

Applying Theory to Crime: *OTHER ASSAULTS (SIMPLE)*

The FBI's Uniform Crime Report Program defines "other assaults," or "simple assaults," as "assaults and attempted assaults where no weapon was used or no serious or aggravated injury resulted to the victim. Stalking, intimidation, coercion, and hazing are included."³⁷ In 2014, there were a total of 1,093,258 simple assaults. From 2005 to 2014, the number of simple assaults by males decreased by 18.3%; for the same period, the number of simple assaults by females decreased by 3.7%.³⁸

Based on 2014 National Crime Victimization Survey data, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that there were 3,318,923 victims of simple assault, which means 12.4 simple assaults per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. Comparing this rate with the rate of simple assaults for 2005 (i.e., 19.2) reveals a significant decrease (35.4%). Men and women reported similar rates of victimization (12.8 and 12.1, respectively); however, when examining the relationships between victims and offenders, some interesting differences appear.

For the male victims of simple assault, 39.2% were nonstranger, 52.2% were stranger, and the remaining were "relationship unknown." Within the 39.2% nonstranger simple assaults, 3.7% involved intimate partners (i.e., current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends), 8.6% involved another relative, and 26.9% were between friends or acquaintances. For the female victims of simple assault, 72.2% were nonstranger, 22.4% were stranger, and the remaining were "relationship unknown." Within the 72.2% nonstranger simple assaults, 18.5% involved intimate partners, 11.9% involved another relative, and 41.8% were between friends or acquaintances. When examining the rates of intimate



Police officers are a primary component of deterrence. Without the police, chaos might ensue, as seen during police strikes. However, studies show that concentrating officers in certain neighborhoods doesn't reduce crime in those areas.

partner violence by gender, 0.5 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older were male victims compared with 2.2 per 1,000 for female victims.³⁹

It is essential to stress, however, that the scope and extent of domestic violence varies a great deal depending on the definition used to measure the incidence and prevalence of these assaults. Further, there is a general assumption that both official reports and self-reports understate the problem of domestic assault for a variety of reasons. For instance, a direct question pertaining to past victims or perpetrators of violence may not evoke a positive response. Some individuals may not remember or may not be willing to acknowledge or admit to illegal or inappropriate behavior.⁴⁰

One area of study that has explored the application of deterrence theory is that of law enforcement responses to domestic violence. In the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, Sherman and Berk examined

the effects of police responses in deterring domestic assaults.⁴¹ Officers were randomly assigned to respond in one of the following manners: (a) separate the parties and order one of them to leave, (b) inform the parties of various alternatives (e.g., mediating disputes), or (c) arrest the abuser. The results revealed that 10% of those arrested, 19% of those advised of alternatives, and 24% of those ordered to leave subsequently engaged in further violence. Thus, Sherman and Berk concluded that arresting perpetrators of domestic violence has the strongest deterrent effect. Some researchers, however, noted methodological shortcomings of the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment. For instance, some officers involved in the experiment claimed to have prior knowledge of what type of action they were to take when responding to a domestic violence call. Thus, they would reclassify the offense in an effort to have it omitted from the study.⁴²

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