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Differentiating Risk Pathways to Violence: A Comparison of The Incremental Contributions of Masculine Gender Discrepancy Stress and Trait Agreeableness

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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### **Abstract**

The existing literature on risk profiles leading to the perpetration of violent acts has suggested personality and gender role socializations to be relevant predictors. Research has consistently found personality factors, particularly trait agreeableness, to predict several types of violence (e.g., sexual violence, violence against intimate partners, aggressive behaviors across relationships). Recent research suggests that although both adherence to masculine social norms and individual differences in experiences of stress while enacting these norms have been shown to be reliably associated with violence, masculine gender discrepancy stress (i.e., stress experienced by men when perceiving themselves to be inadequately masculine) may be uniquely predictive of gender-based violence. This thesis aims to differentiate between risk pathways from discrepancy stress and personality trait-agreeableness to three types of violence: physical aggression, physical intimate partner violence (IPV), and sexual violence. A sample of ( $N = 454$ ) men completed a series of questionnaires including the Masculine Gender Role Discrepancy Stress Scale (MGRDS), NEO-Five Factor Model scale (NEO-FFI), and Sexual Experiences Survey (SES). Results suggest masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) to have significant unique value as a predictor for sexual violence. Other findings suggest personality-trait agreeableness, gender role stress, and discrepancy stress to be important predictors for risk of committing physical aggression either towards partners or non-partners.

*Keywords:* agreeableness, discrepancy stress, masculine gender role stress, masculine role norms, physical aggression, physical intimate partner violence, sexual violence

### **Differentiating Risk Pathways to Violence: A Comparison of The Incremental Contributions of Masculine Gender Discrepancy Stress and Trait Agreeableness**

Violence and aggression are often used synonymously with one another. Anderson and Bushman (2002) defined violence as “an extreme form of aggression that has severe physical harm (e.g., serious injury or death) as its goal”. These behaviors are also a serious problem both globally and locally (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]). Fortunately, we may be able to determine risk factors or predictors for who may become violent or perpetrate violent behaviors. Research may also lead to insights guiding treatment of those with violent tendencies and inform the development of assessment tools to guide optimized treatment intervention types based on the type of violence perpetrated. Given the significant physical or psychological harm violence may cause both victims and perpetrators, the humanitarian needs to prevent violence is pressing (CDC).

Violent crimes, either sexual or nonsexual, are prevalent in our society and often carry physical, emotional, and fiscal burdens for the victims and for society. According to national crime report data, roughly 1,203,808 violent crimes were committed in 2019 (Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI]). Young people specifically are at high risk of perpetrating, as well as being victims to, violent crimes (CDC). It is estimated that 13 young people die from violent acts every day while about 1,100 are left injured by such violence (CDC). The costs to young people alone due to such violent crimes is estimated at \$20 billion per year. Sex crimes are just as prevalent if not more so as 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men are estimated to experience sexual violence at some points in their lives (CDC). When factoring monetary costs that may accrue because of rape, including medical and legal costs, it is estimated to cost about \$122,461 per victim (CDC). This total does not include costs of sexual violence that are more difficult to quantify such as impacts

on the capacity to experience one's body as a source of agency and pleasure. Intimate partner violence specifically is highly prevalent as well as 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men will be the victims of severe physical abuse from their intimate partners at some point in their lives (CDC). The CDC also reports that about 35% of women and 11% of men who reported IPV have experienced physical injuries by their abusive partners. Crime report data indicates 1 in 5 homicides to be committed by an abusive partner. The costs of IPV, including medical and legal costs, add up to approximately \$3.6 trillion in the US. Lifetime costs to victims are estimated at \$103,767 for females and \$23,414 for males (CDC).

In this paper I will examine three subtypes of violence as I understand them. They are physical aggression, intimate partner violence (IPV), and sexual violence. Physical aggression in this paper refers to any physical, nonsexual act by the perpetrator that produces harm or damage to another person or other entity. Intimate partner violence refers to any physical, nonsexual act by the perpetrator that produces harm or damage to an intimate partner. Sexual violence refers to various forms of sexual assault including attempted or successful rape, molestation, and sexual coercion. The pervasiveness and public health impact of these forms of violence support the need for additional research to identify and intervene in potential perpetrators' risk pathways that maintain them. Individual differences research on violence risk factors has broadly focused on two categories of risk: 1) personality/trait predictors of violence and 2) individual differences in internalized masculine socialization and its consequences.

