

# Gender Differences in Intimate Partner Violence in Current and Prior Relationships

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## Abstract

Although much available research indicates that intimate partner violence (IPV) is male perpetrated, growing recent evidence suggests a gender symmetry model of family violence. This article examines gender differences in IPV in current and prior relationships reported by young adults. Data comprised 2,060 young adults (62.1% females) who participated in the 30-year follow-up of the Mater Hospital and University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy (MUSP) in Brisbane, Australia. The Composite Abuse Scale was used to measure IPV during the last 12 months in the respondents' most recent relationship. Similar proportions of males and females reported leaving their prior relationships. Both males and females who were not currently in a relationship reported experiencing much higher rates of IPV than those who were in a relationship. There were no differences in the past experience of IPV between males and females who were not currently in a relationship, but males in a current relationship reported they experienced most forms of IPV more often than did females. IPV typically involves both

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male and female perpetrators and victims. It does appear that the majority of relationships involving higher rates of IPV were dissolved. IPV was more likely to have occurred in relationships that ended than in relationships that persisted. Males more often remain in an abusive relationship and report experiencing higher rates of IPV in their current relationships compared with females.

### **Keywords**

gender, intimate partner violence

## **Introduction**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a prevalent public health concern worldwide (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002). Despite an extensive body of research on IPV, it is not clear whether there are gender differences in IPV perpetration and victimization (Johnson, 2005; Winstok, 2011; Winstok & Straus, 2016). Although much of available research indicates that IPV is *male perpetrated* (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hester, Kelly, & Radford, 1996; Yodanis, 2004), growing recent evidence suggests a *gender symmetry* model of family violence (Capaldi, Kim, & Shortt, 2007; Cross & Campbell, 2011; Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford, & Fiebert, 2012; Dutton, Nicholls, & Spidel, 2005; Sorrentino, Friedman, & Hall, 2016; Straus, 2011; Straus & Ramirez, 2007). What is currently known about gender differences in IPV victimization/perpetration likely reflects disparities in a cultural context, samples characteristics, definitions of IPV, different ways of measuring IPV, and confusion about whether IPV includes both current and former relationships.

A number of highly cited studies that report a high prevalence of female victimization have been conducted in traditional or economically developing countries; for example, a World Health Organization (WHO) multicountry study using data from 10 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and Tanzania) concluded that “violence against women is widespread” (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). A recent review of available estimates of violence against women (WHO, 2013) suggested that the lowest prevalence of IPV was found in high-income countries including Australia. It may be that in modern and economically developed societies such as Australia, egalitarian gender attitudes and objective economic and social changes are associated with lesser

gender differences in IPV. Growing female's status and power, combined with changes in normative expectations may challenge historical gender differences in IPV victimization (Archer, 2006; van Egmond, Baxter, Buchler, & Western, 2010). In more economically developed countries, men may be inhibited from using violence, especially physical violence, against women (Felson, Ackerman, & Yeon, 2003), although a degree of aggression by women toward male partners is tolerated (Simon et al., 2001; Sorenson & Taylor, 2005; Taylor & Sorenson, 2005).

It is likely that representative or community samples produce results that differ from those observed from a selected sample based upon those in contact with the criminal justice system (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 1995). Similarly, details of IPV that are derived from official reports of women who are using a medical service may overrepresent severe and unidirectional male perpetration, whereas population sample surveys may identify IPV cases that are less severe and bidirectional. In a comprehensive review of 50 studies (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Selwyn, & Rohling, 2012), mutual violence was identified in half of the IPV cases, whereas male-only perpetrated violence comprised a quarter of all cases. In addition, mutually perpetrated violence was reported across all types of samples—either representative or selective—whereas only male-perpetrated violence was much more frequently observed in samples selected from those in contact with the criminal justice system. Estimates of gender differences in IPV may vary depending upon the degree of violence, as females are more likely to experience more severe injuries (Catalano, 2013).

One important discrepancy in IPV estimates can be attributed to the diverse ways of measuring IPV. Some widely used measurements of IPV have been developed based on a particular theory or a selective aspect of IPV. For instance, the Abusive Behavior Inventory (Shepard & Campbell, 1992) is derived from, and consistent with, a feminist perspective about the nature of domestic violence and leads to arguably biased findings that family violence is exclusively male perpetrated. By contrast, the commonly used Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) measures *the act of violence* rather than its *consequences*, which arguably produces findings suggesting an overrepresentation of women as “violent.” In much of the available research on IPV, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse as well as gender-specific types of IPV may not be adequately represented (Archer, 2000; DeKeseredy, 2000; Ford-Gilboe et al., 2016; Kimmel, 2002).

