

Missing Voices

Patterns of Battered Women's Satisfaction With the Criminal Legal System

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Many survivors of intimate partner violence turn to the criminal legal system for help in ending the violence against them. An increasing amount of research has focused on how the system ought to handle these cases. But, with few exceptions, the existing research has not examined survivors' satisfaction with the criminal legal system. The current research explored intimate partner violence survivors' patterns of satisfaction with the criminal legal system response. Survivors from three sites were interviewed after a domestic violence-related court case closed. Cluster analysis revealed four patterns of satisfaction with multiple components of the criminal legal system. Multinomial logistic regression was used to evaluate an ecological model predicting cluster membership. Characteristics of the survivor and assailant, the criminal legal system response, and women's perceived control over this response were all related to satisfaction. Implications for improving the criminal legal system response to survivors of intimate partner violence are discussed.

Every year, approximately 1.5 million women are battered by intimate partners or ex-partners; 1 in 4 women will experience at least one physical assault by an intimate partner during adulthood (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Many survivors¹ of intimate partner violence turn to the criminal legal system for help in ending the violence against them. In response to this, an increasing amount of research has focused on how the criminal legal system ought to handle intimate partner violence cases. With few exceptions, the

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existing research on the police and court responses to intimate partner violence has neglected to examine factors relating to survivors' satisfaction with the criminal legal system. However, such an examination is critical to developing policies and interventions to keep survivors safe. The current study addressed two major questions: (a) How satisfied are survivors with the multiple components of the criminal legal system? and (b) What factors about survivors, about their situations, and about the criminal legal system impact that satisfaction?

Much of the research on the criminal legal system response to intimate partner violence has focused specifically on the effectiveness of different police responses. For instance, the Minneapolis Spouse Abuse Experiment (Sherman & Berk, 1984) and the Spouse Abuse Replication Project (SARP) (e.g., Berk, Campbell, Klap, & Western, 1992; Dunford, Huizinga, & Elliot, 1992; Hirschel & Hutchison, 1992; Pate & Hamilton, 1992) explored whether arrest was more likely to deter future violence than other police interventions. Although this question is critical, the survivors' experiences and decisions were conspicuously absent. All of the SARP studies focused on police records as a measure of subsequent violence. Given the low reporting rate of intimate male violence against women overall (Koss et al., 1994), there are likely to be significant differences between those survivors who do report violence to the police and those who do not (Zorza, 1992).

Some of the SARP studies did include survivor interviews (e.g., Berk et al., 1992; Hirschel & Hutchison, 1992; Sherman & Berk, 1984), but they tended to have low response rates. Moreover, the survivor interviews in the SARP studies did not address survivors' satisfaction with the criminal legal system intervention but simply whether there had been further violence. Understanding survivor satisfaction with the system is critical, however, because survivors may change their future help-seeking strategies depending on their experiences with the system (Lewis, Dobash, Dobash, & Cavanagh, 1997; Rigakos, 1997). If the police response is not helpful, survivors may be less likely to contact the police about any future assaults (Conaway & Lohr, 1994). Moreover, survivors who are not satisfied with the police response may be less likely to participate in the court system (Lerman, 1992). Conversely, if survivors find the police response helpful, they may be more likely to contact the police again. This logic may help

explain why some of the SARP studies found what appeared to be an escalation effect of arrest; those survivors whose assailants were arrested may also be more likely to contact the police again, with the hope that the police would arrest again.

However, the legal action taken is not the only factor that impacts survivor satisfaction. The way the police and other system personnel treat survivors has also been shown to affect their satisfaction. In a study of women's experiences with orders of protection, Ptacek (1999) found that women were more satisfied with the police response to protection order violation when the police responded with empathy. Similarly, women were more satisfied with judges' responses when those judges listened to them and empathized with their situations.

Less research attention has focused on the impact of prosecution than on the police response, partially because prosecution of intimate partner violence has been a relatively rare event (Dutton, 1987; Ferraro, 1993). Much of the existing research has examined the effects of prosecution on official reports of later violence. Tolman and Weisz (1995) evaluated a protocol that coordinated the police department and the prosecutor's office. According to official records, they concluded that arrest had a long-term deterrent effect, but successful prosecution did not. Other research on coordinated community responses to intimate partner violence has also shown that coordination within the legal system can decrease later violence (Steinman, 1990; Syers & Edleson, 1992). For instance, Syers and Edleson (1992) found that court-mandated batterer treatment following an arrest decreased repeat violence. Like the research on arrest, however, this research is limited because the survivors' perspectives and decisions were missing.

In one of the few studies to ask survivors about their decisions around prosecution, Ford (1991) found that many women used prosecution as a power resource. For instance, survivors would decide to pursue or to drop charges if the perpetrator did certain things, such as promising to get counseling. Based on the concept of the ability to pursue or prevent prosecution as a source of power for survivors, Ford cautioned against policies that may result in disempowering survivors by taking away their choice to pursue prosecution or not.

