of situations did those who said that there are situations where they would approve of a husband slapping his wife or a wife slapping her husband have in mind? The 1968 survey asked those who approved to indicate the situation in which they would do so. None mentioned self-defense or altruistic situations such as to defend a child or to revive a spouse from a trance or seizure. The most frequently mentioned situation was if the partner was sexually unfaithful: 72% of those who approved of a husband slapping a wife had this in mind, as did 75% of those who approved of a wife slapping her husband.

Group Differences

Gender. Combining the four surveys, 16.1% of the men compared to 11.6% of the women approved of a husband slapping a wife, and 26.4% of the men compared to 18.4% of the women approved of slapping by a wife. Both differences are significant at the .001 level (see the rows for gender in Table 1.2). Thus, more men than women approve of marital violence, regardless of whether it is a husband slapping his wife or a wife slapping her husband.

The trend lines plotted in Figure 1.2 show that the percentage who approved of a husband slapping his wife decreased for both men and women during the 26-year period. However, the trends are not identical. At the start of the period more men than women approved a husband slapping. By 1992, the approval rates had converged. However, in 1994 the old differences reemerged because approval by women continued down, whereas approval by men increased. Despite this, approval by both men and women of a husband slapping his wife decreased substantially from 1968 to 1994.

Figure 1.3, on the other hand, shows that approval of a wife slapping her husband by either men or women did not change much during these 26 years. However, the small changes were in the direction of greater approval by men and

TABLE 1.1 Zero-Order Correlations Among Variables

	APPROVE.H SLAP	APPROVE.W SLAP	YEAR	GENDER	NORTHEAST	SOUTH	WEST	AFR.AMER	HISP.AMER	EDUC	INCOME	AGE
APPROVE.H	1.00											
SLAP		1.00										
APPROVE.W			1.00									
W SLAP	.65***	1.00										
YEAR	-.06***	.01	1.00									
GENDER	-.07***	-.10***	-.03**	1.00								
NORTHEAST	.00	.02	-.02	-.01	1.00							
SOUTH	.01	-.02*	.01	.02*	-.37***	1.00						
WEST	.01	-.00	.03**	.00	-.25***	-.38***	1.00					
AFR.AMER	-.02	-.02*	-.13***	.04***	-.00	.13***	-.10***	1.00				
HISP.AMER	-.02	-.04***	.22***	.03**	-.05***	.07***	.16***	-.17***	1.00			
EDUC	.01	.06***	.03**	-.09***	.05***	-.10***	.02	-.04***	-.27***	1.00		
INCOME	.02*	.04***	.02	-.11***	.07***	-.11***	.00	-.12***	-.22***	.48***	1.00	
AGE	-.05***	-.08***	.00	-.06***	.00	.02	-.04***	-.04***	-.09***	-.10***	.04***	1.00
X	13.35	21.49	2.19	.57	.20	.36	.21	.12	.17	.01	.01	.00
SD	34.02	41.07	.71	.49	.40	.48	.40	.33	.38	1.00	1.00	1.00