There is also a recent debate about how assessments of IPV, which refer to prior or current relationships, may affect gender-based conclusions (Ackerman, 2012). Ackerman suggests that women are more inclined than men to terminate

abusive relationships and may more frequently report violence in a previous (but not current) relationship. A focus on IPV in a current relationship (characteristics of gender symmetry studies) may ignore “gendered differences” and asymmetric consequences of IPV such as injuries or fear. Restricting the sampling frame to a current relationship may also lead to overrepresentation of male victimization and underestimation of male perpetration (Ackerman, 2012; Currie, 1998). Ackerman’s findings that females often disproportionately leave an abusive relationship have not been replicated by other studies (Ackerman, 2012; Anderson, 1997, 2005, 2007; Choice & Lamke, 1997). Anderson (2007) argues that the interplay between internal (e.g., depression, low self-esteem, sense of control) and external barriers (e.g., economic dependency, social expectations of a mother to remain for the sake of children) constrain women from leaving an abusive partner. There is a need to know whether males or females are more likely to terminate an abusive relationship.

Another important question concerns the extent to which demographic factors may confound the association between gender and IPV. Previous studies have well documented that people of younger age; unstable marital status, for example, living with a partner but not married; lower education level; unemployment; and insecure occupational status are vulnerable to IPV victimization (Chang, Shen, & Takeuchi, 2009; Rickert, Wiemann, Harrykissoon, Berenson, & Kolb, 2002; Schumacher, Feldbau-Kohn, Slep, & Heyman, 2001; Sorenson, Upchurch, & Shen, 1996). Having children appears to have a more complicated association with IPV victimization: Biological parents may be expected to remain in an abusive relationship because of the children, or may decide to leave it to protect children from being exposed to violence; however, carrying children to the next romantic relationship might increase the risk of conflict not only with prior partner (custody disagreements) but also with the new partner (Vatnar & Bjorkly, 2010).

This article aims to address the current gap in knowledge about gender differences in IPV with respect to several issues. We recruited a population sample of both males and females in an economically developed society, and used a validated measure of different types of IPV. In addition, we adjusted for a range of demographic variables in the relationship between gender and IPV. Although the co-occurrence of multiple types of victimization among women have been previously examined (Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2008; Sullivan, McPartland, Armeli, Jaquier, & Tennen, 2012), literature about IPV co-occurrence in males is limited. We also determine the extent to which IPV is differentially experienced by males and females in current and former intimate relationships.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants are from the Mater Hospital and University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy (MUSP), which is a prospective cohort study of mothers and their children (Najman et al., 2005). Between 1981 and 1983, baseline data were collected from 7,223 consecutive women who attended their first clinical visit at Brisbane's Mater Misericordiae Hospital. Further data were obtained when the study children were 6 months, 5 years, 14 years, 21 years, and 30 years old. Informed consent was gained from all participants. The University of Queensland and Mater Misericordiae Hospital institutional ethics committees approved this study. Of 2,438 participants at the 30-year follow-up, we omitted 378 cases who reported that they had not ever been in any intimate relationship, and analyzed 2,060 persons who completed the self-report questionnaire; 62.1% of the sample were females and the mean age was 30.30 years ( $\pm 1.13$  years). Most of the participants' ethnicity was White (93.6%), 3.1% Asian, and 3.3% Aboriginal and Islander. Among the participants, 53.7% were married, 31.3% were living together, and 15% had been in a relationship but were single at the current follow-up; 55.5% of respondents had children and the average length of their current relationship was 6.9 years ( $\pm 3.79$  years; ranging from 1 month to 17 years).

### *Measurement*

According to WHO, "intimate partner violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship." This definition includes acts of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, and controlling behaviors (WHO, 2012). Hence, the terms "intimate partner violence" and "intimate partner abuse" can be used interchangeably (Hegarty & Valpied, 2007).