Moreover, Ford and Regoli (1992) found that those assailants who went through an initial hearing were less likely to commit

later violent acts against the same survivor than those who did not. Women who had the opportunity to drop charges but did not were less likely to be assaulted 6 months later than those who did request charges be dropped. At the time of the study, survivors were only permitted to drop charges if they had initiated the complaint; if the assailant had been arrested, survivors were not able to drop charges. The authors argued that "preventive policy impact derives from her power to drop rather than from judicial action" (p. 204).

In contrast, some areas have experimented with prosecution even without survivor participation. Lerman (1992; Cahn & Lerman, 1991) argued that the best way to help survivors may be to pursue prosecution of assailants whether or not the survivors want prosecution. By prosecuting the assailant, the criminal legal system sends the message that the community will not tolerate violence. Shifting responsibility for prosecution from the survivors to the prosecutors also may give survivors a better opportunity to control the rest of their lives, to the extent that prosecution keeps them safer.

For some women, then, having control over prosecution and deciding to prosecute may protect them, as Ford (1983, 1991; Ford & Regoli, 1992) has argued. For other women, deciding to participate in prosecution may put them in more danger. Women who have been battered are more likely to be killed when they are trying to end the relationship or when they are pursuing prosecution (Browne, 1987; Mahoney, 1991). In addition, assailants may threaten survivors specifically to keep them from participating in prosecution (Hart, 1993; Mahoney, 1991; Smith, 1988). In such cases, taking that power to decide about prosecution away from survivors may keep them safe and thus allow them more control over other aspects of their lives.

The difference between survivors having a *sense* of control over the criminal legal system and survivors having *actual* control is critical. As Ford (1991) pointed out, police and prosecutors (not survivors) ultimately make arrest and charging decisions. Judges and juries decide about guilt or innocence and make sentencing decisions. Survivors who perceive that they have control may be more satisfied with the criminal legal system, regardless of the level of *actual* control.

THE CURRENT RESEARCH

This research addressed two major questions. The first was: How satisfied are survivors with each of the multiple components of the criminal legal system process and outcome? These components included the police response, the prosecutor's handling of the case, the court system process, and the court outcome. The second question addressed was: What factors about the survivor's situation and about the criminal legal system impacted that satisfaction? Simply describing patterns of survivor satisfaction is not enough; we need to understand the situations and experiences within the system that relate to satisfaction.

Consistent with ecological theories of intimate partner violence (e.g., Carlson, 1984; Dutton, 1996), contextual and system factors were both expected to impact survivor satisfaction with the criminal legal system. Contextual factors included those factors that described women and their situations, such as the violence against them, their relationship with the assailant, and the social support available to them. Criminal legal system factors, such as the degree to which the police and prosecutors were supportive and the amount of control that survivors perceived they had over the criminal legal system, were also expected to partially explain women's satisfaction with the system.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 178 female survivors of intimate male partner violence whose assailants were charged with a crime against them. The majority of participants were recruited from a large urban area in the West (52%), with the remainder recruited from a smaller, suburban western area (27%) and a midwestern county (21%). A multisite study was conducted to maximize the number of women who could be recruited during a relatively short time period (9 months). After a domestic violence case was closed, potential participants were mailed a flyer from the prosecutor's office. A small number of participants (4%) were also recruited through two victim advocacy organizations and in person through the courts.

TABLE 1
Participant Demographics, by Site

	<i>West, Urban</i> (n = 92)	<i>West, Suburban</i> (n = 48)	<i>Midwest</i> (n = 38)	<i>Total</i> (N = 178)
Race (%)				
African American	27	0	29	20
White	41	90	53	57
Latina	28	2	5	16
Multiracial	2	2	11	4
Native American	1	4	3	2
Asian American	0	2	0	1
Involvement with assailant during 6 months before arrest (%)	68	83	80	76
Involvement with assailant at time of arrest (%)	60	69	55	62
Average age (in years)	33	36	30	33
(<i>SD</i>)	(9.2)	(10.3)	(10.9)	(10.0)
Average number of children	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.7
(<i>SD</i>)	(1.6)	(1.2)	(1.6)	(1.5)
Have high school degree or higher education (%)	84	92	84	86
Employed in past 6 months (%)	84	85	84	84
Average monthly income	\$1,841	\$2,805	\$1,561	\$2,042
(<i>SD</i>)	(1,598)	(3,142)	(1,110)	(2,105)

Participant demographics are summarized in Table 1. Just more than half of the participants were White (57%), 20% were African American, 16% were Latina, 4% were of mixed race, and 2% were Native American. Most of the women were involved in a relationship with the assailant during the 6 months before he was arrested (76%), but fewer women reported being in a relationship with the assailant at the time of the arrest (62%). The average age of the participants was 33 (*SD* = 10.0). Most of the women had at least a high school diploma (86%), and most had been employed in the 6 months before the interview (84%). The median monthly income for the participants was \$1,600, but this ranged from no income at all to \$20,000 per month.