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

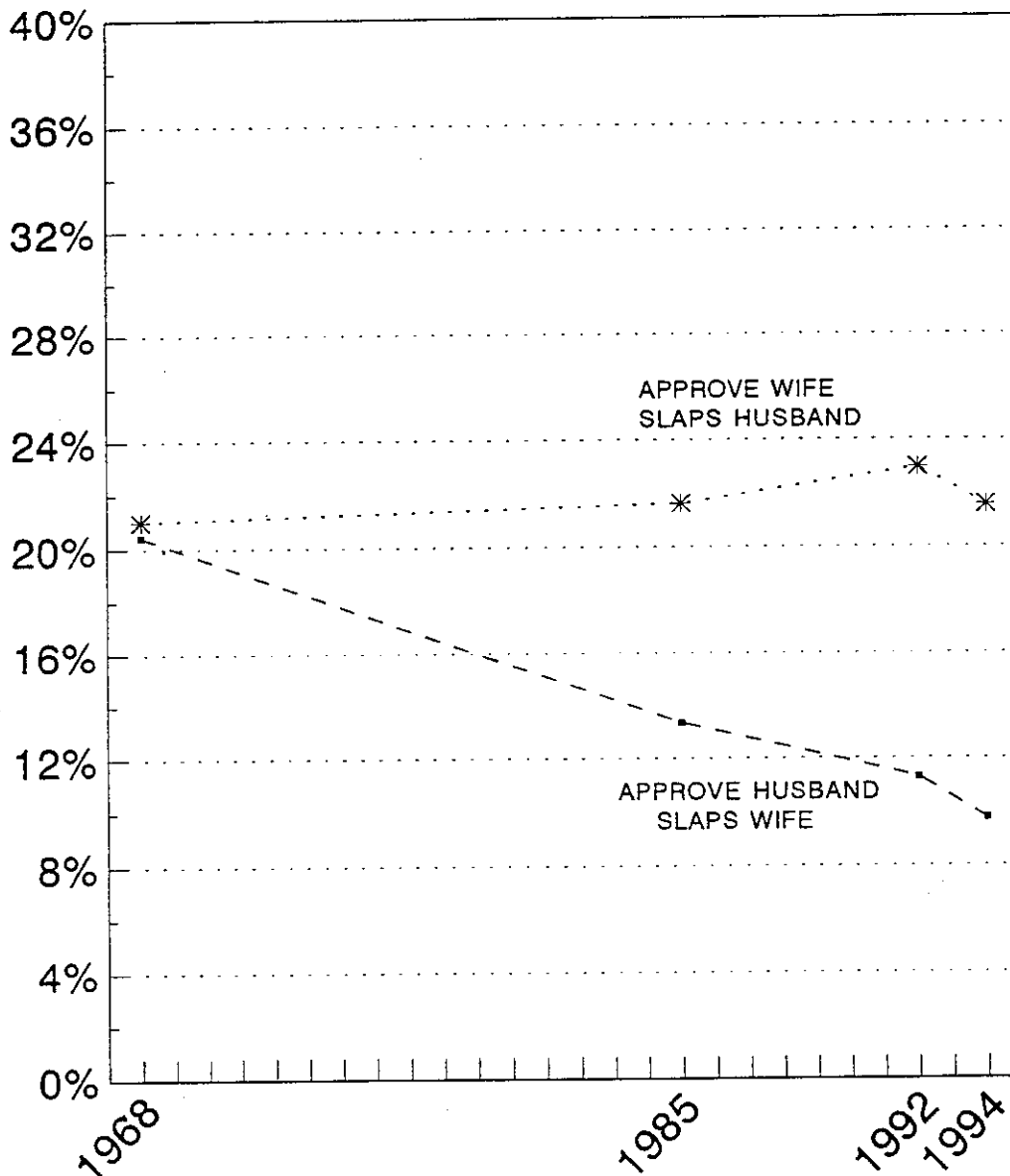


Figure 1.1. Approval of Slapping Spouse (adjusted for covariates and independent variables)

less approval by women. As a result, in 1994 the percentage of men who approved of a wife slapping her husband was double the percentage of women who approved (31% of men, 16% of women), whereas at the start of this period, men were only 30% more likely to approve slapping by a wife. The findings of greater approval of violence by women than by men are consistent with other research as well (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Greenblat, 1983).

Region. Regional differences were investigated by creating dummy variables for three of the four census regions (Northeast, South, and West) and using the Midwest as the referent region. Part A of Table 1.2 shows that Southerners were significantly more likely to approve a husband slapping his wife, net of other demographic variables. This is consistent with the fact that the South has typically had the highest homicide rate of any region.

TABLE 1.2 Logistic Regression of Approval of Slapping a Spouse

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Logit Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
A. Approval of husband slaps wife				
YEAR	-.2973	.0480	.0001	.7428
GENDER	-.3946	.0642	.0001	.6740
NORTHEAST	.0676	.0995	.4971	1.0699
SOUTH	.1679	.0869	.0533	1.1829
WEST	.1736	.0982	.0772	1.1895
AFR.AMER	-.2041	.1043	.0504	.8154
HISP.AMER	-.1046	.0979	.2852	.9007
AGE	-.0705	.0172	.0001	.9320
EDUCATION	-.0201	.0191	.2924	.9801
INCOME	.0324	.0196	.0991	1.0329
Constant	-.7899	.1803	.0001	
B. Approval of wife slaps husband				
YEAR	.0337	.0375	.3683	1.0343
GENDER	-.4634	.0535	.0001	.6292
NORTHEAST	.0564	.0801	.4813	1.0580
SOUTH	-.0367	.0715	.6072	.9639
WEST	.0244	.0808	.7624	1.0247
AFR.AMER	-.1310	.0860	.1278	.8773
HISP.AMER	-.2836	.0821	.0005	.7531
AGE	-.1090	.0144	.0001	.8967
EDUCATION	.0394	.0159	.0133	1.0402
INCOME	.0162	.0164	.3231	1.0163
Constant	-.7923	.1506	.0001	