IPV at the 30-year-old follow-up was measured using the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS). The CAS is a self-report scale that was developed using well-known scales such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and the Measure of Wife Abuse (Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993). It is a multidimensional and validated tool with well-demonstrated face, content, concurrent, criterion, discriminant, and construct validity, as well as high internal consistency (Hegarty, Bush, & Sheehan, 2005; Hegarty, Sheehan, & Schonfeld, 1999; Hegarty & Valpied, 2007). The CAS has been translated into several languages and its psychometric characteristics have been supported in various clinical and community populations worldwide (Ford-Gilboe et al.,

2016; Lokhmatkina, Kuznetsova, & Feder, 2010; Loxton et al., 2013; Rietveld, Lagro-Janssen, Vierhout, & Wong, 2010). The CAS asks a series of questions about how frequently specific forms of abuse have been experienced during the last 12 months in the respondent's most recent relationship (current partner or if no current partner, previous partner). The scale comprises 30 items (the appendix;  $\alpha = .95$ ) and four subscales: Severe Combined Abuse ( $\alpha = .79$ ; comprises eight items, which include rape, keep from obtaining medical care, locked in the bedroom); Emotional Abuse ( $\alpha = .90$ ; comprises 11 items, which include insults, verbal, psychological dominance, and separation from friends and family); Physical Abuse ( $\alpha = .89$ ; comprises seven items, which include slapping, throwing, hitting, shaking); and Harassment ( $\alpha = .72$ ; comprises four items including actual harassment such as following, harassing over the telephone and at work). Items were quantified into *never*, *only once*, *several times*, *once a month*, *once a week*, and *daily* in a 12-month period (Hegarty & Valpied, 2007). After recoding each item to 0 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*) and summing them, we used the recommended cutoff scores for the individual subscales: Severe Combined Abuse ( $\geq 1$ ), Physical Abuse ( $\geq 1$ ), Emotional Abuse ( $\geq 3$ ), and Harassment ( $\geq 2$ ). Endorsement of a score equal to or higher than the cutoff score meets the criteria for abuse. Four dichotomous subscales were summed to generate a multiple victimization variable with three categories of *none* (reference group), *only one type*, and *two types and more*.

## Covariates

We separated respondents who answered the questionnaire with regard to their current relationship (partner) from those who reported that they did not currently have a partner. For this purpose, we asked respondents about their present marital status (single/never married, living together, married, or separated), whether they lived with their partners, and for how long they lived with their current partner. Those no longer with their partners, or are no longer married or living with their current partner were categorized as *not currently in an intimate relationship*. We also adjusted for some demographic variables that may be related to both gender and the experience of IPV. All participants were about 30 years of age (males =  $30.39 \pm 1.17$  years; females =  $30.25 \pm 1.11$  years), so we did not adjust for the age variability in the sample. Respondents' education level was categorized into *high school completion or less*, *diploma and college*, and *university* (reference category). Having a child was dichotomized into *yes* and *no* (reference category). Marital status comprised two categories, *living together* and *married* (reference group). Length of relationship was measured with a question "For how long (in years) has your current

live-in relationship lasted.” Average length for females was 7.3 years ( $\pm 3.8$  years) and for males was 6.3 years ( $\pm 3.6$  years).

### *Data Analysis*

The prevalence of each type of IPV was determined separately for each gender. For describing demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics, chi-square, and *t* test were used. IPV forms (severe combined, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and harassment) were not mutually exclusive. Binary and multinomial logistic regression is performed and odds ratios (ORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are reported. Each of the regression models was then adjusted for respondent’s demographic characteristics. Statistical analyses were conducted using STATA-13 and SPSS-24 softwares.

### *Findings*

Table 1 presents comparative information of males and females by their demographic and IPV characteristics. More females who are currently in a relationship have children and a university education than do comparable men. However, women are less likely to be in full-time employment than males. There is only one significant gender difference between respondents who are not currently in a relationship: Females are more often unemployed or employed part-time compared with males. Although we have not explicitly examined differences between females (or males) comparing those in a current or prior relationship, such differences do appear to exist. Females who are in a current relationship are more likely to have children and to be experiencing lower rates of IPV compared with females not currently in a relationship. Males in a current relationship are more likely to be employed full-time, to have children, and to be less likely to be experiencing IPV.

Table 2 presents the bivariate associations between demographic variables and IPV victimization at the 30-year follow-up for respondents who are currently in a relationship. Females who cohabit are more likely to experience severe combined victimization and emotional abuse, whereas cohabiting males more frequently experience harassment. Having a child is strongly associated with reports of experiencing severe combined victimization in men and harassment in females. Physical abuse is experienced twice as often by females with a lower level of education and unemployed. Males with a part-time job are more likely to report harassment.

Table 3 shows that those who are currently in a relationship (males and females) report they experience statistically significantly less IPV—individual and multiple types—than those who are not currently in a relationship.

