

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**PATTERNS OF MISREPORTING INTIMATE  
PARTNER VIOLENCE USING MATCHED PAIRS**

A Thesis in

Crime, Law, and Justice

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

August 2012

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## ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an issue of serious public concern. However, IPV policy interventions and theoretical development have been complicated by mixed research evidence about whether men or women experience higher levels of IPV. Some of this discrepancy arises from IPV's measurement and whether abuse and victimization is asked of one or both partners. In this study, I examine partner IPV reporting discrepancies and develop hypotheses for why such discrepancies might exist. I examine IPV reporting discrepancies with matched partner data from 1,393 heterosexual couples collected in Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. I hypothesize that discrepancies in reporting between men and women may be caused by gendered effects of social desirability, such that 1) disagreement about violence will be greater for reports of male perpetrated violence than female perpetrated violence, 2) disagreement about victimization will be greater for reports of male victimization than female victimization, 3) disagreement between partner reports of male perpetrated violence and victimization will increase with the seriousness of IPV, 4) disagreement between partner reports of male perpetrated violence and victimization will decrease with the seriousness of IPV, and 5) disagreement about men's victimization will be greater for men with higher levels of masculinity. Finally, I hypothesize that masculinity may be the mechanism which explains male underreporting of victimization, such that more masculine men will be more likely to deny victimization than less masculine men. Overall, results suggest that disagreement is greater for male perpetrated violence and victimization than for female perpetrated violence and victimization, with the exception of injury, and that disagreement increases with the seriousness of IPV. I find no association between masculinity and men's reports of IPV. Therefore, reports of IPV are subject to social desirability bias, but masculinity is not the explanatory mechanism.

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## **Introduction**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) continues to be a central public, research, and policy concern. However, there is contention among scholars about whether theory and research should be focused on IPV perpetrated against women only or against both men and women (Reed, Raj, Miller & Silverman 2010; Straus 2005). An overwhelming majority of research conducted on the prevalence, causes and consequences of IPV has focused exclusively on violence against women, largely because of a belief that violence against women is qualitatively different from violence against men. For example, Reed and colleagues (2010) argue that the consequences of IPV are much greater and more damaging for female than for male victims, and that violence against men and violence against women should not be conflated into one overarching concept of intimate partner violence.

Alternatively, some researchers suggest that IPV perpetrated against men is problematic in its own right, and should also be taken seriously. Archer's (2000) meta-analysis of studies measuring sex differences in IPV indicates that self-report studies have actually found higher levels of IPV perpetrated by women than by men. Other research has suggested that reciprocal violence, perpetrated by both partners in the relationship, is quite common (Bookwala et al. 1992; Brush 1990; Gray & Foshee 1997; Margolin 1987; Moffitt et al. 1997; Straus 2011). Using the 1975 National Family Violence Survey, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found that 50 percent of the relationships studied which involved any IPV could be classified as reciprocal. The remaining 50 percent of violent relationships were split almost equally between unidirectional male and female perpetration. A follow-up study using data from couples in the 1985 National Family Violence Resurvey (NFVS) found similar results (Straus and Gelles 1990). These results have been replicated by Melander, Noel and Tyler (2010) and by Kessler et

al. (2001), leading to the conclusion that reciprocal violence— IPV perpetrated by both partners within a relationship – is just as common as unidirectional violence (Follingstad & Edmundson 2010; Straus 2008; Whitaker et al. 2007).

Estimates from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAW) indicate that about 25% of women experience some form of IPV during their lifetimes, and 1.5 million women experience some form each year, while nearly 8% of men experience some form during their lifetime, and 835,000 experience some form each year (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). In an attempt to make sense of the difference in levels of IPV between surveys like the NFVS and the NVAW, Johnson (1995) created a typology of IPV which distinguishes *common couple violence*, which refers to sporadic acts of violence arising out of situational conflict by either partner in an effort to regain control during an argument or fight that has gotten out of hand, from *patriarchal terrorism*, which refers to the violence used by husbands to maintain perpetual domination over their wives. Common couple violence is argued to be less serious and minor, while patriarchal terrorism is more serious and harmful. Additionally, common couple violence tends to be reciprocal, while patriarchal terrorism is almost exclusively unidirectional and perpetrated by husbands against their wives. Therefore, the gender discrepancies in incidence and prevalence between surveys like the NFVS and the NVAW are due to differences in the type of IPV being captured by each, and the level of seriousness.

The heterogeneity in definitions of IPV and the differences and discrepancies in theories surrounding it are partially due to issues of measurement. Initial studies of IPV relied on self-reports of victimization and violence from one partner within the couple. Margolin (1987) and others suggest that using information from both partners better captures the amount of violence actually occurring within the relationship because reports from only one partner may be

misleading (Szinovacz 1983; Jouriles & O’Leary 1985; Edleson & Brygger 1986). Using a sample of 103 volunteer couples, she found that the level of IPV incidence increased by 100% when she used reports made by either spouse compared to reports in which spouses agreed. Szinovacz and Egley (1995) used data from the National Survey of Families and Households and found that agreement about IPV perpetration was low among couples in which violence was reported by at least one partner. For example, only 29.3 percent of violent couples agreed that the husband “hit, shoved, threw things at wife,” (ibid: 2).

Couple discrepancies in reports of IPV suggest that either one or both partners are misreporting the actual level of incidence. Because IPV is a private affair that most often occurs behind closed doors, it is extremely difficult to know its *real* prevalence or incidence. However, patterns of reporting discrepancies are potentially informative means for understanding the relationship between gender and IPV, as well as helping to develop theory about why, how and when partners become violent. Misinterpreting patterns of reporting may also lead to poor planning and misguided initiatives, as well as over- or under-funded or resourced programs designed to tackle IPV, which may have serious ramifications for the wellbeing of the victims (Dobash and Dobash 2004). For example, if women systematically underreport IPV because of fear or shame, they may also be less likely to seek help or medical care when necessary. Therefore, it may be helpful to determine patterns of misreporting in order to better interpret self-reports, and in order to better address the needs of victims.

In this thesis, I will try to make sense of patterns of IPV reporting discrepancies using theories of social desirability and gender. Reporting about sensitive behaviors can be biased by social desirability because individuals may answer dishonestly if they think the truth violates acceptable societal norms (Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinki 2000). In the case of IPV, people may



resist reporting violence and victimization because both are anti-normative and undesirable.

Although both women and men can be affected by social desirability, men may be more susceptible than women in the case of IPV because of strong social norms against hitting women and against admitting being hurt by women. Accordingly, I generate hypotheses about gendered patterns of reporting discrepancies, and test these hypotheses using matched-partner data from 1,393 couples collected in Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health).