Personality studies, particularly those based of the Five Factor Model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992), have consistently shown that trait factors predict those who are more likely to commit aggressive behaviors. Such factors include agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (e.g., Seibert et al, 2010; Dam et al, 2018; Skeem et al, 2005). Among these,

trait-agreeableness has most consistently been found to be predictive of violence compared to the other four factors in this model (e.g. Seibert et al, 2010; Dam et al, 2018). Agreeableness can be defined as the aspect of personality that affects how we treat and interact with others (Seibert et al, 2010). Agreeable individuals tend to be warm, friendly, and tactful. They generally have an optimistic view of human nature and get along well with others. Antagonism represents the opposite of a highly agreeable person, meaning whereas agreeable dispositions often result in trust and positive interactions with others, antagonistic individuals are often distrusting, temperamental, deceitful, etc. (Seibert et al, 2010).

Numerous studies have demonstrated associations between trait agreeableness and violence. Skeem et al (2005), in their study consisting of 769 patients of psychiatric hospitals, found agreeableness to be significantly and negatively related to violence in the patients. Seibert et al (2010) conducted laboratory experiments using aggression-provoking stimuli to unknowing participants in a semi-controlled setting. Agreeableness was measured using the NEO-PI-R and lower scores of agreeableness were found to be significantly predictive of higher displays of aggression when participants were provoked during the experiments. Dam et al (2018) found lower ratings of trait-agreeableness to be significantly predictive of violence in a study of incarcerated offenders of violent crimes compared to a nonoffender sample. However, Dennison et al (2001) study found that agreeableness did not significantly differentiate sex offenders and non-offenders. Voller and Long (2010), in a sample of 521 college students, did find lower agreeableness scores to be significantly predictive of sexual violence, but the effect size was small ( $n^2 = .02$ ). The small effect sizes found in these studies suggest there may be other variables not accounted for by the authors' analyses, indicating a need to search for other variables not yet used in mainstream research on this topic.

Beyond personality factors there has been a wealth of research focusing on the role played by gender role socialization, more specifically masculinity on violence perpetration. Masculinity has been conceptualized and measured in the psychology literature from a variety of frameworks including male role norms, masculine gender role stress (MGRS), and masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS).

Male role norms are said to consist of the traditionally accepted role norms our society has associated with being a 'man' (Moore & Stuart, 2005, as cited by Reidy et al, 2015). Thompson and Pleck (1986) described these norms as "social norms that prescribe and proscribe what men should feel and do". These authors had developed this understanding by reviewing the existing literature at the time, especially the conclusions of Brannon and Juni (1984). They concluded male role norms to fall within several "clusters" of norms including those related to avoiding femininity, concealing emotions/ feelings, dedication to work and family, desire respect and admiration, mental and physical toughness, self-reliance, and risk and violence (Brannon & Juni's, 1984). In general, research on male role norms often operationalizes these terms and subsequently measure them in hopes of revealing potential relationships between men's adherence to the norms and their subsequent health or behavior effects.

Masculine gender role stress (MGRS) is thought to be the amount of stress men place on various hypothetical failures to fulfill masculine expectations (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987, as cited by Reidy et al, 2015). Eisler and Skidmore (1987) defined this type of stress as "the cognitive appraisal of specific situations as stressful for men". These authors also viewed such gender role stress as being comprised of several categories including physical inadequacy, expression of tender emotions, subordination to women, threat to intellectual control, and failure in work and sexual behavior. Unfortunately, they did not examine the direct relationships of this stress with

violence perpetration, but they did examine MGRS's relationship to anger. They found higher MGRS to be correlated with higher ratings of anger in their study (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). It may be possible for men to view such experiences as being stressful and thus have some effect on their behavior, mood, etc.

Masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) is the specific type of stress one may experience after appraising themselves as being 'hypomasculine' in the eyes of themselves or others (Reidy et al, 2014). This type of stress is different than gender role stress as the person is experiencing an active feeling of distress over their own perceived 'shortcomings' in terms of masculinity as they understand it. Reidy, et al (2014) concluded from their research into the existing literature of the time that higher experiences of DS would likely be associated with higher rates of physical aggression, in and outside of intimate relationships. Reidy, et al (2015) also expected DS to be necessary for the exhibition of "maladaptive behavior," like violence. They said the experience of perceiving a discrepancy in masculinity alone would not be sufficient to motivate these behaviors. Therefore, the authors explained how experiencing discrepancy stress along with the masculine gender role discrepancy, is an essential component to prompt violence.

All three constructs have been associated with the perpetration of each of the forms of violence discussed (i.e., physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence). However, more recent findings by Reidy et al (2014, 2015) have shown that masculine role norms and gender role stress fail to predict sexual violence when controlling for discrepancy stress. Reidy et al (2014) also found that male role norms and masculine gender role stress were often either insufficient or inferior predictors of physical aggression and intimate partner violence (IPV), when compared to this form of discrepancy stress. These findings suggest that discrepancy

stress (i.e., distress experienced by men as a function of believing they are insufficiently masculine) may be a more robust predictor of physical aggression and physical aggression towards intimate others than masculine norm adherence or the stress of enacting this role.

