CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Attributions of Blame to Battered Women when they are perceived as Feminists or as "Difficult to Deal With"

Ana Vidal-Fernández and Jesús L. Megías

Universidad de Granada (Spain)

Abstract. This study aimed to analyze the influence of victim-related and observer-related factors in victim blaming of battered women. Two hundred and forty six college students participated. They were asked to read a scenario describing a hypothetical case of physical violence perpetrated by a man against his partner. Depending on the experimental condition, the victim was described either as a feminist and/or as exhibiting difficulties in her relationship with others or not. A hierarchical regression analysis was performed with victim blaming as dependent variable. Participants' hostile sexism positively predicted victim blaming when the victim was described as a feminist and as a "difficult to deal with" woman ($p < .001$). In addition, men, but not women, high in hostile sexist attitudes placed more blame on the victim when she was presented as a feminist woman ($p < .001$). These results underscore the importance of victim-related and observer-related factors, and of their interaction, in blaming the victim of gender-based violence.

Violence against women is a global problem that affects people and countries everywhere in varying degrees. The World Health Organization (WHO) revealed, through a study presented in 2005 and performed in 10 states with different cultural backgrounds (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania), that between 13% and 61% of women suffer physical violence, between 20% and 75% suffer psychological abuse and between 6% and 59% suffer sexual violence. Of all the forms of violence that women are subjected to, the violence that occurs within their current or past intimate relationships is particularly serious; due to both their high frequency and the harmful consequences they entail (WHO, 2005). In Spain, despite political and social efforts undertaken in recent years to eradicate it, violence against women perpetrated by their intimate partner or former partner (hereinafter IPV) remains a major problem. For example, from the year 2000 to June 2012, 798 women have been killed by their intimate partners or former intimate partners (Ministerio de Sanidad, Política

Social e Igualdad, 2012). From 2002 to the first quarter of 2012, there have been a total of 1,026,629 domestic violence complaints filed by women against their male partners or former partners (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2007; Observatorio contra la violencia doméstica y de género 2010, 2011, 2012). However, the number of complaints does not reflect the real number of cases, for example, according to the National Health Survey of 2006, at least 162,010 women that year were victims of abuse by their partners or former partners, which nearly triples the number of complaints filed during that same period (Vives-Cases et al., 2009).

Despite the clear violation of women's rights that IPV against them entails, studies in different countries and very different cultural contexts have found that some people justify this violence, and even place the blame on the victim, exonerating the perpetrator (Choi & Edleson, 1996; Ewing & Aubrey, 1987; Fundación Mujeres & UNED, 2004; Gentemann, 1984; Gracia & Herrero, 2006; Haj-Yahia, 2000, 2003; Mugford, Mugford, & Easteal, 1989). For example, Ewing and Aubrey (1987) found that more than a third of their American adult sample agreed with the idea that the woman is partly responsible for the violence she has suffered. In an Australian sample, Mugford et al. (1989) found that about 20% of participants also felt that, in some situations, violence against women was justified. Choi and Edleson (1996), in a sample from Singapore, found that more than 5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with that idea. Haj-Yahia (2000), studying an Arab-Palestinian sample, found that the majority of participants agreed

with the idea that an infidelity committed by the wife entitled her husband to beat her. In a more recent study, Haj-Yahia (2003) surveyed 362 married men with Israeli nationality on their beliefs on violence against women, and found that 62% supported violence if the woman had committed a sexual infidelity, 37% if the wife had insulted her husband in front of their friends and 29% if she disobeyed her husband continuously. With regard to Spain, a study carried out on adolescents and young adults aged between 13 and 21 years showed that 20.6% of men in the sample agreed with the statement "sometimes it is women that provoke men and therefore are attacked" (Fundación Mujeres & UNED, 2004). In a recent study conducted by Valor-Segura, Expósito, and Moya (2011), participants attributed more blame to the victim and exonerated the aggressor when no reason for the aggression itself was mentioned that when such reason was given.

In psychosocial literature, a particular interest is given to the study of the factors affecting the formation of this type of prejudiced attitudes on violence against women in intimate relationships (see Flood & Pease, 2009, for a review). These factors can be grouped into two general categories: those related to the situation or context in which the violence occurs, and those referred to the recipient, i.e. the personal characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of the person issuing the evaluation.

The gender of the offender (Felson & Feld, 2009), the economic dependence of the victim (Mann & Takyi, 2009; Valor-Segura, Expósito, & Moya, 2008), the type of relationship maintained between victim and perpetrator (Felson & Feld, 2009; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Shlien-Dellinger, Huss, & Kramer, 2004), or the assumption of traditional roles by women (Btoush & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Obeid, Ginges, & Chang, 2010; Pavlou & Knowles, 2001; Yoshioka, DiNoia, & Ullah, 2001) are some of the situational factors that have been associated with the social perception of this problem. For example, Valor-Segura et al. (2008) asked a group of Spanish participants to read different stories about the IPV of a husband towards his wife that differed only in her economic dependence of him. The results showed that participants maintained a less negative attitude of the aggressor when the woman had her own income than when she was financially dependent of the husband. In relation to gender roles, Btoush and Haj-Yahia (2008) studied the attitudes of the Jordanian population towards gender violence and found that they tended to place the blame more on the woman than the man when she challenged her husband and did not respect the roles expected of her as a wife or mother. That is, when it was concluded that the woman had not cared for her husband, their children or their home, or when

she had screamed or aired their secrets in public. These results are in line with those obtained by Obeid et al. (2010), who found that Lebanese participants justified abuse more when the woman had been unfaithful or had displayed sexual misconduct, had insulted her husband's friends and acquaintances, had been disrespectful to the husband's family, had been disobedient or did not follow the traditional roles expected of women. Yoshioka et al. (2001) also found among an Asian American population that violence was increasingly justified in cases where the wife had been unfaithful, had continually complained or had refused to cook or clean.