**Table 1.** Gender Differences in Study Variables at 30-Year Follow-Up.

Variables	Current Relationship <sup>a</sup>		Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup>	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Present marital status (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,094)	(n = 658)		
Living together	35.5	39.1	—	—
Married	64.5	60.9	—	—
Have children (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,074)	(n = 645)*	(n = 182)	(n = 118)
No	37.3	49.1	56.6	65.3
Yes	62.7	50.9	43.4	34.7
Education (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,091)	(n = 658)*	(n = 183)	(n = 122)
High school and less	28.9	33.7	36.1	45.1
College	38.5	43.5	39.3	37.7
University	32.6	22.8	24.6	17.2
Occupational status (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,045)	(n = 658)*	(n = 182)	(n = 116)*
Unemployed	25.1	3.8	26.9	12.9
Part-time	21.3	5.5	20.9	12.1
Full-time	53.6	90.7	52.2	75.0
Forms of IPV victimization (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,076)	(n = 642)	(n = 180)	(n = 115)
Severe Combined ( $\geq 1$ )	1.8	1.9	16.1	11.3
Physical Abuse ( $\geq 1$ )	5.9	12.0	27.2	22.6
Emotional Abuse ( $\geq 3$ )	12.3	16.4*	36.1	28.7
Harassment ( $\geq 2$ )	2.5	5.3*	26.1	20.0
At least one	14.9	22.7*	40.6	40.9
Multiple IPV victimization (at 30-year follow-up)	(n = 1,076)	(n = 642)*	(n = 180)	(n = 115)
None	85.1	77.3	59.4	59.1
Only one type	8.9	13.6	10.6	19.1
$\geq$ two types	5.9	9.2	30.0	21.7
Length of current relationship (range = 1 month-17 years; M (SD))	7.3 (3.8)	6.3 (3.6)*	—	—

Note. IPV = intimate partner violence.

<sup>a</sup>Respondents who are in a relationship now (living together + married).

<sup>b</sup>Respondents who were in an intimate relationship before but are single now (n = 308; females = 186, males = 122).

\* $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2.** Bivariate Association Between Demographic Variables and Different Forms of IPV in the Current Relationship (OR [95% CI]).

Variables	SC		PA		EA		H	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Present marital status (at 30-year follow-up)								
Married	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Living together	<b>2.53</b> [1.01, 6.35]	0.79 [0.24, 2.66]	1.59 [0.95, 2.65]	1.22 [0.75, 1.98]	<b>1.49</b> [1.03, 2.16]	1.49 [0.98, 2.27]	1.70 [0.79, 3.66]	<b>3.10</b> [1.51, 6.38]
Have children (at 30-year follow-up)								
No	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Yes	1.30 [0.49, 3.44]	<b>10.93</b> [1.40, 85.17]	1.66 [0.94, 2.94]	1.33 [0.82, 2.15]	1.27 [0.86, 1.87]	1.23 [0.81, 1.87]	<b>2.68</b> [1.01, 7.14]	0.75 [0.37, 1.50]
Education level (at 30-year follow-up)								
University	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
College	2.59 [0.70, 9.65]	3.27 [0.39, 27.39]	1.56 [0.79, 3.04]	1.46 [0.74, 2.86]	1.28 [0.82, 2.0]	1.24 [0.71, 2.17]	1.37 [0.44, 4.23]	1.92 [0.93, 8.71]
High school and less	2.71 [0.69, 10.55]	3.45 [0.40, 28.84]	<b>2.04</b> [1.04, 4.02]	1.46 [0.90, 3.30]	1.31 [0.81, 2.10]	1.24 [0.69, 2.21]	<b>3.31</b> [1.18, 9.28]	2.85 [0.93, 8.71]
Occupational status (at 30-year follow-up)								
Full-time	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Part-time	0.27 [0.04, 2.18]	4.14 [0.86, 19.96]	0.66 [0.28, 1.55]	1.36 [0.51, 3.64]	0.84 [0.51, 1.41]	1.13 [0.46, 2.82]	1.26 [0.59, 3.61]	<b>3.70</b> [1.32, 10.32]
Unemployed	1.95 [0.75, 5.13]	2.91 [0.35, 24.02]	<b>2.30</b> [1.31, 4.04]	1.60 [0.53, 4.85]	1.38 [0.90, 2.12]	0.77 [0.22, 2.63]	1.26 [0.47, 3.40]	1.97 [0.44, 8.85]
Length of current relationship	<b>0.88</b> [0.77, 0.99]	1.16 [0.98, 1.36]	1.03 [0.97, 1.10]	0.99 [0.93, 1.07]	<b>1.06</b> [1.01, 1.11]	1.02 [0.95, 1.07]	1.05 [0.95, 1.16]	0.99 [0.89, 1.1]

Note. ORs in bold are significantly different to those of the reference category ( $p < .05$ ). IPV = intimate partner violence; OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; SC = Severe Combined; PA = Physical Abuse; EA = Emotional Abuse; H = Harassment.