The purpose of this thesis is to replicate and extend the relatively limited literature on the predictive validity of masculine gender discrepancy stress (DS) as a risk factor for use of various forms of violence. To date, there does not appear to be any research in the existing literature that compares both personality factors and the masculinity constructs reviewed above in the same study. Such an analyses allows for a direct comparison of these risk factors as they relate to various types of violence and for the development of conceptual models of violence risk that integrates our understanding of both personality and gender socialization processes as they operate independently and in tandem to drive violent behavior.

Until now prior research has either examined personality traits or masculinity socialization and their relations to the perpetration of the violence types described thus far. Upon reviewing the existing literatures, I theorized that personality traits, when found to be predictive of sexual violence and IPV, were likely to be statistically associated by chance. I propose that IPV and sexual violence worked on a similar motivational pathway distinct from that of physical aggression and thus were controlled by masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS). By controlling for personality trait-agreeableness I would be able to identify masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) as the sole predictive variable of IPV and sexual violence. For the same reason I chose to control for the other masculinity variables including masculine gender role stress and male role norms, as I assessed from prior research DS to be the only important variable at predicting sexual violence and IPV. Similarly, by controlling for all masculinity variables, including DS, personality-trait agreeableness could be revealed as the only predictive

variable of physical aggression. I assessed this type of violence as motivationally distinct from sexual violence and IPV and thus running on its own distinct motivational pathway towards its own unique violence type, physical aggression.

Based on the reviewed literature on personality and masculinity, I hypothesize that when controlling for all three masculinity constructs (i.e., Male Role Norms, Masculine Gender Role Stress (MGRS), and Masculine Gender Role Discrepancy Stress [DS]), trait agreeableness will uniquely predict physical aggression (*Hypothesis 1*). I also hypothesize masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) will uniquely predict intimate partner violence (IPV), when controlling for trait agreeableness and all other mentioned variables (*Hypothesis 2*). Lastly, I hypothesize masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) will uniquely predict sexual violence when controlling for trait agreeableness and all other mentioned variables (*Hypothesis 3*).

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Procedure**

A total of ( $N = 558$ ) participants completed online surveys for the original study that collected all data used for my paper (Berke et al, 2020). All participants identified as male. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 80 with a mean age of 33.97 ( $SD = 11.169$ ). Participants took ( $M = 36.81$ ,  $SD = 18.03$ ) minutes to complete the surveys. See Table 1 for additional sample descriptives.

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk service. All questionnaires were completed online. All participants gave informed consent and were given the opportunity to withdraw at any point during their participation in the study. Participants were paid US\$2.00 for their time answering the questionnaires.

## Materials

*Demographics questionnaire.* A demographic questionnaire consisting of 13 questions was used to ascertain participants' age, gender, race, relationship status, total number of marriages, years of school completed, whether their primary language was English, annual household income range, mental illness diagnoses, intimate relationship history, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation was assessed by asking participants, "Which of the following best describes you". Choices included straight, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer. These choices were then converted into a dichotomous scale (heterosexual = 0; non-heterosexual = 1). This variable was entered as a covariate in all planned analyses.

*Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPAQ: Raine et al., 2006).* The reactive-proactive aggression questionnaire was used in the current study to measure general aggression in terms of reactive and proactive aggression. Both physical and verbal aggressions are measured by this questionnaire but not typically separated. Questions were scored on a scale from 0 to 2, with 0 indicating "never", 1 indicating "sometimes", and 2 indicating "often". For the current study, only questions ascertaining physical aggression are used given my focus on this behavior. These questions included "damaged things when mad", "felt better after hitting", "hit to defend self", "hit when teased", "fight for status", "hurt others to win game", "force to manipulate others", "force to obtain money", and "carried weapon for use". A total score for these questions was used to assess the level of physical aggression reported in each participant. Lower scores indicated less aggression and higher scores indicated more aggression. The sample's Cronbach alpha was .85 for this measure.

*Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS-2; Strauss et al., 1996).* This measure assesses how intimate partners deal with interpersonal conflicts. The scale consists of 78 questions grouped

into 5 subscales: physical assault, psychological aggression, negotiation, injury, and sexual coercion. For the current study, only questions in the physical assault were used to assess participants' nonsexual violence as physical aggression towards intimate partners. The physical assault category consists of 12 questions about the behaviors exhibited by participants. The CTS-2 assesses behaviors based on their severity categorized into either none, minor, and severe depending on the score assigned to each question. Scores range from 1) once in the past year, 2) twice in the past year, 3) 3-5 times in the past year, 4) 6-10 times in the past year, 5) 11-20 times in the past year, 6) more than 20 times in the past year, 7) not in the past year, but did happen before, and 0) this has never happened. Examples of these questions include "I pushed or shoved my partner" and "I used a knife or gun on my partner". Scores on the physical assault subscale were summed and used to assess the general level of physical IPV. Lower scores indicated less IPV while higher scores indicated more IPV. This sample's Cronbach alpha was .96 for this measure.

*Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss, 2012).* A brief 10-question version of the sexual experiences survey (SES) used to assess participants' report of a wide range of sexual violence perpetration behaviors including rape, sexual assault, and sexual coercion. Participants were instructed to answer all questions with consideration that any experiences occurred at age 14 or later. These 10 items were presented as 1) "Have you had sex play with a woman (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when she didn't want to because you overwhelmed her by your continual arguments and pressure; 2) "Have you had sex play with a woman (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when she didn't want to because you used your authority (boss, teacher, camp counselor, supervisor) to make her?"; 3) "Have you had sex play with a woman (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when she didn't want to because you

threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.) to make her?"; 4) Have you attempted sexual intercourse with a woman (get on top of her and insert your penis) when she didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.) but intercourse did not occur?"; 5) Have you attempted sexual intercourse with a woman (get on top of her and insert your penis) when she didn't want to by giving her alcohol or drugs, but intercourse did not occur?; 6) "Have you had sexual intercourse with a woman when she didn't want to by overwhelming her with your continual arguments and pressure?"; 7) "Have you had sexual intercourse with a woman when she didn't want to because you used your position of authority (boss, teacher, counselor, supervisor)?""; 8) "Have you had sexual intercourse with a woman when she didn't want to because you gave her alcohol or drugs?"; 9) "Have you had sexual intercourse with a woman when she didn't want to because you threatened to use some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down. Etc.) to make her?"; and 10) Have you had sexual acts (anal or oral intercourse or penetration by objects other than the penis) with a woman when she didn't want to by using threats or some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.)?". Participants were asked whether they had committed each act ever (measuring prevalence) and were presented a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 assessing how many times they have engaged each act, if applicable (chronicity). Scores were summed to determine the level of sexual violence in each participant. Lower scores indicated less sexual violence and higher scores indicated more sexual violence. This sample's Cronbach alpha was .83 for this measure.

*Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1996).* This scale was used to measure men's beliefs regarding the traditional roles in society. In other words, it measures how closely one's beliefs about gender roles adhere to the traditionally accepted dimorphic roles

society has assigned to males and females. There are 26 items on this survey and ratings are conducted on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 7 indicating “strongly agree”. Examples of questions used in this measure include “A man should always try to project an air of confidence even if he really doesn’t feel confident inside” and “A man owes it to his family to work at the best-paying job he can”. Two questions are reversed scored meaning their values are inverted before totals are calculated. Scores are totaled to assess conformity to these traditional masculine role norms. Lower scores indicated less conformity to these ideals while higher scores indicated more conformity. This sample’s Cronbach alpha was .90 for this measure.

*Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRS: Eisler & Skidmore, 1987).* This scale was used to assess the degree to which men believe hypothetical infractions to their masculinity would stress them. Each of the scale’s 40 questions challenges an aspect of traditional masculinity (e.g., “being unemployed” or “having a female boss”). Responses are based on a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 7 with 0 indicating “not stressful” and 7 indicating “extremely stressful”. Scores were totaled to assess overall perception of stress induced by hypothetical scenarios. Lower scores indicated less stress while higher scores indicated more stress induced by the hypothetical scenarios where traditional gender roles were challenged. This sample’s Cronbach alpha was .95 for this measure.

*Masculine Gender Role Discrepancy Stress (Reidy et al., 2014).* This 10-item scale assesses self-perceived discrepancy from traditional masculinity and the stress one experiences when considering this discrepancy. For the purposes this thesis, I am only using the 5 questions that assess discrepancy stress as masculinity discrepancy is assessed by the more thorough male role norms scale (MRNS). Sample scale items include: “I wish I was more “manly”, “I worry

that people judge me because I am not like the typical man”. Scores were totaled to assess participants’ overall level of stress resulting from such discrepancies in our society’s masculine gender roles. Lower scores indicated less discrepancy stress while higher scores indicated higher discrepancy stress because of these self-perceptions. This sample’s Cronbach alpha was .90 for this measure.

*Trait Agreeableness.* This personality factor was assessed using the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), a shortened version of the longer NEO PI-R, both designed by Costa and McCrae (1992). The NEO-FFI is designed to measure personality based of the five-factor model of personality. This model’s five factors are openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extroversion. The NEO-FFI consists of 60 questions which are each used to score the five factors. Scoring is based on a 5-item Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The total number of questions used to assess agreeableness was 12. Example items from the agreeableness factor include (e.g., “I often get into arguments with my family and co-workers” and “I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them”). 8 of the 12 questions were reverse scored meaning their values were inverted prior to calculating their totals. Lower scores indicated lower agreeableness (also referred to as antagonism) while higher scores indicated higher agreeableness. This sample’s Cronbach alpha was .76 for this measure.