In a similar manner as with situational variables, various studies have paid great attention to the role that those variables directly related to the observer play in the perception of IPV. These include demographic variables such as gender, family history and others of a more cognitive nature, such as beliefs and attitudes. In relation to gender, numerous studies have shown that men, in comparison with women, are more likely to accept myths and beliefs that support the use of violence against women, and perceive a smaller range of behaviors as violent. They blame and show less empathy towards the victim and minimize the damage associated with physical and sexual assault. They also consider behaviors of violence against women as less serious, inappropriate or harmful (Ferrer, Bosch, Ramis, Torrens, & Navarro, 2006; Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia, García, & Lila, 2011; Gracia, Herrero, Lila, & Fuente, 2010; Kim-Goh & Baello, 2008; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004; Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003; Valor-Segura et al., 2008, 2011). Having lived or observed violent scenes-whether between parents or between siblings- during childhood also appears to influence subsequent perceptions of IPV and of victims and perpetrators (Ferrer et al., 2006, Flood & Pease, 2009).

Regarding variables of a cognitive nature, studies show that people with more traditional attitudes towards women's roles are more likely to justify violence against them (e.g., Burt, 1980; Obeid et al., 2010; Wehbi , 2002) and in particular, IPV (e.g., Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner 2004; Willis, Hallinan, & Melby, 1996). Among these cognitive variables, special attention has been paid to gender or sexist ideologies (e.g. Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Flood & Pease, 2009; García, Palacios, Torrico, & Navarro, 2007, Gracia et al., 2011; Sakalli, 2001, Valor-Segura et al., 2011). Traditionally, sexist ideology has been described as a set of beliefs about the roles and expected behaviors characteristic and considered appropriate for men and women, as well as a set of beliefs or rules on how they should interact with each other. This ideology does not intend to promote equality, but to keep the traditional

subordination of women to men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In recent years, the ambivalent sexism theory has been studied profusely (Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to this theory, sexism includes both negative or discriminatory behaviors towards women whom are considered inferior (hostile sexism, HS), and positive attitudes, considering women to be good, pure and complementary to men, as long as they are limited to the roles traditionally expected of them (benevolent sexism, BS) (Expósito, Moya, & Glick, 1998; Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to Glick and Fiske (1996), men may want to keep women away from certain activities and roles but at the same time, they need them for interpersonal and sexual relationships. So that "the simultaneous existence of men's structural power and women's dyadic power (based on the interdependence amongst relationships) create ambivalent gender ideologies, composed of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism" (p. 121).

Different studies have shown the relationship between HS and the perception of gender violence. Those with higher scores in HS usually show more prejudiced attitudes toward IPV against women (Russell & Trigg, 2004; Sakalli, 2001, Valor-Segura et al., 2008, 2011), increased justification of the aggressor's actions (Valor-Segura et al., 2011), give more conciliatory advice to the victim (Valor-Segura et al., 2008) and tolerate violence more, either physical or psychological (García et al., 2007; Valor-Segura et al., 2011). In relation to BS, studies have shown that those with high adherence to these beliefs also show greater tolerance to violence (García et al., 2007) and decreased willingness to unconditionally help women suffering from violence (Lila, Gracia, & García, 2010). However, Sakalli (2001) found that benevolent sexist men place a greater blame on men for the aggression. However, other studies have found no relationship between benevolent sexism and attitudes supporting violence against women (Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, & Souza, 2002).

The main objective of this study was to assess the social perception of the victim's responsibility for physical violence within heterosexual relationships. Specifically, this study explores how judgments about the victim's blame were affected by (1) the information given on the victim's feminist ideology (2) their description as a "difficult to deal with" person and (3) the participants' sexist ideology.

To our knowledge, no study has yet analyzed how the victim being a feminist, committed to equality, influences the judgments of the victim's blame. However, indirect evidence allows for the hypothesis that victim's gender ideology will influence the observer's assessments. According to Nelson, Shanahan, and Olivetti (1997), popular culture has distorted the feminist social movement in such a way that it is perceived negatively, at least within broad sectors of society. For example, although many people sustain egalitarian feminist ideas, they will not openly identify with this ideology because they believe that someone of such ideology should hold far more radical ideas than theirs (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). Male groups resistant to change have played a major role in creating this negative view of feminism, repeatedly labeling feminist demands as ridiculous, useless and outdated (Mendes, 2011; Vint, 2010), and spreading the idea that the tactics used to achieve their claims have been plagued by bad manners, bigotry and fanaticism (Mendes, 2011). Even in the laboratory, the existence of a negative social perception of feminism has also been confirmed, even at an implicit level. For example, Jenen, Winquist, Arkkelin, and Schuster (2009) investigated implicit attitudes towards feminism using IAT (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz, 1998). Their participants showed lower reaction times for the *feminism-bad* than for *feminism-good* association, faster responses for the *traditionalism-good* than for the *traditionalism-bad* association, and faster responses for *traditionalism-female* than for *traditionalism-male* association, which shows certain cognitive difficulty in relating feminism with good and traditional with bad.

