

AN EXAMINATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATION:  
A FURTHER LOOK INTO THE GENDER SYMMETRY DEBATE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Sociology  
in the College of Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term  
2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

The influences of certain social changes and social movements, such as the feminist movement, in society introduced a violence gendered stereotype model that promoted the social idea that males are more violent than females. From the limited research, it appears that domestic violence perpetration among women differs from male domestic violence perpetration; however, research has not clarified the extent of female domestic violence perpetration and the severity of their abusive behaviors. The current research examines gender-specific intimate partner violence perpetration to determine whether attitudes toward social gender role expectations, income contribution and production, and division of labor in the household can explain marital violence using secondary data collected from the National Survey of Families and Households. Findings indicate that significant differences were not found for perpetration of physical violence and attitudes about division of labor among women and men, but there were significant differences for men and women when taking into consideration their attitudes about income contribution, income production, and gender roles.

Dedico esta tesis a Dios Todopoderoso, a todos los Santos, mis abuelos y Mami Rosi (Q.E.P.D) quienes me han protegido y guiado por el camino del bien. A mi mami Noelia, por ser mi pilar y guía por enseñarme que no hay obstáculo que no se pueda superar, que los sueños si se hacen realidad y acompañarme en el recorrido de este camino llamado vida. A mi padre, Manolo, por ayudarme a que mis sueños se hicieran realidad. A mis mami: Chichi, Zadi, Thais Liamny, Leida, Malinita, y Marelis, a mis papis: Ruben, Jorge, Orlando, Freddy, Julian, y Julio, hermanos, sobrinos y seres queridos quienes siempre me han apoyado y amado incondicionalmente y han estado conmigo en todos los momentos de mi vida.

Thank you for always believing in me and loving me unconditionally!

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my committee chair Dr. Amy Reckdenwald, who has guided me during the preparation of this thesis and supported me during this journey. Also, thank you for motivating me to continue researching about domestic violence and male victimization. Without you, this thesis would have not been possible.

I would like to thank to my committee member Dr. Lin Huff-Corzine, whose advice has helped me to develop an unbiased perception related to this topic and motivated me to pursue my research passion.

I would like to thank to my committee member Dr. David Gay, whose expertise in the statistic field is invaluable. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Gay for his dedication and support who has inspired me to continue developing my statistic skills.

I would like to thank to the members of the UCF - Department of Sociology for their dedication and support during this journey.

Thank you to all my colleagues who have helped and supported during this journey and annual meetings.

Thank you UCF for this opportunity.

Go Knights forever!

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CTS Conflict Tactic Scale

DV Domestic Violence

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Gender has long played a controversial role in the area of domestic violence. Hester (2013, p. 752) observed that “whether or not an individual is perceived as a perpetrator or a victim can be complex, and also involves gendered perspectives and constructions” (625). Certain social changes and movements, such as the feminist movement, introduced a gendered stereotype model of intimate partner violence that promoted the social idea that men are more violent than women. This stereotypical model arises in two ways. First, there exists the notion that men are unlikely to be abused compared to women based on their nature and nurture, (Drijber, Reijnders, & Ceelen, 2013). Second, men tend “to underreport” victimization even more so than women (Anderson, 2005, 2013). Though the majority of the research regarding domestic violence has been centered on men perpetrating violence against their female partners (Harris, Palazzolo, & Savage, 2012; Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004; Kilpatrick, 2004; Krebs, Breiding, Browne, & Warner, 2011), research has revealed that males are also victims of domestic violence in the socio-structural setting (Allen, Swan, & Raghavan, 2009; Hines & Douglas, 2013; Kimmel, 2002; Robertson & Murachver, 2007).

Since domestic violence is interconnected with gender-specific stereotypes, a socio-legal limbo has been created and maintained in which men tend to be more vulnerable and unprotected by the criminal justice system when it comes to domestic violence victimization. In addition, research has yet to clarify the extent of female domestic violence perpetration or the severity and social impact of their abusive behaviors (Hines & Douglas, 2013). In fact, few studies have

examined the social reality of female perpetration in domestic violence against their male partners do not explain the nature of this behavior (J. Schwartz & Gertseva, 2010). From the limited research, it appears that female domestic violence perpetration tends to be developed as a spontaneous reaction to “some level of frustration” (Kimmel, 2002) due to a specific event that might involve family violence, abuse, or maltreatment. This limited outcome tends to challenge or compromise the development of an accurate interpretation of domestic violence behavior patterns due to methodological and reporting limitations (Hamel, 2009; Woodin, Sotskova, & O’Leary, 2013).

Drijber et al. (2013) found that male victimization has been overlooked compared to female cases in domestic violence due to the social stigma related to males as the dominant gender. This stigmatic premise prevents them from properly reporting this type of crime. As a result, male victimization has not been taken seriously by the agents of social control and social institutions because of the current social patriarchal setting and social beliefs. Indeed, research has argued that “...one gender disparity between the {male} victims may be {the} fear that fighting back might” cause a severe damage to the violent females” (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2010, p. 413). Also, man’s fear that their mechanism of self-defense would bring socio-legal sanctions resulting in their incarceration and/or social exclusion instead of ending their victimization.