NOTE: YEAR = year of the study: 1968, 1985, 1992, 1994; GENDER = gender of respondent: female = 1, male = 0; NORTHEAST = lives in the Northeast = 1, other = 0; SOUTH = lives in the South = 1, other = 0; WEST = lives in the West = 1, other = 0; AFR.AMER = African American respondent = 1, other = 0; HISP.AMER = Hispanic American respondent = 1, other = 0; AGE = age of respondent (stanine score); EDUCATION = education of respondent (stanine score); INCOME = income of respondent (stanine score).

Part B of Table 1.2 shows that no parallel relationship exists for approving a wife slapping her husband when other demographic characteristics are taken into account. As for trends in approval of marital violence, graphs not shown follow a pattern similar to Figure 1.1. That is, within each region, approval of a husband slapping his wife decreased, whereas approval of a wife slapping her husband stayed about the same.

Ethnic Minorities. The data available permitted comparisons of African Americans and Hispanic Americans with other ethnic groups (which in these samples meant primarily Caucasians of European ancestry). The significant odds ratio of .81 for African Americans in part A of Table 1.2 shows that being African American is associated with a 20% reduction

in the odds of approving a husband slapping his wife. Hispanic Americans also had a lower odds ratio, but the difference is not significant. Part B of Table 1.2 shows that the odds of approving a wife slapping her husband are lower for African Americans and Hispanic Americans than for other ethnic groups, but the odds ratio is significant only for Hispanic Americans.

In respect to trends, the percentage who approved of a husband slapping his wife decreased from 1968 to 1994 for all three ethnic groups. The percentage who approved of a wife slapping her husband also decreased for both African Americans and Hispanic Americans, but did not decrease for Euro-Americans.

Age. The significant odds ratio of .93 in part A of Table 1.2 indicates that each additional

