9-30-2017

# The Relationships Among Different Traits of Masculinity and Intimate Partner Violence

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Recommended Citation

THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DIFFERENT TRAITS OF MASCULINITY AND
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The Relationships Among Different Traits of Masculinity and Intimate Partner Violence

by

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Advisor: Dr. Chitra Raghavan

Research has shown that distinct yet overlapping concepts of dominance, hostility towards women, and sexism—all indices of masculinity—influence the occurrence of intimate partner violence (IPV), although the mechanisms are unclear. This paper seeks to explore the relationship between these individual-level trait measures of masculinity and two aspects of IPV, physical violence and coercive control. With inconsistent findings and the limited study of clinical populations, further examination of these concepts may provide increased understanding of the mechanisms behind IPV perpetration. Results will provide a greater understanding of the complexity of this violence in order to better assist individuals experiencing IPV.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Literature Overview**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has been recognized as a serious societal problem for several decades now (Martin, 1998). Despite stringent efforts to curb IPV and provide early intervention in abusive relationships, women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by any other individual (Browne & Williams, 1993). Estimates of victimization vary widely by sample and how IPV is measured, ranging from nearly 20% of female violent crime victims reporting harm by their intimate partners (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003) to 25% of women experiencing IPV throughout their lifetimes (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). For the purpose of this study, IPV is defined as an abusive relationship in which one partner disproportionately and coercively controls the other, resulting in a chronic power imbalance that is psychologically and physically harmful to the victim (Pence & Paymar, 1986). The control is achieved through a combination of psychological tactics that include isolation, intimidation, threats of force, humiliation, and constant surveillance of daily affairs, and is further maintained through physical abuse, stalking, and sexual abuse (Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2006). Stark (1995, pp. 987) specified that coercive control may include "…an ongoing strategy of intimidation, isolation, and control that extends to all areas of a woman's life, including sexuality; material necessities; relations with family, children, and friends; and work." Stark (2006) went on to identify three dimensions present in coercive control; sexual inequality, perpetrators' privileged access to the victims, and extension of control throughout the victim's social life. Key behaviors include monopolizing essential resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulation of behavior, limiting available options, and deprivation of support necessary for independence (Stark, 2007).

While it is believed that these control tactics are tailored to individual contexts, Piispa (2002) surveyed abused women and found that the most common tactic used among recently violent men was jealousy-driven behaviors, followed by attempts at partner humiliation. This tactic involving jealousy-driven behaviors may include aspects of restrictiveness, such as intruding on a partner's behavior or prohibiting activities or behaviors. Data to support the key role of coercive control in IPV is growing (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Felson & Outlaw, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Raj, Silverman, & Amaro, 2004; Tanha, Beck, Figueredo, & Raghavan, 2010; Thaden & Thoennes, 2000b; Whitaker, 2013). Further, cross-cultural work on IPV has found support for the role of controlling behavior as a predictor of physical violence. Levinson (1989) examined 90 different societies and found that a male partner's decision-making ability about resources, childcare, and relations was the most significant predictor in frequency of physical violence. Further, a study using national samples from nine different countries found that controlling behavior was significantly associated with a higher risk of violence (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). Kishor and Johnson (2004, p. 68) defined controlling behavior in this cross-cultural sample as "whether the respondent's husband is jealous or angry if she talks to other men; he frequently accuses her of being unfaithful; he does not permit her to meet girlfriends; he limits her contacts with her family; he insists on knowing where she is all the time; and he does not trust her with money." Conversely, a study using survey data in Mexico did not explicitly define coercive control, but instead defined marital power as the individual who has the last word on household decisions (Oropesa, 1997).

It is important to note that in the definitions of IPV above, IPV is indexed by a power imbalance rather than the presence of solely physical violence, although the two can be inter-related (Dasgupta, 1999; Jacobson et al., 1994; Stark, 2007) and the importance of certain tactics

over others may vary across cultural contexts and populations (Raghavan, Beck, Menke, & Loveland, forthcoming review). This definition of IPV appears to increase both the sensitivity of understanding violence dynamics (Downs, Rindels, and Atkinson, 2007) and the predictive utility in comparison to measuring physical violence alone. Further, it has been argued that controlling and dominating behavior can have a more severe and long-term impact than actual physical violence (Tolman, 1992). Consistent with this argument, Beck and Raghavan (2010) found that among parents attending court-ordered custody and parenting mediation, measuring physical violence only is insufficient for identifying relationship distress, suggesting that coercive control may be better able to account for relationship distress in this sample. Measuring coercively controlling behaviors also appears to be more sensitive to detecting gender differences than using physical violence alone. In a study of divorcing couples, Tehee, Beck, and Anderson (2013) found that although men and women report similar rates of low-level physical violence, mothers reported more victimization from coercively controlling behaviors, threats, intimidation, and psychological abuse than did men. In a mixed sample of gay men and women, Frankland and Brown (2014) found evidence of coercively controlling behaviors in gay and lesbian partnerships and concluded that measuring coercion rather than focusing on physical violence has the potential to more accurately characterize the violence dynamic in same sex intimate relationships. Thus, while some researchers argue that men and women are equally likely to use physical violence (Archer, 2000; Straus, 1995), with the inclusion of behaviors representing coercive control, this violence appears to be sensitive to gender in both heterosexual and same sex relationships (Stark, 2013).

While coercive control appears to better identify power imbalance overall, the relationship between coercive control and physical violence is in its infancy and is therefore not

well understood. One viewpoint is offered by Stark (2007) who argues that physical violence only occurs when coercion alone cannot enforce the desired level of control, suggesting that the higher need for (failed) control results in more violence. Somewhat differently, Johnson (1995) argued that a defining characteristic of IPV was the degree of coercive control present in the relationship and that in some relationships there is little coercion and occasional violence, whereas in others there can be high levels of coercion with or without violence. Specifically, Johnson (1995) identified common couple violence, which has little to no coercive control, and patriarchal terrorism, which is evidenced by the various control tactics utilized by the male partner, including threats, isolation, and manipulation. Several studies have found that control over one's partner is positively correlated with the use of violence (e.g., Felson & Outlaw, 2007; Tanha et al., 2010) although whether and why violence follows control differs theoretically. Sexual violence has also been indicated in high coercive control situations. Using a community sample of low income, Hispanic women, Raj, Silverman, and Amaro (2004) found that female partners who experienced high levels of control in their relationships with men were more likely to experience both physical and sexual violence. Similarly, sexual violence has been theorized to be an extension of coercive control (Raghavan & Cohen, 2013).

**Contributing Factors to IPV**

IPV perpetration (particularly but not exclusively physical violence) has been linked to a host of different predisposing factors at the individual, situational, social (exosystem), and cultural (macrosystem) level (Heise, 1998). Some researchers privilege one factor as more important than another (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997; Yllo, 1988), whereas others suggest that an ecological model comprised of several different interacting factors create particular vulnerabilities to partner violence (Heise, 1998). At the individual level, experiencing physical or

sexual abuse as a child, witnessing IPV as a child (Heise, 1998; Riggs, Caulfield, & Street, 2000; Stith et al., 2000; WHO/LSHTM, 2010), and less clearly, having an absent or rejecting father are all individual factors that have been associated with increased IPV perpetration (Heise, 1998). Conversely, some researchers have argued that child abuse does not necessarily contribute to increased probability of IPV perpetration, but attribute an increase in IPV perpetration to childhood neglect (Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2014). At the situational level, there are several factors that occur within the context of the family that contribute to an increased likelihood of IPV perpetration. These factors include male dominance in the family, male control of wealth, marital conflict, and alcohol use (Heise, 1998; WHO/LSHTM, 2010). At the social level, factors influencing IPV perpetration are unemployment/low socioeconomic status (Heise, 1998; Riggs, Caulfield, & Street, 2000; WHO/LSHTM), social isolation of women and family, and association with delinquent peers (Heise, 1998). Conversely, Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, and Tritt (2004) found that while career/life stress was associated with increased risk of IPV perpetration, being unemployed or having lower income were not related to IPV perpetration.

One of the most pertinent factors that cuts across these different levels of analyses is the stereotypical culture of masculinity. This culture of masculinity includes the understanding that masculinity is often linked to dominance, toughness, honor, sense of male entitlement or ownership over women, approval of physical chastisement of women, and cultural condoning of violence as a means to resolve interpersonal disputes (Heise, 1998). While there are many different constructions of masculinity, including positive masculinity models and components such as competence and assertiveness, this study focused on expressions of a more stereotypical definition of masculinity that has been linked to IPV. The current study focused on different operationalized traits reflecting the cultural construct of masculinity within the overarching

concept of gender roles. While masculinity can exist at different levels, including social and

macro-level structures, and can be displayed in situational interactions, this study concentrated

on the individual-level operationalization of this concept through traits, and the corresponding

mechanisms of these traits in relation to the perpetration of IPV. In particular, I explored how

these traits influence the occurrence of coercive control, a fundamental component of IPV, and

the resulting physical violence often utilized to maintain this control.

**Gender**

Masculinity cannot be understood without an understanding of gender. Masculinity is to

gender as sand is a key component of beach ecology—ever present but shifting and composed

differently depending on the context. Gender is a complicated, many-armed construct that often

includes the norms, expectations, and expressions considered from multiple vantage points and

contexts that prescribe how men and women interact, live, and view themselves. One of the

"values" that drive gender is masculinity, and masculinity is often suggested to manifest at the

individual-level. Correspondingly, there are countless definitions of gender; some contend that

gender is the system while others state it is the outcome of the system (Butler, 1990; West &

Zimmerman, 1987). Dobash and Dobash (1998) identified gender as a system that organizes the

responsibilities attributed to men and women in relationships. West and Zimmerman (1987)

contend that gender is both an outcome and rationale for social and societal divisions, and that

gender role traits and beliefs are derived from and serve to support membership in a sex

category. Connell (1995) also utilized a systematic definition, and defined gender as a means of

using the reproductive system to organize behavior at every level of social organization. These

definitions of gender are constructed at an ecological level through various social structures

including formal legal structures, informal social interactions, and the media (Allen et al., 2013).