### **Social Desirability, Gender and Victimization**

One of the biggest recognized hindrances to the validity of any survey data is social desirability bias. Social desirability bias occurs because people are concerned with portraying themselves so as to be liked by others. Goffman (1959) compares social interaction to a theatrical play in which individuals' behaviors are a kind of performance intended to convey certain characteristics of themselves that they want others to notice, acknowledge and respond to. If individuals do not actually possess the characteristics they want to convey, he explains that "the individual does of course intentionally convey misinformation," (ibid: 2) suggesting that people may lie about themselves in order to maintain a positive image in the eyes of others. In surveys, and other data collection strategies, social desirability creates a bias in the responses of participants because they are likely to respond in ways that are culturally and politically appropriate, rather than in ways that are truthful (Marlowe & Crowne 1961; Edwards 1957).

Social desirability bias is a potential problem with any data collection, but questions regarding sensitive or anti-normative behaviors or beliefs are particularly susceptible to social desirability reporting bias (Tourangeau et al. 2000; Krebs et al. 2011). Tourangeau et al. (2000) explain that people hold beliefs about what society deems appropriate and acceptable, and that

“Sensitive questions ask, in effect, whether we have violated such norms,” (p. 257). IPV is arguably a very sensitive topic and an anti-normative behavior (Felson 2002), and therefore at risk of biased reporting. As a result, several researchers have suggested that discrepancies in couples’ reports of IPV are attributable to social desirability bias (Caetano et al. 2009; Moffitt et al. 1997; Szinovacz & Egley 1995).

According to Anderson (2005) violence perpetrated by men is perceived and given meaning differently from violence perpetrated by women. Men’s violence is likely to be viewed as serious and injurious, while women’s violence may be viewed as trivial and nonthreatening. Felson (2000) finds that violent incidents are less likely to result in police involvement when the incident involves female perpetrated violence, which may suggest that women’s violence is seen as less serious or harmful. Additionally, Felson (2000) explains that survey research often reveals that IPV perpetrated against women is seen as worse than IPV perpetrated against men. The triviality of women’s violence, and the greater negativity expressed toward violence against women, has led some researchers to assert that IPV perpetrated by men is much more anti-normative than IPV perpetrated by women (Dutton & Nicholls 2005; Sugarman & Hotaling 1997). Therefore, although social desirability bias can affect both men and women, men may be more likely than women to underreport perpetrating violence in order to appear decent (Chan 2009).

It may also be more anti-normative for men to admit being victimized by women than for women to admit being victimized by men. Moffitt et al. (1997) hypothesize explanations for male and female over- and underreporting of IPV, and suggest that men may underreport female perpetrated violence because of embarrassment. As Weiss (2010) explains, men who are victimized may be seen as powerless, and less masculine. Further, Migliaccio (2001) argues that

men may deny victimization because of a fear of emasculation. Therefore, men may underreport victimization because of embarrassment over being victimized, and men with higher levels of masculinity may be particularly susceptible to underreporting because of heightened feelings of embarrassment. On the other hand, the anti-normativity of men admitting victimization may only apply to serious forms of violence, such that men are not embarrassed to admit that their partner hits them occasionally, but do not want to admit that their partner actually hurts or injures them. Therefore, men may be more likely to underreport injury than to underreport being hit, and more likely to underreport being hit than being threatened, causing disagreement to increase with the seriousness of violence.

Conversely, some researchers suggest that disagreement between partner reports of IPV should decrease as the seriousness of the violence increases. Simpson and Christensen (2005) and Caetano et al. (2009) explain that recall, and therefore reporting, should increase as the severity of the violence increases because the consequences become more serious, and the behavior itself becomes more salient. In their discussion of the possible mechanisms explaining under- or over-reporting by both men and women, Moffitt et al. (1997) suggest that men may underreport female perpetrated violence because the abuse is not consequential enough to be remembered and reported. On the other hand, they suggest that women may overreport their own perpetration because of how salient the violence is in their minds.

### **Identifying Discrepancies**

Discrepancies in reports can go in several directions, depending on which partner is misreporting and whether partners are reporting on their own behavior or the behavior of their partner.

Discussions of under- and over-reporting of any phenomenon rely on some knowledge of a “true” value. As discussed previously, the private nature of IPV makes it nearly impossible to

know its true prevalence or incidence. Therefore, researchers interested in studying under- or over-reporting of IPV must make decisions about which partner's report to trust as valid. By default, most researchers rely on victim's reports as the most valid, because it seems reasonable to assume that individuals would be more likely to accurately report their own victimization. Sugarman and Hotaling (1997) explain that the "violence role hypothesis" (p. 278) suggests that social desirability has a stronger influence on self-reports of offending than on self-reports of victimization. For example, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Vivian (1994) compared reports from 97 married couples, using victim reports as the representation of the *truth*, and classifying perpetrators as either over- or under-reporters. They reported a large amount of disagreement between partner reports, and attributed much of the disagreement to perpetrator under-reporting, but some also to perpetrator over-reporting. Simpson and Christensen (2005) used reports from 273 married couples seeking marital therapy, hypothesizing that disagreement in partner reports of IPV results from offender underreporting rather than victim underreporting. Their results supported the hypothesis, and the researchers suggested that social desirability causes people to deny their offending because they do not want to portray themselves as violent.

Rather than rely on victim or offender reports, some researchers refrain from making any judgments about which partner is telling the "truth," and instead measure overall concordance between partners. Using both a community and a clinical sample, Jouriles and O'Leary (1985) assessed interspousal reliability of IPV reporting using kappa statistics. They reported that agreement about both husbands' and wives' behavior is low to moderate. They also reported a pattern which represents either underreporting by males or overreporting by females in the clinic sample, but they did not draw any conclusions about which was more likely to be the case. Moffitt et al. (1997) also measured interpartner agreement using kappa statistics and found it to

be poor to fair, but determined that agreement did not depend on the gender of the perpetrator. In fact, they suggested that as long as confidentiality is guaranteed during the data collection process, reports of either victim or offender are reliable.

Schafer, Caetano and Clark (1998) were interested in measuring the prevalence of IPV, using reports from 1,599 married and cohabiting couples, but found low levels of agreement between partner reports. As a result, rather than reporting single estimates of IPV, they reported ranges of IPV, using the percentage of couples that agreed on the presence of IPV as the lower-bound of the range, and the percentage of couples in which at least one partner reported the presence of IPV as the upper-bound. Using the same data, Caetano et al. (2002) again assessed agreement about the occurrence of IPV, this time finding that men are less willing than women to self-report their own offending. Finally, Caetano et al. (2009) conducted a follow-up study of a subset of these couples, and found low concordance between partner reports, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator.