Consequently, it is necessary to understand socio-psychologically and legally that males are also DV victims who feel the need to talk about it, report it, and/or desire support (Drijber et al., 2013). In fact, activists for “men’s rights” have suggested that policy-oriented efforts for

women have been misplaced because they tend to focus entirely on women as the victim and not as a possible perpetrator of physical violence in domestic violence cases (Anderson, 2005; Kimmel, 2002; M. D. Schwartz, 2000). Therefore, a comparative symmetrical analysis should be followed to better determine factors and/or attitudes that may predict perpetration of domestic violence among women and men.

To shed light on the reasons behind both male and female perpetrated physical violence in domestic violence, the current research examines gender-specific intimate partner violence perpetration to determine whether attitudes toward social gender role expectations, income, and division of labor in the household can explain differences in marital violence for both genders. Also, this study seeks to determine which gender is more violent because of the social influences of certain attitudes that have developed. This exploratory study takes an equalitarian and impartial domestic violence approach to determine possible reasons why both males and females engage in domestic violence. This argues that a more protective and less gendered approach should be applied to prevent and reduce domestic violence perpetration of both genders.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Domestic violence (DV) is a social issue affecting the behavior development of individuals regardless of gender, socio-economic status, age, and education level. DV tends to modify the socialization process and/or socio-psychological well-being of the individuals involved. Research has shown that its impacts on the social perception of gender causes a variance in the social treatment of perpetrators based on gender (Couch, 2014; Kimmel, 2002; ManKindInitiative, 2014; Orloff, 2009; Straus, 1979; Murray A. Straus, 2007; Murray A Straus, 2007a, 2007b). Therefore, this perception developed by social individuals and institutions tends to affect what could be considered as a normal, criminal, or deviant behavior (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, Brzyski, & Brzyska, 2014).

#### ***Definition of Domestic Violence and the Exclusion of Male Victims***

Current literature is unable to provide a clear interpretation and explanation of domestic violence (DV) and the different types of DV (DeKeseredy, 2000). It has been explained as a social issue (Lindquist et al., 2010) caused by aggressive behavior that negatively alters the socialization process in the socio-structural setting affecting women (Johnson, 2006). The current definition is vague. It excludes the possibility of women being DV perpetrators while labeling men as universal perpetrators despite evidence and research that demonstrates that women are also perpetrators of DV (Kilpatrick, 2004; Woodin et al., 2013).

Generally, DV has been defined as a deviant or criminal behavior pattern that tends to be frequently developed by males “in an intimate relationship (e.g. marriage, dating, family, friends and cohabitation)” against their female partners in which the victim is exposed to mental, physical, socio-psychological, and/or economic abuse, retaliation, and/or repression (Drijber et al., 2013, p. 173). Research has shown that the development of this type of behavior tends to modify the behavior patterns, the impression management process, and the socialization process of the individuals involved and their surroundings (Lawson, 2012).

M. D. Schwartz (2000) argues that it is necessary to have available a well-developed definition of domestic violence because it will help to accurately measure domestic violence perpetration to better determine and interpret the outcome of the research. Therefore, “how {DV} is conceptualized or defined has implications for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and legal action” (Woodin et al., 2013, p. 121). Moreover, M. D. Schwartz (2000) states that “feminist critics of social science research... {tend} to argue that in a male-dominated society, the experiences or perspectives of men are often used to develop terms that are supposed to reflect the experiences of women” (p. 816). However, this approach has led to the development of a perception that has resulted in the under-representation of males when analyzing DV victimization and overgeneralization when analyzing DV perpetration (Hamel, 2009; Woodin et al., 2013).

### ***Behind Domestic Violence***

There is a lack of consensus in the literature to explain why domestic violence behavior is developed by certain individuals or about the nature of DV. Some studies have followed a social

learning approach, suggesting that it could be developed as a reaction to previous exposure to domestic violent abuse during an early childhood stage because the events “have a lasting impact on” children (Hamel, 2009, p. 53) or as a consequence of the cycle of violence in a previous and/or current abusive relationship (Hines & Douglas, 2013). Indeed, King-Ries (2010) suggests that domestic violence could be developed during adolescence since adolescents tend to perceive “unhealthy relationship” and violent behavior patterns as normal because their lacking of experience and age (p. 133). Moreover, those patterns tend to appear and increase after the adolescents “begin to date seriously or engage in sexual activity” (King-Ries, 2010, p. 147). Consequently, it tends to trigger the behavioral process causing the development of perpetration behavior patterns “in adulthood” (Hamel, 2009).

On the other hand, sociological and socio-psychological perspectives have determined and analyzed the “social, not individual, causes of violence” (Lawson, 2012, p. 573). Current research and theoretical approaches tend to explain DV perpetration following a feminist and/or family violence perspective (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005; Hamel, 2009; Lawson, 2012; M. D. Schwartz, 2000). Also, those approaches tend to be influenced the social gender-stereotype model.

### **Feminism: Feminist Theory in Domestic Violence**

Feminism has helped to change and increase the socio-legal awareness in society regarding crime and violence against women. The feminist perspective argues that domestic violence is interconnected with gender differences and the patriarchal social model that promotes male dominance while justifying female submission and self-defense actions or reactions.



(Dutton & Nicholls, 2005; Lawson, 2012). In fact, Dutton and Nicholls (2005) explain that “this theory views all social relations through the prism of gender relations and holds, in its neo-Marxist view, that men... hold power advantages over women... in patriarchal societies and that all domestic violence is either male physical abuse to maintain that power advantage or female defensive violence, used for self-protection” (p. 682).