## **Results**

### **Data reduction**

104 participants reported on the CTS-2 that they had not been in an intimate relationship in the past year and so were missing important information pertinent to my thesis topic. Given

the focus on IPV as a key dependent variable of interest in the current study, these participants were removed, resulting in a sample size of ( $N = 454$ ).

### **Correlational analysis**

Bivariate correlations were conducted examining associations between key study variables (see Table 2). Most variables were significantly correlated with one another, with the exception of associations between key variables and sexual orientation. **Regressions**

***Physical aggression.*** My first hypothesis that when controlling for all three masculinity constructs, trait agreeableness would uniquely predict physical aggression guided my first set of analyses. I ran two separate hierarchical regression analyses with physical aggression as measured by the RPAQ serving as outcome variable and either discrepancy stress (DS) or agreeableness as predictors, while controlling for MGRS, MRNS, sexual orientation, and either DS or agreeableness. The final model, which included all control variables along with agreeableness and DS, explained a significant proportion of the variance in physical aggression scores ( $R^2 = .38$ ,  $F(5,448) = 55.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ). MGRS and agreeableness were significantly predictive of physical aggression. See Tables 3 and 4 below for parameter and model statistics.

***Physical IPV.*** The analyses here focused on my second hypothesis that masculine gender role discrepancy stress, would uniquely predict physical aggression towards intimate partners, when controlling for trait agreeableness. I ran two separate hierarchical regression analyses with physical aggression towards intimate partners as the outcome variable as measured by the CTS-2 and either discrepancy stress (DS) or agreeableness as predictors, while controlling for MGRS, MRNS, sexual orientation, and either DS or agreeableness. The final model, including all control variables, agreeableness and DS, explained a significant proportion of the

variance in physical IPV scores ( $R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(5,447) = 12.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). DS, MGRS, and agreeableness were significantly predictive of physical IPV. See tables 3 and 4 below for parameters and models statistics.

***Sexual violence.*** To test my final hypothesis that masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS) would uniquely predict sexual violence when controlling for trait agreeableness, I ran two separate hierarchical regression analyses with sexual violence as the outcome variable as measure by the SES and either discrepancy stress (DS) or agreeableness as predictors, while controlling for MGRS, MRNS, sexual orientation, and either DS or agreeableness. The final model, including all control variables, agreeableness and DS, explained a significant proportion of the variance in sexual violence scores ( $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(5,448) = 3.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ). DS was the only variable to significantly predict sexual violence. See tables 3 and 4 below for parameters and models statistics. Descriptive statistics analysis of the frequencies of response types on the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) was conducted. Each of the 10 items were individually analyzed in this way to reveal the percentage of this sample who endorsed each item's unique form of sexual violence. See table 5 below for full details.

## **Discussion**

The goal of the current thesis was to identify and differentiate between the possible risk pathways towards the perpetration of three different types of violence in men. I hypothesized that trait agreeableness would uniquely predict perpetration of physical aggression, over and above masculinity factors among this demographic. In contrast, I predicted that masculine discrepancy stress (DS) would uniquely predict both physical aggression towards intimate partners (IPV) as well as sexual violence, over and above the effects of trait agreeableness. Results of this study partially support these hypotheses.

My first hypothesis was partially supported. Agreeableness was indeed found to be significantly predictive of physical aggression when controlling for masculinity constructs. However, contrary to expectations, masculine gender role stress remained a significant predictor in the model, even when accounting for agreeableness. As expected, masculine discrepancy stress did not reach significance in predicting physical violence when accounting for agreeableness. This pattern of findings implies that perceiving conflicts to masculinity as being stressful and having a more antagonistic personality may both work together or independently to affect men's predisposition to committing physical aggressive acts. It is possible that antagonistic men who commit such acts may be similar to men who do not have such antagonistic personalities but who do view such challenges to masculinity as stressful.

These findings partially contradict some of the existing literature on the subject, namely Reidy's et al (2015) findings. Reidy et al (2015) examined a sample of 600 men who completed online questionnaires that ascertained these participants' prior criminal histories or lack thereof. Discrepancy stress was also measured, as well as gender role stress via the MGRS. The authors found no significant direct effects of DS or MGRS on the violent behavior outcomes of assault or assault with a weapon. However, unlike Reidy's et al (2015) findings, I found MGRS to be a significant predictor of this violence type alongside agreeableness. Our samples were similar in size and demographic composition. However, my use of RPAQ to measure physical aggression, improve the psychometric validity of the current findings when compared to the four questions used by Reidy et al (2015).