These constructions are then experienced both interpersonally (Anderson, 2005) but also internalized as a central tenet of one's identity. Gender is often discussed in terms of gender role beliefs and gender role traits,[1] with the former including ideological beliefs about gender-appropriate roles, and the latter including self-ascribed personality characteristics involving stereotypic behaviors and attitudes (Basow, 1992; Deux & Major, 1987; Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2000). Additionally, some research measures actual expression of behaviors or a mixture of personality, behaviors, and beliefs, such that easy categorization of this research as either gender role beliefs or traits is not possible. As such, where possible, I will indicate how best to categorize this research.

Different researchers have proposed a wide variety of mechanisms that promote the use of control and violence to reestablish masculinity. The structuralist approach suggests that gender is a social structure that serves to determine rights and responsibilities. This approach argues that IPV is the result of societal structures that afford opportunities and rewards for the perpetrators of this form of violence (Anderson, 2005). Conversely, the interactionist approach suggests that gender is something that is created and expressed interpersonally. Through the lens of the interactionist approach, IPV is an expression of masculinity such that violence is a method of "doing" gender (Anderson, 2005). For example, restricting a partner's freedom is not only about the outcome (less autonomy) but also the manner in which these restrictions are expressed and the right to express them. By initiating and maintaining control, the individual maintains his status and is able to perform masculinity. A third view focuses on individual-level threats to masculinity, generally measured by gender roles beliefs, and more recently, traits.

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[1] A trait is generally defined as a distinguishing quality or characteristic; while a belief is defined as an idea or feeling that something exists or is true (Merriam-Webster's, 2009).
[2] I acknowledge that anyone can define as masculine. The current study focuses on heterosexual relationships, thus I

As a result, how gender role stereotypes (and masculinity in particular) relate to IPV across different populations is equally complex. One source of confusion pertains to how gender is defined – different researchers have examined different aspects of gender roles offering overlapping but different definitions, making this research difficult to compare. There is also confusion over the mechanisms through which gender roles are posited to operate in relation to IPV. Past confusion on the importance of gender roles as a predictor or explanatory variable in IPV is attributed to inconsistency in defining gender roles, with some defining gender roles solely as an individual-level characteristic or attribute (Allen, Davis, Javdani, & Lehrner, 2013) while other researchers focus on its' embeddedness in social structures. The association among masculine concepts and IPV has been inconsistent because researchers measure a wide variety of beliefs and traits, which while representing legitimate aspects of masculinity, are difficult to compare across studies, and make generalization of results difficult. Further, what constitutes IPV also varies across studies, with definitions that include a range of behaviors and actions with more recent definitions privileging the role of coercive control. In an attempt to disentangle this, I review different aspects of gender roles beginning with the construct of masculinity, a key aspect of gender roles, and explore how several different conceptualizations of masculinity may influence IPV perpetration. I then review a host of constructs, defined here as masculine gender role traits. I refer to constructs pertaining to personality characteristics, including behaviors and attitudes, as gender role traits, and constructs pertaining to beliefs about gender-appropriate roles, as gender role beliefs (Basow, 1992; Deux & Major, 1987; Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2000).

**Theoretical Views of Masculinity**

At the most abstract level, one complex way of defining masculinity[2] focuses on what it is not, rather than a particular set of beliefs and traits signifying what it is. More specifically, asserting one's difference from and devaluation of a feminine identity is thought to be central to masculine identity development (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1978; Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg, & Walker, 1990). Connell (1995) argued that masculinity encompasses the beliefs and traits that men engage in, while femininity is defined as the other, or opposite, of these beliefs and traits. For example, femininity has been defined as the absence of masculinity (Kessler & McKenna, 1978), or as negations of masculinity, in that femininity lacks any of the power or patriarchy associated with masculinity (Paechter, 2006). This dynamic definition is useful because it allows one to understand that the definition of masculinity does not occur in a vacuum but rather is pegged to the construction of femininity. Accordingly, when typically feminine behaviors change, what is defined as masculine must also change. In more concrete terms, contemporary constructions of masculinity typically include beliefs and traits that promote power, including sexual aggression, need for dominance, breadwinning responsibility, or low self-disclosure (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993).

An extreme adherence to masculinity, or an exaggerated form of masculinity, is often termed "hyper-masculinity" (Reidy, Shirk, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009) and is suggested to be a dysfunctional form of masculinity. Mosher and Sirkin (1984) identified three central components of a hyper-masculine personality: calloused sex attitudes towards women, viewing violence as manly, and viewing danger as exciting. Mosher and Sirkin (1984) argue that hyper-masculinity is a trait that influences men to utilize behaviors that display power and dominance, and is particularly prominent in interactions with women. For example, viewing danger as exciting

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[2] I acknowledge that anyone can define as masculine. The current study focuses on heterosexual relationships, thus I narrow the discussion of masculinity to men in heterosexual relationships.

demonstrates fearlessness and the ability to conquer one's own weakness. As gender roles

encompass both beliefs and traits, hyper-masculinity as an exaggerated form of masculinity

includes both stereotypical beliefs and attitudes.

Regardless of how masculinity is measured, Butler (1990) argued that masculinity is

particularly unstable, as it consists of the reactionary actions within a normative binary gender

framework. Thus, masculinity is viewed as a performance, rather than as an identity grounded in

internal values and beliefs. Because gender is socially produced, what it means to be masculine

or feminine is context-dependent and according to this view, must vary across space and time.

As such, masculine identities at the individual level are perceived to be relatively fragile and

precarious. At the broadest level, theories of masculinity propose that this tenuous state may

contribute to a sense of vulnerability and instability. In secure men, this instability may be

interpreted as dynamic with men (and women) adapting or even embracing the changing facets

of gender expectations. In insecure men or men with poor insight and coping, this state of

instability can increase the probability of the use of violence to restore or establish a sense of self

as a "real man." Thus, one broad pathway to violence is posited to be through this "failure" of

maintaining or embracing masculinity. It is important to note that not all men who are masculine

or feel threatened resort to IPV and the pathway from masculinity to violence is complex and

multifactorial. Men may enjoy challenges to their masculinity and may respond positively in

ways leading to personal growth and other men may bolster their masculinity in societally

condoned ways such as engaging in aggressive sports, earning more financially, and others,

while threatened, may refrain from hurting the perceived source of threat but may cope

maladaptively and internally, rather than acting out externally through violence.

The manner in which men restore their masculinity—the process—speaks to the heart of

masculinity because this concept is not just an outcome (i.e., Am I masculine?), it also embraces

the performance and the process (i.e., How am I masculine?). As such, enforcing control and

violence speaks to the heart of the definition of masculinity. Using this logic, this broad lens

argues that the use of control and violence is not a random or a "neutral" tool that anyone might

use when frustrated but a very specific mechanism that is linked to the definition and the

restoration of masculinity.[3] Many studies have shown that IPV is most common in societies that

endorse rigid gender roles and associate masculinity with dominance and male honor (Ellsberg,

Pena, Herrera, Liljestrand, & Winkvist, 2000). Yet, because of rapid changes in society and the

advent of women's and gay rights, these are the very contexts in which traditional masculinity is

most likely to be challenged. In addition, the process by which men traditionally asserted their

dominance, such as aggression and sexual independence solely for men, have also been criticized

as abusive, sexist, and one-sided such that women either resist such practices or in the case of

sexual independence, demand equality (Connell, 1995). These societal changes and ongoing

challenges to masculinity may contribute to the consistently high rates of IPV in society, as an

assertion for control is an attempt to restore masculinity.

**Research Findings on Masculinity as Gender Roles[4] and IPV**

One body of research examines the relationship between masculinity and IPV by

measuring gender in terms of actual expressed behavior and/or gender role beliefs that

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[3] I acknowledge that IPV often occurs in same sex relationships, and some research suggests that it occurs at elevated rates compared to heterosexual partnerships. The role of masculinity in IPV perpetration is not limited to heterosexual relationships, and it likely works similarly in same sex relationships but perhaps with different rules or mechanisms.

[4] Throughout the paper, I use the terms "traditional gender role" and "traditional masculinity" to reference similar concepts indicating adherence to normative gender constructs. The term "traditional sex role" often used in the literature is encompassed with these terms. Traditional gender role can refer to either femininity or masculinity, while traditional masculinity focuses strictly on the concepts typically associated with being male. The term "gender role" encompasses a combination of both gender role traits and gender role beliefs.

encompass deviations from gender roles. With the need to assert masculinity, some researchers argue that IPV is likely to occur in a context where a man perceives that his power and control, and thus his masculine identity, are threatened (Dutton & Browning, 1988; Totten, 2003) and the cost of losing his identity is high. These threats can occur either when an intimate partner's behaviors deviate from a traditional gender role or when the man fails to live up to a rigid masculine gender role. A partner's nonconformist behaviors can include a female breadwinner, the female partner taking on the more assertive role in a relationship, or the female partner challenging the male partner's dominance or authority. Men's failure to fulfill a masculine gender role can include engagement in behaviors associated with femininity, or failure to endorse masculine beliefs or engage in masculine roles or behaviors (i.e. losing one's job, appearing weak or sensitive). By asserting control using aggressive methods towards an intimate partner, the power (and masculine identity) is restored and reaffirmed.

Several studies have found support for a positive relationship between traditional gender roles and violence towards an intimate partner. The majority of this research has been conducted with undergraduate samples, and has found that individuals who endorsed more traditional gender roles displayed more support for the use of IPV against female partners (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004). Anderson and Umberson (2001) interviewed 33 racially diverse men in a domestic violence program, asking open-ended questions about the positive and negative aspects of their relationships using methods identified in Dobash and Dobash's (1984) study of female victims of IPV. These interviews were then thematically coded, and the findings suggested that IPV occurs in response to masculine and feminine traditional gender role deviations and may be utilized as a method to restore their masculinity and their partners' femininity. Violations of traditional gender roles have been found to result in physical aggression

towards women (Reidy et al., 2009), particularly when involving hyper-masculine men and role-violating or hypo-feminine women. In a seminal study, Dobash and Dobash (1979) reported that abusive male partners frequently described the use of IPV in response to their female partners' failure to engage in stereotypical feminine or "wifely" behaviors. Providing additional support for the argument that IPV may occur in response to gender role deviations, Finn (1986) found that more egalitarian gender roles contributed to a reduction in attitudes that legitimize the use of physical force. Crossman, Stith, and Bender (1990) found that among a combined sample of 77 men enrolled in a substance abuse treatment program and 44 men enrolled in an anger management program, severe partner violence explained a significant amount of variance in gender role egalitarianism, but minor violence did not.

