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Male and Female College Students in Mexico and the U.S. Are Equally Violent to Dating partners, UNH Expert Says

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DURHAM, N.H. -- A study of 1,446 college students in Mexico and the United States found that men and women are equally aggressive in most cases of intimate partner violence. When only one partner is violent, however, it is twice as likely to be the woman than the man, according to Murray A. Straus, founder and co-director of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire.

"These findings suggest that programs and policies aimed at preventing intimate partner violence by women are crucial," says Straus, "but almost all prevention efforts are based on the assumption that intimate partner violence is perpetrated primarily by men. In fact, intimate partner violence by men, but not by women, has been decreasing since the mid 1970s, but assaults by women on male partners have stayed about the same."

He cautions, however, that the idea that violence by women justifies or excuses violence by their partner must be refuted.

"A focus on protesting and assisting female victims must remain a priority," he says. "In many societies women lack full economic, social, political and human rights. In such cultural contexts, equality for women needs to be given priority as an even more fundamental aspect of the prevention of intimate partner violence."

Straus presented these results today, July 30, at the XV World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression in Montreal, Canada. Students

at the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad in Juarez, Mexico; the University of Texas at El Paso; Texas Technological University; and the University of New Hampshire were surveyed. The study is part of the first phase of the International Dating Violence Study that will eventually include 32 countries.

While the percent reporting violence was high in all the universities, the lowest rate was in New Hampshire, 29.7 %, and the highest rate was in Juarez, Mexico, 46.1%. However, New Hampshire had the highest rate of women being the only aggressor in the relationship.

"One reason could be that as women become more equal in other spheres of life, they also tend to become more equal in respect to committing crime," Straus says. "New Hampshire has the highest degree of equality between men and women of the four samples."

Straus is the author or co-author of more than 200 publications, including "Beating the Devil Out Of Them: Corporal Punishment By American Parents and Its Effects on Children," the second edition of which was published last year, and a book due out next year, "The Primordial Violence: Corporal Punishment By Parents, Cognitive Development, and Crime."

For copies of Straus's papers or more bio information, go to <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2>.

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