Of note, when adding agreeableness to the regression as the predictor of physical aggression, the explained variance in the models increased from 28% to 38%. When adding DS to the regression, the explained variance in the models did not change, further supporting

hypothesis 1 (i.e., agreeableness has unique predictive validity in accounting for physical aggression over and above the effects of masculine discrepancy stress).

This finding also supports Miller's and Lynam's (2006, as cited by Seibert et al, 2010) assessment of individuals scoring lowly on trait-agreeableness measures as being vulnerable to committing both proactive and reactive forms of aggression. This pattern is consistent with Seibert et al (2010), Skeem et al (2005), and Dam et al (2018) findings on agreeableness' predictive power in explaining physical aggression as lower agreeableness scores often predict higher physical aggression. These researchers however did not include any of the gender related variables including in this thesis. As such, my findings add a novel contribution to the existing literature on personality traits as they relate to predicting violence. The fact that masculine gender role stress remained a significant predictor of physical aggression when accounting for trait agreeableness suggests future research on this topic would likely benefit by examining these masculine gender factors alongside personality assessments. This pattern implies a need to examine not only how men experience possible discrepancy stress due to masculinity 'infractions', but also a need to address what men think is stressful as it relates to masculinity.

My second hypothesis was that masculine discrepancy stress would predict physical IPV when controlling for the effects of the other measures in this paper. This hypothesis was partially supported. Discrepancy stress was a significant predictor of IPV when controlling for personality trait agreeableness and other masculinity constructs. However, agreeableness and MGRS explained significant variance in the overall model. This means that both trait and gender socialization processes likely contribute to the perpetration of physical assault against intimate partners. However, discrepancy stress produced the strongest effect size. These results do not necessarily explain how or if agreeableness interacts with DS or gender role stress. Men

committing physical IPV may exhibit low agreeableness scores, and/or high discrepancy stress, and/or perceive challenges to masculinity as stressful. Alternatively, either antagonistic personalities, experiencing high discrepancy stress, or merely perceiving these challenges to be stressful, may result in the same or similar outcomes (i.e., higher rates of physical IPV). These findings do support past research on physical IPV as Reidy et al (2014) also found DS and MGRS to be significantly predictive of this type of violence in their sample. However, they also found MRNS to be significantly predictive, of this type of violence despite controlling for their effects in regression analyses, although less strongly than DS had. Had Reidy et al (2014) also included a measure and control for trait agreeableness in their study they may have found MRNS to be an insignificant factor when predicting physical IPV. My findings of DS having significant predictive value of physical IPV also supports Berke's et al (2016) findings. The authors in that study found DS to have a significant indirect effect on physical IPV.

As expected, male role norm adherence was not a significant predictor of this violence type. I had predicted MRNS to lose any coincidental effect on the perpetration of physical IPV when conducting my analyses. This was due to the low effect size of MRNS to be (-.16), found by Reidy et al (2014). The failure for MRNS to reach significance implies the level of adherence to traditional masculine gender norms to be irrelevant in the outcome of physical IPV. There is also a question of how well the MRNS truly explains participants' adherence to masculine norms. That is, do the questions on the MRNS accurately represent the majority of modern males' beliefs of what masculinity means to them? The recent research conducted by either Berke or Reidy would suggest that MRNS may not be designed in such a way as to truly assess masculinity in modern terms. This could be why it often fails to reach significance as a predictor for violence. The continuation of using personality measures alongside gender measures will

likely prove vital to uncovering potential weaknesses or even total inadequacies of some of these measures to predict violence accurately and consistently. On a similar note, the inclusion of these masculine gender factors in future studies, alongside personality measures, can ensure more accurate effect sizes attributed to any potentially significant findings between personality traits and violence outcomes.

My third hypothesis, that masculine discrepancy stress would predict sexual violence when controlling for the effects of the other measures used in this paper was fully supported, suggesting there is good reason to believe discrepancy stress is an especially important construct to assess and consider when conducting research on the causes of sexual violence. My results suggest that as expected trait agreeableness does not play as important a role as some may believe regarding the perpetration of sexual violence. Indeed, it appears that the experiencing higher discrepancy stress when perceiving the self as inadequately masculine is a unique risk factor for sexual violence. This is not to say that high discrepancy stress causes sexual violence as we cannot draw such conclusions from this cross-sectional design. However, these findings build on those reported by Reidy et al (2014) who found sexual violence to also be significantly predicted by DS when controlling for effects of the MGRS and MRNS scores. Berke et al (2016) also found DS to have a significant indirect effect when predicting sexual coercion.