Moreover, in an attempt to justify its principles, feminists remark on the impact and influences of the social patriarchal beliefs and cultural norms – i.e. male dominance, wife abuse tolerance, and victim blaming in the development of DV behavior pattern- that has not only promoted a generalized position that describes domestic violence as a male violence issue only but also has overgeneralized female participation in domestic violence (Houston, 2014; Michalski, 2004). It is evident that feminism has caused the development of a biased social perception and beliefs that tend “to ignore female pathology” in the social setting while punishing male self-defense and ignoring findings that expose female violence tendencies against their males’ partners (Archer, 2000; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). In contrast, the position, intervention, or participation of the criminal justice system in domestic violence has been modified since domestic violence cases have been considered as a public matter now instead of a private family matter reflecting the social impact of modern socio-psychological perceptions (Houston, 2014).

### **Family Violence Theory in Domestic Violence**

In contrast to feminist theory, the family violence perspective argues that DV is the result of a combination of “structural stress and socialization experience” of the family members and

their role expectations (Houston, 2014, p. 228). In other words, family violence theory explains that family members tend to develop DV behaviors due to the influences of social forces that alter the social perception related to role performance and its expectations. As a result, those social forces act as conditional factors (gender inequality and the impossibility to execute the gender role expectations in the social structure: i.e. impossibility to comply with the breadwinner duties) that lead to the development of violent behaviors in the familiar structure against spouses, children, and any other family members (Houston, 2014; Lawson, 2012) based on a mutual combat systematical predictable model (Archer, 2000; Straus, 1979; Murray A. Straus, 2007; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Surogarman, 1996). Therefore, “studies that propose gender symmetry must explain this {gendered} paradox...” (Kimmel, 2002, pp. 1343-1344) in family violence cases as well as create a well-developed definition that addresses and includes the different types of abusive behaviors. Moreover, scholars have suggested that this will lead to the development of an effective measurement that will help to scholars and the agents of social control to better understand findings, predict, and determine DV perpetration patterns in the current socio-structural setting (Anderson, 2005).

In addition, Houston (2014) states that “the more social disadvantages experienced by a family, the more stress they are likely to feel; and the more stress a family feels, the more likely violence is to occur” (p. 228). As a result, this theory argues that the development of domestic violence behavior patterns in family structures tends to be predictable because the victims are able to predict the actions that predisposed their partner to violence so that victims and aggressors should mutually modify their behavior to maintain and safeguard the family structure (Houston, 2014).

## **Measurement Implications**

Based on previous perspectives, studies that have examined the possible effect of gender differences in domestic violence perpetration tend to use and apply different types of structural measurement instruments (i.e., scales and self-reports) to measure socio-psychological reactions and the social impact in society and individuals (Anderson, 2005; Follingstad & Bush, 2014; Hamby, 2005; Straus, 1979; Murray A. Straus, 2007; Waltermaurer, 2005; Woodin et al., 2013). Shorey, Cornelius, and Bell (2008) argued that “findings have historically been mixed and inconclusive” due to the type of measurement used. The measurement of DV represents a challenge to the research field due to the fact that almost all instruments tend to measure it using questionnaires that do not ask questions that help to identify the perpetrator, the frequency and/or timeframe of the victimization. In fact, the questions asked on those questionnaires do not help to properly determine when or how the violence happened (Waltermaurer, 2005).

Similarly, Woodin et al. (2013) explain that current measurement instruments are unable to systematically determine and quantify levels of exposure of DV due to the fact that “there is no {a} single measure of {DV} that is suitable for all purposes” (p. 122). In fact, the majority of the instruments only tend to measure violent actions and not the result of those actions or its frequency, creating validity and reliability issues (Anderson, 2005; Woodin et al., 2013). Consequently, it is important to be able to properly determine and explain the context of the violent act and specify if it was the result of self-defense or not (Brush, 1990).

When developing a measurement instrument, Waltermaurer (2005) argues that it is necessary and imperative to determine and set a specific timeframe to be able to analyze the

nature and nurture of any type of abusive/violent behavior effectively. This would help to better analyze and measure “the life of the cycle of violence” and any “immediate risk” related to any abusive behavior; a piece of the puzzle that would help to reveal the unknown facts related to DV perpetration (Waltermaurer, 2005). Therefore, Follingstad and Bush (2014) suggest that many instruments should be updated to properly analyze, understand, and identify DV perpetration patterns based on a standardized measurement protocol, such as the gold standard and its phases (Follingstad & Bush, 2014).

### ***Measurement Instruments: CTS and its Criticism***

The methodological technique developed by Straus (1979) tends to be one of the most commonly used to explain and justify DV behavior patterns. Researchers keep in mind his connection to the family violence theory and/or tendency (Houston 2014). In an intent to measure domestic violence in society, Straus developed the Conflict Tactic Scale, which is one of the most well-known instruments, to properly analyze intrafamily conflict. To support his position and instrument, Straus (1979) argues “that there is a curvilinear relationship between the amount of conflict and group well-being (p. 76)” that tends to affect society and individuals. With this instrument, it is evident that he has tried to evaluate those conditional factors that could alter and/or generate violence in the family structure, such as conflict of interest, conflict, and hostility. In other words, with the development of the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS), he has been able to test "the catharsis theory of violence control" that is related to the role of each family member in the development of domestic violence (Straus, 1979, p. 77).