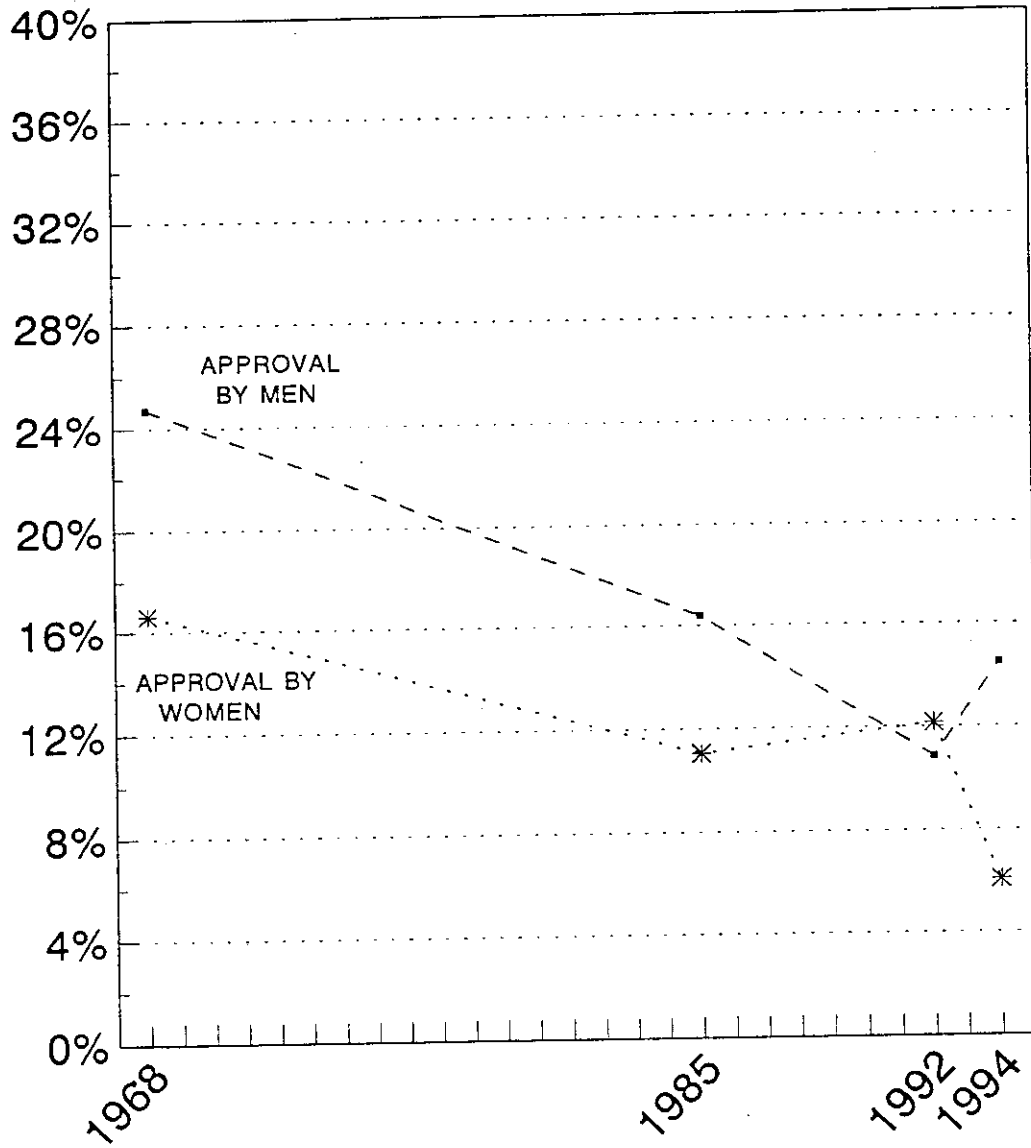


Figure 1.2. Approval of Husband Slapping Wife by Gender of Respondent (adjusted for covariates and independent variables)

year of age of the respondent is associated with a 7% reduction in the odds of approving a husband slapping his wife. Similarly, the odds ratio of .89 in part B indicates that each additional year of age is associated with an 11% reduction in the odds of approving a wife slapping her husband. Although fewer older respondents approved slapping a spouse, the

pattern of change from 1968 to 1994 shown in Figure 1.1 was found regardless of the age of the respondent.

Education. Part A of Table 1.2 shows that education is not significantly related to approving violence by husbands. However, the significant odds ratio of 1.04 for education in