**Table 3.** IPV Victimization Across Genders and Relationships.

Forms of IPV <sup>s</sup>	Females (n = 1,256)			Males (n = 757)				
	OR (95% CI)		%	OR (95% CI)		%		
	Current Relationship <sup>a</sup> (Reference Group)	Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup> (n = 180)		Current Relationship <sup>a</sup> (Reference Group) (n = 642)	Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup> (n = 115)			
SC	1.8	16.1*	<b>10.68</b> [5.85, 19.53]	13.11 [6.86, 25.06]	1.9	11.3*	<b>6.69</b> [2.97, 15.07]	6.08 [2.42, 15.28]
PA	5.9	27.2*	<b>6.01</b> [3.97, 9.11]	<b>7.0</b> [4.45, 11.02]	12.0	22.6*	<b>2.14</b> [1.30, 3.53]	<b>1.91</b> [1.11, 3.27]
EA	12.3	36.1*	<b>4.04</b> [2.84, 5.76]	<b>4.27</b> [2.93, 6.22]	16.4	28.7*	<b>2.06</b> [1.31, 3.24]	<b>2.05</b> [1.27, 3.43]
H	2.5	26.1*	<b>13.73</b> [8.27, 22.78]	<b>18.53</b> [10.59, 32.43]	5.3	20.0*	<b>4.47</b> [2.52, 7.93]	<b>3.44</b> [1.86, 6.35]
At least one	14.9	40.6*	<b>3.91</b> [2.78, 5.50]	<b>4.14</b> [2.88, 5.95]	22.7	40.9*	<b>2.35</b> [1.55, 3.56]	<b>2.27</b> [1.47, 3.52]
Multiple IPV								
None	85.9	59.7*	1	1	77.6	59.1*	1	1
Only one type	8.7	12.2	<b>2.01</b> [1.21, 3.32]	<b>2.02</b> [1.19, 3.42]	13.6	21.7	<b>2.10</b> [1.26, 3.51]	<b>2.18</b> [1.287, 3.70]
≥Two types	5.4	28.2	<b>7.53</b> [4.92, 11.53]	<b>8.90</b> [5.59, 14.15]	8.9	19.1	<b>2.83</b> [1.63, 4.92]	<b>2.46</b> [1.34, 4.50]

Note. ORs in bold are significantly different to those of the reference category ( $p < .05$ ). IPV = intimate partner violence; SC = severe combined; PA = physical abuse; EA = emotional abuse; H = harassment; OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>a</sup>Respondents who are in a current relationship (living together + married).

<sup>b</sup>Respondents who were in an intimate relationship before but are single now.

<sup>c</sup>Adjusted for education, occupational status, and having children.

\* $\chi^2$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.** Gender Differences in the Experience of IPV at 30-Year Follow-Up (Reference Group = Females).

	OR (95% CI)	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted <sup>a</sup>
<b>Current relationship<sup>b</sup></b>		
Forms of IPV <sup>c</sup>		
Severe combined	1.06 [0.51, 2.20]	1.26 [0.55, 2.91]
Physical abuse	<b>2.19 [1.55, 3.11]</b>	<b>2.61 [1.74, 3.93]</b>
Emotional abuse	<b>1.40 [1.06, 1.85]</b>	<b>1.55 [1.14, 2.10]</b>
Harassment	<b>2.17 [1.29, 3.64]</b>	<b>2.15 [1.19, 3.89]</b>
At least one	<b>1.69 [1.31, 2.16]</b>	<b>1.81 [1.37, 2.39]</b>
Multiple IPV		
None (reference)	1	1
One type only	<b>1.71 [1.26, 2.35]</b>	<b>1.68 [1.20, 2.36]</b>
≥Two types	<b>1.83 [1.25, 2.67]</b>	<b>2.19 [1.41, 3.40]</b>
<b>Not currently in relationship<sup>d</sup></b>		
Forms of IPV <sup>c</sup>		
Severe Combined	0.66 [0.33, 1.34]	0.89 [0.39, 1.89]
Physical Abuse	0.78 [0.45, 1.35]	0.88 [0.48, 1.62]
Emotional Abuse	0.72 [0.43, 1.18]	0.83 [0.47, 1.44]
Harassment	0.71 [0.40, 1.25]	0.88 [0.47, 1.65]
At least one	1.01 [0.63, 1.63]	1.23 [0.73, 2.09]
Multiple IPV		
None (reference)	1	1
One type only	1.81 [0.94, 3.45]	<b>2.11 [1.06, 4.21]</b>
≥Two types	0.69 [0.38, 1.23]	0.81 [0.42, 2.31]