After reviewing the results from several studies about agreement between partner reports of IPV, Margolin (1987) claimed that the research tentatively suggests that whatever biases exist in IPV reporting seem to go in the direction of women being more willing to report their own perpetration and victimization than men. However, rather than making an assumption about which partner's report is most valid, I will instead compare the level of agreement found between partner reports of victimization of men and victimization of women, as well as the level of agreement found between partner reports of violence perpetrated by men and violence perpetrated by women. While it may be true that overall, perpetrators have more of a reason to hide their violent behavior, there may be exceptions to this rule. The norms protecting women, and the stigma attached to men being victimized by women, may have a particularly strong

impact on men’s reporting of IPV. In other words, there may be some sort of an interaction between gender and social desirability, such that both men and women may underreport violence perpetration and victimization, but men underreport even more than women. Therefore, I expect large discrepancies in partner reports of both violence and victimization, but greater disagreement for reports of male victimization than reports of female victimization, and for male perpetrated violence than for female perpetrated violence.

My study partially replicates previous work on agreement between partner reports of IPV by comparing men’s reports of violence and victimization with women’s reports. However, the majority of studies in this area have utilized small or unrepresentative convenience samples, giving their findings and results limited generalizability. My study, on the other hand, tests theoretically driven hypotheses using a sample of couples drawn from a large representative sample. Table 1 displays the various combinations of partner reporting of violence and victimization separately for male-to-female IPV and female-to-male IPV. The cells are labeled numerically from 1 through 8 for ease of discussion about each combination.

Table 1: Patterns of Discrepancies

Male → Female IPV		Male reports	
		Violence	No Violence
Female reports	Victimization	1	2
	No Victimization	3	4

Female → Male IPV		Female reports	
		Violence	No Violence
Male reports	Victimization	5	6
	No Victimization	7	8

The terms *violence* and *victimization* are used to clarify which partner is giving and which partner is receiving the IPV. As there are many levels of seriousness of IPV (threatening, hitting, injuring, etc.), *violence* and *victimization* refer to whichever form of IPV is relevant to the question of interest.

Cells 1, 4, 5, and 8 refer to reporting congruence, while Cells 2, 3, 6, and 7 refer to reporting discrepancy. For example, Cell 1 captures those cases in which the man reports perpetrating violence and the woman reports being victimized (congruence), while Cell 3 captures those cases in which the man reports perpetrating violence but the woman does not report being victimized (discrepancy). Based on social desirability theory, and the assumption that female partners are accurately reporting IPV, I have developed five primary hypotheses regarding the patterns of misreporting by male partners. I use the cell numbers to help explain the pattern that each hypothesis refers to.

*Hypothesis 1: Among couples in which any violence is reported, disagreement about that violence will be greater for reports of male perpetrated violence than female perpetrated violence. Specifically, Cell 7 will be larger than Cell 3.*

*Hypothesis 2: Among couples in which victimization is reported, disagreement about that victimization will be greater for reports of male victimization than female victimization. Specifically, Cell 2 will be larger than Cell 6.*

*Hypothesis 3: Disagreement between partner reports of male victimization and male perpetrated violence will increase with the seriousness of IPV. Specifically, more men will disagree than agree with their female partners' reported victimization and violence as IPV moves from threaten to hit to injure.*

*Hypothesis 4: Disagreement between partner reports of male victimization and of male perpetrated violence will decrease with the seriousness of IPV. Specifically, fewer men will disagree than agree with their female partners' reported victimization and violence as IPV moves from threaten to hit to injure.*

*Hypothesis 5: Among couples in which any violence is reported by women, disagreement will be most likely for men with higher levels of masculinity. Specifically, men in Cell 7 will have higher levels of masculinity than men in Cell 5.*

As mentioned previously, several studies have found that reports of IPV taken from only one partner may be misleading, and that discrepancies between reports of partners within a couple may be widespread (Margolin 1987; Szinovacz 1983; Jouriles & O'Leary 1985; Edleson &

Brygger 1986). However, Krebs et al. (2011) suggest that self-reports may be a fairly valid measurement of victimization. They compared women's reports of sexual assault experiences using both indirect and direct questioning. Indirect questioning removes the characteristics of regular self-report surveys that cause respondents to misreport sensitive behaviors, and in doing so creates the potential to test the validity of the estimates obtained using direct questioning. Krebs et al. (2011) found similar estimates of the prevalence of sexual assault experiences when they questioned women directly about their experiences as compared to indirectly. This finding not only indicates that self-reports from one partner may be valid, but also that respondents may not be as resistant to reporting about sensitive behaviors as previously thought. Since this suggestion runs counter to much of the interactionist literature, it serves as a null hypothesis.

## **Data**

The data for this project come from Wave III of Add Health. Add Health is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of adolescents who were in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade during the first wave of data collection in 1994 and 1995. This first wave was collected in two stages, first through a short in-school survey, and then followed up by an in-house questionnaire. The in-school survey was conducted on a stratified random sample of high schools within the United States and the in-home sample was derived based on answers given in the in-school survey.

Wave II was collected in 1996, and researchers attempted to re-interview all Wave I respondents, except those that were high school seniors at Wave I.

Wave III was then collected in 2001 and 2002, by re-interviewing 15,197 of the original Wave I respondents in their homes, when respondents were aged 18-28. Researchers were also interested in respondents' romantic relationships, and wanted to interview their partners, so half of the respondents were randomly selected and flagged as eligible for a *couples* sample



(n=7,539). All Wave III respondents reported all serious romantic relationships during the previous five years, totaling 42,334 relationships. Respondents who had previously been flagged as eligible for the *couples* sample, and had relationships that 1) were current 2) were heterosexual, 3) were with someone 18 years or older, and 4) had lasted at least three months, were then included in the *couples* sample (n=3,982).

To guarantee adequate representation of married, cohabiting, and dating couples, approximately 500 respondents in each category and in the *couples* sample were asked to recruit their partners for the survey, creating a total of 1,507 respondents and their partners in the final *partners* sample. Partners filled out the exact same Wave III questionnaire as the respondents that recruited them. Coding errors made it impossible to match 114 relationships, so the final *partners* sample used for this analysis is composed of 1,393 heterosexual couples.

With this project, I am primarily interested in understanding partner discrepancies in reporting of victimization and violence. I do not attempt to explain reasons for violence or to ascertain whether unidirectional or reciprocal intimate partner violence is more common. Rather, I use a combination of descriptive and bivariate analyses, logistic regression and multinomial logistic regression to identify patterns of misreporting by partners' gender.