Conversely, some research has found that gender roles are unrelated to IPV, with researchers arguing that there is not a clear link between different kinds of masculine roles and violence perpetration (Archer, 2000; Felson, 2002). Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) explored potential risk markers for IPV through a review of 52 empirical studies on "husband to wife violence." They found that only 25% of the studies they reviewed indicated that batterers endorsed more traditional gender roles than non-batterers. Additionally, Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, and Ryan (1992) used The Macho Scale to assess stereotyped gender roles among college undergraduates, and found that men who endorsed more "macho" or masculine identities were actually less likely to use violence against a female intimate partner. Further, Bookwala and colleagues (1992) found that less traditional gender roles were associated with violence. Burke, Stets, and Pirog-Good, (1988) found similar results in an undergraduate population using an qualitative method to study gender identity, asking participants to self-rate items relevant to gender.

While the research may be inconclusive, it is clear that not all men who adhere to traditionally masculine or hyper-masculine gender roles resort to violence when there is a perceived threat to their masculinity. One concept that helps explain the pathway between masculinity and IPV is masculine gender role stress. Among college men, higher masculine gender role stress, or stress related to the perception that male gender role norms are being violated, was found to be related to an increase in negative responses, aggression, and violence towards female partners (Eisler, Franchina, Moore, Honeycutt, & Rhatigan, 2000; Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002). Expectedly, for men who reported less identification with traditional masculine gender roles, masculine gender role stress was not predictive of aggression and violence towards partners (Jakupcak et al., 2002). Even more noteworthy was the finding that in situations when gender role stress was low, men who endorsed high masculine identities reported lower levels of violence and aggression. Taken together, these findings may indicate an interesting mediating effect of threats found among men who identity with highly conventional masculine gender roles and are sensitive to threats. When not faced with a gender-threatening or stressful situation, these men may adhere to a more traditional code in which men are not aggressive or violent towards women but when faced with a perceived gender-threatening situation, they may respond with aggression and violence (Jakupcak et al., 2002). The results from these studies suggest that men's conceptualization of their masculine identities and roles may interact with how sensitive they are to masculine insult and the interaction between these factors influences how they interpret situations with their partners.

While traditional gender roles, hyper-masculinity, and gender role stress focus on threats to masculinity, violence may also occur when men are unable to sufficiently separate themselves from the negative aspects that they perceive to be associated with femininity (Benjamin, 1988).

This is different from an active threat to one's masculinity, as this inability to separate oneself does not occur as a result of someone else's actions but rather is an internal struggle with one's own feelings of emasculation and incompetence. Attempts to reassert masculinity and gender differences may be expressed through violence and domination of an individual with a feminine identity (Benjamin, 1988; Goldner et al., 1990), resulting in acts of IPV. In a study exploring IPV among male college students, Cogan, Porcerelli, and Dromgoole (2001) found that castration anxiety was higher among men who were violent towards their partner. Castration anxiety was measured with the Schwartz Castration Anxiety Scale, with castration anxiety measured as concerns about bodily integrity. It is possible that heightened castration anxiety is indicative of subsequent defensiveness and hyper-masculinity, which may result in anger and aggression towards an intimate partner. Some violent men may struggle with a vulnerable sense of masculine identity and the use of violence or aggression may be in reaction to perceived threats to their sense of self.

To better understand the proliferation of constructs measuring masculinity, Murnen, Wright, and Kalyzny (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on 39 studies. The authors explored the research findings on 11 concepts representative of a masculine ideology including: acceptance of interpersonal violence, adversarial sexual beliefs, attitudes towards women, dominance/power over women, hostile masculinity, hyper-masculinity, masculine instrumental personality traits, rape myth acceptance, sex role conservatism, and sex role stereotyping. Hyper-masculinity, hostile masculinity, dominance/power measures, hostility towards women, and acceptance of interpersonal violence were found to have the strongest effects on sexual aggression. Overall, this suggests that a hostile form of masculinity is moderately associated with sexual aggression,

while sexual conservatism, gender role stereotyping, and masculine instrumentality were least predictive of sexual aggression.

**Summary**

While much research has been conducted on masculine gender roles, the populations, sample sizes, definitions, and operationalizations used vary considerably across studies. The majority of studies utilize college samples, with samples ranging between 316 (Berkel, Vandiver & Bahner, 2004) to 611 undergraduate males (Reitzel-Jaffe & Waffe, 2001). Researchers have used a variety of measures to assess gender roles, including the Sex Role Egalitarianism Scale to measure beliefs about appropriate gender roles (Berkel, Vandiver & Bahner, 2004), and the Hypermasculinity Inventory to assess for an exaggerated masculine personality (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003). One of the few studies to utilize a clinical sample of violent men was conducted by Anderson and Umberson (2001) who conducted open-ended interviews with 33 men to explore the influence of gender roles on IPV. In addition to the use non-clinical samples and a variety of measures, the definition of masculinity varies across studies, as researchers often use terms including traditional gender roles, traditional masculinity, and hyper-masculinity to represent masculinity. This variety in definition leads to the use of a range of measures to explore this relationship, making comparison across studies difficult. Further, the definitions of IPV vary broadly, with some researchers including only physical aggression, and others including physical, sexual, and emotional violence. As such, it is difficult to pinpoint which one of these conceptualizations is most useful to test associations among masculinity and subsequent tactics used to maintain power imbalances in IPV.

**Research Findings on Masculine Traits and IPV**

In addition to gender role beliefs and actual gender role behaviors, researchers have also examined different aspects of masculine gender role traits. Although researchers do not explicitly link these traits to the overarching concept of masculinity, the correspondences are evident in the similar definitions. As noted above, gender roles beliefs differ from traits in that the former refers to how one believes one should behave whereas the latter refers to longstanding personality characteristics, involving stereotypic behaviors and attitudes about men and women (Basow, 1992; Deux & Major, 1987), including attitudes towards women, although sometimes the assessments used conflate the two concepts. Three often-studied masculine traits are dominance, hostility towards women, and sexism. Most of these constructs are studied in the context of sexual violence, with the exception of dominance. However, because sexual violence is thought to be an aspect of IPV and may be a form of coercive control in and of itself, these traits may have relevance to the understanding of IPV. I first review these traits followed by the most validated operationalizations of these constructs. By exploring the relationship between masculinity and IPV by focusing on individual-level traits, such as dominance, hostility towards women, and sexism, this enables a clearer picture of the individual behaviors and mechanisms that influence perpetration of IPV.

**Dominance**

A primary tenet of stereotypical masculinity is the need to dominate over female partners. Feminist theory argues that gender inequality and dominance by a male intimate partner are correlated with partner violence towards a female partner (Bograd, 1988). Dominance, as a correlate of IPV, has been defined as beliefs including the promotion of men's superiority and authority over women (Levant & Richmond, 2007), and as behaviors such as restrictiveness and disparagement (Straus, 2008). The use of dominance to explain IPV has been confusing, as one

view is that IPV is used to dominate, while another perspective is that dominance is a trait that

can lead to the use of IPV. Further, dominance has been defined in a wide variety of ways;

sometimes as a feature of masculinity and sexism, other times independently, and has been

posited both as a factor leading to IPV as well as a characteristic of IPV. This relationship

between dominance and IPV is often attributed to the use of violence as a method to express or

assert dominance over a female partner (Sugihara & Warner, 2002). Dobash and Dobash (1992)

argue that in a patriarchal society, men's desire and ability to maintain power and control over

their female partners contributes to IPV, and this assumption and demand for power likely bleeds

into the need to dominate and control one's partner (Yodanis, 2004). Consequently, men may use

violence to maintain their dominance and control over their partners.

To date, Hamby (1996) has provided the first and clearest definition of individual-level

dominance in relationships. She advocates a conceptualization of dominance as a deviation from

an egalitarian relationship and the presence of dominance or power by one individual in the

relationship. Further, this conceptualization of dominance is comprised of three components:

authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement. Authority consists of one partner needing to hold

most of the power in the relationship. Restrictiveness involves one partner intruding on the other

partner's decisions and behaviors, while disparagement consists of a partner with a negative view

of their partner, including failure to value the partner. Other researchers have attached

dominance to similar concepts, including masculinity (Ellsberg et al., 2000) and hyper-

masculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). However, dominance as defined by Hamby includes

authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement, which are not included in Glick and Fiske's (1996)

discussion of dominance and sexism. Thus, while dominance and sexism are conceptually

related, they are not identical. In an attempt to tease apart how the components of dominance

influence IPV, Hamby (1996) found that restrictiveness (entitlement leading to patterns of controlling a partner's decisions or behaviors) was most associated with IPV. While Hamby's measure of dominance encompasses several crucial components relevant to partner violence, it has not been researched within a sample of batterers.

Several studies have explored the relationship between dominance and IPV, and results suggest that dominance may play some role in the perpetration of IPV, although it is unclear if this role is indirect or direct. A study of 2,421 male undergraduates found that male dominance was a predictor of physical partner violence, but not psychological partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). Hamberger and Guse (2002) reported that men court-ordered to attend a batterers' treatment program were more likely to exhibit dominating or controlling behaviors compared to women court-ordered to attend a similar treatment. Straus (2008) found that among undergraduates, both men and women who dominate their partners are more likely to engage in partner violence. This finding suggests that endorsing dominance as a particular type of masculine trait regardless of gender increases the potential for violence. It is important to note that Straus' (2008) and Hamberger and Guse's (2002) findings were based on the concept of dominance expressed through behaviors rather than attitudes, as measured by Hamby.