Note. ORs in bold are significantly different to those of the reference category ( $p < 0.05$ ).

IPV = intimate partner violence; OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

<sup>a</sup>Adjusted for demographic variables at the 30-year follow-up.

<sup>b</sup>Only respondents in a current relationship (with a partner) were considered.

<sup>c</sup>Reference group = no IPV.

<sup>d</sup>Respondents who were in a relationship before but now are single were considered.

However, these differences appear to be larger for females than males. Females not currently in a relationship more frequently report having experienced multiple types of IPV than do males.

With respect to gender differences in IPV, males in a current relationship, with the exception of severe combined victimization, report they experience higher rates of physical and emotional abuse as well as harassment (Table 4). For physical abuse and harassment, the differences are large with males

reporting they experience victimization about twice as often as females. Adjustment for demographic variables did not alter the results described above. Males describing their current relationship experience both higher individual and multiple forms of IPV. By contrast, for those not currently in a relationship, there was no association between gender and IPV. The finding that males and females not currently in a current relationship experience similar rates of IPV suggests that males who are experiencing IPV may remain in these relationships more often than do females.

We have also examined gender differences in response to the specific items in the CAS scale (the appendix). The Severe Combined subscale includes such items as rape or attempted rape, physical restraint, and threat. There are no gender differences for these items. Males describing their current relationship reported more often being slapped, hit, and kicked by their present partner, whereas females who were not currently in a relationship more often experienced being pushed, thrown, and shaken. Emotionally, men in a current relationship were more often told they were not good enough, not allowed to socialize with friends, as well as told they failed to undertake housework-related expectations. Females who are not currently in a relationship reported they had more often been blamed for their partners' violence, and told they were crazy and unwanted. Males in a current relationship report they were followed by their current partner and females reported their prior partners hung around more often.

## Discussion

The present study suggests that both males and females who are not currently in a relationship, report having experienced much higher rates of IPV in the past year than those who are in a current relationship. Based on composite scales, there are no differences in the experience of IPV between males and females who are not currently in a relationship. However, males in a current relationship experience most forms of IPV more than comparable females.

Contrary to previous studies (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yodanis, 2004) that describe IPV primarily as "violence against women" or "wife abuse," we found that males experience higher rates of physical and emotional abuse and harassment in their current intimate relationships. This finding is partly consistent with the *family violence perspective* and *gender symmetry* model of IPV aggression (Straus, 2008, 2011, 2012; Straus & Ramirez, 2007; Winstok, 2011), in which both men and women might engage in domestic violence (Capaldi et al., 2007; Cross & Campbell, 2011; Desmarais et al., 2012; Dutton et al., 2005; Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005; Sorrentino et al., 2016).

Several possibilities need to be considered when interpreting the result: These findings might reflect methodological differences between our research and previous studies, involving sampling, measurements, and definitions (Johnson, 1995, 2011; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010; Ruiz-Pérez, Plazaola-Castaño, & Vives-Cases, 2007). Some studies that have reported high violence against women generally have been done in criminal settings with questionnaires that measure severe domains of IPV (Dutton et al., 2005; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010; Ross & Babcock, 2010); have been conducted in traditional societies (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006), recruited women from health settings and at-risk groups such as battered women (Campbell & Soeken, 1999); or used a feminist-oriented measurement such as the Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI; Shepard & Campbell, 1992). Otherwise, with a comprehensive measure of IPV and recruiting population samples, several recent studies have found that women were more violent in intimate relationships than were males (Cross & Campbell, 2011; Straus, 2011, 2012). There is also a need to consider the possibility that the current sample may not include a small group of very violent men. Such a possibility cannot be excluded as men who had frequent contact with the criminal justice system or who were incarcerated were unlikely to be retained in this 30-year phase of data collection. Johnson (1995) proposes to distinguish between two types of violence: a gendered and severe form of violence, called *patriarchal terrorism*, which is measured by studying clinical samples; and a gender-balanced type named *common couple violence*, which mostly can be seen in population surveys, as, for example, suggested by the present research. From a different perspective, Anderson (2005) argues that there is no such phenomenon as *gender neutral violence*, even in studies that simply reduce *gender* to what females and males do. Contexts (e.g., cultural scripts), motivations, and consequences (e.g., injuries) of IPV vary by gender. The last possibility is that males in our study might have overreported their experiences of IPV. It is difficult to see why this would be the case. Indeed, some suggest that males have lesser tendency to disclose their own victimization, mainly due to shame or fear of not being believed (Brown, 2004; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005).