Indeed, the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) has helped set differential parameters that allow the proper identification of “occasional minor violence from a repeated severe violent behavior (i.e. severe assaults)” in the family based on the family members’ roles and gender expectations (Straus, 1979). In the same way, Murray A. Straus (2007) explains that the levels of measurement that have been used and/or applied to the identification and detection of “maltreatment” are based on a behavioral "8-level factor" scale with 24 different possible CTS scores and categories that vary from a less severe to a more severe aggression for a specified and/or predetermined time frame to measure the frequency. In addition, Straus (1979) explains that this scale is subdivided into three subscales that are:

1. Reasoning scale (rational and reasoning during the social interaction),
2. Verbal aggression scale (verbal maltreatment or abuse), and
3. Violence scale (physical aggression and/or psychical abuse).

This subscale had helped interpret different type of violence and its possible implications in society. It is evident that the development of an instrument, such as the CTS, has been an almost impossible task in the research field. This type of instrument has helped to properly determine levels of exposure to violence and how its frequency could be related to a variety of socio-psychological risks and conditions.

### *Criticism of the CTS*

Although researchers have determined that the CTS has helped to examine some effects of DV in the social setting, it has been questioned and criticized for couple reasons. For example,

its inability to properly determine which combination of variables and behavior patterns could effectively help identify and predict which actions, reactions, injuries, and/or conditional factors could be the result or lead to domestic violence perpetration. Also, for its inability to determine any other events that tend to increase or reduce the risk to be exposed to violence in a short or long period of time despite the influences of the patriarchal social setting, gender differences related to specific social roles and expectations, and/or feminism. On the other hand, scholars tend to use this instrument to measure levels of exposure to violence in society (Murray A. Straus, 2007) even though it does not offer a solution about how to end and/or break the cycle of violence in the family structure because it is an instrument that was only developed to measure some type of predetermined behavioral actions.

Another critique is that the socio-family system that the CTS follows is not viable or valid due to the fact that “the context of violence act” and self – defense behavior tend to be “unexplored” while gender differences are not being considered to cause gender disparate treatment due to some type of sample misrepresentation (Brush, 1990). Moreover, it may not be possible nor viable to analyze DV following an egalitarian and gender symmetry approach because to be able to determine if there is any trail of female perpetration of physical violence, it should test the impact or "significance of the gender differences {while} controlling for other variables" related to the type of abuse and/or injury (Brush, 1990, p. 61). Based on those factors previously exposed, the interpretation of violence might modify and/or change the social perception without taking in consideration the fact that males are most likely to underreport DV compared to females (Murray A. Straus, 2007). In addition, Murray A. Straus (2007) argued that it is important to use a specified instrument to measure the why, what, and how a family deals

with intrafamily conflicts (Murray A. Straus, 2007; Murray A Straus, 2007a), but his instrument does not offer the option to effectively and properly measure the frequency of the violence events.

Finally, Dutton and Nicholls (2005) state that feminists have criticized the CTS because its categories may measure acts for which severity levels tend to vary so that the interpretation of the findings. Also, some feminists argue that the CTS is unable to properly measure self-reporting because males and females tend not to agree on the severity of the act. Therefore, it may cause gender misrepresentation in the research field (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005).

#### *After the CTS*

Current research explains that having a standard instrument to measure DV could be a viable solution to the measurement limitations issues. This standard instrument should develop and include unique categories that describe different types of abusive behaviors and experiences to be able to evaluate the social implications (Follingstad & Bush, 2014) and its intensity and impact. In the same, it should be able to evaluate any possible variance that could alter the findings. For example, a variance based on the gender of the perpetrator and victim (Johnson, 2006) or the definition of violence since this tends to vary from one individual to another.

The desirable instrument should be developed using a gendered symmetry approach that includes any possible situation, event, and circumstances that may be interconnected with any type of abusive/violent behavior. It should focus on the victim and the aggressor using a questionnaire with open-ended questions (Waltermaurer, 2005). This last requirement would help to better detect and identify any abusive behavior against any individual because the

respondent should be able to state to what type of violence has been exposed in the past and the degree and/or level of exposure to since “it is crucial to know the extent to which the partner has also ceased acts of physical and psychological aggression (Murray A. Straus, 2007).” It will help to identify a better perpetration pattern in DV.

### **Gender Differences in Domestic Violence**

In the past, domestic violence perpetration was analyzed as an isolated gender issue with a unique and sole male perpetration approach that automatically excluded women (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Kilpatrick, 2004). Previous socio-criminological studies have demonstrated that society and the agents of social control have failed to properly address and analyze the actual social reality of the DV perpetration (Drijber et al., 2013; Johnson, 2006; Krebs et al., 2011; Robertson & Murachver, 2007). As a result, limited research has concluded that both genders may be equally exposed to domestic violence and developed perpetration behavior (Hester, 2013; Hines & Douglas, 2013) and have only focused on the individual who tends to be more affected by the violence. For instance, Hester (2013) found that there are gender difference patterns developed by them so that it “can be difficult {to determine} whether these patterns are also lodged in the experience of the individuals concerned, or to what extent the individuals are framed by police officers’ perspectives and professional approaches.”