Since one of the main causes of domestic violence lies in the man's attempts to maintain the situation of power and control they exert over women (Anderson, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996), and that violence is a culturally acceptable method for exercising control and dominance when a man's masculinity is threatened, one might expect that men in general (and, more particularly, sexist men) will feel more threatened by the feminist movement and will thus, somehow justify violence against women of egalitarian / feminist ideology.

On the other hand, regarding the roles traditionally expected of women, the above-mentioned studies state that they were increasingly blamed for the violence received when it was taken into consideration that they had challenged, provoked or disobeyed their partner. For example, not fulfilling her obligations as a mother, as a wife or housewife, being disobedient, complaining constantly, being verbally aggressive, yelling at her husband, cheating or being disrespectful to the families and friends of her husband (Btoush & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Hillier & Foddy, 1993; Obeid et al., 2010; Pavlou & Knowles, 2001; Yoshioka et al., 2001). Considering the characteristics of our culture and these previous studies, it would be expected that when the behavior or character of the victim is not docile or accommodating, she will be blamed more and the actions of the aggressor will be increasingly justified. Thus, following the conclusions drawn by Yoshioka et al. (2001), who suggests that violence against a

woman is increasingly justified when it occurs to a person who constantly complaints, this study intends to check if this is also the case in our culture under similar behaviors labeled as a "difficult to deal with person ".

Taking all of the above into consideration, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Participants will increasingly blame the victim when she is described as having feminist / egalitarian ideology than when she is not.

Hypothesis 2. Consistent with previous research (Yoshioka et al., 2001), it is expected that victims will be increasingly blamed when she is presented as a "difficult to deal with" person (egocentric, catastrophic, who thinks mostly about her problems and pays no attention to others' problems ...) than when she is not.

Hypothesis 3. Participants with high hostile sexist ideology will generally blame the victim more than those less hostile sexist (Russell & Trigg, 2004; Sakalli, 2001, Valor-Segura et al., 2008, 2011).

Hypothesis 4. Men, compared with women, will blame the victim more (e.g., Ferrer et al., 2006; Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia et al., 2010).

Hypothesis 5. Interactions between situational variables and HS are expected, in that the participants' HS will exercise a greater influence on their judgments of blame when the victim is a feminist or a "difficult to deal with" person than when these characteristics are not mentioned. Not only these second-order interactions between situational variables and HS are hypothesized, but also a third-order interaction between those three, in so that the situation in which HS will predict blame judgments more strongly will be the one in which the victim is described as a feminist and "difficult to deal with".

Hypothesis 6. Finally, since hostile sexist men may be the most threatened by the claims of feminist movement, a third-order interaction between Gender x HS x Victim's Ideology is also hypothesized, in the sense that in men, but not in women, HS will relate positively with victim blaming but especially when the victim is presented as a feminist.

Method

Participants

The initial sample was composed of 246 participants studying different degrees within the Universidad de Granada, out of which 110 were females, 134 were males and 2 did not specify their gender. The average age was 21.06 (DT = 3.14) for women and 20.24 (DT = 2.73) for men. In relation to their nationality, 98% of the sample was Spanish students, while only 1.2% were foreigners and .8% did not facilitate this information. According to the studied degree, 31.7%

of the sample were studying Computer Engineering, 15.9% were studying History, 8.5% were studying Pedagogy (Teaching), 8.9% Business Management and Administration, 8.1% Economy, 7.7% Spanish Philology , and 2.8% were studying Business Studies. Out of the total sample, 50.8% were undergoing first year, 5.7% second year, 21.7% third year, 18.9% fourth year and 2.9% fifth (final) year.

The entire sample took part voluntarily in the study, and did not receive any type of compensation for their collaboration.

Design

The study followed a between-group factorial design, using participant gender, the gender ideology of the victim (feminist/equalitarian vs. no information on their ideology) and their description (difficult to deal with vs. no description) as independent variables, and participants' judgments on victim blame as the dependant variable. In addition, the participants' sexist ideology was measured.

Instruments

For this study, a booklet including the instructions, questions on gender, age and education level of the participants was presented along with a questionnaire measuring ambivalent sexist attitudes and assessment of different IPV scenarios.

Ambivalent Sexism

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996 - Spanish version by Expósito, Moya, & Glick, 1998) was administered to measure participants' adherence to sexist attitudes. This scale is composed of two 11-item subscales that assess HS and BS. Each of their items is answered using a Likert-type response format of six points (ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Examples of HS subscale would be items such as "women are very easily offended", "in reality, feminist women intend women to be more powerful than men" or "once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to keep him closely controlled". The BS subscale includes items such as "A man is incomplete without a woman", "in the event of a disaster, women must be rescued before men" or "a good woman should be put on a pedestal by her man". The Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was .90 in the Spanish validation carried out by Expósito et al. (1998) and .92 in our sample. Regarding the internal consistencies for the HS and BS subscales, Expósito et al.'s (1998) study reported (α = .89 and α = .86) respectively, similar to those obtained in our sample, (α = .92) for HS and (α = .84) for BS.