Women recruited from the three sites differed significantly on two variables: race, $\chi^2(2) = 30.29, p < .001$, and age, $F(2, 175) = 3.79, p < .05$. Women recruited from the suburban western site were more likely to be White than women from the western city, $\chi^2(1) = 30.2, p < .001$, or from the midwestern county, $\chi^2(1) = 14.8, p < .001$. Tukey's HSD test revealed that women from the suburban western site were also older than women from the midwestern site:

suburban west, $M = 35.6$, $SD = 10.3$; midwest county $M = 29.7$, $SD = 10.9$.

MEASURES

Several major types of variables were measured in the survivor interviews. The first type were indicators of the violence and resultant injuries. The second type were contextual variables that described the context of women's lives, including race, relationship with the assailant, and economic dependence. The third type were variables that described survivors' experiences with the legal system processes and outcome. The fourth type of variables described the survivors' perceived control over and satisfaction with the different aspects of the criminal legal system.

Violence Variables

Physical violence. An extended version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) was used to examine which of 22 types of violence occurred during the incident that led to the court case. Two items were dropped from the scale: "shot" was dropped because no women had been shot, and "drove recklessly in order to scare or hurt you" was dropped due to low reliability. A count of the number of types of violence women experienced during that assault was created (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

A severity scale for the incident that led to the court case was created (see Sullivan & Bybee, 1999), with 0 = *No violence*, 1 = *Less severe violence* (e.g., pushed, slapped), 2 = *Severe violence* (e.g., kicked, beat up), and 3 = *Highly severe violence* (e.g., choked, stabbed). This third category is consistent with Straus's (1979) factor analysis of the CTS.

To examine the validity of this coding, a series of t tests was conducted comparing women who experienced severe violence with women who experienced highly severe violence. Women who experienced highly severe violence during the assault that led to the court case had more injuries from that assault than women who experienced severe violence, $t(123) = -2.08$, $p < .05$; severe $M = 3.08$ ($SD = 2.24$); highly severe, $M = 4.05$ ($SD = 2.95$). Women who experienced highly severe violence during the target assault were also threatened with death more often over the 6

months before the target assault, $t(123) = -3.90, p < .001$; severe, $M = .84 (SD = 1.19)$; highly severe, $M = 2.02 (SD = 2.08)$, on a scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 7 (*every day*).

Injuries. Survivors were asked to indicate which of 17 injuries—such as soreness without bruising, black eyes, and broken bones—resulted from the assault that led to the court case. On average, women received 2.7 injuries from that assault ($SD = 2.63$), though this ranged from no injuries to 13 different injuries. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .79.

Contextual Variables

Relationship to assailant. Survivors were asked what their relationship was with the assailant when the assailant was arrested (e.g., married, divorced, living together, dating).

Economic dependence. For some survivors, arrest and conviction of their assailant can lead to economic hardship. Because even a small loss of the total income can impact survivors' lives, survivors were asked to rate how important the economic contribution of their assailant was on a 4-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all important*) to 3 (*very important*).

Social support. Survivors were asked if friends, family, and agencies or systems (e.g., domestic violence shelters, religious leaders, hospitals) knew about the violence and, if so, how supportive those people or agencies were of them, using a scale ranging from 0 (*very unsupportive*) to 5 (*very supportive*). A mean social support scale was created as the average supportiveness among those people who knew. On average, women reported that 5.9 individuals or agencies (other than the police and prosecutor) knew about the violence ($SD = 2.8$). The mean supportiveness among those who knew was 3.1 (somewhat supportive) ($SD = .70$).

Criminal Legal System Variables

Police contact. Survivors were asked how many officers responded to the incident that led to the court case and how many

were female. Survivors were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how supportive the police were of them (from 0 = *very unsupportive* to 4 = *very supportive*). Survivors were also asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how satisfied they were with the police response to that incident (from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*).

Court contact. Survivors were asked multiple questions about what happened in the court process. All survivors were asked how much time (if any) they spent talking with the prosecutor. They were also asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how supportive the prosecutor was of them (from 0 = *not at all supportive* to 4 = *very supportive*). Survivors were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how satisfied they were with the way the prosecutor handled the case (from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*). They were asked the final outcome of the case (e.g., the assailant pled guilty, charges were dismissed), how satisfied they were with the court process (the way things were done in the hearings and/or trial), and how satisfied they were with the outcome of the case (from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*).

Control and Satisfaction Variables

For each of the four components of the criminal legal system (the police response, the prosecutor response, the court process, and the court outcome), participants were asked how much control they felt they had, using a scale ranging from 0 (*no control*) to 3 (*a lot of control*). Women also were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how satisfied they were with each of these four aspects of the criminal legal system (from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*).