There is a lack of literature that examines both male and female DV perpetration (Hines & Douglas, 2013) because of a dualistic gender differential approach that has been applied to study domestic violence from both a gendered symmetrical and asymmetrical perspective (Anderson, 2013; Gerstenberger & Williams, 2013; Hester, 2013; Hines & Douglas, 2013; Iritani



et al., 2013). This dualistic approach explains the social idea that gender symmetry is present during perpetration. However, Gerstenberger and Williams (2013) argue that this approach represents gender asymmetry when the impact is analyzed excluding certain factors that could be useful at the time of understanding the nature of this type of perpetration; otherwise, it is symmetrical. Consequently, “the apparent discrepancies between the claims of gender symmetry and claims of dramatic asymmetry have led to significant confusion among policy makers and the general public” (Kimmel, 2002, p. 1334). Therefore, if domestic violence is, in fact, a gendered symmetrical issue then it is imperative to determine the reasons behind domestic violence perpetration for both genders. In the same way, Kimmel (2002) argues that gender symmetry studies should offer a more detailed and precise explanation of why DV should not be considered a social gendered issue taking into consideration that previous socio-psychological and criminological studies have found that violent behaviors are interconnected to gender and its variance is influenced by the geographic location of the social individuals.

### ***Gendered Symmetrical Implications***

Current debates are focused on establishing a relationship between the “nature of the domestic violence” and the nurture of gender that could possibly explain DV perpetration (Kimmel, 2002, p. 1333). Since Straus’ findings suggest a “relationship between socio-economic factors” and the development of DV behavior patterns (Straus, 1979). In the same way, Straus (1979) concludes that the factor analysis of violence reported by females (wife) tend to be similar to that reported by males (husband). Therefore, this finding has helped to determine if the use of violence by females and/or males is related “to maintain a male-dominant power

position (p. 85)” or not in society. Also, Hines and Douglas (2013) estimated that DV against women in the United States “range from 3.2% to 5.5%, with approximately equal rates of...” DV against men with socio-psychological “consequences for both” genders (Iritani et al., 2013, pp. 459-460).

Though previous findings, there are a limited number of studies available that address female perpetration against male based on the current gender difference in the social hegemonic structure. For example, Hines and Douglas (2013) have suggested that “... The literature has overlooked the prediction of more severe and dangerous forms of {DV} toward men in relationships with women who are more frequently and severely violent than men are, given the evidence than men can be the victims of severe IPV” (p. 752). In contrast, Woodin et al. (2013) argue that the current research has started to evaluate the disparate findings since previous research has demonstrated that DV is a social phenomenon with different forms and types. Consequently, DV should not be analyzed as a sole gender issue (p. 126).

### **Division of Labor in the Household: Gender Differences**

In society, gender differences have not only modified social perception but also have imposed a behavior pattern that requires a mandatory compliance. Therefore, Launius and Hassel (2015) argue that “gender is performative... {it is} something that is built into or programmed into you (p. 27).” In other words, individuals tend to perform and behave according with their social beliefs and perception of their own self (self-presentation) interconnected to their gender ideology. Those beliefs and perceptions are being directly affected by the gender differences presented in the household. Therefore, it will modify and impact the division of labor in the

household intentionally dividing women and men into two different categories based on traditional and patriarchal principals present in the social model: breadwinning and housewife.

Furthermore, Atkinson, Greenstein, and Lang (2005) argue that marriage is the perfect “structural context of opportunity for husbands and wives to behave in ways that validate their {gender} identities as male and female”(pp. 1137-1140), which tend to imply the beginning of the cycle of violence in some cases. From an analogical perception, it is possible to state that violent behavior and reaction can be developed to take control or denote power in a relationship “in the absence of material resources...” affecting men and women (Atkinson et al., 2005). However, current research is limited on the analysis of the socio-economic impact of the division of labor in perpetration among men only.

Indeed, Atkinson et al. (2005) explain that the spouse “with the most material resources are less likely to use violence since their material resources assure obedience and compliance (pp. 1138-1140)” while controlling for age, income, and education. Also, Hines and Douglas (2013) found that female perpetrators tend to develop deviant behavior patterns that may predict the use of life-threatening violence and the severity of the injuries in DV cases. In fact, results demonstrate that women tend to develop DV perpetration behavior not as a reaction to a previous victimization but as a reaffirmation of dominance based on “income production” (Atkinson et al., 2005) in the household.

On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that gender differences in domestic violence tend to modify the social treatment of domestic violence perpetrators due to the social stigmas related to the gender-specific constructed reality in the patriarchal social model. In some cases, the behavior developed by the perpetrators is justified due to the prevalence of gender

differences in the division of labor (Hester, 2013; J. Schwartz & Gertseva, 2010). Mavin, Grandy, and Williams (2014) argue that the “gendered nature of organizational life” has caused the social exclusion of women in situations related to power. Therefore, this position has helped to establish and maintain the myth surrounding an imminent relationship between DV and gender that implies that females could not be the perpetrator because they are socially excluded from the development of any possible attitude and behavior that could be interconnected to the “male inner cycles of power and influence” in the social hegemonic/patriarchal model.