## **Measures**

Descriptive statistics for the final *partners* sample (n=1393) are presented in Table 2. To maximize the amount of information available, I included the total number of couples which had a value for both the male and the female partner for each bivariate comparison of interest, and the sample size varies from association to association as a result. Multinomial logistic regression analyses were limited to those couples which were not missing on any variables (n=1185) in the final model. T-tests comparing sample means revealed no significant differences between the

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	Males					Females				
	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Violence Perpetration</i>										
Any	1350	0.17	0.37	0	1	1359	0.32	0.47	0	1
Threatening	1355	0.16	0.36	0	1	1363	0.27	0.44	0	1
Hitting	1364	0.07	0.25	0	1	1373	0.23	0.42	0	1
Injuring	1362	0.04	0.20	0	1	1375	0.05	0.21	0	1
<i>Victimization</i>										
Any	1350	0.24	0.43	0	1	1368	0.22	0.41	0	1
Threatened	1358	0.21	0.41	0	1	1370	0.20	0.40	0	1
Hit	1361	0.16	0.37	0	1	1374	0.11	0.32	0	1
Injured	1362	0.05	0.22	0	1	1375	0.06	0.24	0	1
Age	1393	23.46	3.31	18	43	1393	21.84	2.39	18	40
<i>Race</i>										
White	1393	0.61	0.49	0	1	1393	0.63	0.48	0	1
Black	1393	0.18	0.38	0	1	1393	0.16	0.37	0	1
Hispanic	1393	0.15	0.35	0	1	1393	0.14	0.35	0	1
Other	1393	0.07	0.25	0	1	1393	0.07	0.25	0	1
<i>Education</i>										
No High School or GED	1393	0.23	0.42	0	1	1393	0.18	0.38	0	1
High School Degree	1393	0.44	0.50	0	1	1393	0.38	0.49	0	1
Some College or Associate's	1393	0.24	0.43	0	1	1393	0.34	0.47	0	1
Bachelor's Degree or More	1393	0.09	0.29	0	1	1393	0.10	0.30	0	1
Income (in thousands)	1288	19.25	22.14	0	270	1285	11.82	16.11	0	290
Religiosity	1386	1.09	1.01	0	3	1387	1.31	1.05	0	3
Masculinity	1335	4.94	1.00	1	7					
<i>Couple Level</i>										
Relationship Status		Mean	SD							
Married	1393	0.35								
Cohabiting	1393	0.34								
Dating	1393	0.31								

final *partners* sample and the limited samples used in each step of the analysis. Therefore, descriptives for the limited samples are not presented here.

### *Violence and Victimization*

Measures of violence and victimization come from six questions in the Add Health questionnaire, which survey three forms of violence. Survey respondents<sup>1</sup> are asked how often during the past year they have “threatened partner with violence, pushed or shoved him/her, or thrown something at him/her that could hurt,” and how often their partner did these things to them (hereafter this form of IPV will be referred to as “threatened”). These questions are followed by a question asking how often respondents “hit, slapped, or kicked partner,” and how often their partner did these things to them (hereafter referred to as “hit”). Finally, respondents are asked how often they had “an injury, such as a sprain, bruise, or cut because of a fight with partner,” and how often their partner had the same (hereafter referred to as “injured”). I dichotomized each of these six variables so that they have a value of 1 if the respondent reported that it happened at all and a value of 0 if they reported that it did not happen.

I also created two dichotomous measures indicating whether any violence or any victimization is reported. The first refers to any victimization and is coded 1 if the respondent reported being threatened, hit or injured by his or her partner, and coded 0 if none of the three victimization types are reported. The second refers to any violence perpetrated and is coded 1 if the respondent reported threatening, hitting, or injuring his/her partner, and coded 0 if none of the three violence types are reported.

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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned previously, the original Add Health respondents and their partners filled out the same questionnaire, and therefore, all of the variables described below are measured for both members of the couple. For ease of discussion, I will refer to each individual surveyed (both original respondents and their partners) as a respondent in my descriptions of each measure.

Overall, women reported more violence against their partners than men. For example, only 17% of men compared with 32% of women reported perpetrating some form of violence against their partner. Looking at each form separately, approximately 16% of men reported threatening, 7% reported hitting, and 4% reported injuring their female partner, while 27% of women reported threatening, 23% reported hitting, and 5% reported injuring their male partner. Reports of victimization on the other hand, were more even. About 24% of men and 22% of women reported being victimized in some way by their partner. And taking each form of victimization separately, 21% of men and 20% of women reported being threatened, 16% of men and 11% of women reported being hit, and 5% of men and 6% of women reported being injured by their partner. Overall, the descriptive pattern provides some preliminary support for my hypotheses that men may be more likely to deny than to admit both victimization and violence perpetration since a smaller proportion of men report being victimized at all (24%) than women report perpetrating any violence (32%), and a smaller proportion of men report perpetrating any violence (17%) than women report being victimized at all (22%). However, these proportions are based on the entire sample and do not compare the reports of women and men within a couple. Missing from these descriptives is whether the women who report perpetrating violence are partnered with the men who report being victimized, whether the women who report being victimized are partnered with the men who report perpetrating violence, and whether the percentage of men agreeing with their female partners' reports differs significantly from the percentage of men disagreeing. My analyses address this issue.

The final violence/victimization variable I created is a categorical variable representing (dis)agreement within the couple about whether the male partner was victimized, using the dichotomous measures of any violence and any victimization. The variable is equal to (0) if the

female reports no violence perpetration and the male reports no victimization, (1) if the female reports no violence but the male reports victimization, (2) if the female reports violence but the male reports no victimization, and (3) if the female reports violence and the male reports victimization. There is agreement about the absence of female-perpetrated violence in 58% of the couples, and agreement about the presence of female-perpetrated violence in 13% of the couples, leaving 28% of couples in disagreement.

### *Masculinity*

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem 1974) was designed to assess individuals' sex-role identity by asking respondents how well they think that certain stereotypically male or stereotypically female characteristics describe them. The original BSRI consists of 60 items (20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 neutral), but Bem (1981) created a short-form version<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 30 items (10 masculine, 10 feminine, and 10 neutral). Respondents are given a list of statements and asked how often each statement is true of them, on a scale of 1 ("never or almost never true") to 5 ("always or almost always true"). I created a measure of masculinity using 9 of the 10 masculine statements<sup>3</sup> ("I defend my own beliefs," "I am independent," "I am assertive," "I have a strong personality," "I am forceful," "I have leadership abilities," "I am willing to take risks," "I am dominant," and "I am willing to take a stand") by taking the average of the sum of respondents' responses to each statement ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ). The masculinity score ranges from 0 to 7 with a mean of 4.94 among men.