The role of dominance in IPV is unclear not only because some researchers measure beliefs, and others traits, but also because while many researchers agree that increased dominance is correlated to increased violence (Yllo & Bograd, 1988), others argue that a lack of control or power is correlated to increased dominance (Dutton, 1994). However, reframed within a coercive control paradigm, one potential new explanation is that the claim for power and dominance may increase coercive controlling behaviors, which in turn leads to increased partner violence. Indeed, in a recent study, controlling behaviors mediated the relationship between

dominance and partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). Overall, Whitaker (2013) found that among male undergraduates, a male partner's control seeking had the strongest influence on the occurrence of partner violence, more so than male dominance and hostile sexism. Even when controlling for hostile sexism, controlling behavior was still the most influential, increasing the likelihood of IPV, suggesting a mediating role of coercive control. To measure these relationships, Whitaker (2013) used the dominance subscale from the Male Role Norms Inventory-Revised to measure male dominance, the hostile sexism subscale on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory to assess for sexism, and control seeking was measured with the dominance subscale from the Hamby Scale. Similar to coercive control researchers, Whitaker (2013) argues that control seeking is a unique form of partner violence, and these findings suggest that there may be different motives for partner violence. Taken together, this suggests that identifying the presence of controlling behaviors may have serious implications for intervention efforts, particularly in relationships when both partners utilize physical violence. More research, particularly in populations of adult men, is needed to better understand the roles of dominance, coercive control, and IPV.

**Hostility towards Women**

Another concept thought to be associated with masculinity at the individual trait level is hostility towards women. Hostility towards women is a personality trait or attitudinal set that is marked by prejudice and misogynist views of women across various dimensions including relationships, work, gender roles, and women's abilities (Glick & Fiske, 1996). While there remains debate on whether hostility is purely an attitudinal construct or if it has an associated emotional component (Eckhendardt & Deffenbacher, 1995; Eckhenhardt, Norton, & Deffenbacher, 2004), most researchers agree that the associated emotion or the consequence of

hostility is anger. Similar to general hostility, central to hostility towards women is cynicism towards women (the belief that women are selfishly motivated), mistrust—the attitude that most women cannot be trusted, and denigration of women, which include sexism, and negative stereotypes of women (Check, 1985; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro, & Hallet, 1996). In parallel with general hostility, individuals who are high on hostility towards women have been found to experience frequent and intense anger directed towards women (Parrot & Zeichner, 2003). Researchers have used a variety of measures to assess hostile attitudes towards women, including the Hostility Towards Women Scale (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003) and the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001).

Hostility towards women has been extensively linked with violence against women including partner aggression, sexual coercion (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004), sexual assault (Marshall & Hambley, 1996; Marshall & Moulden, 2001), and victim blaming (Yamawaki, 2007). Catlett, Toews, and Walliliko (2010) also found that men who reported high levels of hostility, denial, and minimization were more likely to drop out of batterer treatment programs compared to their less hostile counterparts. These studies document the important role that hostility towards women and the subsequent role of induced anger play in understanding pathways to violent aggression. Hostility towards women was highly correlated with dominance in male undergraduates, supporting the notion that a need to control may be expressed through hostility (Lisak and Roth, 1990). The majority of the research on hostility towards women has focused on one component of IPV, sexual violence, with higher hostility towards women correlated with sexual aggression and assault in male undergraduate samples (Forbes et al., 2004), as well as in rapists (Marshall & Hambley, 1996; Marshall & Moulden, 2001). Using a sample of undergraduate students, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) found a relationship between

hostility towards women and acceptance of rape myths. Thus, hostile beliefs towards women may serve to justify violent behavior towards female intimate partners. Although there is not clear research linking the two concepts, hostility towards women appears to be similar to hyper-masculinity, as both hyper-masculinity and hostility towards women consist of an element of dominance, and encourage the use of aggression and violence towards women. Ross and Babcock (2009) found that men with more hostility towards their partners are more controlling and more violent. Thus, while the majority of research on hostility towards women has focused on its' role in sexual assault and rape myths, this construct may have application and utility in IPV, as hostility is thought to motivate and contribute to violence (Check, 1988; Malamuth et al., 1991). Accordingly, the lack of research exploring the role of hostile beliefs in IPV warrants additional exploration, as it may provide an important link between endorsement of masculine beliefs and IPV perpetration.

**Sexism**

Historically, researchers have argued that sexism is related to hostility towards women (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) or that hostility towards women is a fundamental aspect of sexism (Forbes, Collinsworth, Jobe, Braun, & Wise, 2007). Sexism stems from the belief that women are inherently different or inferior, and this belief results in a negative attitude and discriminatory behavior towards women (Cameron, 1977). Sexism encourages adherence to traditional gender roles and maintains the balance of power, justifying inequality between the genders. Sexism is rooted in the endorsement of traditional gender roles and the corresponding social structure (Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Swim & Cohen, 1997). While hostile sexism and hostility towards women are similar concepts, hostility towards women focuses more on interpersonal hostility, while hostile sexism focuses more on hostility towards women in general. Thus, sexism can be

thought of as behaviors and attitudes produced by adherence to a traditionally masculine gender

identity. Traditional gender roles are an essential component to a patriarchal societal structure, as

patriarchy consists of men's structural control over most aspects of life, including economic and

political institutions (Goldberg, 1993). When the power balance is perceived as threatened,

violence may be used (Sidanius, Pratto & Bobo, 1994). As masculinity involves distinguishing

oneself from femininity, sexism is a negative representation of this, as sexism distinguishes men

from women by viewing women as inferior.

To address the criticism that not all sexist men use violence, Glick and Fiske (1996) posited

the ambivalent sexism theory. Ambivalent sexism theory states that there are several types of

sexism: ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. Both hostile and benevolent

sexism consist of stereotyping and prejudice, but hostile sexism consists of more anger and

resentment towards women, while benevolent sexism is generally considered to be more positive

(Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism involves apathy and disdain for women who fail to adhere

to traditional gender roles, often resulting in anger and resentment, along with attempts to justify

traditional gender roles. Additionally, hostile sexism may be reflected by contempt for gender

equality. Glick and Fiske (1996) specify that hostile sexism consists of several components,

specifically male dominance, competitive gender differentiation, and hostile heterosexuality.

Conversely, benevolent sexists may endorse the belief that women are special and require

protection from men. Benevolent sexism typically consists of chivalry and the positive portrayal

of women who are perceived as adherent to traditional female gender roles and thus, upholding

male dominance. Typically, benevolent sexists have generally positive views of women, albeit

traditional and restrictive. Benevolent sexism is comprised of protective paternalism,

complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Accordingly, women's behaviors that are consistent with benevolent sexist attitudes are rewarded, while challenges to sexist attitudes may be punished. Glick and Fiske (2001) argue that benevolent sexism may enable men to feel justified in their roles as protectors or providers of their female partners. Additionally, benevolent sexism disarms women, in that it discourages women to resist this power structure.

Individuals who possess both hostile and benevolent sexist traits are referred to as ambivalent sexists. Ambivalent sexists are thought to have polarized reactions to the individual their sexist feelings are directed towards, such as an intimate partner (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Ambivalent sexism is based on the idea that men are conflicted or ambivalent about their need for control and power, while also realizing that women are valuable and necessary in a reproductive capacity (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Lisco, 2013). Ambivalent sexism represents the conflict between needing women (for intimacy and sexuality), while also wanting to exclude women (upholding patriarchy and male power). Ambivalent sexism allows men to place women in categories of "good" or "bad" depending on their adherence and conformity to roles that are perceived as gender appropriate (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Similarly, hostile sexism enables men to punish women who fail to conform to traditional gender roles ("bad"), while benevolent sexism enables men to reward women who act in accord with traditional gender roles ("good") (Lisco, 2013). While ambivalent sexists are thought to encompass both hostile and benevolent sexism traits, they may deviate towards one end of sexism when faced with an individual woman who either meets this gender role standard or fails to do so. Thus, based on the qualities of the individual women, either hostile sexism or benevolent sexism may become the dominant frame. Based on this range of sexism, some researchers have begun to explore the relationship between type of sexism and IPV.

Studies using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory have found that hostile sexism predicted positive attitudes toward the use IPV among both American undergraduates (Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch, & Adams-Curtis, 2005) and Turkish undergraduates (Sakalli, 2001). Additionally, within a combined sample of 857 Turkish and Brazilian undergraduate students and community members, hostile sexism was associated with a higher tolerance for IPV (Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreria, & Aguiar de Souza, 2002). With respect to actual behaviors impacted by hostile sexism, a study of 147 undergraduate males found that those individuals with hostile sexist attitudes were more likely to commit verbal and sexual coercion (Forbes et al., 2004). Further, in a sample of male undergraduates, hostile sexism was shown to be a predictor of both physical and psychological partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). Controlling behaviors have been shown to partially mediate the influence of hostile sexism on partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). One of the few studies to explore the role of hostile sexism in a sample of 140 male domestic violence offenders found that those offenders who endorsed hostile sexism had a higher risk of domestic violence reoffending (Eades, 2003). Hostile sexism may provide a link between masculinity and IPV, as hostile sexism is thought to include anger and resentment towards gender equality, with attempts to justify traditional gender roles. This anger may lend itself to IPV as a method to assert one's control and maintain male superiority with the use of coercively controlling behaviors. This suggests that endorsement of attitudes consistent with hostile sexism may be a risk factor for future IPV.

Interestingly, some research has reported conflicting findings on the relationship between benevolent sexism and partner violence. Using an international community sample, Glick et al. (2002) found that benevolent sexism is unrelated to IPV, while Allen, Swan, & Raghavan (2009) found that among undegraduate students, benevolent sexists perpetrated less partner violence.

Conversely, research has shown that benevolent sexism is predictive of greater responsibility for wife beating (Sakalli, 2001), and victim blaming in both domestic violence (Yamawaki, Ostenson, & Brown, 2009) and date-rape scenarios (Yamawaki, 2007). Further, ambivalent sexists were more likely to minimize domestic violence or sexual assault. Glick and Fiske (2001) suggest that because benevolent sexism is a less overt form of sexism that asserts itself when a woman fails to conform to traditional gender roles (i.e. does something perceived to be "wrong"), this may contribute to victim blaming for partner violence. This inability to accept responsibility for violent behaviors may be attributed to Kimmel's (2002) proposal that men have difficulty acknowledging a lack of control over their partners, causing them to underestimate their violence.