Physical Violence Scenarios

To incorporate the experimental manipulation, four physical violence scenarios describing a heterosexual couple were created. All of them described a relationship between a man (John) and a woman (Mary) who had an argument that ended in an episode of physical violence consisting of John pushing Mary over. The scenarios differed in the information that was given on the gender ideology of the woman (feminist / egalitarian vs. no information) and in some features of her description (difficult to deal with vs. no information). The scenarios in full format are presented in the Appendix.

Dependent Measures

A total of 6 items were included to assess the blame attributed to the victim. These items were an adaptation of those used by Durán, Moya, Megías, and Viki (2010): (1) *To what extent do you think Mary intentionally contributed to the outcome of the discussion?*, (2) *Do you think that Mary should feel guilty about what happened?*, (3) *To what extent do you think Mary contributed to the outcome of the discussion?*, (4) *To what extent do you think Mary's personality contributed to result of the discussion?*, (5) *To what extent do you think that Mary could have acted differently to change what happened?*, (6) *To what extent do you think Mary's behavior can be considered decisive for the outcome of the discussion?*. Each item was answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *nothing / not at all* to (7) *completely / a lot*. A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on these 6 items to study their factorial structure. The Bartlett's sphericity test, $\chi^2(15) = 441.62$, $p < .001$, and *KMO* test (.83) showed the suitability of the correlation matrix for this analysis. The results confirmed a single component with an eigenvalue equal to 3.41, which explained 56.83% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha was equal to .84.

Also, two items were included as "manipulation checks": (1) *"In the information that you have read: does it say that Mary is a feminist?"* and (2) *Does it say that Mary is a difficult to deal with woman, with whom it is difficult to live?"*. Both questions could be answered "yes" or "no".

Procedure

Participants completed the booklets in their classrooms, in approximately 20 minutes. They were asked to take part voluntarily in a study on young people's interpersonal relationships. The answers were individual and anonymous. They were reassured that their data would not be analyzed individually but collectively and would only be used for research purposes. Each booklet contained one of four physical violence scenarios between a heterosexual couple created to insert the experimental manipulations. Participants read a hypothetical scenario in which a man, after having had an argument with his partner, pushed her away. Then, once the participants had answered the items used as manipulation checks, they assessed the blame they attributed to the victim for what happened. Finally, each participant completed the ASI. Once they completed their booklet, they were thanked for their participation and were informed about how to access the results of the study.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

All statistical analyzes were performed using SPSS for Windows (version 15.0.1). First, we checked the appropriateness of our experimental manipulations. In relation to the question that served as manipulation check on the gender ideology of the victim, 93% of participants answered correctly each condition; regarding the question on the woman's description, 79.2% of the participants answered adequately. For subsequent analyzes, only participants who had correctly answered both questions were included. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 189 participants, of whom 84 were women, 103 men and 2 did not report their gender.

Table 1 presents the correlations between the ideological measures and the dependent variable. It also contains the participants' mean scores for these variables, overall and according to gender, and their standard deviations. As expected, significant correlations were found between HS and BS with victim blame, and between HS and BS. Moreover, men blamed the victim more ($M = 3.53$, $DT = 1.26$) than women

Table 1. *Mean scores for men and women in the main variables of the study and correlations between them*

Variable	Total (SD)	Men (SD)	Women (SD)	t	(2)	(3)
(1) BS	1.77 (.98)	2.00 (1.00)	1.51 (.91)	3.39**	.53***	.34***
(2) HS	2.29 (1.21)	2.50 (1.17)	2.02 (1.20)	2.73**	–	.32***
(3) VB	3.10 (1.26)	3.53 (1.26)	2.58 (1.04)	5.61***		–

Note: BS: Benevolent Sexism; HS: Hostile Sexism; VB: Victim Blaming. **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

(M = 2.58, DT = 1.04) and showed greater adherence to both hostile sexist beliefs (M = 2.50, DT = 1.17) and benevolent sexist beliefs (M = 2.00, DT = 1.00) than women (M = 2.02, DT = 1.20, and M = 1.51, DT = .91, respectively).

Victim Blaming

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of the information of the victim's feminist ideology and description, gender, and participants' HS and BS on the blame attributed to the victim. HS and BS variables were centered prior to this analysis (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990). Examination of the data showed no multicollinearity between variables, since no value exceeded limits set by the regression model (VIF maximum = 8.68, minimum tolerance level = .12) or the conditional indices (CI max = 15.2). In the first step, all main effects were analyzed and in the second and third steps, the second and third order interactions between the independent variables (victim's ideology and description, participants' gender) and HS and BS.

In the first step, the overall equation was significant, F(5, 186) = 21.41, p < .001, significant main effects were obtained for the variables Victim's description β = .38; t = 6.33; p < .001, HS, β = .20; t = 2.83; p < .01, and Participants' gender, β = .28; t =4.50; p < .001 (see Table 2). As predicted in Hypothesis 2, participants blamed the victim more when she was described as a "difficult to

deal with" person than when no information was given about her personality. However, this did not occur when it was reported that the victim had a feminist ideology, contrary to expectations according to Hypothesis 1. On the other hand, in agreement with Hypothesis 3, the higher the HS adhesion the participants showed, the greater the blame they attributed to the victim. Hypothesis 4 was also supported, with men blaming the victim more than women.