### ***The Current Study***

The current study uses a gender symmetrical approach to determine possible reasons why both males and females engage in domestic violence and to examine physical violence perpetration in domestic violence since it may help to predict perpetration pattern. In addition, it examines gender-specific intimate partner violence perpetration to determine whether attitudes about gender role expectations, income, and division of labor in the household can or cannot explain differences in marital violence for both genders.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Method: Data***

The current quantitative and exploratory study utilizes secondary data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH): Wave 2 and 3. It is a nationwide sample of 13,007 individuals from a cross-section of 9,637 households including an oversampling of minority groups, modern family structures (single parent families, families with step-children, and cohabiting couples), and traditional family structures (married individuals). These data were originally collected to determinate and predict the impact of “earlier patterns on current states” of some violent behavior developed on marital relationship that tend to affect the socio-economic-psychological well-being (Bumpass & Sweet., 2004; Eisenhauer Smith & Hanson, 2008). For purposes of the current study only data on currently married respondents was utilized, which resulted in a sample of 4476 individuals.

#### ***Units of Analysis***

The unit of analysis is the individual. Each survey was self-administrated randomly to a sample of English and Spanish speaking persons 19 years of age or over in which one individual from each household was selected as the primary respondent. This survey includes longitudinal information related to the living arrangements in childhood, departures and returns to the parental home, and histories of marriage, cohabitation, education, and religion (Bumpass & Sweet., 2004; Eisenhauer Smith & Hanson, 2008).

## **Independent Variables**

In the current study, the independent variables that were taken into consideration measure attitudes that were developed due to the influence of the feminist tendency, such as:

### ***Attitudes about Income Contribution***

To account for attitudes about income contribution in a relationship the social attitude toward if “Husband and wife should contribute income” was measured by level of agreement. Participants were asked if: “Both the husband and wife should contribute to family income.” The responses were: strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), strongly disagree (5).

### ***Attitudes about Gender Roles***

To measure social attitudes toward patriarchal tendencies related to who should be the breadwinner in a relationship, participants were asked their agreement with the following statement: “Man earner while wife is a homemaker.” The possible responses were coded as strongly agree (1), Agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), strongly disagree (5).

### ***Attitudes about Division of Labor***

To measure social attitudes toward an egalitarian household division, participants were asked their agreement with the following statement: “A husband whose wife is working full-time should spend just as many hours doing housework as his wife.” Those responses were coded as: Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), strongly disagree (5).

### ***Attitudes about Income Production***

The social attitude towards attribution of income production was measured by asking participants agreement to the following statement: “The partner who earns the most money should have the most say in family.” The responses were coded as: Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5).

### **Control Variables**

To measure the possible influence of demographic characteristics in domestic violence perpetration, participants were asked questions related to age, gender, personal income, religious beliefs. Those variables were measured using the following *format*:

#### ***Age***

Each participant was asked to “enter year” of birth. The age variable was transformed to create a measure of the participants’ age in years.

#### ***Household Income***

To measure the participants’ household income, participants were asked to provide the household income. The question was: “About how much income from wages, salaries, commissions, and tips did you receive in the last 12 months, before taxes and other deductions? They were able to provide an estimate of all possible income received in the past 12 months.

### ***Religiosity: Religious tendency***

The religious tendency of the participants was measured using the following question: “How Religious are you? Would you say you are very religious, somewhat religious, not very religious, or not at all religious?” The possible responses were coded as: Very religious (1), somewhat religious (2), not very religious (3), not at all religious (4).

## **Dependent Variables**

### ***Gender-Specific Perpetration of Physical Violence***

The dependent variables were divided into two sub-dependent variables that are:

- Male Perpetration of physical violence
- Female perpetration of physical violence

From the NSFH, one variable measured perpetration of physical violence. This variable asked about physical violence perpetrated by the other partner in the following format: “Married respondent was physically violent towards spouse in the last year?” The possible responses were coded as: yes (1) and no (2).

## ***Data Analysis and Findings***

Initially, logistic regression analyses were going to be performed to examine relationship between the main independent variables and gender-specific physical violence perpetration while accounting for the control variables. However, logistic regression models were unable to be run because of the rare nature of the dependent variable; particularly, the small number of cases on the rarer of the two outcomes of the dependent variable (perpetrating physical violence of



spouse). When the models were estimated they were not a good fit for the data (i.e., the Chi-square test was not significant).

Due to this, analyses were limited to bivariate analyses, which were not able to control for the age, household income, or religious tendency. Specifically, four independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether men and women, violent men and non-violent men, violent women and non-violent women, and violent men and violent women differed significantly in domestic violence perpetration of physical violence as a result of the development of attitudes about income contribution, gender roles, division of labor, income production.

**Table 1** shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable and the independent variables (see below). Based on the findings, the respondents were more likely to be somewhat religious (M=1.88) and older (M=57.98) with a mean household income of \$54,306.40. On the other hand, on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being completely disagree, the respondents slightly agreed (M=2.40) with the fact that husband and wife should contribute financially to the household but they disagreed with the idea that the individuals who were most likely to contribute to the household should have more power to make decisions in the household (M=4.05). In contrast, the respondents fell in the mid-range of agreement regarding traditional gender roles expectations (M=3.03) related to the social belief that the husband should be the breadwinner while the wife should be housewife, while responses were slightly lower on the level of agreement scale (M=2.35) measuring attitudes about whether husbands should do equal housework when they are full time workers.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of All Variables (n=4,476)**