Much of the past research on the relationship between sexism and violence has focused on sexual violence, particularly rape. While there is some research exploring the role of sexism on physical violence in IPV, there is little research focusing specifically on sexism and coercive control. Further, past studies have focused more on victim blaming, tolerance for IPV, and aggression, as opposed to a focus on partner violence dynamics. Additionally, there have been inconsistent findings on the relationship between benevolent sexism and partner violence, perhaps because of differences in participant populations. Because sexism is directly related to gender roles, and because the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a more refined measure of contemporary sexism, examining the link between the ASI and partner violence may further clarify how one masculine trait, hostile sexism, may or may not be related to IPV.

In summary, the relationship between IPV and trait masculinity has been unclear, as masculinity has been operationalized many different ways, and studied within many varied fields, with different approaches and measures. Nevertheless, research has shown that measuring

traits may be more useful than gender role belief inventories. In particular, the distinct yet overlapping concepts of dominance, hostility towards women, and hostile sexism have been most implicated in increased controlling behaviors, physical violence, and sexual violence, suggesting that narrowing the focus and examining these concepts may provide increased understanding of the mechanisms behind IPV.

**Conclusions**

Gender is an overarching/organizing construct (Bohan, 1997), and as result of gender, men and women fulfill outlined roles and display beliefs and traits consistent with their prescribed gender roles. The challenges to traditional domains of masculinity have increased in contemporary times and it is argued that masculinity is in "crisis" (Gardiner, 2002). With the advent of minority, women's, and gay rights, the traditionally desirable domains and expressions of masculinity such as social and financial dominance are being "infiltrated" by women, sexual minorities, and ethnic minority men as the U.S. struggles to build a democratic and egalitarian society. Men's attitudes towards women, and their resulting behaviors, are complex and difficult to adequately assess. In exploring the relationship between gender roles and IPV, focusing on masculinity may provide insight into this relationship, as research has shown that men are more likely to perpetrate IPV and women are predominantly victimized (Campbell, 2004). Further, research has shown that masculinity is related to higher rates of aggression and violence (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004; Finn, 1986; Hillier & Foddy, 1993; Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001).

In order to explore this relationship, gender role traits may be of more use than gender role belief inventories. Gender role traits are longstanding personality characteristics involving both behaviors and attitudes (Basow, 1992; Deux & Major, 1987). With the knowledge that

masculinity is an unstable and reactionary concept (Butler, 1990), gender role traits may be more useful in understanding the mechanisms behind IPV. Three traits, dominance, hostility towards women, and hostile sexism, have been implicated in increased controlling behaviors, physical violence, and sexual violence. While there is some research linking these constructs to IPV, research samples vary from undergraduate students, batterer populations, and violent youth, making findings, even when using similar measurements, difficult to compare. Further, few studies have specifically looked at these traits in a clinical population of abusive partners. With inconsistent findings and the limited study of clinical populations, further examination of these concepts may provide increased understanding of the mechanisms behind IPV perpetration.

## Current Study

### Research Aims and Hypotheses

IPV is defined as an abusive relationship where one partner disproportionately and coercively controls the other, resulting in a chronic power imbalance that is psychologically and physically harmful to the victim (Pence & Paymar, 1986). While dominance, hostility towards women, and hostile sexism have been linked to IPV in some capacity, little is known about how these three traits are related. Therefore, the first step was to examine the relationship among these traits in an effort to obtain a greater understanding of masculinity. IPV is best understood by exploring violent dynamics and power imbalance, and past research suggests that coercive control and physical violence are interrelated, and that coercion may lead to physical violence. The next step in this study was to test the following research hypotheses to assess the relative contributions of these three predictors (dominance, hostility towards women, and hostile sexism) on physical violence. Next was to test whether these three predictors are significantly associated with coercive control, and finally, whether coercive control mediates the relationships among

masculine traits and physical violence. The research aims and hypotheses are arranged

accordingly.

**Research Aim 1**. To examine the inter-relationships of dominance (restrictiveness),

hostility towards women, and hostile sexism.

Hypothesis 1a*.* Research has shown that hostility towards women is correlated with

dominance in some samples (Lisak & Roth, 1990). As such, it is hypothesized that hostility

towards women will be significantly correlated with dominance (restrictiveness). Specifically,

men who endorse higher levels of hostility towards women will also endorse higher levels of

dominance (restrictiveness).

Hypothesis 1b. Glick and Fiske (1996) found that hostile sexism is comprised of several

components including general male dominance. Based on this finding, it is hypothesized hostile

sexism will be significantly correlated with dominance (restrictiveness). Specifically, men who

endorse higher levels of hostile sexism will also endorse higher levels of dominance

(restrictiveness).

**Research Aim 2.** To examine the relative contribution of each of these three predictors to

physical violence (see Path A in Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2a. Studies have shown that male dominance is a predictor of physical partner

violence (Whitaker, 2013). Based on this finding, it is hypothesized that dominance

(restrictiveness) will be significantly correlated with physical violence. Specifically, men who

endorse higher levels of dominance (restrictiveness) will exhibit higher levels of physical

violence.

Hypothesis 2b. Lisak & Roth (1990) found that men who raped to or attempted to rape

endorsed greater levels of hostility towards women. Although there is little research on the

concept of hostility towards women in IPV, sexual violence is one aspect of IPV, thus it is hypothesized that hostility towards women will be significantly correlated with physical violence. Specifically, men who endorse higher levels of hostility towards women will exhibit higher levels of physical violence.

Hypothesis 2c. Hostile sexism has been found to be a predictor of both psychological and physical partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). Based on the research linking hostile sexism to IPV (Eades, 2003; Forbes, et al., 2004; Whitaker, 2013), it is hypothesized that hostile sexism will be significantly correlated to physical violence. Specifically, men who endorse higher levels of hostile sexism will exhibit higher levels of physical violence.

**Research Aim 3.** To examine the relative contribution of each of these three predictors to coercive control (see Path B in Figure 1).

Hypothesis 3a. By definition, a key component of dominance, restrictiveness, involves characterological beliefs about patterns of controlling behaviors (Hamby, 1996). Therefore, it is hypothesized that dominance (restrictiveness) will be significantly correlated to reported coercive control. Specifically, men who endorse higher levels of dominance (restrictiveness) will report using higher levels of coercive control.

Hypothesis 3b. Research has suggested that a need to control one's partner may be expressed through hostility (Lisak & Roth, 1990). Thus, it is hypothesized that hostility towards women will be significantly correlated with reported coercive control. Specifically, men who endorse higher levels of hostility towards women will report using higher levels of coercive control.

Hypothesis 3c. Glick and Fiske (2001) associated sexism with a need for control and power. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that hostile sexism will be significantly correlated to

coercive control. Specifically, men who endorse higher levels of hostile sexism will report using higher levels of coercive control.

**Research Aim 4.** To explore whether the relationships between the three predictors and physical violence are mediated by coercive control (Path A is mediated by Path C, see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 4a. Whitaker (2013) found that controlling behaviors mediate the relationship between dominance (restrictiveness) and IPV in undergraduates. Whitaker (2013) used the Restrictive subscale on The Hamby Scale to measure controlling behaviors. Conversely, dominance (restrictiveness) will be measured using the Restrictiveness subscale on The Hamby Scale, and the Coercive Control subscale on the Interpersonal Relationship Rating Scale to measure coercive control. Using measures designed to assess these specific constructs aims to more clearly identify the relationship between dominance (restrictiveness) and physical violence. Consequently, it is hypothesized that the relationship between dominance (restrictiveness) and physical violence will be mediated by coercive control such that once coercive control is entered into the multiple regression analysis; the relationship between dominance (restrictiveness) and physical violence will be significantly reduced.

Hypothesis 4b. Similar to above, it is hypothesized that coercive control will mediate the relationship between hostility towards women and physical violence such that higher hostility towards women will be related to higher coercive control and higher coercive control will be linked to higher physical violence. Once coercive control is entered into the equation, the relationship between hostility towards women and physical violence will be significantly reduced.

Hypothesis 4c. Controlling behaviors have been shown to partially mediate the influence of hostile sexism on partner violence (Whitaker, 2013). Thus, it is hypothesized that coercive

control will mediate the relationship between hostile sexism and physical violence such that

higher levels of hostile sexism will be related to higher levels of coercive control and higher

levels of coercive control, in turn, will be associated with higher levels of physical violence.

Once coercive control is entered into the equation, the contribution of hostile sexism to physical

violence will be significantly reduced.
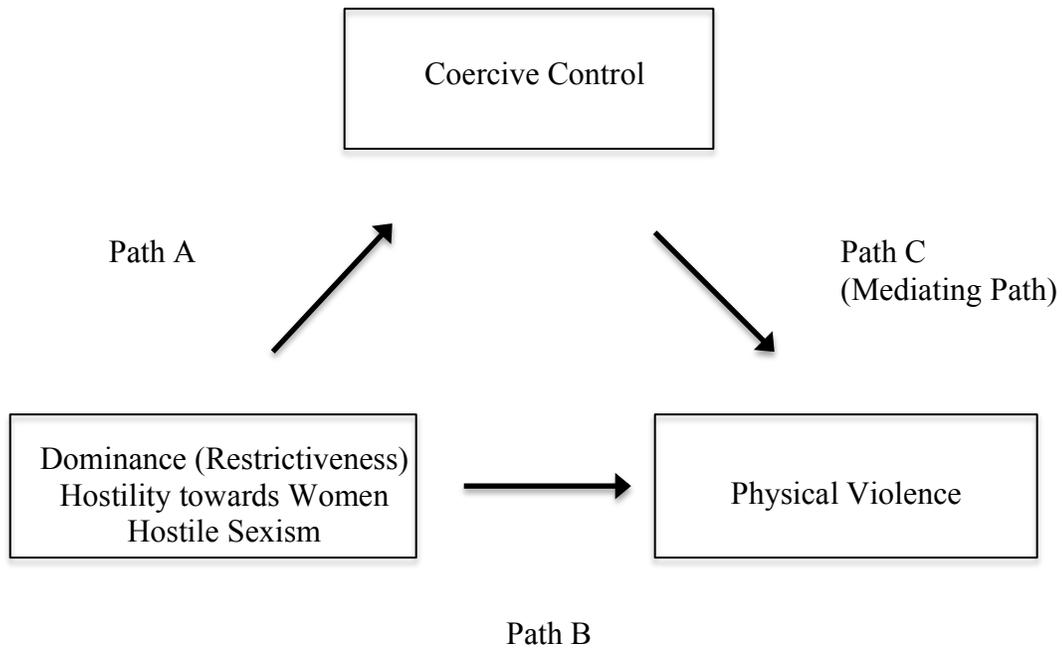


*Figure 1*. Diagram showing the hypothesized correlations and mediating pathway.