However, these effects and two related second-order interactions (Victim's ideology x HS, Gender x HS) must be interpreted in light of two third-order interactions between Victim's ideology x Victim's description x HS, β = .37, t = 2.29, p < .05 and Victim's ideology x Gender x HS, β = .41, t = 2.58, p < .05. To interpret the first of these interactions, the effect of Victim's ideology and HS on blaming was analyzed separately for each level of the Victim's description variable (difficult to deal with vs. no information). A significant interaction was found between Victim's ideology and HS only when the victim was described as "difficult to deal with", β = .41, t = 2.23, p < .05, but not in the control condition, β = .07, t = .57, *ns*. The *simple slopes* test (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that within the "difficult to deal with" woman condition, participants' HS predicted victim blaming only when she was described as a feminist, β = .49, t = 3.83, p < .001, but not when nothing was said about her ideology, β = –.01, t = –.01, *ns*.

Table 2. *Hierarchical regression with victim blaming as the dependent variable*

Variable	R^2	F	SD	β	t	Tolerance	VIF
Step 1	.372	21.41***	1.01				
BS			.09	.125	1.76	.69	1.45
HS			.07	.20	2.83**	.70	1.43
Victim's Ideology			.15	.01	.14	.97	1.04
Victim's Description			.15	.38	6.33***	.97	1.04
Gender			.15	.28	4.50***	.93	1.07
Step 2	.42	10.35***	1.01				
Description x BS			.18	– .02	– .23	.32	3.07
Description x HS			.15	.01	.10	.35	2.86
Ideology x BS			.18	– .11	– 1.11	.32	3.10
Ideology x HS			.15	.24	2.22*	.28	3.50
Ideology x Description			.31	– .05	– .49	.29	3.45
Gender x BS			.19	– .21	– 1.88	.27	3.61
Gender x HS			.15	.24	2.32*	.31	3.19
Step 3	.47	8.19***	.93				
Ideology x Description x BS			.36	– .28	– 1.85	.14	7.17
Ideology x Description x HS			.31	.37	2.29*	.12	8.13
Ideology x Gender x BS			.37	– .22	– 1.37	.12	8.10
Ideology x Gender x HS			.30	.41	2.58*	.12	8.15
Description x Gender x BS			.37	.11	.69	.12	8.68
Description x Gender x HS			.30	.06	.44	.16	6.18

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; BS: Benevolent Sexism; HS: Hostile Sexism.

Therefore, Hypothesis 5 received significant support, since the second-order interaction between Victim Ideology x HS and the third-order interaction between Victim's Ideology x Victim's description x HS were all significant. In sum, as hypothesized, the greater influence of HS on victim blaming judgments was found when the victim was described as a feminist and "difficult to deal with".

To interpret the three-way interaction between Victim's ideology x Gender x HS, the effect of the information of Victim's ideology and HS on victim blaming was analyzed separately for men and for women. The interaction between Victim's Ideology x HS was significant only for men, $\beta = .32$, $t = 2.25$, $p < .05$, but not for women, $\beta = -.07$, $t = -.42$, *ns*. The *simple slopes* test (Aiken & West, 1991) indicated that men's HS predicted victim blaming only when she was described as a feminist, $\beta = .52$, $t = 4.37$, $p < .001$, but not when her ideology was omitted, $\beta = .13$, $t = .92$, *ns*. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was also corroborated, which stated that men's HS, but not women's, would positively correlate with victim blaming when she was a feminist. No other second or third order interaction was significant.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to examine the attribution of blame to women living situations of violence within heterosexual relationships. To this effect, the influence of two victim-related factors (feminist / egalitarian ideology and certain personality aspects) and one relative to the observer (sexist ideology) on the perception of victim blaming was analyzed. In general, results confirmed that not only both factors individually exert a significant influence on the participants' judgments, but so does the interaction between them.

The first hypothesis posed that a feminist woman would be increasingly blamed for the violence received than a woman whose ideology was not known. Although the main effect of this variable was not significant, it did influence the participants' judgments by moderating the influence of HS and the other situational variable, as Hypotheses 5 and 6 predicted and will be discussed later.

The second hypothesis was corroborated. Participants blamed the victim more for the violence received when she was described as a "difficult to deal with" than when no information was given. These results are in line with those presented by other authors regarding the traditional roles expected of women (Btoush & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Hillier & Foddy, 1993, Obeid et al., 2010, Pavlou & Knowles, 2001; Yoshioka et al., 2001). In all these cases, the woman is increasingly blamed for the violence suffered when she was considered to have challenging or provocative behaviors with her partner. According to this idea, the results of the present study might suggest that the victim's character / difficult behavior is considered by observers as challenging or provocative and that is the reason why women "deserve" violence.

Consistent with the third hypothesis, participants who scored high on HS blamed the victim more than those who scored low. In a similar cultural context, Valor-Segura et al. (2008) also found that the HS was the factor that best predicted the justification of the aggressor's actions and the minimization of the aggression's importance (see also García et al., 2007, Russell & Trigg, 2004; Sakalli, 2001 and Valor-Segura et al., 2011).