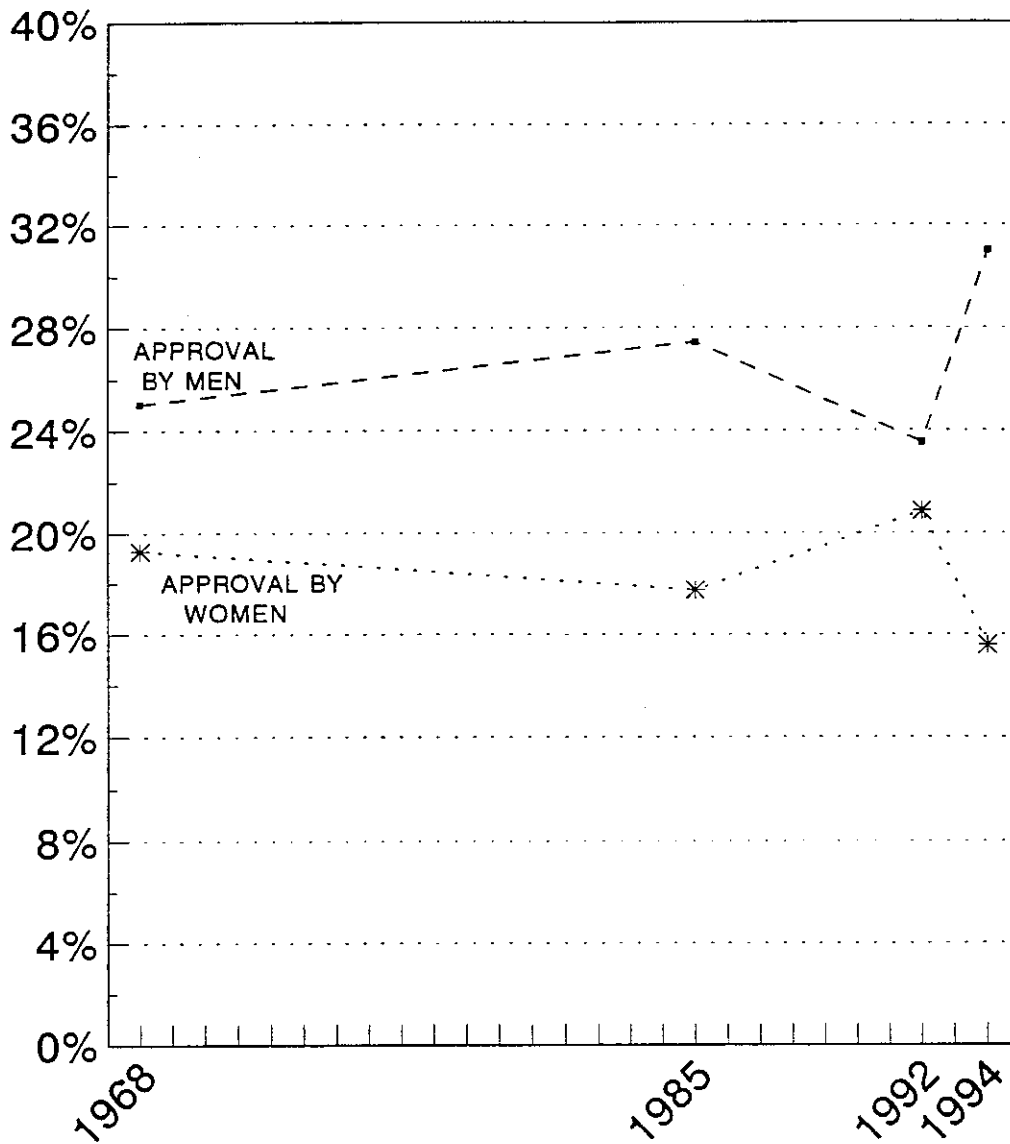


Figure 1.3. Approval of Wife Slapping Husband by Gender of Respondent (adjusted for covariates and independent variables)

part B shows each increase of one stanine score in education is associated with a 4% increase in the odds of approving a wife slapping her husband.

Income. Income was not found to be related to approving a husband slapping his wife, or a wife slapping her husband, nor did income alter the pattern of change from 1968 to 1994 shown in Figure 1.1.

Summary and Discussion

Approval of slapping by husbands decreased from 20% in 1968 to 13% in 1985, 12% in 1992, and 10% in 1994. Approval of slapping by wives, which was 22% in 1968, has not changed significantly.

Although a larger percentage of both men and women approved of a wife slapping her husband than a husband slapping his wife, fewer

women than men approved of such violence by either husbands or wives.

Tests of the hypothesis that adherence to cultural norms approving or tolerating marital violence decreased from 1968 to 1994 produced mixed results. The percentage of the U.S. population who approved of a husband slapping his wife went down steadily during the 26-year period studied. We suggest that the efforts by women's advocacy groups and service providers to condemn male violence and aid battered women are part of the explanation of the large decrease in approval of slapping by husbands. We also believe that these efforts are part of the reason for the decrease in actual rates of assaults on wives from 1975 to 1992 (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus & Kaufman Kantor, 1994).

Unfortunately, approval of a wife slapping her husband did not decrease. All four surveys found a larger percentage of the population approved of a wife slapping a husband than of a husband slapping a wife, and the gap increased over the time period studied. Approval of wife-to-husband violence exceeded approval of husband-to-wife violence by only a small amount in 1968. Since then, the gap grew steadily until by 1994, the percentage who approved of a wife slapping a husband was more than double the percentage who approved of a husband slapping a wife. We suggest that one of the reasons that approval of a wife slapping a husband did not decrease, and one of the reasons that reports by women of actual assaults on their spouses did not decrease (Straus, 1993; Straus & Kaufman Kantor, 1994), is the absence of efforts to condemn violence by women.

The greater public acceptance of violence by wives than by husbands may occur because of a tendency to assume that a wife slapping a husband is primarily a symbolic act that is physically harmless (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Greenblat, 1983). The fact that approval of a wife slapping her husband has not decreased since 1968 may be an unfortunate side effect of the gains women have made toward achieving equality with men. The status and behavior of women and the image of women may have become more like that of men, not only in socially

desirable characteristics but also in respect to violence and other crime. This may be one of the reasons for a recent tendency to glorify violence by women in novels, television, and films (e.g., *Thelma and Louise*). However, there are no signs that a female crime wave is imminent, and although arrest rates for simple assaults by women have risen, female participation in crimes of homicide remains exceedingly low (Steffensmeir & Allan, 1991).