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<sup>2</sup> The short-form version of the BSRI has been argued by some to be a better measure than the long-form version (Colley et al. 2009).

<sup>3</sup> The tenth masculine statement, "I am aggressive," was not included in the measure of masculinity because of its relationship to violence and potential problems of collinearity.

### *Relationship Status*

I created a series of dummy variables to indicate whether the couple was dating, cohabiting or married, using the original Add Health respondents' reports. For each relationship listed, respondents are asked if they are currently married to the respective partner and if they are currently cohabiting with that partner. Respondents who reported being currently married were coded 1 for *married*, and all others were coded 0. Respondents who were not currently married, but reported that they currently cohabited with their partners, were coded 1 for *cohabit*, and all others were coded 0. Finally, respondents who reported not being currently married and not currently cohabiting were coded 1 for *dating*, while currently married and cohabiting respondents were coded 0. Six respondents had missing values for either *married* or *cohabit*. For these relationships, I used the partner's responses to these questions. If the partner reported neither being currently married nor currently cohabiting, the relationship was coded as dating. Approximately 35% (n=492) of the couples in the sample are married, 34% (n=469) are cohabiting, and 31% (n=432) are dating.

### *Age*

Age was calculated using respondents' birthdates relative to the date they were interviewed. Overall, the sample ranges in age from 18 to 43, with a mean age of 22.65. Female partners range from 18 to 40 years old, with a mean age of 21.84, while male respondents range from 18 to 43 years old, with a mean age of 23.46.

### *Race*

Race was separated into four categories: white, black, Hispanic, and other. I created a dummy variable for each racial category, coded 1 if the respondent belonged to that race, and 0 if not. Of

the male partners, 61% are white, 18% are black, 15% are Hispanic, and 7% are other. Of the female partners, 62% are white, 16% are black, 14% are Hispanic, and 7% are other.

### *Education*

Educational attainment was measured as an ordinal variable using respondents' reports of the highest level of education achieved at the time of the interview. The variable was coded as follows: (0) no high school degree or only a GED, (1) a high school degree, (2) some college or an associate's degree, and (3) a bachelor's degree or higher. Among women, 18% did not complete a high school degree or received a GED, 38% received a high school degree, 34% completed some college or an associate's degree, and 10% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Among men, 23% did not complete a high school degree or received a GED, 44% received a high school degree, 24% completed some college or an associate's degree, and 9% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

### *Religiosity*

Religiosity was measured using a question about respondent's frequency of attending religious services during the previous 12 months. Response categories ranged from "never" to "more than once a week." These categories were coded into an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 3, with a mean level of 1.09 among men, and 1.31 among women.

### *Income*

Respondents were asked what their total personal income was for the previous fiscal year. Respondents who indicated that they did not know their total personal income were asked for their best guess and given response categories ranging from "less than \$10,000" to "\$75,000 or more." The best guess responses were recoded as the midpoint value of the range in each category. These values were then substituted as the value of total personal income for

respondents that originally reported not knowing their income. Men's income ranges from \$0 to \$270,000 with a mean of \$19,245, while women's income ranges from \$0 to \$290,000 with a mean of \$11,820. I divided total personal income by 1,000 to create my final income measures.

### **Analytic Strategy**

All analyses were conducted using STATA v.12. To compare men's and women's reports of violence and victimization, I first estimated simple cross-tabulations of men's reports of violence perpetration and women's reports of victimization, as well as of men's reports of victimization and women's reports of violence perpetration, for each level of IPV. These bivariate analyses were conducted using all couples that reported on both variables in the association. I then conducted tests for independence to check for significant associations between partners' reports, using Pearson's chi-squared test or Fisher's exact test for each association, depending on the expected frequency in each cell of the cross-tabulation. Next, I descriptively compared the percentage of disagreement to the percentage of agreement between partners at each level of IPV, measured as violence and as victimization. I then compared the proportion of men that disagreed with their female partners that violence or victimization occurred to the proportion of women that disagreed with their male partners that violence or victimization occurred. I calculated test statistics for comparing two independent proportions to see whether the proportion of men disagreeing with their female partners' reports was significantly larger than the proportion of women disagreeing with their male partners' reports, at each level of seriousness. Finally, to examine whether disagreement about male victimization and male perpetrated violence increases with seriousness of violence, I descriptively compared the proportion of men that disagreed with women's reports at increasing levels of seriousness. I then calculated test statistics for comparing two independent proportions to compare the proportion of



men disagreeing with women's reports of threatening to the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of hitting, and then the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of hitting to the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of injury. Lastly, I calculated test statistics to compare the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of being threatened to the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of being hit, and then the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of being hit to the proportion of men disagreeing with women's reports of being injured.

To examine the influence of men's masculinity on partner disagreement about male victimization, I first restricted the sample to those couples in which the female partner reported violence against the male partner (n=402), and then compared the average level of masculinity among men that reported any victimization to men that did not report any victimization. To test whether the difference in means was significant, I used an independent samples mean t-test. Next, in order to see whether the effects of masculinity were affected by control variables, I further restricted my sample to those couples with no missing data on any control variables (n=382). I estimated two logistic regression models using men's reports of any victimization as the dependent variable and men's masculinity as the main predictor. The first model is a bivariate model, including masculinity as the only predictor. The second model adds relationship status and men's race, age, education, religion, and income as control variables.

The logistic regression models necessarily restricted the sample size because I was interested in comparing men's reports of the presence or absence of victimization *given* that their female partners reported perpetrating violence. In an effort to include more information, and increase statistical power, the final step in my examination of the influence of men's masculinity utilized multinomial logistic regression. The sample in this analysis included all couples with no

missing data on any control variables, and no missing data about men's reports of any victimization and women's reports of any violence (n=1185). The categorical dependent variable for this model measures (dis)agreement within the couple about whether the male partner was victimized, and the reference category used is couples in which the female reports violence, but the male reports no victimization. As with the logistic regression, the independent variable of interest is men's masculinity, and the model controls for relationship status and men's race, age, education, religion, and income.

## **Results**

### *Test for Independence*

In order to test for independence between partner reports, I first determined whether Pearson's chi-squared test or Fisher's exact test was a better test for each association. All bivariate associations were suited for a chi-squared test for independence except the associations between reports of injury. Therefore, I used Fisher's exact tests for associations regarding injury, and chi-squared tests for other outcomes. Each bivariate association revealed a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating that the variables in each association are dependent, and that the associations are not due to chance.