Consistent with the fourth hypothesis, men blamed the victim more than women, as has also been shown in other research with Spanish population and from other countries (Ferrer et al., 2006, Flood & Pease, 2009, Gracia et al., 2010; Kim-Goh & Baello, 2008; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004, Nayak et al., 2003; Valor-Segura et al., 2008). The possible increased identification of women with the victims and their lower adherence to sexist beliefs may help explain these differences.

In the fifth hypothesis, interaction effects between situational variables and HS on victim blaming judgments were expected. This hypothesis has also been endorsed by the data of this study. The results have shown that HS, as an ideological variable, is especially influential on victim perception, when the victim is described as being a feminist and "difficult to deal with". This result follows the proposal of the Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), according to which HS is characterized by, among other things, assuming that women are weaker and inferior to men and have none of the characteristics needed to succeed in the public sphere. This is exactly the opposite of what the feminist ideology stands for, seeking to achieve equality between men and women and bring them into the public sphere rather than relegating them to the private and family spheres. If in addition, the woman's behavior does not correspond to the traditional roles of caregiver, nice, sensitive, kind … but rather is problematic, egocentric, concerned primarily about herself... those participants that harbor more hostility towards women may blame them more for the violence they have received, considering that they deserved to be reprimanded. In fact, several studies have confirmed that counter-stereotypical behavior regarding gender roles can lead to punishment and negative evaluations of adult women, a phenomenon known as *backlash* (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

Finally, in agreement with the sixth hypothesis, men with high HS scores especially blamed the feminist victim of the violence suffered in her relationship. According to feminist models (e.g. Anderson, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996), one of the main causes of domestic violence lies in the man's attempts to maintain a position of power and control over the woman. Since violence is considered on numerous occasions a culturally acceptable method to exercise this control and dominance when a man's masculinity is threatened, it is expected that men in general and more particularly sexist men, would perceive more of a threat from the feminist movement. Therefore, these men would be more likely to divert the origin of violence to the attitudes and behavior of women themselves.

Although this study presents interesting findings, it also involves a number of limitations that must be taken into account. Firstly, although a large sample was used, the results should be generalized with caution as the sample was composed exclusively of university students. Future studies with a greater representation of the general population would be interesting. Another limitation is related to the experimental manipulation of the variable that described the victim as a "difficult to deal with" person, this description has generated confusion in some participants as was evident in one of the questions that served as *manipulation checks*. Further research should improve the definition and realization of this variable and explore the influence of other features more clearly counter-stereotypical in the social perception of victim blaming.

Despite these limitations, it is worth mentioning two important applied implications of this work. Firstly, valuable conclusions can be drawn from this study for the design of intervention programs against gender violence. Knowing factors that influence victim blaming can help minimize battered women's secondary victimization processes, which often stem from unfair social values and judgments. Spreading this knowledge can contribute to a better performance of professionals dedicated to this area. Secondly, this work can also be useful for the design of gender violence prevention programs to be carried out in formal educational settings, incorporating actions aimed at correcting biased sexist attitudes and beliefs towards the victims.

References

Aiken L. S., & West S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Anderson K. L. (1997). Gender, status, and domestic violence: An integration of feminist and family violence approaches. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 59, 655–669. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/353952

Berkel L. A., Vandiver B. J., & Bahner A. D. (2004). Gender role attitudes, religion, and spirituality as predictors of domestic violence attitudes in white college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, 119–133. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2004.0019

Btoush R., & Haj-Yahia M. M. (2008). Attitudes of Jordanian society toward wife abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23, 1531–1554. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260 508314313

Burt M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and support for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 217–230. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.38.2.217

Capezza N. M., & Arriaga X. B. (2008). Factors associated with acceptance of psychological aggression against women. *Violence Against Women*, 14, 612–633. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077801208319004

Choi A., & Edleson J. L. (1996). Social disapproval of wife assaults: A national survey of Singapore. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 27, 73–88.

Dobash R. P., & Dobash R. E. (1979). *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Durán M. M., Moya M., Megías J. L., & Viki T. (2010). Social perception of rape victims in dating and married relationships: The role of perpetrator's benevolent sexism. *Sex Roles*, 62, 505–519. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9676-7

Eagly A. H., & Karau S. J. (2002). Accuracy and bias in stereotypes about the social and political attitudes of women and men. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 268–282.

Ewing C. P., & Aubrey M. (1987). Battered women and public opinion: Some realities about the myths. *Journal of Family Violence*, 2, 257–264.

Expósito F., Moya M., & Glick P. (1998). Ambivalent Sexism: Measurement and Correlates. *Revista de Psicología Social*, 13, 150–169. http://dx.doi.org/10.1174/021347 498760350641

Felson R. B., & Feld S. L. (2009). When a man hits a woman: Moral evaluations and reporting violence to the police. *Aggressive Behavior*, 35, 477–488. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ab.20323

Ferrer V. A., Bosch E., Ramis M. C., & Navarro C. (2006). Beliefs and attitudes on violence against women in partner: Socio-demographics, familiar and formative determinants. *Anales de Psicología*, 22, 251–259.