**Research Aim 5.** To explore the relative contributions of dominance (restrictiveness),

hostility towards women, or hostile sexism to physical violence and whether these relationships

are mediated by coercive control. To test this, all three predictors will be entered in one model to

assess the relative contribution of the predictors on coercive control and physical violence. This

aim is exploratory; therefore there are no proposed hypotheses.

**Method**

**Procedures**

The present study had full Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. The study used a correlational, quantitative research design to examine the intersection of masculine traits, physical violence, and coercive control in IPV relationships. Survey instruments measured various forms of intimate partner violence, coercive control tactics, and various masculine attitudes and behaviors that violent men might endorse.

**Participants**

Data collection occurred from May 2012 through June 2015. Participants were recruited from a batterers' treatment program located in the northeastern United States. This program serves an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population, and includes individuals with a range of violent histories and criminal and civil charges. All participants enrolled in the batterers' treatment program were eligible to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria included self-identifying as a male over the age of 18, being mandated to treatment due to a violent incident with an intimate partner, and having at least two romantic relationships. Romantic relationships were defined as intimate sexual relationships that lasted for at least three months. Participants were recruited through announcements made by the co-facilitators of their weekly group therapy sessions. Interested participants were asked to sign up for an interview time and date and were then contacted by a research assistant to confirm participation.

Trained Masters-level and Doctoral-level psychology students interviewed participants using questionnaire. All researchers have extensive experience in clinical interviews and received training in conducting these interviews specifically. Interviews ranged from one to two hours and participants respond to a variety of questions about their emotions, thoughts towards women, and relationship histories. Prior to participation, participants read and signed a written

informed consent form. After providing consent, researchers read through the survey questions

with each participant and marked answers as indicated by the participant. After participation,

participants were appropriately debriefed and provided with a written debriefing form.

Participants were compensated in the form of excusal from one group counseling session at the

treatment facility.

The study collected data from 137 men. The sample was a diverse group of men,

identifying as Caucasian, ($n = 60$, 43.8%) Latino/Hispanic ($n = 33$, 24.1%), Black/African-

American ($n = 15$, 10.9%), and Other ($n = 28$, 20.4%). Participants who fell within the Other

category self-identified as a race or ethnicity other than the three provided categories. Individuals

who specified as Other provided a variety of responses, including Asian ($n = 6$, 4.4%), Italian ($n

= 2$, 1.5%), Polish ($n = 2$, 1.5%), and Puerto Rican ($n = 2$, 1.5%). One participant did not disclose

his race or ethnicity. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 62 years old, $M = 38.6$ years, $SD$

$= 9.8$. A large portion of the participants had completed college ($n = 94$, 68.6%), with a third of

the sample who had completed high school ($n = 33$, 24.1%), and the remainder who completed

primary school or obtained their GEDs. The majority of participants were employed in some

capacity ($n = 112$, 81.8%). Due to the diversity of the sample, differences were explored across

race, employment status, and education level (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). There were no significant

differences on the predictor or outcome variables.

Table 1
*Means scores by race*

|  | Latino/Hispanic | Black/African American | White/Caucasian | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Dominance (Restrictiveness) | 20.9 | 19.8 | 19.4 | 19.0 |
| 2. Hostility towards Women | 25.2 | 26.7 | 26.5 | 26.2 |
| 3. Hostile Sexism | 27.7 | 27.0 | 24.5 | 23.6 |
| 4. Coercive Control | 5.8 | 7.7 | 5.9 | 8.0 |
| 5. Physical Violence | 2.3 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 2.0 |

Table 2
*Mean scores by employment*

|  | Employed | Unemployed |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Dominance (Restrictiveness) | 19.4 | 20.9 |
| 2. Hostility towards Women | 26.3 | 25.4 |
| 3. Hostile Sexism | 24.8 | 28.6 |
| 4. Coercive Control | 6.4 | 7.6 |
| 5. Physical Violence | 2.3 | 3.1 |

Table 3
*Mean scores by education level*

|  | Primary School | GED | High School | College |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Dominance (Restrictiveness) | 21.3 | 20.1 | 20.7 | 19.2 |
| 2. Hostility towards Women | 25.7 | 25.4 | 25.4 | 26.5 |
| 3. Hostile Sexism | 34.7 | 27.7 | 28.2 | 24.1 |
| 4. Coercive Control | 3.7 | 4.6 | 5.6 | 7.2 |
| 5. Physical Violence | 1.7 | 3.3 | 2.2 | 2.5 |

**Measures**

**Interpersonal Relationship Rating Scale** (IRRS; Beck, Menke, O'Hara-Brewster, &

Figueredo, 2009). The IRRS was used to examine self-reported acts of coercive control and

physical violence towards an intimate partner. The IRRS consists of 47 items with 7 subscales

focusing on several types of violence and coercive control, including 1) Psychological Abuse, 2)

Coercive Control, 3) Physical Abuse, 4) Threatened and Escalated Physical Violence, 5) Sexual

Intimidation and Coercion, 6) Stalking, and 7) Positive Communication. The IRRS is a form of

the RBRS that has been modified for the perpetrator. The RBRS has been validated against the

scale it was originally adapted from, the Partner Abuse Scales (Attala, Hudson, & McSweeney,

1994). It correlates highly with the original scales and subscales (above .90 with a p-value of less

than .05 on all subscales) and the items have equally high reliability (Beck et al., 2009). For this

study, physical violence was measured by two indices; "Physical Abuse" (more minor forms of

physical violence) and "Threatened and Escalated Physical Violence," and coercive control was

measured using the subscale "Coercive Control." The combined Physical Violence subscale

consisted of 17 items, while the Coercive Control subscale consisted of 11 items. Items on the

subscales inquire about the frequency of particular behaviors with a romantic partner in the last

12 months, with responses ranging from

never to daily. The participant was asked to indicate whether the event has *Never* happened, or

has happened *Only Once*, *6 Times*, *12 Times*, *Once a Week*, or *Daily*. The items were coded zero

(*Never*) to five (*Daily*). Only the first item, "*I resolved things peacefully with my partner,*" is

reverse-scored. The authors' published alphas for men across the relevant subscales are .799 for

the Coercive Control subscale, .903 for the Physical Abuse subscale, and .788 for the Threated

and Escalated Physical Violence. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .697 was obtained for the

Coercive Control subscale in the present sample. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .700 was

obtained for the combined Physical Violence subscale in the present sample. Mean score and

standard deviation for the combined Physical Violence subscale were $M = 2.42$, $SD =3.20$. Mean

score and standard deviation for the Coercive Control subscale were $M = 6.59$, $SD = 6.26$. In a

study of divorcing couples using the RBRS, female victims of IPV reported mean scores of 2.35

on Coercive Control, 3.01 on Physical Abuse, and 0.42 on Threats and Escalated Physical

Violence (Tehee et al., 2013). This suggests that the participants in this study were reporting

similar rates of physical violence but elevated rates of coercive control.

The Hamby Scale[5] (Hamby, 1996). The Hamby Scale was used to assess for dominance,

and the scale divides dominance into three subcategories: authority, restrictiveness, and

disparagement. For the purpose of this study, only the Restrictiveness subscale was used.

Participants were asked to respond to questions about communication with and behavior towards

their partners. The Restrictiveness subscale consists of nine items and all items are measured on

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[5] While Whitaker (2013) used the dominance scale from the Male Norms Inventory-Revised to measure male dominance, I define dominance based on Hamby's definition, thus I will use The Hamby Scale.

a 4-point Likert scale (*1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree)*.

One of the items is reverse scored in the Restrictiveness subscale. The published alpha for the

Restrictiveness subscale is .73. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .737 was obtained for the

Restrictiveness subscale in the present sample. The published mean among undergraduates is

20.92, and the mean score and standard deviation for Restrictiveness subscale was $M = 19.69$;

$SD = 4.60$.

**Hostility towards Women Scale** (Check, 1985). The Hostility towards Women Scale

assesses for aggressive attitudes and behaviors towards women, using responses of either true or

false. The Hostility towards Women Scale specifically measures negative attitudes towards

women and support of violence in relationships (Check, 1985). Higher scores represent greater

hostility towards women, with scores ranging from zero to thirty. Check (1985) reported an

internal consistency coefficient of .80 and a test-retest reliability of .83. A Cronbach alpha

coefficient of .784 was obtained in the present sample. The mean score and standard deviation

for Hostility toward Women Scale in this sample were $M = 26.15$; $SD = 2.32$, compared to an

average score of 8.79 among undergraduate men.

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory** (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The Ambivalent Sexism

Inventory was used to assess for participants' reported sexism. This 22-item measure includes

two subscales measuring hostile sexism and benevolent sexism towards women. Hostile sexism

included items focusing specifically on male dominance, competitive gender differentiation, and

hostile heterosexuality. Participants are asked to respond to questions on their attitudes towards

women in general, and responses are recorded on a zero (*Strongly Disagree*) to five (*Strongly

Agree*) Likert scale. The reported scale reliabilities range from .80 to .92 across several studies

(Glick & Fiske, 1996). Scores on this subscale are averaged, with higher scores representing

greater sexism. The reliability of the hostile sexism subscale for this population was .789 as

measured by coefficient alpha. The mean score and standard deviation for the total subscale were

$M = 25.47$, $SD = 9.50$, and the mean for the individual subscale items ranged from 2.84 to 1.68.