Findings also lend support to past research on the subject such as Dennison's et al (2001) findings. They had found agreeableness, when assessing all five factors of personality of the FFM, to not be significantly predictive of sexual violence in their sample. However, that study had found other factors of personality (e.g., conscientiousness) to be predictive of this type of violence. They did not include a control for masculine gender role discrepancy stress (DS), much as the rest of the personality literature has neglected to do so. My results imply the focus

on personality as the predictor for sexual violence may be missing considering of essential masculine socialization processes and that focus should be shifted towards examining masculine gender role discrepancy stress.

### **Limitations**

While many of the variables examined in this paper reached statistical significance as in models of violence, their effects were often small. The largest effect size was found when using agreeableness as the predictor of physical aggression which had a medium effect size. This suggests there are likely confounding variables not assessed in my study. Without knowing what these extraneous variables are, and without including them alongside the variables used in this paper, I cannot know what changes may occur in my findings. This same issue is noted by Reidy et al (2014) as they also had small effect sizes revealing the same weakness in their interpretations of the data.

Also similar to the limitations of Reidy, et al (2014), my findings can neither infer causality nor could it be possible to ensure participants' self-reported responses are truly accurate descriptions of themselves. Causality could not be achieved as all data collected came from scoring surveys filled out by participants themselves as they recalled their past experiences. This was not a lab-controlled experiment where through control and experimentation we may infer a causative relationship. Accuracy furthermore could not be completely assured so it is possible the findings reported in this paper are not truly descriptive of the sample. I operated on trust that participants accurately reported their experiences, especially those that are frowned upon by society such as committing IPV or sexual violence towards women. However, all surveys were completed online and anonymously so this issue of inaccurately reporting experiences, such as

underreporting violent behaviors, could have been avoided as participants would not be identified nor punished for any incriminating responses.

The scales used in this paper themselves may be flawed in some respects. The alpha coefficients for all scales used were however good implying reliability and validity of their scores to be sufficient. More likely, the questions on some of the masculinity constructs could be outdated or otherwise insufficiently worded to truly gauge masculinity. The Male Role Norms Scale was not found to be significant in any of the regressions conducted for this paper, but this may not necessarily imply male role norms are unimportant factors when predicting violence. The problem could be outdated wording or interpretation by those original authors of what men in modern society believe male role norms to be. Similarly, the scales assessing MGRS and DS could also be insufficient to assess this masculine gender role stress and its associated form of discrepancy stress.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that other forms of discrepancy stress exist (e.g., worrying about one's attractiveness) and so these may need to be included alongside the masculine DS measure for a clearer picture to be drawn. Additionally, this study uses measures that only assess these variables on the individual level. However, it is possible that the masculine ideals and other causes of violence operate at different levels of the social ecology (social networks, legislation, community norms). Further my sample was isolated to those of whom are US citizens and made no attempt to differentiate between participants' more unique cultural values, nor were other values in general assessed.

## Conclusion

Overall, results of the current study partially supported my hypotheses and constitute a first attempt to integrate personality and masculinity models of violence. Trait agreeableness significantly predicted both physical aggression and physical IPV. Discrepancy stress (DS) was a significant predictor of all three types of violence: for physical aggression, for physical IPV, and for sexual violence. Furthermore, discrepancy stress was found to be the only significant predictor of sexual violence. Findings speak to a need to incorporate consideration of masculine gender socialization and its effects on the risk for exhibiting violent behavior, particularly with regard to IPV and sexual violence, but also physical aggression in general. I would encourage future researchers to not only include the MGRS and DS scale described in my paper, but to also contemplate on how such scales may be improved moving forward.

These findings also help to discredit any argument that men with 'likable' personalities could not possibly be perpetrators of sex crimes. As DS was the only predictor found for the perpetration of sexual violence, and not personality trait-agreeableness, it is implied that masculine gender socialization to somehow influence some men to commit such acts, works above and beyond the individual's personality. Men that in other situations appear very agreeable to others, may still be just as capable of committing this type of violence as more blatantly antagonistic individuals.

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Table 1. Sample descriptives for demographic variables

Demographic Variables	Mean or %
Race/ ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino	6.6
American Indian or Alaskan Native	.7
Asian	5.7
Black or African American	7.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.2
White	77.8
Other	1.5
Relationship status	
Single (never married)	35.7
Married (first marriage)	43.4
Remarried	4.6
Separated	.7
Divorced	2.9
Long-term domestic partner (at least one year)	12.8
Sexuality	
Straight	91.9
Gay	2.2
Bisexual	4.6
Trans	.4
Queer	.9
School completion	