Flood M., & Pease B. (2009). Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10, 125–142. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1524838009334131

Fundación Mujeres, & UNED (2004). *Proyecto detecta. Estudio de investigación sobre el sexismo interiorizado presente en el sistema de creencias de la juventud y adolescencia de ambos sexos y su implicación en la prevención de la violencia de género en el contexto de la pareja.* [Detect Project. Research study on internalized sexism present in the belief system of youth and adolescents of both sexes and their involvement in the prevention of gender violence in the context of relationships]. Madrid, Spain. Retrieved from http://www.fundacionmujeres.es/proyectos/view/proyecto_detecta_investigacion_sobre_sexismo_interiorizado_en_jovenes.html

García P., Palacios A. S., Torrico E., & Navarro Y. (2007). El sexismo ambivalente: ¿Un predictor del maltrato? [Ambivalent sexism: A predictor for abuse?]. *Boletín Electrónico de Psicología Jurídica y Forense*, *29*. Retrieved from http://psicologiajuridica.org/psj210.html

Gentemann K. (1984). Wife beating: Attitudes of a non-clinical population. *Victimology*, *9*, 109–119.

Glick P., & Fiske S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*, 491–512. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.70.3.491

Glick P., Sakallı-Ugurlu N., Ferreira M. C., & Souza M. A. S. (2002). Ambivalent sexism and attitudes toward wife abuse in Turkey and Brazil. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *26*, 292–297. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1471-6402.t01-1-00068

Gracia E., García F., & Lila M. (2011). Police attitudes toward policing partner violence against women: Do they correspond to different psychosocial profiles? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 26*, 189–207. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260510362892

Gracia E., Herrero J., Lila M., & Fuente A. (2010). Perceptions and attitudes towards partner violence against women among Latin-American immigrants in Spain. *Intervención Psicosocial*, *19*, 135–144.

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. http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech.2005.036533

Greenwald A., McGhee D., & Schwartz J. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The implicit association test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1464–1480. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.74.6.1464

Haj-Yahia M. M. (2000). Wife abuse and battering in the sociocultural context of Arab society. *Family Process*, *39*, 237–255. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2000.39207.x

Haj-Yahia M. M. (2003). Beliefs about wife beating among Arab men from Israel: The influence of their patriarchal ideology. *Journal of Family Violence*, *18*, 193–206.

Hillier L. & Foddy M. (1993). The role of observer attitudes in judgments of blame in cases of wife assault. *Sex Roles*, *29*, 629–644. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00289209

Jaccard J., Turrisi R., & Wan C. K. (1990). *Interaction effects in multiple regression*. London, UK: Sage.

Jenen J., Winquist J., Arkkelin D., & Schuster K. (2009). Implicit attitudes towards feminism. *Sex Roles*, *60*, 14–20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9514-3

Kim-Goh M., & Baello J. (2008). Attitudes toward domestic violence in Korean and Vietnamese immigrant communities: Implications for human services. *Journal of Family Violence*, *23*, 647–654. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10896-008-9187-2

Langhinrichsen-Rohling J., Shlien-Dellinger R. K., Huss M. T., & Kramer V. L. (2004). Attributions about perpetrators and victims of interpersonal abuse. Results from an analogue study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *19*, 484–498. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260503262084

Lila M., Gracia E., & García F. (2010). Actitudes de la policía ante la intervención en casos de violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de pareja: Influencia del sexismo y la empatía. [Police attitudes toward intervention in cases of partner violence against women: The influence of sexism and empathy]. *Revista de Psicología Social*, *25*, 313–323. http://dx.doi.org/10.1174/021347410792675570

Liss M., O´Connor C., Morosky E., & Crawford M. (2001). What makes a feminist? Predictors and correlates of feminist social identity in college women. *Psychology of Women of Quarterly*, *25*, 124–133. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1471-6402.00014

Mann J. R., & Takyi B. K. (2009). Autonomy, dependence or culture: Examining the impact of resources and socio-cultural processes on attitudes towards intimate partner violence in Ghana, Africa. *Journal of Family Violence*, *24*, 323–335. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10896-009-9232-9

Mendes K. (2011). 'The lady is a closet feminist!' Discourses of backlash and postfeminism in British and American newspapers. *Intercultural Journal of Cultural Studies*, *14*, 549–565. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367877911405754

Ministerio de Igualdad (2007). *I Informe anual del observatorio estatal de violencia sobre la mujer. Informe ejecutivo.* [I Annual report of the State Observatory on violence against women. Executive Report]. Madrid, Spain: Author.

Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad (2012). *Víctimas mortales por violencia de género.* [Deaths caused by gender violence]. Madrid, Spain: Author.

Mugford J., Mugford S., & Easteal P. (1989). Social justice, public perceptions, and spouse assault in Australia. *Social Justice*, *16*, 102–123.

Nayak M. B., Byrne C. A., Martin M. K., & Abraham A. G. (2003). Attitudes toward violence against women: A cross-nation study. *Sex Roles*, *49*, 333–342.

Nelson L. J., Shanahan S. B., & Olivetti J. (1997). Power, empowerment and equality: evidence for the motives of feminists, nonfeminists and antifeminists. *Sex Roles*, *37*, 227–249.

Obeid N., Chang D. F., & Ginges J. (2010). Beliefs about wife beating: An exploratory study with Lebanese students. *Violence Against Women*, *16*, 691–712. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077801210370465

Observatorio contra la Violencia Doméstica y de Género (2010). *Datos de denuncias, procedimientos penales y civiles registrados, órdenes de protección solicitadas en los juzgados de violencia sobre la mujer (JVM) y sentencias dictadas por los órganos jurisdiccionales en esta materia en el año 2010.* [Data on registered complaints, criminal and civil proceedings, restraining orders requested in court for violence against women (JVM) and final judgments of the courts on this matter in 2010]. Madrid, Spain: Consejo General del Poder Judicial.