Published scale means for Hostile Sexism subscale range from 3.05 to 2.38 for male respondents

across several studies (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

**Data Analysis**

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS),

Version 22.  Correlations were used to analyze the relationship between dominance

(restrictiveness), hostility towards women, and hostile sexism. Regressions were used to analyze

the possible mediating role of coercive control.

**Results**

**Inter-correlations among Masculine Traits**

The first research aim was to examine the inter-correlations among dominance

(restrictiveness), hostility towards women, and hostile sexism. Pearson correlation coefficients

were computed and two significant results emerged. Hypothesis 1a was not supported, as

hostility towards women scores were significantly negatively correlated with dominance

(restrictiveness), $r = -.263$, $n = 137$, $p = .004$. Conversely, hypothesis 1b was supported, as hostile

sexism was significantly positively correlated with dominance (restrictiveness), $r = .317$, $n = 137$,

$p = .000$. Additionally, while not a stated hypothesis, results indicated that hostility towards

women and hostile sexism were significantly negatively correlated, $r = -.504$, $n = 137$, $p = .000$

(see Table 4).

Table 4
*Correlations between Variables of Masculinity and IPV*

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Dominance (Restrictiveness) | -- |  |  |  |
| 2. Hostility towards Women | -.263** | -- |  |  |
| 3. Hostile Sexism | .317*** | -.504*** | -- |  |
| 4. Coercive Control | .236** | -.137 | .224* | -- |
| 5. Physical Violence | .240** | -.242** | .160 | .565*** |

Note. $***p \leq .001$, $**p \leq .01$, $*p \leq .05$.

**Physical Violence**

The second research aim was to examine the contribution of the three predictors to physical violence by computing Pearson correlation coefficients. Of the hypotheses associated with this research aim, only Hypothesis 2a was supported; Dominance (restrictiveness) was significantly positively correlated with physical violence, $r = .240$, $n = 137$, $p = .006$. Conversely, hostility towards women was significantly negatively correlated with physical violence, $r = -242$, $n = 137$, $p = .010$ (hypothesis 2b). Finally, hostile sexism was not significantly correlated with physical violence, $r = .160$, $n = 137$, $p = .074$ (hypothesis 2c).
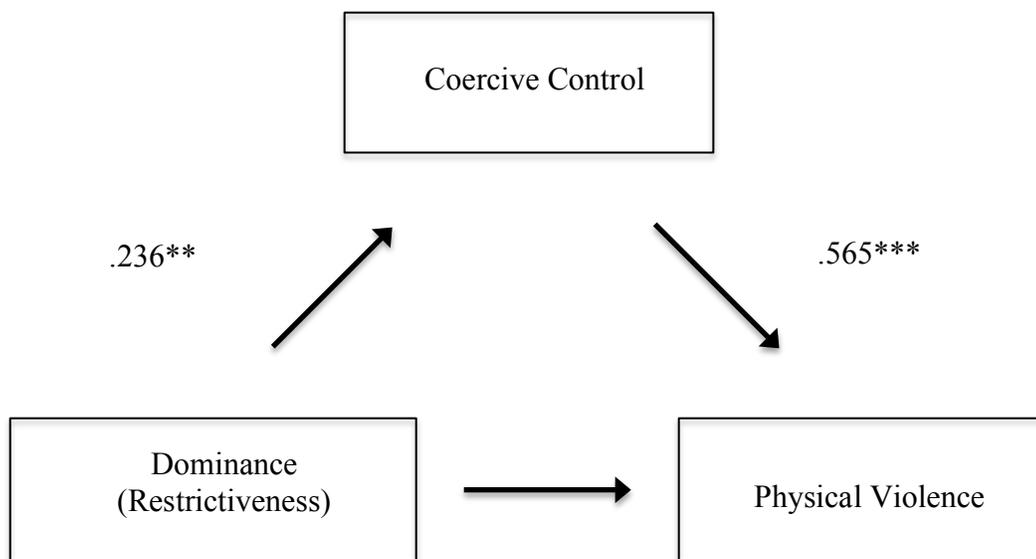
**Coercive Control**

The third research aim was to examine the relationships of the three predictors to coercive control using Pearson correlation coefficients. Both hypothesis 3a and 3c were supported, as dominance (restrictiveness), $r = .236$, $n = 137$, $p = .007$, and hostile sexism, $r = .224$, $n = 137$, $p = .012$, were significantly positively correlated with coercive control. Hostility

towards women was not significantly correlated with coercive control, $r = -.137$, $n = 137$, $p = .155$ (hypothesis 3b).

**Mediation Model**

The fourth and fifth research aims were to explore which predictor best predicts physical violence and whether these relationships are mediated by coercive control. Prior analyses revealed that hostility towards women was not significantly correlated with coercive control and hostile sexism was not significantly correlated with physical violence. Because neither hostility towards women and hostile sexism were significantly correlated with both the outcome variable and the hypothesized mediator, both variables were dropped from the mediation analyses. Subsequent analyses were conducted using only dominance (restrictiveness).

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the role of coercive control in mediating the relationship between dominance (restrictiveness) and physical violence. Prior to entering coercive control into the model, analyses indicated that dominance (restrictiveness) was significantly correlated with both physical violence ($r = .240$, $n = 137$, $p = .006$) and coercive control ($r = .236$, $n = 137$, $p = .007$) respectively. Coercive control and physical violence were also significantly correlated, $r = .565$, $n = 137$, $p = .000$ (see Figure 2). Once coercive control was entered into the model, dominance (restrictiveness) was no longer significantly correlated with physical violence, $r = .106$, $n = 137$, $p = .163$. Coercive control remained significantly correlated with physical violence, $r = .539$, $n = 137$, $p = .000$ (see Table 5; Figure 3). These results support hypothesis 4a, and suggest that coercive control partially mediates the path from dominance (restrictiveness) to physical violence.
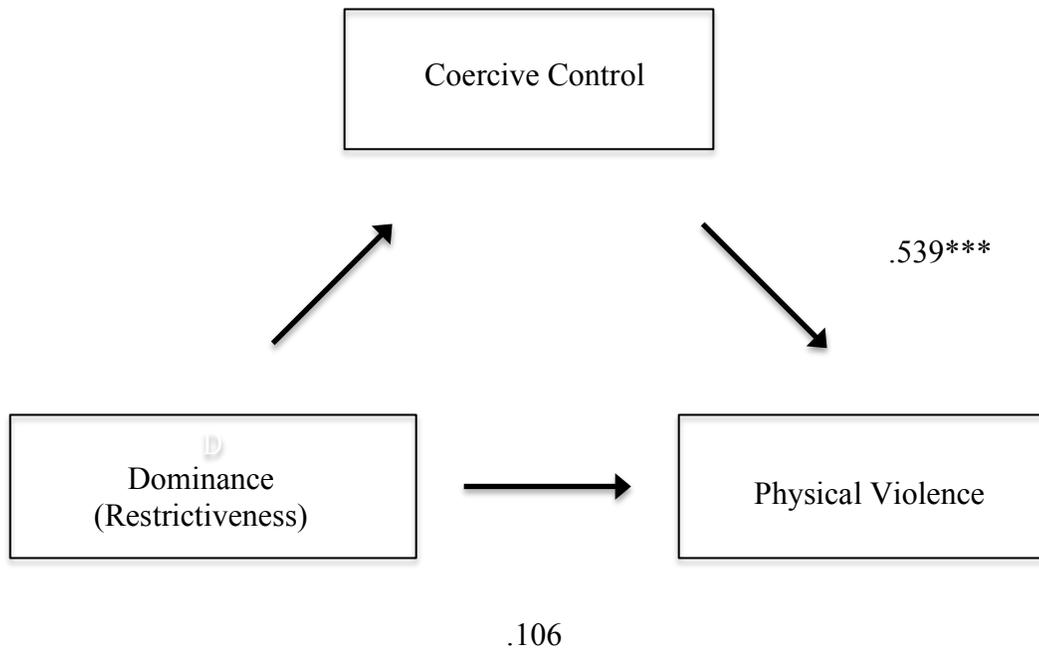
Note. ***$p \le .001$, **$p \le .01$, *$p \le .05$.

*Figure 2*. Correlations between variables prior to entering the mediating variable.

Table 5
*Regression Analysis for Mediation Model*

|                               | $B$    | $\beta$ | $t$   |
| ----------------------------- | ------ | ------- | ----- |
| Dominance (Restrictiveness)   | .106   | .054    | .163  |
| Coercive Control              | .539   | .039    | .000  |
| Constant                      | -.894  | 1.069   | .404  |

Note. ***$p \leq .001$, **$p \leq .01$, *$p \leq .05$.

*Figure 3*. Correlations between variables after entering the mediating variable.

**Discussion**

Why do some men use such extreme control to manage their relationships? Referred to as coercive control, little is known about the mechanisms behind coercively controlling behaviors although a growing body of research indicates the importance of this dynamic in understanding violent relationships. In parallel, while research has been conducted on masculinity and its' relationship to IPV, much of this research does not define masculinity clearly or use clinical samples of violent individuals to explore this relationship. To address these shortcomings, I explored the role of coercive control as a potential mediating variable in the pathway between various facets of masculinity and physical violence in a sample of batterers. The goal of this study was to examine three specific aspects of masculinity; a subset of dominance,

restrictiveness, hostility towards women, and hostile sexism. In this sample of violent men, the findings suggest that restrictiveness is the masculine trait that best explains physical violence perpetration. Specifically, men who reported higher levels of restrictive beliefs and behaviors also reported higher levels of coercive control and physical violence. While increased restrictiveness contributes to increased physical violence perpetration, much of this relationship appears to be accounted for by coercive control. Once self-reported coercive control is considered, restrictiveness no longer influenced physical violence in a meaningful way. Therefore although restrictiveness contributes to physical violence, it appears to do so indirectly via its' influence on coercive control.