RESULTS

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

The Target Incident

For 85% of the women, a physical assault against them led to the court case. Among these women, 82% ($n = 125$) had severe violence perpetrated against them; for 40% ($n = 61$), the assault included at least one act of highly severe violence. Not

surprisingly, most of the women (86%) ($n = 130$) who were assaulted during the target incident were injured by the assault. More than half of the women (58%) ($n = 102$) had cuts, scrapes, or bruises, and the same number ($n = 102$) had soreness without bruising. Nearly 1 in 5 women (17%) ($n = 32$) had a concussion or other head injury, and 1 in 10 (10%) ($n = 19$) lost consciousness.

The remaining women (15%) ($n = 26$) were not assaulted during the incident that led to the court case. Most of these cases were about harassment (50%) ($n = 13$) or a protection order violation (31%) ($n = 8$). A handful of cases were about property damage (8%) ($n = 2$), and 3 participants insisted that no crime was committed; the assailant was wrongly arrested (12%) ($n = 3$).

Police Response

All but 1 woman had contact with the police about the target incident; the remaining woman contacted her assailant's probation officer. In most cases, two or three officers responded, $M = 2.83$, $SD = 2.08$. In more than a third of the cases (34%), at least one female officer responded. In general, women thought the police were between neutral and somewhat supportive when they handled the case, $M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.32$.

Court Process

Just more than half of the women talked directly to the prosecutor (55%). On average, women spent about half an hour with the prosecutor before the case went to court, but this varied from no time² to 4 hours, $M = 32.7$, $SD = 44.1$. Overall, women who talked to the prosecutor thought that she or he was somewhat supportive of her, $M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.46$. Most assailants pled guilty (62%) or the charges were dropped (19%). A smaller number were convicted after trial (7%). A handful of women (5%) did not know what the final outcome was. Only 3% of the assailants were tried and found not guilty.

WOMEN'S SATISFACTION WITH THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Overall, women were between neutral and somewhat satisfied with the police response, $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.52$. Similarly, on average,

women were neutral about the way the prosecutor handled the case, $M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.57$; the court process, $M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.40$; and the court outcome, $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.57$.

Women did not differ across site on three of the four satisfaction variables. However, a site difference was found for satisfaction with the court outcome, $F(2, 162) = 4.15$, $p < .05$. Post hoc testing (Tukey's HSD) revealed that women in the western suburb were less satisfied with the court outcome, $M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.61$, than women in the western urban area, $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.49$. One obvious explanation for this difference would be a difference in actual outcome; however, there was no site difference in conviction rates, $\chi^2(1) = .24$, *ns*.

Cluster analysis was used to explore participants' satisfaction with different aspects of the criminal legal system rather than creating a linear satisfaction score to capture (a) individual women's different levels of satisfaction with the different components of the system and (b) differences in these patterns. A woman who was very satisfied with the police response and very dissatisfied with the court outcome would appear to be neutral overall if her answers were averaged. Moreover, a second woman with the opposite pattern of responses (very dissatisfied with the police and very satisfied with the outcome) would appear identical to the first woman using a linear scale.

Cluster analysis was conducted on the four items measuring survivors' satisfaction with different aspects of the criminal legal system response. First, an agglomerative clustering method was used to determine initial groupings as there was no theoretical or empirical basis to determine the initial cluster centers (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). Ward's method was chosen to minimize within-cluster differences and maximize between-cluster differences (Rapkin & Luke, 1993). Second, the resulting cluster centroids were used as the starting point for an iterative clustering procedure (K-means). This step was done to minimize the misassignment of cases common with agglomerative methods (Mowbray, Bybee, & Cohen, 1993).

The number of clusters was decided on by using four techniques. First, the resulting plot of fusion coefficients showed a marked flattening between four and three clusters. The resulting dendrogram also showed that a four-cluster solution fit the data. In addition, the four-cluster solution yielded the most even

TABLE 2
Final Cluster Centroids for Four-Cluster Solution

<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Satisfaction With Police</i>	<i>Satisfaction With Prosecutor</i>	<i>Satisfaction With Process</i>	<i>Satisfaction With Outcome</i>
Somewhat Satisfied	3.92	4.62	3.91	4.60
Let Down	4.46	2.93	2.69	1.66
Satisfactory Outcomes	3.11	1.91	2.69	4.03
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1.48	1.38	1.31	1.45

NOTE: The scale ranges from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*).

distribution of cases across clusters (39%, 24%, 21%, and 17%). Finally, the four-cluster solution yielded interpretable clusters.