Observatorio contra la Violencia Doméstica y de Género (2011). *Datos de denuncias, procedimientos penales y civiles registrados, órdenes de protección solicitadas en los juzgados de violencia sobre la mujer (JVM) y sentencias dictadas por los órganos jurisdiccionales en esta materia en el año 2011.* [Data on registered complaints, criminal and civil proceedings, restraining orders requested in court for violence against women (JVM) and final judgments of the courts on this matter in 2011]. Madrid, Spain: Consejo General del Poder Judicial.

Observatorio contra la Violencia Doméstica y de Género (2012). *Datos de denuncias, procedimientos penales y civiles registrados, órdenes de protección solicitadas en los juzgados de violencia sobre la mujer (JVM) y sentencias dictadas por los órganos jurisdiccionales en esta materia en el primer trimestre del año 2012.* [Data on registered complaints, criminal and civil proceedings, restraining orders requested in court for violence against women (JVM) and final judgments of the courts on this matter in the first trimester of 2012]. Madrid, Spain: Consejo General del Poder Judicial.

Pavlou M., & Knowles A. (2001). Domestic violence: Attributions, recommended punishments and reporting behavior related to provocation by the victim. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, *8*, 76–85. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218710109525006

Rudman L. A., & Fairchild K. (2004). Reactions to counter stereotypic behavior: The role of backlash in cultural stereotype maintenance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *87*, 157–176. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.2.157

Russell B. L., & Trigg K. Y. (2004). Tolerance of sexual harassment: An examination of gender differences, ambivalent sexism, social dominance, and gender roles. *Sex Roles*, *50*, 565–573. http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/B:SERS.0000023075.32252.fd

Sakalli N. (2001). Beliefs about wife beating among Turkish college students: The effects of patriarchy, sexism and sex differences. *Sex Roles*, *44*, 599–610. http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1012295109711

Stark E., & Flitcraft A. H. (1996). *Women at risk: Domestic violence and women's health.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Valor-Segura I., Expósito F., & Moya M. (2008). Atribución del comportamiento del agresor y consejo a la víctima en un caso de violencia doméstica. [Attribution of aggressor's behavior and advice to the victim in a case of domestic violence]. *Revista de Psicología Social*, *23*, 171–180. http://dx.doi.org/10.1174/021347408784135896

Valor-Segura I., Expósito F., & Moya M. (2011). Victim blaming and exoneration of the perpetrator in domestic violence: The role of beliefs in a just world and ambivalent sexism. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, *14*, 195–206. http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_SJOP.2011.v14.n1.17

Vint S. (2010). The new backlash: Popular culture's "marriage" with feminism, or love is all you need. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *34*, 160–169. http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/JPFT.34.4.160-169

Vives-Cases C., Álvarez-Dardet C., Gil-González D., Torrubiano-Domínguez J., Rohlfs I., & Escribà-Agüir V. (2009). Perfil sociodemográfico de las mujeres afectadas por violencia del compañero íntimo en España. [Sociodemographic profile of women affected by intimate partner violence in Spain]. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, *23*, 410–414. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2009.02.007

Wehbi S. (2002). "Women with nothing to lose": Marriageability and women's perceptions of rape and consent in contemporary Beirut. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *25*, 287–300.

Willis C. E., Hallinan M. N., & Melby J. (1996). Effects of sex role stereotyping among European American students on domestic violence culpability attributions. *Sex Roles*, *34*, 475–491. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01545027

World Health Organization (2005). *WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. Initial results on prevalence, health-related events and women's responses to such violence.* Geneva, Switzerland: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/summary_report/chapter1/es/index.html

Yoshioka M. R., DiNoia J., & Ullah K. (2001). Attitudes toward marital violence: An examination of four Asian communities. *Violence Against Women*, *7*, 900–926. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/10778010122182820

Appendix

Scenario used in the study (the information that could vary depending on the experimental condition is presented between brackets).

Mary met John, her current boyfriend, twelve years ago through some friends. At first, they met with all members of the group to go out to dinner or for a drink at a bar. As they begun to know each other, they started to meet on their own and began their relationship. They went out together for five years as a couple, seeing each other almost every day before they decided to live together.

They looked around for an apartment for a few months until they found one they both liked. They lived in that apartment for three years, and then decided to buy their own home. [Mary is the typical woman who constantly talks about herself, fixates on her problems too much, get nervous easily and has a somewhat catastrophist view. She needs to be the centre of attention and needs constant approval by others; she likes people to be thoughtful with her, even though she is not thoughtful herself usually. In general, she is a difficult to deal with woman.] [Maria is also a feminist, and fights for equality between men and women and believes that women are discriminated against men when it comes to accessing a job, she thinks that both men and women should care for dependents equally, and also argues that the housework carried out by women at home is undervaluated].

Lately Mary and John are having many discussions in their relationship. Recently, they had a problem. They started arguing over economic issues, since they are not doing very well financially lately. The discussion kept getting more heated and eventually it ended in John giving Mary a push.