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Junior High School (7-9 <sup>th</sup> grade)	.2
Some High School (10-11 <sup>th</sup> grade)	1.5
High School graduate	11.5
Some college or vocational training	33.7
A four-year college program	40.3
Graduate or professional training	12.8
Yearly household income	
Less than \$5,000	3.4
\$5,000 to \$9,999	2.4
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.7
\$15,000 to \$19,999	5.1
\$20,000 to \$24,999	6.6
\$25,000 to \$29,999	6.6
\$30,000 to \$34,999	5.5
\$35,000 to \$39,999	6.6
\$40,000 to \$49,999	13.9
\$50,000 to \$59,000	12.1
\$60,000 to \$74,999	13.2
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12.1
\$100,000 and above	7.7

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*Note:* For race/ ethnicity, “other” consisted of Bi-racial; Biracial; European/ American; Mixed race; Mixed race White/ Asian; and White, American Indian, and Japanese.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between predictor, control, and outcome variables

Variables	DS	MGRS	MRNS	Sexual Orientation	NEO	RPAQ	CTS-2	SES
<b>DS</b>	—	.24***	-.01	.07	-.12**	.20***	.25***	.15***
<b>MGRS</b>		—	.60***	-.13**	-.40***	.51***	.26***	.14**
<b>MRNS</b>			—	-.23***	-.36***	.36***	.15***	.10*
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>				—	-.01	.01	-.02	-.01
<b>NEO</b>					—	-.51***	-.22***	-.11*
<b>RPAQ</b>						—	.41***	.25**
<b>CTS-2</b>							—	.24***
<b>SES</b>								—

*Note:*

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001

Table 3. Beta coefficients for regression analyses of violence types

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Beta coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>
<i>Physical aggression (RPAQ)</i>		
DS	.07	1.80
MGRS	.34***	6.77
MRNS	.04	0.90
Sexual Orientation	.06	1.45
NEO-FFI	-.37***	-8.51
<i>IPV (CTS-2)</i>		
DS	.20***	4.32
MGRS	.14*	2.41
MRNS	.02	0.39
Sexual Orientation	-.01	-0.25
NEO_FFI	-.14**	-2.77
<i>Sexual violence (SES)</i>		
DS	.13**	2.73
MGRS	.06	0.89
MRNS	.04	0.69
Sexual Orientation	-.01	-0.13
NEO-FFI	-.05	-1.01

Note:

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4. Effect sizes between regressions and between models within regressions

<b>Regression</b>	<b>R squared</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>sig</b>	<b>R square change</b>
<i>Physical aggression</i>				
NEO-FFI as predictor				
Model 1	.28	F(4,449) = 44.41	.000	
Model 2	.38	F(5,448) = 55.66	.000	.100
DS as predictor				
Model 1	.38	F(4,449) = 68.42	.000	
Model 2	.38	F(5,448) = 55.66	.000	.004
<i>Physical IPV</i>				
NEO-FFI as predictor				
Model 1	.11	F(4,448) = 13.11	.000	
Model 2	.12	F(5,447) = 12.17	.000	.015
DS as predictor				
Model 1	.08	F(4,448) = 10.16	.000	
Model 2	.12	F(5,447) = 12.17	.000	.037
<i>Sexual violence</i>				
NEO-FFI as predictor				
Model 1	.04	F(4,449) = 4.10	.003	
Model 2	.04	F(5,448) = 3.48	.004	.002
DS as predictor				
Model 1	.02	F(4,449) = 2.46	.045	
Model 2	.04	F(5,448) = 3.48	.004	.016

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*Note:* R squared change values in this table represent the p value of the change between models 1 and 2.

Table 5: Descriptives for SES endorsements

<b>Question</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Means (Standard Deviations)</b>
<b>Question 1</b>			
Yes	63	13.9	.14 (.35)
No	390	85.9	
Missing	1	.2	
<b>Question 2</b>			
Yes	12	2.6	.03 (.16)
No	441	97.1	
Missing	1	.2	
<b>Question 3</b>			
Yes	9	2	.02 (.14)
No	444	97.8	
Missing	1	.2	
<b>Question 4</b>			
Yes	12	2.6	.03 (.16)
No	441	97.1	
Missing	1	.2	
<b>Question 5</b>			
Yes	28	6.2	.06 (.24)
No	424	93.4	
Missing	2	.4	
<b>Question 6</b>			
Yes	36	7.9	.08 (.27)

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<b>No</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>92.1</b>	
<b>Question 7</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>.02 (.12)</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>98.5</b>	
<b>Question 8</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>.04 (.19)</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>96.3</b>	
<b>Question 9</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>.02 (.12)</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>98.2</b>	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.2</b>	
<b>Question 10</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>.02 (.13)</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>97.8</b>	
<b>Missing</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>.4</b>	

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*Note:* Questions 1 through 10 are listed in full detail in the Measures section under the Sexual Experiences Survey.