### *Agreement between Men's and Women's Reports*

Table 3 presents the percentage of men and the percentage of women who report perpetrating no violence against their partners, given that their partners reported victimization. The data provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 1, that men are more likely than women to disagree with their partners that they perpetrated violence. Of the couples in which the woman reports any form of victimization, 62.4% (n=174) of male partners disagree that they perpetrated any violence, while only 43.3% (n=132) of the women whose partners report any victimization disagree that they

perpetrated any violence. Similarly, of the couples in which the woman reports being threatened, 63.2% (n=165) of male partners disagree, but of the couples in which the man reports being threatened, only 48.7% (n=132) of female partners disagree. And, of the couples in which the woman reports being hit, 71.6% (n=106) of male partners disagree, while of the couples in which the man reports being hit, only 48.2% (n=105) of female partners disagree. Finally, of the couples in which the woman reports being injured, 77.6% (n=59) of male partners disagree, but of the couples which the man reports an injury, only 73.8% (n=48) of female partners disagree.

**Table 3: Partner Disagreement About Perpetrating Violence**

Other Partner Reports	Violence Perpetration Not Reported by:				p-value
	Men		Women		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Victimization	62.4%	(174)	43.3%	(132)	***
Threatened	63.2%	(165)	48.7%	(132)	**
Hit	71.6%	(106)	48.2%	(105)	***
Injured	77.6%	(59)	73.8%	(48)	

Note: † p<0.10, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Although the descriptive comparisons of disagreement about perpetrating violence provide some support for my hypotheses, I also calculated test-statistics comparing the proportion of men that disagree with their partners that they perpetrated violence (Table 1, Cell 2) to the proportion of women that disagree with their partners that they perpetrated violence (Table 1, Cell 6) to determine whether men were significantly more likely than women to disagree that they perpetrated violence. I compared the two independent proportions using the following formula, where  $n_2$  denotes the frequency in Cell 2,  $n_6$  denotes the frequency in Cell 6,  $n_{12}$  denotes the total number of females reporting victimization at the hands of their partners (Table 1, Cell 1 + Cell 2), and  $n_{56}$  denotes the total number of males reporting victimization at the hands of their partners (Table 1, Cell 5 + Cell 6):

Formula 1:

$$z = \frac{\left(\frac{n_2}{n_{12}}\right) - \left(\frac{n_6}{n_{56}}\right)}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{n_2 + n_6}{n_{12} + n_{56}}\right) \left(1 - \frac{n_2 + n_6}{n_{12} + n_{56}}\right) \left(\frac{1}{n_{12}} + \frac{1}{n_{56}}\right)}}$$

The last column in Table 3 indicates whether the proportion of men disagreeing that they perpetrated violence is significantly different from the proportion of women disagreeing that they perpetrated violence at each level of seriousness. As indicated in the table, the test statistics provide some evidence for Hypothesis 1, that men are more likely than women to disagree that they perpetrated violence, given that their partner reports victimization. Men are significantly more likely than women to disagree that they perpetrated any violence ( $p < 0.001$ ), that they threatened their partners ( $p < 0.01$ ), and that they hit their partners ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, men are not significantly more or less likely than women to disagree that they injured their partners.

The results from Table 3 also provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 3, based on social desirability literature, that men are more likely to disagree about hitting than threatening, and more likely to disagree about injuring than hitting. The data in Table 3 show that the likelihood of men disagreeing about violence perpetration increases with the seriousness of the violence. Results from tests comparing two independent proportions reveal that a significantly greater proportion of men disagree that they hit their partner than disagree that they threatened their partner, and a significantly greater proportion of men disagree that they injured their partner than disagree that they hit their partner ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The percentage of men and the percentage of women who report experiencing no victimization, given that their partners' reported perpetrating violence, is shown in Table 4 for each level of seriousness. The results in Table 4 provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 2, that disagreement about victimization will be greater for reports of male victimization than

female victimization. Of the couples in which men report any type of violence perpetration, 53.1% (n=119) of women disagree that they were victimized, while 58.4% (n= 243) of men whose female partners report violence perpetration disagree that they were victimized. A similar pattern emerges for each level of seriousness, such that a greater percentage of men than women disagree that they were victimized.

**Table 4: Partner Disagreement About Being Victimized**

Other Partner Reports	Victimization Not Reported by:				p-value
	Men		Women		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Any Violence	58.4%	(243)	53.1%	(119)	†
Threatening	60.8%	(216)	54.1%	(113)	†
Hitting	62.3%	(187)	55.3%	(52)	
Injuring	72.1%	(44)	69.0%	(37)	

Note: † p<0.10, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

In order to test whether these differences are significant, I again used Formula 1 to compute test statistics for each comparison. The last column in Table 4 reports whether the proportion of men that disagree that they were victimized is significantly different from the proportion of women that disagree that they were victimized. As shown in the table, the proportion of men that disagree that they were victimized is significantly greater (one-tailed test, p<.10) than the proportion of women that disagree that they were victimized for reports of any victimization and reports of being threatened. However, the proportion of men that disagree that they were victimized is not significantly greater than the proportion of women that disagree that they were victimized for reports of being hit and reports of being injured.

Finally, results from Table 4 provide additional support for Hypothesis 3, based on social desirability, that disagreement about both men’s victimization and men’s violence perpetration should increase as the seriousness of the violence increases, while at the same time contradicting

Hypothesis 4, that disagreement should decrease as the seriousness of the violence increases, due to increasing salience. Within the 355 couples in which the woman reports threatening her partner, 60.8% (n=216) of male partners disagree that they were threatened, but within the 300 couples in which the woman reports hitting her partner, only 62.3% (n=187) of male partners disagree. Further, within the 61 couples in which the woman reports injuring her partner, only 72.1% (n=44) of male partners disagree. However, test statistics for these differences revealed only partial support for my hypothesis. The proportion of men that disagree about being threatened is not significantly different from those that disagree about being hit. However, a significantly greater proportion of men disagree about being injured than disagree about being hit ( $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, disagreement between partner reports of male victimization do not steadily increase with the seriousness of IPV, but disagreement about male injury is significantly more likely than disagreement about less serious forms of violence perpetrated against males. Additionally, these results do not support the competing hypothesis, Hypothesis 4, that disagreement about men's victimization will decrease as the seriousness of the violence increases due to the increasing salience of the violence.

#### *The Influence of Masculinity*

Among the 402 couples in which the female partner reports perpetrating any violence, the average masculinity score for men that admit report any victimization is 4.91, and the average score for men that do not report any victimization is 4.92. The difference is in the expected direction, with men who deny victimization having higher levels of masculinity than men who admit it, but the difference is quite small. The independent samples mean t-test revealed a p-value of 0.451, indicating that the difference is not statistically significant.