Cluster Descriptions

Table 2 presents the cluster centroids for each of the clusters. The first and largest cluster was called "Somewhat Satisfied" because it was characterized by the highest levels of satisfaction across all four components of the criminal legal system. This cluster was the largest, containing 39% of the sample. Women in this cluster overall were somewhat satisfied with the police and the court process and were between somewhat and very satisfied with the prosecutor and the case outcome. The second largest cluster, containing 24% of the women, was called "Let Down." The women in this cluster were satisfied with the police response, were neutral about the prosecutor and the process, and were dissatisfied with the final court outcome. The third cluster was called "Satisfactory Outcomes" because the women in this cluster were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with the police, were somewhat dissatisfied with the prosecutor and the court process, but were somewhat satisfied with the court outcome. About 20% of the sample was in this cluster. The final cluster was called "Somewhat Dissatisfied" because it was characterized by the lowest levels of satisfaction across all four aspects of the system. This was the smallest cluster, with 17% of the sample. Women in this cluster were between somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the police response, the prosecutor, the court process, and the court outcome.

PREDICTING SURVIVOR SATISFACTION

Four types of variables were selected to predict cluster membership: characteristics of the incident (severity of the violence, number of injuries), demographic characteristics (site, survivor and assailant race, relationship involvement at arrest, social support, economic dependence), system characteristics (supportiveness of the police, whether any of the responding officers were female, time with the prosecutor, and case outcome), and women's perceived control over three components of the criminal legal system (the police response, the court process, and the court outcome). Because the dependent variable was cluster membership, multinomial logistic regression was used to test the predictive utility of these four types of variables.

The outcome variable had four levels (cluster membership), so six sets of contrasts were performed (one for each pair of clusters) as well as an overall test for each predictor variable. Because this research was exploratory, trends as well as statistically significant relationships were examined, at the risk of being overly inclusive rather than prematurely discounting potentially important relationships. Five variables did not exhibit any significant or trend relationships for any of the contrasts in this model: number of injuries, site, assailant race, time spent with the advocate, and control over the police response. Hosmer and Lemeshow (1991) recommended dropping variables with no predictive value and running a smaller model, assuming that dropping those variables does not significantly impact the coefficients of the remaining variables. The decision was made to retain site in the model as a control, especially given the site difference in satisfaction with the outcome.

Thus, the four remaining variables, which neither exhibited a significant relationship with cluster membership nor exhibited a significant relationship or trend in any contrast, were examined as potential suppressor variables. Neither time spent with the advocate nor control over the police response appeared to act as suppressors. Injuries was found to be a suppressor for violence; once the impact of injuries from the incident was accounted for, women who experienced more violence were more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes." Thus, the decision was made to leave both injuries and violence in the model.

A confounding effect was found for assailant race. Without assailant race in the model, women at the midwest site were less likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" relative to women at the western urban site. When assailant race was added to the model, this site effect disappeared. Univariate analyses suggested that assailant race was related to site, $\chi^2(2) = 36.09, p < .001$. Moreover, the criminal legal system has been criticized for treating White assailants and assailants of color differently (e.g., Ferraro, 1993; Richie, 1996; Richie & Kanuha, 1997). This difference in treatment, in turn, could be expected to be related to women's satisfaction with the system. Once the variance shared between assailant race and site was accounted for, however, neither showed a relationship with satisfaction. Thus, the decision was made to retain assailant race in the model due to its relationship with the control variable site.

OVERALL MODEL FIT

The model showed a good fit to the data, as indicated by the likelihood ratio statistic for the goodness-of-fit test for the overall model, $LR\chi^2(48, N = 130) = 132.42, p < .001$. McFadden's rho squared equaled .38, which also indicated that the model resulted in a significant increase in fit relative to the null model; values between .2 and .4 are generally considered acceptable (Hensher & Johnson, 1981).

UTILITY OF INDIVIDUAL PREDICTORS

Next, the utility of individual predictors to explain differences in patterns of satisfaction was examined. Two demographic variables, three system response variables, and one control variable showed a relationship overall with cluster membership. Whether the assailant had a substance abuse problem distinguished the clusters, $LR\chi^2(3) = 11.30, p < .05$. Whether the assailant was a man of color or White showed a trend with cluster membership, $LR\chi^2(3) = 7.63, p < .10$. Variables about the system response distinguished between the clusters: the supportiveness of the police, $LR\chi^2(3) = 37.48, p < .001$; time with the prosecutor, $LR\chi^2(3) = 10.51, p < .05$; and whether the assailant was convicted, $LR\chi^2(3) = 11.32, p < .05$. Finally, the amount of control women believed they had