If one assumes that education is associated with gender equality, the above interpretation is consistent with the finding that more education is associated with greater approval of a wife slapping her husband, but not with greater approval of slapping by a husband. Finally, some women may misinterpret the advice not to tolerate physical, verbal, or sexual abuse as advice to be violent themselves, especially because, in contrast to the legal norms, the informal norms of American society favor retaliation and do not usually distinguish between retaliation and self-defense. This interpretation is consistent with the finding that women initiate physical attacks on their spouses at about the same rate as men (Straus, 1993). However, men's and women's acts of violence are often not comparable. For example, aggression by women is rarely characterized as terroristic, as is sometimes the case with abusive men (Johnson, 1995).

Possible Limitations

A number of potential problems and limitations need to be kept in mind. For one thing, this study refers to a relatively minor act of violence—slapping a spouse—and does not stipulate the conditions under which approval exists. The findings may not apply to more severe assaults such as punching or kicking. However, there would be little point to doing a study of approval of punching, kicking, stabbing, or shooting a spouse because, at least in principle, everyone is against it. More important, severe violence tends to develop out of minor violence (Feld & Straus, 1989). Perhaps most important of all, even minor violence is an act that is a crime that would not be tolerated outside the

family. Even if there were no risk of escalation, it is a serious social problem. It undermines the mental health of victims (Stets & Straus, 1990) and the stability of the family, and it harms millions of children who witness violence between their parents (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; Straus, 1992).

A related problem is that a behavior approved of by 20% of the population is not a broad enough consensus to be considered a cultural norm. As noted earlier, we think the rates reported in this chapter are lower-bound estimates. If the questions had been more adequately specified, much higher percentages approving violence are almost certain. When some situations are specified, for example, sexual infidelity, Arias and Johnson (1989) found that 44% of men approved of the husband slapping and 42% approved of the wife slapping. Similarly, when Greenblat (1983) asked about hitting a spouse for sexually related causes, 40% of men and 50% of women approved of a husband hitting his wife under such circumstances. For wives hitting their husbands for sexually related causes, 33% of the men approved of the wife hitting the husband, and 23% of the women approved of the wife hitting the husband. We think even these figures are lower-bound estimates. If so, a majority of Americans subscribe to the principle that it is legitimate to assault a spouse in certain situations.

Finally, there is the possibility that the decrease from 1968 to 1985 in the percentage who approved of a husband slapping his wife reflects only a change in what is politically correct to tell an interviewer and that the underlying norms continue to approve or tolerate marital violence. We agree that this probably is part of the explanation. However, even if it were the entire explanation, that would still be a significant change because the increased sensitivity is a reflection of the process of changing cultural norms.

Policy Implications

If our explanations of the findings are correct, there are important implications for policies that

might reduce marital violence. For one thing, the findings suggest that social movements condemning violence against women, legal and institutional reforms, and systematic antiviolence educational efforts can produce major changes in public attitudes about violence and should therefore be expanded.

The continuing high rate of approval of violence by women also needs to be addressed because, like violence by men against their partners, it is a criminal act, and because it increases the risk of violence against women. Straus (1993) argued that the prevalence of seemingly harmless and justified "minor violence" by women helps perpetuate norms that make it legitimate to hit a spouse who persists in an objectionable behavior and "won't listen to reason." This is because sooner or later, she is likely to engage in behavior that her husband thinks is intolerable. When that happens, her previous use of violence to deal with his intolerable behavior will provide the justification for the husband to be violent also (see also Kaufman Kantor and Asdigian, in press). Consequently, one of the many steps needed to reduce assaults by men on their partners is a campaign to end what on the surface may seem to be harmless violence by women. The steps might include public service announcements directed at violence by women similar to those directed at male violence, and also school-based programs that explicitly recognize and condemn violence by girls as well as boys.

Important as such programs are for primary prevention of marital violence, it must not obscure the fact that women are the main victims of marital violence. They are physically injured to the point of needing medical attention 7 times as often as are husbands, they suffer psychological injury at much higher rates because of their concern with family well-being (Stets & Straus, 1990), and they are much more often locked into violent marriages because of the economic inequities of American society (Straus, 1976, 1992). Prevention of all forms of violence should continue to be a national priority and should make zero tolerance of violence by both men and women the major message to be communicated.

Note

1. Because adjusted rates are given in the graphs, they differ slightly from those previously reported in Stark and McEvoy (1971). The unadjusted rates of approval found in the present study are available from the authors.

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