Interestingly, despite previous research suggesting otherwise, other traits of masculinity assessed in this study did not appear to contribute to both coercive controlling behaviors and physical violence. Specifically, high feelings of hostility towards women, which includes cynicism and denigration towards women (Check, 1985; Glick & Fiske, 1996), did not appear to influence whether men used tactics such as intimidation, isolation, and microregulation to control their intimate partners. A closer look at the items suggest that the measure is not only tapping anger and resentment as the authors intended, but also humiliation and powerlessness (e.g., I never have the feeling that women laugh about me (reverse-coded); I have been rejected by too many women in my life), and may be indexing emasculation. Further, the items appear to be capturing very personal experiences of humiliation and emasculation (i.e., it happened to me). If so, feeling personally emasculated (even if accompanied by resentment and hostility), may have the opposite effect – withdrawing from contact and shunning relationships rather than pursuing women to gain more control. Indeed, the unexpected negative correlation between hostility towards women and hostile sexism suggests that these two facets of masculinity are related, but

in opposition. A closer look at hostile sexism indicates that items tap beliefs around the loss of autonomy (feminists are making reasonable demands (reverse-coded); women seek power by gaining control over men) and that the items are global rather than specific and personal. The negative correlation, although counterintuitive at first glance, suggests that men who endorse feeling emasculated at a highly personal level are less likely to equally endorse more global beliefs that women can successfully rob them of power (high hostile sexism), perhaps because it would be tantamount to admitting failure or perhaps because in this case, personal beliefs do not generalize to more global ones.

Another explanation may be related to how hostility towards women is expressed. Other research has found that hostility towards women influences the use of sexual violence, specifically sexual coercion (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004) and sexual assault (Marshall & Hambley, 1996; Marshall & Moulden, 2001). Perhaps, feeling humiliated and emasculated leads to a higher likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence. Further, past research has found evidence that hostility towards women is associated with acceptance of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). Perhaps hostility towards women is more readily expressed in sexual contexts rather than through physical violence. While sexual violence is an aspect of IPV, this study did not focus specifically on sexual violence, instead targeting coercively controlling behaviors and both minor and major forms of physical violence. Further, past research identifying the relationship between hostility towards women and sexual violence has focused exclusively on undergraduate samples and rapists. Future research exploring the relationship between hostility towards women and sexual violence in a sample of batterers might help clarify these unexpected findings.

While hostile sexism was not associated with physical violence, it was associated with coercive control. Thus, feelings which are focused on fears and beliefs that women are jockeying for power and are willing to use unfair means to obtain such power logically increase men's use of behaviors such as controlling access to resources and monitoring their partner's activities. These findings are consistent with other research with undergraduate samples that also found a positive relationship between hostile sexism and verbal and sexual coercion (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004). Further, hostile sexism has been associated with positive attitudes towards and tolerance of IPV (Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch, & Adams-Curtis, 2005; Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreria, & Aguiar de Souza, 2002, & Sakalli, 2001). Sexism is rooted in the belief that women are inferior, and as a result, contributes to negative attitudes and behaviors directed at women to maintain traditional gender roles and a patriarchal societal structure. Perhaps this feeling of superiority over women combined with anger and resentment results in an increased use of coercively controlling behaviors towards an intimate partner but does not directly lead to the use of actual physical violence. The use of coercive control may serve as a method to assert control and maintain the desired level of male superiority that often accompanies hostile sexism.

The findings also indicate that men who endorse more hostile beliefs towards women, as reflected in both hostility towards women and hostile sexism, are not more likely to display physical violence towards a partner. One possible explanation is that while hostile beliefs may not be displayed through overt physical violence, they may be reflected in sexual violence or aggression, or through coercively controlling behaviors. These results further underscore the importance of examining different measurements of masculinity with a more nuanced eye to

understanding how such traits and behaviors may influence the use of different kinds of violence against intimate partners.

One of the most exciting results in this study was the role of dominance, as measured by restrictiveness. Dominance is based in the need for deviation from an egalitarian relationship and power held by one individual in a relationship (Hamby, 1996). Specifically, one aspect of dominance, restrictiveness, involves entitlement leading to patterns of control over a partner's decisions or behaviors. In this study, restrictiveness includes preventing one's partner from social activities, a tendency to be jealous, and the expectation to be involved with all of a partner's activities. These expectations and tendencies were related to whether men used controlling behaviors and physical violence. However, restrictiveness contributed to using actual physical violence indirectly though controlling behaviors. Because a key aspect of restrictiveness is beliefs about control, high levels of this trait are likely to translate into a myriad of coercively controlling behaviors including isolating the victim, manipulation, and microregulation to maintain control. For example, a man who believes that he has a right to know everything his partner does, may be more likely to forbid his intimate partner from spending time with opposite sex friends. However, if she resists he may be more likely to engage in physical violence to reassert control. One possibility for this may be related to an older theory of violence, the frustration-aggression theory. Men with higher beliefs about restriction may feel entitled to control their intimate partners but when this fails, they resort to physical violence. Thus, it appears that in a sample of batterers, dominance plays both a direct role on physical violence, as well as an indirect role through coercively controlling behaviors. This is consistent with previous research among undergraduates that found a link between dominance and IPV (Straus, 2008 &

Whitaker, 2013). These possibilities warrant additional research into the mechanisms underlying controlling and violent behavior towards a partner.

Overall, these findings suggest that men who endorse a certain kind of masculinity, particularly dominance (restrictiveness) and hostile sexism, may attempt to gain control over their partners through the use of coercive tactics. While both restrictiveness and hostile sexism are directly related to coercive control, only restrictiveness mediates the relationship between coercive control and physical violence. If coercively controlling tactics fail to result in the desired control, these individuals may resort to physical violence towards their partners to reassert their desired level of control. This finding is consistent with the idea that physical violence occurs when coercion alone cannot enforce the desired level of control (Stark, 2007).

Past research has been inconclusive on the role of masculinity in IPV, with some studies finding support for a relationship between traditional gender roles and IPV (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004; Finn, 1986), and other research suggesting that gender roles are unrelated to IPV (Archer, 2000; Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Felson, 2002). Importantly, the differentiated results from the current study suggest that aspects of masculinity play an important role in IPV.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This study has several strengths. While several studies have looked at the presence of coercive control in physically violent relationships, this study is the first to directly explore the possibility that coercive control may act as a mediator between masculinity and physical violence. Additionally, many studies on IPV have utilized a sample of undergraduate students. For this study, I obtained a diverse clinical sample of 137 men with a history of violence or aggression towards an intimate partner. While all men in this study self-identified as

heterosexual, there was a wide range of diversity across race, age, and socioeconomic status. This suggests that the relationship between dominance, coercive control, and physical violence may exist regardless of cultural or socioeconomic factors. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics present in violent intimate relationships.

Further, this study attempted to provide a more comprehensive definition of masculinity. By operationalizing masculinity using three distinct yet overlapping constructs, this allowed comparison of various aspects of masculinity to determine which features are most important in understanding IPV. Additionally, the use of several measures specifically intended to assess these masculine constructs strengthens the study's findings. The results provide support for identification of the specific aspects of masculinity to measure when exploring the dynamics of IPV. By providing a clear definition of masculinity, this enables future studies to use this definition and to reduce confusion regarding the distinction of masculine traits compared to masculine beliefs or roles.

There are several limitations to these findings. First, this study used a relatively small sample size. Although 137 participants is a significant size for a sample of batterers, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Additionally, this study utilized a cross-sectional design, providing data on the relationship between masculinity and IPV at one point in time. This limits determination of the cause and effect relationship between masculinity and IPV, as the methodology is unable to control for potential confounding variables prior to data collection. Additionally, the use of cross-sectional data potentially biases estimates of the longitudinal mediation. To further establish longitudinal mediation, data should be analyzed at additional time points. Third, while anyone can be masculine, this study focused exclusively on men in heterosexual relationships. Thus, the results can only be extended to

heterosexual partnerships. As research indicates, violence occurs across all gender dyads and future research should explore the possibility of similar control dynamics in same sex partnerships.

Further, this study utilized self-report measures. While great effort was made to stress the confidentiality of the participants and encourage honest disclosure, there is a risk of underreporting when discussing intimate and potentially shameful topics such as violence or controlling behaviors towards an intimate partner. Relatedly, the majority of the interviewers responsible for collecting data were young women and it is possible that the interaction between participant and interviewer influenced responding in some way. Social desirability of the participants may also have influence results, as participants generally reported low rates of coercive control and physical violence towards their partners. Lastly, this study utilized older scales to measure the indices of masculinity. While the use of the selected scales allowed measurement of the intended constructs and comparison between constructs, older scales may not best capture the current state of attitudes and behaviors towards women. Sexism and political correctness has evolved over time and thus, may limit the current representativeness of the results.

**Implications and Future Research**

The study's findings have several implications for both future research and treatment of violent intimate partners. Future research on the role of gender and the mechanisms behind IPV would likely benefit from a focus on trait-like aspects of gender. Gender, in particularly masculinity, is considered to be an unstable and vulnerable identity. By exploring more long-term, trait-like aspects of masculinity, this may provide an opportunity to obtain a better understanding of the psychological processes involved in IPV.

This study affords a greater understanding of how masculinity, and specifically the negative expressions of masculinity, is enacted in heterosexual relationship violence. By understanding the mechanisms associated with IPV, this enables clinicians and associated healthcare professionals to better identify, understand, and support those experiencing IPV in their relationships, ideally providing better outcomes for individuals experiencing IPV. Further, results from this study lend support to the idea that a comprehensive understanding IPV is obtained not by measuring physical violence alone, but that it is necessary to measure coercively controlling behaviors as well.

Currently, batterer intervention programs utilize a short-term treatment style, typically focused on targeting anger management skills. If dominance and coercive control are potential precursors to physical violence, these results suggest that intervention programs may benefit from a longer-term treatment model, with a focus on the more entrenched characteristics of the batterer. By understanding the relationship between masculinity, coercive control, and physical violence, violent men may be better able to understand and manage potential triggers for their violent behavior.

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