**Table 5: Logistic Regression (N=382)**

Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>b</i>	S.E.
<i>Male Characteristics</i>				
Masculinity	-0.051	(0.099)	-0.076	(0.103)
Age			0.010	(0.037)
White (reference)				
Black			-0.306	(0.273)
Hispanic			0.371	(0.303)
Other race			-0.347	(0.474)
Religiosity			-0.023	(0.118)
Income			0.001	(0.005)
Education			-0.105	(0.128)
<i>Relationship Status</i>				
Married (reference)				
Dating			-0.138	(0.285)
Cohabiting			-0.096	(0.268)
Constant	-0.100	(0.498)	0.020	(1.107)

The lack of a group mean difference suggests that a logistic regression will not produce significant results, but I present it nonetheless to assess whether other covariates might influence men's reports of victimization or suppress the masculinity coefficient. Model 1 in Table 5 displays the results of the logistic regression with men's masculinity score as the only predictor.

As expected, the men's masculinity variable is not a significant predictor, but the direction of the coefficient suggests that as men's masculinity scores increase, they become less likely to admit victimization. After controlling for age, race, religiosity and income (Table 5, Model 2), the magnitude of the effect of men's masculinity increases, but so does its standard error and the coefficient remains non-significant. Additionally, none of the control variables are significant at standard levels.

**Table 6: Multinomial Logistic Regression (Female Reports Violence, Male Reports No Victimization is Reference) (N=1185)**  
**Comparison**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	<b>Female Reports No Violence, Male Reports No Victimization</b> <i>b</i> (S.E.)	<b>Female Reports No Violence, Male Reports Victimization</b> <i>b</i> (S.E.)	<b>Female Reports Violence, Male Reports Victimization</b> <i>b</i> (S.E.)
<i>Male Characteristics</i>			
Masculinity	-0.040 (0.081)	0.005 (0.118)	-0.059 (0.105)
Age	0.037 (0.027)***	0.025 (0.038)	0.014 (0.036)
White (reference)	-- --	-- --	-- --
Black	-1.114 (0.212)	-0.832 (0.344)*	-0.309 (0.273)
Hispanic	-0.095 (0.243)	0.211 (0.329)	0.338 (0.302)
Other race	-0.440 (0.317)	0.037 (0.439)	-0.344 (0.461)
Religiosity	0.151 (0.084)†	-0.223 (0.129)†	-0.011 (0.113)
Income	0.000 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.001 (0.005)
Education	0.293 (0.095)**	0.052 (0.138)	-0.093 (0.128)
<i>Relationship Status</i>			
Married (reference)	-- --	-- --	-- --
Dating	0.155 (0.214)	-0.123 (0.308)	-0.079 (0.285)
Cohabiting	-0.144 (0.200)	-0.317 (0.284)	-0.130 (0.261)
Constant	0.183 (0.793)	-0.934 (1.116)	-0.187 (1.033)

Note: † p<0.10, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001



Finally, results from the multinomial logistic regression are shown in Table 6. The comparison of interest is between couples who agree that the male has been victimized and the reference category, couples in which the female partner reports violence perpetration, but the male partner denies. The results indicate that men with higher levels of masculinity are less likely to disagree that they were victimized than to agree. However, the effect remains non-significant, and is slightly smaller in magnitude than the effect found in the logistic regression (Table 5, Model 2). Finally, and similar to the results of the logistic regression analyses, none of the coefficients for the control variables are significant. Therefore, I find no support for Hypothesis 5, that disagreement about men's victimization will be most likely for men with higher levels of masculinity.

## **Discussion**

IPV is an issue of serious public concern, but prior research has repeatedly found discrepancies between partner reports of IPV, making it difficult to form conclusions about the incidence, prevalence, seriousness and nature of IPV. A discrepancy between partner reports indicates that one or both members of the relationship are misreporting the actual level of IPV that occurs, but the mechanisms explaining the misreporting have yet to be determined. Identifying patterns of misreporting and the mechanisms underlying these patterns is an important step in determining the real prevalence of IPV and how we might intervene to reduce this prevalence. This thesis utilized a sample of couples taken from a nationally representative survey to compare men's and women's reports of IPV and test whether gender and social desirability might explain reporting discrepancies.

My analyses made no assumptions about which partner (male or female, victim or perpetrator) was telling the truth. Instead, I developed a series of hypotheses based on social

desirability literature, suggesting that while both men and women may underreport the actual occurrence of IPV, men may have more of a reason than women to underreport both victimization and perpetration, and therefore be more likely than women to disagree with their partners' reports of victimization and perpetration. Additionally, I developed two competing hypotheses about whether agreement would increase or decrease with the seriousness of the violence.

Overall, my results provided support for my hypotheses drawn from social desirability literature. Regarding gender differences in agreement over violence perpetration and victimization, findings indicated partial support for both Hypothesis 1, that disagreement about violence perpetration will be greater for reports of male perpetrated violence than female perpetrated violence, and Hypothesis 2, that disagreement about victimization will be greater for reports of male victimization than female victimization. A significantly greater proportion of men than women disagreed with their partners about perpetrating any violence, threatening or hitting their partners. However, no significant differences were found between the proportion of men and the proportion of women that disagreed with their partners about injuring their partners. And, a significantly greater proportion of men than women disagreed with their partners about experiencing any victimization or being threatened, but no significant differences were found between the proportion of men and the proportion of women that disagreed with their partners about being hit or being injured.

Further, results indicated partial support for Hypothesis 3, that disagreement between partner reports of male victimization and male perpetrated violence should *increase* with the seriousness of IPV, and contradicted Hypothesis 4, that disagreement between partner reports of male victimization and of male perpetrated violence should *decrease* with the seriousness of

IPV. Men's disagreement about perpetration of violence increased with seriousness of violence, such that men were more likely to disagree about hitting than about threatening, and more likely to disagree about injuring than about hitting their female partners. Men's disagreement about being victimized, on the other hand, did not increase steadily with seriousness of violence, but men were significantly more likely to disagree about being injured than to disagree about less serious forms of violence.

Finally, no support was found for Hypothesis 5, that disagreement will be most likely for men with higher levels of masculinity. Men's masculinity was not a significant predictor of agreement or disagreement with female partners' reports of violence perpetration. These results suggest that discrepancies in men's and women's reports of IPV are likely due in part to social desirability bias, but the mechanism underlying the bias is not heightened masculinity.