Overall, the proportions who are not currently in a relationship appear to be similar for males and females (15.2% vs. 14.1%); however, our data suggest that a smaller proportion of victimized males left their abusive partners than did victimized females. Of the 233 females who experienced any type of IPV in the past year, 73 women had left their relationships (31.3%), whereas out of 193 males who reported being abused, 47 (24.4%) had terminated their abusive relationships ( $\chi^2 = 2.54, p = .11$ ). This finding confirms that a substantial proportion of abused individuals make a decision not to stay with a violent partner. Furthermore, this finding may suggest that men tend to

remain more often in an abusive relationship compared with females. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. The first possibility is that whereas women victims are socially encouraged to exhibit their fears and vulnerability and to seek help for IPV (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Felson & Cares, 2005), social discouragements (e.g., societal bias, shame, and denial) precludes men from disclosure of their victim status (Felson & Cares, 2005). A second possibility could be the extent to which men and women are affected by the partner violence. Some evidence shows that although females may perpetrate violence as frequently as do men, due to the males' physical strength and higher social and economic status in the society, they experience fewer negative psychological (fear, stress, guilt) and physical consequences (Archer, 2000; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). A third possibility is that social expectations of males to be the breadwinner and responsible for their (even abusive) partners, constrain them from leaving an intimate relationship (Anderson, 2007).

Our results support the idea that females' victimization cannot be understood by assessing only details of their current relationships (Ackerman, 2012). Although, composite scales of IPV did not reveal any gender differences in IPV, individual items suggested that rates of the same specific forms of physical and emotional abuse as well as harassment in females who are not currently in a relationship may be higher than those reported by men. Whereas males (in their current relationship) reported being slapped, hit, and kicked, females (in their former relationship) reported being pushed, thrown, and shaken. Arguably, the latter entails more physical power and leads to more injuries. In interpreting emotional abuse items, males more often reported that "their partners did not want them to socialize with friends." We also found that females were experiencing verbal insults more often, especially items containing "crazy," "unwanted," and "blamed for partner's violent behavior." This supports Johnson's idea, suggesting that men in an abusive relationship may make females feel worthless, guilty, and humiliated (Johnson, 1995). Males reported higher rates of emotional abuse over house chores. It seems that while families are increasingly becoming dual earners, some males who are expected to undertake what were previously feminine roles, are unwilling to do so, and this unwillingness may be a source of family conflict (Karakurt & Silver, 2013; Killewald & Gough, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The present study compares males and females using a relatively large population sample with a comprehensive self-report measure of IPV. IPV in this study involves both males and females as perpetrators and victims. Although

males reported they are more often the victims of IPV in the current relationship, the broader context is that IPV involves couples who are engaged in interactions characterized by disagreements and sometimes physical violence. It does appear that there was a disproportional tendency for relationships involving higher proportions of IPV to lead to a mutual breakdown. IPV was more likely to have occurred in relationships that ended than in relationships that persisted. The findings suggest that victimized men appear to remain in an abusive relationship and report greater rates of IPV in a current relationship. There may be a need to have a greater emphasis on IPV-related research and male victimization, its correlates and consequences.

These findings should be interpreted with regard to the limitations of an absence of very high-risk individuals in the study, as well as reliance on only one partner’s self-report of victimization (Perry & Fromuth, 2005). Although a retrospective self-report of IPV might be subject to recall bias or reporting errors, CAS asked about the most recent experiences to minimize losing information (Hegarty et al., 2005). Further studies are needed to address the experience of IPV in those who may have had a previous abusive partner, which was not their most recent relationships.