	Mean/Freq (%)	range
<b>Dependent variable</b>		
Male Perpetration of Physical Violence	17 (0.8%)	0-1
Female Perpetration of Physical Violence	17 (0.7%)	0-1
<b>Independent variables</b>		
<i>Feminist Tendency</i>		
Attitudes about Income Contribution	2.40	1-5
Attitudes about Gender Roles	3.03	1-5
Attitudes about Division of Labor	2.35	1-5
Attitudes about Income Production	4.05	1-5
<i>Respondent Characteristics</i>		
Respondent's Age	57.98	34-97
Respondent's Household Income	54306.40	0-1,070,000
Respondent's Religious Tendency	1.88	1-4

As shown on **Table 2**, an independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether men and women differed significantly on perpetration of physical violence, attitudes about income contribution, attitudes about gender roles, attitudes about division of labor, attitudes about income production, and certain respondent characteristics, such as age, household income, and religiosity. Results indicate that women (M=0.01, SD=0.085) and men (M=0.01, SD=0.089) do not significantly differ in the development of perpetration of physical violence ( $t=0.262$ ,  $p=0.794$ ). Also, results indicate that attitudes about the division of labor in the household ( $t=-1.383$ ,  $p=0.167$ ) did not significantly differ for men (M=2.33, SD=0.936) and women (M=2.37, SD=1.013). Moreover, it appears that attitudes about income contribution did not differ significantly for men and women ( $t=1.589$ ,  $p=0.112$ ). Results indicate that men (M=2.42, SD=0.812) agree less than women (M=2.38, SD=0.792).

On the other hand, women's attitudes about gender roles (M=3.10, SD=1.283) differed significantly from men's attitudes (M=2.96, SD=1.221), with men agreeing more with this

attitude than women ( $t=-3.715$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Also, attitudes about income production differed significantly for men and women ( $t=-7.383$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). It appears that women disagreed more with the statement “most money, most say” ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=0.552$ ) than did men ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=0.616$ ).

In the case of religious tendency developed by the respondents ( $t=-3.715$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), an examination of the group means indicated that women ( $M=1.80$ ,  $SD=0.785$ ) tended to be significantly more religious than men ( $M=1.98$ ,  $SD=0.850$ ). Additionally, men ( $M=56,779.78$ ,  $SD=84,355.129$ ) and women ( $M=52,044.60$ ,  $SD=75,533.858$ ) differed significantly in reported household income ( $t=1.981$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). Finally, men ( $M=59.11$ ,  $SD=10.658$ ) were significantly older than women ( $M=56.95$ ,  $SD=10.530$ ) in this sample ( $t=6.787$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 2: Comparison of All Measures across Men and Women ( $n=4,476$ )**

	Men ( $n=2,138$ )	Women ( $n=2,338$ )	<i>t</i>
	<i>mean (SD)</i>	<i>mean (SD)</i>	
<b>Dependent Measure</b>			
Perpetration of Physical Violence	0.01 (0.089)	0.01 (0.085)	0.262
<b>Feminist Tendency</b>			
Attitudes about Income Contribution	2.42 (0.812)	2.38 (0.792)	1.589
Attitudes about Gender Roles	2.96 (1.221)	3.10 (1.283)	-3.715*
Attitudes about Division of Labor	2.33 (0.936)	2.37 (1.013)	-1.383
Attitudes about Income Production	3.98 (0.616)	4.11 (0.552)	-7.383*
<b>Respondent Characteristics</b>			
Age	59.11 (10.658)	56.95 (10.530)	6.787*
Total Household Income	56779.78 (84,355.129)	52044.60 (75,533.858)	1.981*
Religious Tendency	1.98 (0.850)	1.80 (0.785)	7.335**

\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Table 3** shows the results for the independent samples t-test conducted to determine the influences of feminist tendency (promoting equalitarian treatment between both genders in the social setting) in the development of violence perpetration behavior among men. Results indicate that the only significant measure that differed between violent men and non-violent men was attitudes about income production ( $t=2.265$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). An analysis of the group means indicated that non-violent men ( $M=3.99$ ,  $SD=0.611$ ) tended to significantly disagree more with the social belief that who has more money should have more say in the household than violent men did ( $M=3.65$ ,  $SD=1.057$ ).

**Table 3:** Comparison of Feminist Tendency across Spousal Violence Perpetration for Men ( $n=2,138$ )

Variable	<i>t</i>	mean (SD)	
		Violent ( <i>n</i> =17)	Non-Violent ( <i>n</i> =2,121)
Attitudes about Income Contribution	0.644	2.29 (0.920)	2.42 (0.811)
Attitudes about Gender Roles	0.665	2.76 (1.200)	2.96 (1.221)
Attitudes about Division of Labor	-0.350	2.41 (1.064)	2.33 (0.935)
Attitudes about Income Production	2.265*	3.65 (1.057)	3.99 (0.611)

\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

**Table 4** shows the results for the independent samples t-test conducted to determine the influences of feminist tendency in the development of violence perpetration behavior for women. Results indicate that there were not significant differences among non-violent women's and violent women's attitudes about income contribution ( $t=0.769$ ,  $p=0.442$ ), gender roles ( $t=-0.626$ ,  $p=0.532$ ), division of labor ( $t=0.082$ ,  $p=0.935$ ), and income production ( $t=1.727$ ,  $p=0.084$ ).