The sensitive nature of IPV makes it susceptible to social desirability reporting bias, but societal norms make it a particularly sensitive and delicate topic for men to self-report. IPV perpetrated against women is often seen as worse than IPV perpetrated against men because of norms protecting women from violence (Felson 2000). I hypothesized that these norms may pressure men to underreport their own perpetration of violence to a greater extent than women, such that disagreement about violence perpetration would be greater for reports of male perpetrated violence than female perpetrated violence. My results indicated that disagreement was greater for reports about male violence perpetration than female violence perpetration only when the level of seriousness being asked about was any violence, threatening or hitting. No significant gender differences were found in disagreement about the most serious form of violence, injuring. These findings suggest that for less serious forms of violence, men are more susceptible than women to social desirability bias because of norms protecting women.

However, injury may be a serious enough offense that the societal norms against it protect both women and men, shaming both male and female perpetrators and causing them both to underreport it. In this way, women may not feel ashamed to report threatening or hitting their male partners, but would feel ashamed for injuring them, while men would feel ashamed about any violence perpetration.

On the other hand, men are expected to be more powerful than women, and when they are victimized by women they are often viewed as less powerful (Weiss 2010). Therefore, I hypothesized that men may also feel more pressure than women to underreport victimization, in an effort to protect their sense of manliness, so that disagreement about victimization would be greater for reports of male victimization than female victimization. My results suggested that disagreement was greater for reports about male victimization than female victimization when the level of seriousness being asked about was any victimization or threatening. No significant gender differences were found in disagreement about hitting or injuring. Similar to the explanation given for the findings regarding disagreement about reports of violence perpetration, perhaps admitting victimization in the form of less serious types of violence, such as being threatened, is uniquely embarrassing for men. Women may be equally as embarrassed as men to admit more serious forms of violence specifically because of the societal norms against violence. However, men may be less likely than women to be willing to admit being threatened than because even this lesser form of violence challenges their manliness.

I presented two competing hypotheses about the relationship between disagreement and violence seriousness. Social desirability literature suggests that disagreement should increase with the seriousness of the violence because the anti-normativity of the violence increases with the seriousness. On the other hand, disagreement should decrease with the seriousness of the

violence because the behavior in question becomes more salient and memorable as the seriousness of the violence increases. Overall, my findings supported the former hypothesis. Rather than increasing salience leading to greater agreement between partner reports, increasing seriousness led to less agreement between partner reports. Further research is necessary in order to definitively explain these findings, but the results suggest that disagreement about the occurrence of IPV is not due primarily to the salience of the behavior, but rather to the severity of the societal norms against that behavior. Additionally, men and women may have different definitions of what counts as violence at each level.

I hypothesized that masculinity may be the mechanism underlying men's disagreement about being victimized, such that the reason men disagree that they were victimized is that victimization may cause them to feel emasculated (Migliaccio 2001), and men with heightened masculinity should experience the sense of emasculation to a greater extent. My analyses revealed that masculinity is not significantly related to men's agreement with women's reports, suggesting that masculinity is not the mechanism explaining men's underreporting. I hypothesized that masculinity could be the mechanism explaining the influence of social desirability on men's reports because female perpetrated violence could be seen as a threat to manliness. Moffitt et al. (1997) assert that men may underreport victimization because of embarrassment or because the victimization was not serious or salient enough to be memorable. I proceeded as though heightened masculinity could be a proxy for heightened embarrassment, such that more masculine men would feel more embarrassed by violence perpetrated by their female partners and therefore underreport. However, perhaps heightened masculinity is not a suitable proxy for heightened embarrassment. The strength of the influence of the stigma attached to men being victimized by women may not depend on masculinity at all, and may

instead by contingent upon self-esteem or another self-perception. Perhaps men who think more highly of themselves, regardless of their level of masculinity, are less likely to be willing to admit victimization perpetrated by anyone, especially their female partners.

### *Limitations*

This study is not without limitations. First, as mentioned previously, I do not have a measure of actual IPV occurrence. As such, I cannot definitively state whether each partner was over- or underreporting, only that they agreed or disagreed with their partner's report. However, I avoided making assumptions about which partner was telling the "truth," and I therefore think the impact of this limitation is minimal.

Another limitation of the study is that the original Add Health respondents at Wave III were restricted to ages 18-27 due to the design of the study. Therefore, although their recruited partners consisted of a broader age range (18-43), the generalizability of my findings is restricted due to the limited age range of the original sample. Third, partners recruited for the study were interviewed up to a year after the original respondents who recruited them, and some of the relationships had ended by that point. In those cases, partners were reporting about the presence of IPV in a past relationship, which could cause issues with memory.

A final limitation of the study relates to the measure of masculinity. Findings about the influence of masculinity were non-significant, but it is possible that the measure of masculinity used in this study did not adequately capture the sense of manliness that might be threatened by women's perpetration of violence. Additionally, the BSRI has been criticized for focusing too heavily on stereotypical traits which do not adequately discriminate between men and women and for establishing masculinity and femininity as two uncorrelated traits (Udry & Chantala 2006). These criticisms have led some to argue that masculinity and femininity should be

measured as two ends of the same spectrum, using the method of gender diagnosticity, which takes into account culture, context and age effects (Cleveland, Udry & Chantala 2001; Lippa 1995). However, my hypothesis regarding the influence of masculinity was specifically targeted at the idea of masculinity as a measure of “macho” attitudes, so the criticisms of the BSRI may not be relevant here. Additionally, although the sample was larger than many previous studies, the prevalence of female perpetrated violence might have been too low to detect a substantively meaningful relationship between masculinity and men’s reports.

### *Conclusion*

Consistent with prior work on men’s and women’s reports of intimate partner violence, my findings indicate that there are large discrepancies between partner reports. In this thesis, these discrepancies are clarified through the lens of social desirability which suggests that social norms against perpetrating violence against and being victimized should cause men to want to hide their own victimization and perpetration of violence in order to protect their manliness and their image as decent. Results indicated that not only are men more likely than women to disagree with their partners’ reports about violence perpetration and victimization in most cases, but also that their disagreement about perpetration increases with seriousness of violence, and disagreement about victimization is highest when reporting about injury. My results did not find a significant influence of masculinity on men’s reporting.

Future research should attempt to further clarify the relationship between social desirability and reports of IPV by testing other potential mechanisms which could explain the stronger impact of social desirability on men than on women. Future research should also expand upon my findings by testing the correlation between agreement and a direct measure of

social desirability. Add Health does not include a standard social desirability scale, but it may be possible to create one from various responses throughout the survey.

Whatever the exact mechanism explaining the connection between social desirability, gender and IPV reporting, my findings suggest that men are indeed particularly susceptible to social desirability bias. Research conducted on the prevalence and incidence of IPV in America should rely on reports from both partners, but also find a way to take into account the gendered effect of social desirability.



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