over the court process distinguished the clusters, $LR\chi^2(3) = 10.31$, $p < .05$.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, predictors that differentiated individual clusters were also explored, even if those predictors were not significant overall. The amount of violence women experienced and several variables about the legal system response and about the amount of control women perceived they had distinguished the first cluster, "Somewhat Satisfied," from the other clusters. Women who experienced more severe violence during the target incident were more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = 2.11). Women who felt supported by the police were 4.47 times more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" and were somewhat (but not significantly) more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = 1.75, $p < .10$). Women whose assailants were convicted were 9.18 times more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Let Down." Women who felt they had control over the court system and over the outcome also were more likely to be in the "Somewhat Satisfied" cluster than in the other clusters. Women who perceived themselves to have more control over the court process were more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Let Down" (odds ratio = 2.74) or in "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = 3.32). Finally, women who perceived themselves to have more control over the court outcome were more likely to be in the "Somewhat Satisfied" cluster than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = 3.39).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the second cluster, "Let Down," was distinguished from the others mainly by the police response and the court outcome. Women who reported feeling supported by the police were more likely to be in "Let Down" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = 6.45) or "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = 2.64). Women who spent more time with the prosecutor were somewhat but not significantly ($p < .10$) more likely to be in "Let Down" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes." However, women whose assailants pled guilty or were convicted were .11 times less likely to be in "Let Down" than in "Somewhat Satisfied" and were .10 times less likely to be in "Let Down" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes." Women whose assailants had a drug and/or alcohol problem were more likely to be in "Let Down"

than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = 17.57) or "Somewhat Satisfied" (odds ratio = 7.75).

The third cluster, "Satisfactory Outcomes," was distinguished from the other clusters by demographic variables, as well as by incident and system response variables. Women who were involved with their assailant at the time of the arrest were somewhat (but not significantly) more likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than in "Let Down" (odds ratio = 4.18, $p < .10$) or in "Somewhat Satisfied" (odds ratio = 3.95, $p < .10$). White women were 7.09 times more likely to be in this cluster than in "Somewhat Satisfied" and 4.12 times more likely to be in this cluster than in "Let Down." Women whose assailants had a substance abuse problem were more likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = 10.75) or "Somewhat Satisfied" (odds ratio = 4.74, $p < .10$). A trend for economic dependence was also found; women who said that the assailant's income was important were somewhat more likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = 2.16, $p < .10$). In addition, women who had a female officer respond were .16 times less likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than in "Somewhat Satisfied" and somewhat (but not significantly) less likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" (odds ratio = .19, $p < .10$).

The final cluster, "Somewhat Dissatisfied," was distinguished from the other clusters mainly by system variables and by control variables. Women who felt the police were supportive were less likely to be in this cluster than in the other clusters ("Somewhat Satisfied" odds ratio = .22; "Let Down" odds ratio = .15; "Satisfactory Outcomes" odds ratio = .39). In addition, women who reported less social support in general were somewhat more likely to be in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = .32, $p < .10$) or "Let Down" (odds ratio = .34, $p < .10$). Women who spent more time with the prosecutor were more likely to be in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes" (odds ratio = 1.06) or "Somewhat Satisfied" (odds ratio = 1.03). Women who felt they had more control over the outcome were less likely to be in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" than in the other three clusters ("Somewhat Satisfied" odds ratio = .29, $p < .05$; "Let Down" odds ratio = .35, $p < .10$; "Satisfactory Outcomes" odds ratio = .32, $p < .10$).

UTILITY OF EACH TYPE OF VARIABLE

In addition to examining the utility of each individual variable in predicting cluster membership, the utility of each type of variable was examined as well to more fully explore the ecological model. An ecological perspective suggests that factors about the incident, the individual survivors, and assailants as well as about the system response should all be useful in predicting women's satisfaction. The first block of variables entered into the regression were about the target incident: the severity of the violence at the incident that led to the court case and the number of injuries that resulted from that incident. The target incident block was not related to cluster membership, $\chi^2(6) = 6.80, ns$.

The second group of variables entered into the equation was demographic characteristics about the survivor and the assailant (whether she was White or a woman of color, whether the assailant was White or a man of color, the site, assailant drug use, relationship to the assailant, social support, and economic dependence). The addition of this block improved the model somewhat but not significantly, $\chi^2(24) = 34.78, p < .10$.

The third group of variables examined was characteristics of the legal system response (whether a female officer responded, supportiveness of the police, time with the prosecutor, whether the assailant was convicted). This block significantly improved prediction of cluster membership, $\chi^2(12) = 66.66, p < .001$.

The final group of variables entered was about the amount of control the survivor believed she had over the court process and the court outcome. The addition of this block to the model also improved prediction of women's patterns of satisfaction, $\chi^2(6) = 24.18, p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

Women in this study had a wide variety of experiences related to violence as well as to the police and courts. The majority of the women in this sample experienced severe violence during the incident that led to the court case. As expected, there were distinct patterns of satisfaction with the different components of the system. Two of the four clusters ("Somewhat Satisfied" and "Somewhat Dissatisfied") were each made up of women who were

either relatively satisfied or relatively dissatisfied with all the components of the legal system. The two remaining clusters ("Satisfactory Outcomes" and "Let Down") each included women who were satisfied with some aspects of the system and dissatisfied with other aspects. Clearly, women can and do differentiate between the different aspects of the criminal legal system.