**Table 4: Comparison of Feminist Tendency across Spousal Violence Perpetration for Women (n=2,338)**

Variable	<i>t</i>	mean (SD)	
		Violent (n=17)	Non-Violent (n=2,321)
Attitudes about Income Contribution	0.769	2.24 (0.903)	2.38 (0.791)
Attitudes about Gender Roles	-0.626	3.29 (1.213)	3.10 (1.284)
Attitudes about Division of Labor	0.082	2.35 (0.931)	2.37 (1.013)
Attitudes about Income Production	1.727	3.88 (0.928)	4.11 (0.548)

\*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001

As shown in **Table 5**, another independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether violent men and violent women differed significantly on their attitudes about income contribution, gender roles, division of labor, and income production. Results indicate that there were no significant differences among violent men and violent women for attitudes about income contribution ( $t=0.188$ ,  $p=0.852$ ), gender roles ( $t=-1.279$ ,  $p=0.210$ ), division of labor ( $t=0.171$ ,  $p=0.865$ ), and income production ( $t=-0.690$ ,  $p=0.495$ ).

**Table 5: Comparison of Feminist Tendency Measures across Violent Men and Women (n=34)**

Variable	<i>t</i>	mean (SD)	
		Men (n=17)	Women (n=17)
Attitudes about Income Contribution	0.188	2.29 (0.920)	2.24 (0.903)
Attitudes about Gender Roles	-1.279	2.76 (1.200)	3.29 (1.213)
Attitudes about Division of Labor	0.171	2.41 (1.064)	2.35 (0.931)
Attitudes about Income Production	-0.690	3.65 (1.057)	3.88 (0.928)

\*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DISCUSSION**

Using secondary data collected from the National Survey of Families and Households, the possible difference in reported marital physical violence perpetration for women and men were examined as well as the possible influence of attitudes about gender roles, income (income production and income contribution), and division of labor in the household in the development of DV perpetration among women and men. Similar to previous research, this study did not find any significant difference between violent women and violent men (Brush, 1990) and non-violent women and violent women that may predict a possible perpetration pattern in DV-physical perpetration. Based on an analytical interpretation of these findings, this study reaffirms the fact that each social individual may have a different perception about what physical violence is. Likewise, DV perpetration should be analyzed using principles drawn from the gender symmetry perspective-in domestic violence to prevent the appearance of social inequality related to the development and support of a gender-stereotype approach.

#### ***Women and Men***

Women and men do not differ in the report of physical violence perpetration based on the development of attitudes about the division of labor and income contribution. However, gender roles expectations and the attitudes about income production in the patriarchal setting tend to influence the social perception of the individuals involved causing perpetration of physical violence. Men tend to believe that women should comply with the traditional role of wife and submission. While women tend to develop perpetration patterns as a reaction to male dominance

due to the influence of the feminism. As a result, women tend to justify their violence actions. On the other hand, the results suggested that women believe that both genders (wife and husband) should equally participate in the decision-making process to prevent the appearance of violence in the household.

### ***Violent Men and Violent women***

There are not significant differences in attitudes developed between violent men and violent women. They tend to develop similar attitudes based on the traditional beliefs promoted in the patriarchal setting to justify their violent behavior. These attitudes tend to be modified by the gender roles expectations and dominance that influenced the power and control relationship in the household.

### ***Violent women and Non-violent women***

Violent women and non-violent women do not differ in the report of physical violence perpetration based on the development of any attitudes. However, they could develop physical perpetration patterns as a reaction to male violence and/or to certain level of stress present in the household, for example, financial problems and/or food scarcity

### ***Violent Men and Non-Violent Men***

In contrast to women, there are significantly differences in attitudes about income production only between violent and non-violent men. Violent men tend to develop physical perpetration pattern because they follow traditional beliefs that promotes male dominance and supremacy in the patriarchal setting while non-violent men tend to not follow a patriarchal

approach. When seeking differences in the social attitudes developed, the current study found that the reason behind male physical perpetration was related to the following social belief “most money, most say.” Therefore, violent men tended to promote male dominance and control in the household.

### ***Limitations***

Findings tend to be consistent with the data limitations described in previous research mentioned, i.e. Brush (1990). This study should be reviewed while taken into consideration that the results were drawn from a data set “with different sample size” (Heimer & Kruttschnitt, 2005, p. 179). A small number of cases related to physical violence perpetration (n=34) was utilized to predict possible differences in the development of attitudes that may cause physical perpetration. Due to the rareness of the domestic violence events, we were unable to conduct multivariate analysis, i.e. logistic regression analysis. Instead, only limited examinations of the mean differences between attitudes about gender roles which measure association rather than cause-effect, could be examined in this research. Similar to this, only an examination of the group means related to income (income production and income contribution) and division of labor in the household in domestic violence perpetration of physical violence among men and women were conducted.

Further analysis in domestic violence perpetration of physical violence among women is needed. From past research, it is possible to conclude that gender-specific stereotypes influenced the social perception related to DV –physical- perpetration (Gerstenberger & Williams, 2013; Hamby, 2005; Heimer & Kruttschnitt, 2005; Houston, 2014; Johnson, 2006). The current study



suggests that future research should focus on a symmetrical examination of the “causes, nature, and meanings” of DV perpetration (Heimer & Kruttschnitt, 2005) to better interpret the findings using an egalitarian approach . In the same way, it is imperative to create and develop a more effective measurement instrument to properly measure the rare nature of the domestic violence variables. It will allow a better interpretation of the nature of domestic violence perpetration in the household.

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