## Appendix

### Gender Differences in the Experience of IPV-Specific Items<sup>a</sup> at 30-Year Follow-Up

IPV Items	Current Relationship			Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup>		
	Females (n = 1,074)	Males (n = 642)	p	Females (n = 180)	Males (n = 115)	p
	n (%)			n (%)		
Severe combined						
Raped me	0.0	1 (0.2)	.2	2 (1.1)	2 (1.7)	.65
Used a knife or gun or weapon	3 (0.3)	3 (0.5)	.52	6 (3.3)	8 (7.0)	.15
Kept me from medical care	2 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	.90	8 (4.5)	2 (1.7)	.21
Locked me in the bedroom	2 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	.88	10 (5.6)	3 (2.6)	.23
Tried to rape me	0.0	0.0	—	4 (2.2)	2 (1.8)	.77

(continued)

**Appendix. (continued)**

IPV Items	Current Relationship		<i>p</i>	Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup>		<i>p</i>
	Females ( <i>n</i> = 1,074)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 642)		Females ( <i>n</i> = 180)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 115)	
	<i>n</i> (%)			<i>n</i> (%)		
Took my wallet and left me stranded	4 (0.4)	6 (0.9)	.14	16 (8.9)	8 (7.0)	.55
Put foreign objects in my vagina/anus	8 (0.7)	0.0	.02	10 (5.5)	4 (3.5)	.43
Refused to let me work outside	4 (0.4)	3 (0.5)	.77	7 (3.9)	4 (3.5)	.86
<b>Physical abuse</b>						
Slapped me	25 (2.3)	50 (7.8)	<.001	27 (15.1)	18 (15.7)	.90
Pushed, grabbed, or shoved me	55 (5.1)	36 (5.6)	.66	43 (23.9)	17 (14.8)	.05
Hit or tried to hit me with something	18 (1.7)	33 (5.1)	<.001	25 (13.8)	17 (14.8)	.82
Kicked me, bit me, or hit me	11 (1.0)	21 (3.3)	.001	19 (10.5)	9 (7.8)	.44
Threw me	14 (1.3)	2 (0.3)	.03	22 (12.3)	3 (2.6)	.004
Shook me	13 (1.2)	4 (0.6)	.24	26(14.5)	3 (2.6)	.001
Beat me up	5 (0.5)	4 (0.6)	.66	16 (8.8)	7 (6.1)	.39
<b>Emotional abuse</b>						
Told me that I was not good enough	76 (7.1)	77 (12.0)	.001	49 (27.2)	27 (23.5)	.47
Tried to turn others against me	18 (1.7)	16 (2.5)	.24	28 (15.6)	15 (13.0)	.54
Told me that I was ugly	28 (2.6)	23 (3.6)	.25	23 (12.8)	10 (8.7)	.28
Tried to keep me from family	17 (1.6)	17 (2.7)	.12	23 (12.8)	11 (9.6)	.39
Blamed me for causing their violence	51 (4.7)	19 (3.0)	.07	47 (26.1)	14 (12.2)	.004
Became upset if housework was not done	134 (12.5)	117 (18.3)	.001	38 (21.1)	20 (17.4)	.43

*(continued)*

**Appendix. (continued)**

IPV Items	Current Relationship		<i>p</i>	Not Currently in Relationship <sup>b</sup>		<i>p</i>
	Females ( <i>n</i> = 1,074)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 642)		Females ( <i>n</i> = 180)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 115)	
	<i>n</i> (%)			<i>n</i> (%)		
Told me that I was crazy	116 (10.8)	57 (8.9)	.20	57 (31.7)	24 (21.4)	.06
Told me that no one ever want me	27 (2.5)	16 (2.5)	.98	34 (18.8)	11 (9.6)	.03
Did not want me to socialize with friends	66 (6.1)	73 (11.4)	<.001	49 (27.1)	28 (24.6)	.63
Tried to convince others that I was crazy	11 (1.0)	5 (0.8)	.61	28 (15.5)	9 (7.8)	.05
Told me that I was stupid	81 (7.5)	50 (7.8)	.85	29 (21.7)	17 (14.8)	.14
<b>Harassment</b>						
Followed me	10 (0.9)	18 (2.8)	.003	24 (13.3)	12 (10.5)	.47
Hung around outside my house	9 (0.8)	3 (0.5)	.37	23 (12.8)	6 (5.2)	.03
Harassed me over the telephone	34 (3.2)	28 (4.4)	.20	47 (26.1)	20 (17.4)	.08
Harassed me at work	10 (0.9)	7 (1.1)	.75	17 (9.4)	10 (8.8)	.84

Note. IPV = intimate partner violence.

<sup>a</sup>A chi-square test was used for each dichotomous item: *never* = 0 and *only once to daily* = 1.

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