Only 38% of women were in a cluster that was satisfied with all aspects of the system ("Somewhat Satisfied"). More than half were less than satisfied with at least one aspect of the system. Consistent with an ecological perspective of intimate partner violence (Carlson, 1984; Dutton, 1996), it was expected that these patterns of satisfaction could be explained by four different types of variables: the incident, demographics, the system response, and perceived control over the system. The system response and demographics were each marginally related, whereas perceived control was found to be strongly related to satisfaction.

Both the supportiveness of the police and whether any of the responding police officers was female were related to women's satisfaction with the police response. Consistent with Ptacek's (1999) findings, women who felt the police were supportive of them were more likely to be in clusters that were somewhat satisfied with the police response ("Somewhat Satisfied" or "Let Down").

In addition, women who had a female officer respond were more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes." This effect for female police officers may be related to gender differences among police officers in attitudes toward intimate partner violence (Belknap, 1995). However, having a female officer respond in and of itself is not enough to guarantee satisfaction with the police response, as illustrated by the contrast between "Somewhat Dissatisfied" and "Satisfactory Outcomes." Women in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" were somewhat less satisfied with the police response but were more likely to have had a female officer respond. Clearly, for women to be satisfied with the police response to intimate partner violence, they need to feel supported by the police. As Ptacek (1999) noted, "Recognition and empathy alone do not stop the violence and abuse. But they are essential for any meaningful provision of protection" (p. 153).

The actual court outcome was also related to satisfaction. Women whose assailants were not convicted were more likely to

be in the "Let Down" cluster. In addition, women whose assailants were convicted were more likely to be satisfied with the court outcome ("Somewhat Satisfied" or "Satisfactory Outcomes"). Contrary to the stereotype of battered women as wanting their assailants released, many women in this study wanted their assailants convicted. This finding is consistent with Ferraro and Boychuk's (1992) findings that appearing in court and wanting prosecution is still no guarantee of conviction. Thus, changes focusing on the criminal legal system, such as the use of additional evidence in court (e.g., photographs, medical reports), are more likely to increase conviction rates than simple interventions to increase the number of women who appear in court.

Surprisingly, those women who spent more time with the prosecutor were more likely to be in the cluster "Somewhat Dissatisfied," which included women who were dissatisfied with the way the prosecutor handled the case, the court process, and the court outcome. Perhaps these women spent additional time with the prosecutor as a way to change the way the prosecutor handled the case or to communicate their dissatisfaction. Alternatively, those women who spent more time with the prosecutor may have had the chance to see the criminal justice system process up close. To the extent that these "real life" experiences with the prosecution process did not match women's popular (mis)conceptions of the legal system, women may have been less satisfied. Clearly, simply increasing the time women and prosecutors spend together will not automatically lead to increased satisfaction for survivors; the quality of that interaction must also be addressed.

Consistent with an ecological perspective of partner violence, characteristics of the survivor and the assailant were also related to survivors' satisfaction. White women and women who were involved with the assailant at the time of the arrest were more likely to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" than "Let Down" or "Somewhat Satisfied." Perhaps women who were involved with their assailants at the time of the arrest were perceived by police to be more "responsible" for the violence by not leaving the relationship (e.g., Erez & Belknap, 1998). Thus, the police may have treated these women more negatively, leading to their decreased satisfaction.

The role of race is more challenging to interpret. Prior research suggests that police and courts are less likely to support women of

color than White women (Ferraro, 1989). Moreover, women of color report that they may not call the police because of fear that their assailants (men of color) will be treated harshly by a racist judicial system (Richie, 1996; Richie & Kanuha, 1997). Thus, the finding that women of color were less likely than White women to be in "Satisfactory Outcomes" is somewhat inconsistent with prior research. This cluster was marked by dissatisfaction with the police response, the prosecutor, and the court process. Perhaps White women had higher expectations of the system than women of color, leading to their greater dissatisfaction with their actual treatment. All of the assailants in this study had been arrested; thus, this study cannot address possible race differences in arrest rates. Contrary to expectations, assailant race was not related to women's satisfaction with the system. Again, this null finding may be due to race differences in expectations of the system. Additional research needs to explore in more detail the relationship between survivors' expectations of the criminal legal system, race, and survivor satisfaction.

Economic dependence and social support were both only marginally related to survivor satisfaction. Women who were "Somewhat Dissatisfied" were somewhat less likely to report that their assailants' income was important than women in "Satisfactory Outcomes." The measure of economic dependence used, however, was economic dependence at the time of the interview, not the time of the incident that led to the court case nor the time of the court outcome. Measuring economic dependence at a different time may have yielded different results. Alternatively, women who are economically dependent on their assailants may be less likely to have police contact about assaults because they know that their income will be affected. Because women who had not had any system contact were not eligible for the current study, it is not known how generalizable these findings are.

Women who were "Somewhat Dissatisfied" were also slightly more likely to report that they had more social support than women in "Satisfactory Outcomes" and in "Let Down." It was expected that women who had more social support might be more satisfied with the system because of the extra support in decision making and navigating the system. However, this does not appear to be the case; those women who reported slightly more social support were in two clusters that did not have

positive experiences with the prosecutor and the court process. Given the exploratory nature of this research and that this difference on social support was a trend, it is possible that this finding may be a statistical artifact rather than a true difference. Alternatively, women with more social support may have had higher expectations that they would be supported by the system than women without other sources of social support. Additional research asking women directly about how their social support network affected their decisions about using the criminal legal system and their experiences within the system is necessary to explore this finding in more detail.

The last demographic variable related to women's satisfaction with the system was drug and/or alcohol abuse by the assailants. Women whose assailants had a substance abuse problem were more likely to be in "Let Down." Perhaps the court personnel took the violence less seriously because of the assailant's substance abuse problem. If they attributed the violence to the substance abuse rather than to the assailant, they may have been less likely to take the survivor seriously or to vigorously pursue prosecution. Because substance abuse does not cause intimate partner violence (Limandri & Sheridan, 1995; Miller & Wellford, 1997), court personnel may need additional education on the role of substance abuse in intimate partner violence.

These demographic characteristics that are related to women's satisfaction may not cause satisfaction. Rather, each of these variables either impacts the actions of legal system personnel (survivor and assailant race, relationship, assailant drug use) or at least impacts what survivors want from the system (economic dependence, social support). The actions by system personnel, in turn, impact women's satisfaction.

Overall, variables about women's perceived control over the criminal legal system were related to patterns of satisfaction. Women who were in the "Somewhat Satisfied" cluster felt they had more control over the court process than did women in the other clusters. Women in "Somewhat Dissatisfied" felt they had somewhat less control over the outcome than did women in the other three clusters. Control also mediated the site difference in satisfaction with the outcome; this site difference appears to be due to a difference in perceived control. Women who felt they had control, then, were more satisfied with the criminal legal system

response. This effect for control is consistent with Ford's (1983, 1991; Ford & Regoli, 1992) work, which suggests that women who have the option to drop charges but decide not to are safer over time relative to women who decide to drop charges and women who are not given this choice.

The distinction between perceived control and actual control in this study is crucial. The current study simply asked women how much control they believed they had over the system because measuring women's actual control was not possible. Changes within the system that increase women's perceived control but do not increase their actual control ultimately would be misleading and disempowering (Riger, 1993). A great deal of future work will be needed to disentangle the complex relationship between perceived control, actual control, and satisfaction.

Contrary to expectations, the effects of incident characteristics were weak. Severity of the violence and the resultant injuries were expected to be related to satisfaction because the system may take cases of severe violence more seriously. This did appear to be the case; women who experienced more severe violence were more likely to be in "Somewhat Satisfied" than in "Satisfactory Outcomes" (once the impact of injuries was controlled for). However, it should be noted that women who had experienced life-threatening assaults and women who had not been physically assaulted at all were represented in all four clusters.

At first glance, there seems to be a conflict between women having some control within the criminal legal system (which is related to increased satisfaction) and evidence-based prosecution policies that remove the responsibility for prosecution from survivors. Evidence-based prosecution policies will not affect control over or participation in the system among women who believe the system can help end the violence. The dilemma remains, however, for women who want control over the system because they want charges dismissed. Additional community supports for survivors (e.g., financial support) and protection from assailants could decrease women's reliance on control over the system to stay safe. Evidence-based prosecution as part of a larger, coordinated community response could decrease women's perceived control over the system without decreasing their satisfaction with the criminal legal system.

Knowing what aspects of the system women find satisfactory, however, is not the same as understanding what will keep women safe. Future longitudinal research needs to explore how this experience with the criminal legal system impacts women's actual safety over time. Moreover, future research needs to examine how assailants experience the criminal legal system. Assailants' violent behaviors need to stop if we are to end violence against women.

Overall, this study demonstrates the complexity of women's experiences with the criminal legal system. This system is only one of multiple systems with the potential to assist women with abusive partners and to hold assailants accountable for their actions. Appropriate, coordinated responses by multiple systems are necessary to adequately address violence against women. Nonetheless, understanding survivor satisfaction with the criminal legal system is a crucial first step to improving the way this system addresses intimate-partner violence.

NOTES

1. In legal terminology, these women are victims of a violent crime. However, most advocates for women with abusive partners prefer the term *survivor* to emphasize women's strengths and agency. For this reason, the term *survivor* will be used throughout this study, even though these women are victims of crime.
2. Three women spoke to the prosecutor only after the outcome was decided.

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