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# Motives of Violence in Men and Women

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The goal of this study is to increase existing knowledge about what motivates men and women to act violently towards their partners. One third of high school students engage in some form of physical violence with a date in a year (Frieze, 2005). There is a lack of research about what leads people to become violent. This is an important issue to understand, to try and prevent future acts of violence. It is not always the man abusing the woman, but sometimes the woman abusing the man. Domestic violence is no longer thought of as a gender issue (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007). Both men and women react with violence in situations involving an intimate partner. Mutual violence in intimate relationships is becoming increasingly common. Instead of just arguing about situations, both people involved will become physically violent with each other (Frieze, 2005). My hypothesis is that more men will report more violence in the past and feel that lesser acts of violence, such as pushing and hitting are non violent, than women. I define violence as inflicting any form of harm to another individual.

### Method

A sample of 78 Boise State University students participated in this study, either receiving class credit or were volunteers. The survey used all original questions from the author formed after reviewing the literature; refer to Table 1 for survey items and response scales. The participants took the survey using questions from Table 1 in groups and individually. They were given fifty minutes to take the survey; it took most people 45-50 min to complete the survey. At the end of the survey they were debriefed as to the nature of the study and thanked.

### Results

A Chi Square was used to analyze these items. On the survey item "Have you ever physically abused your partner," there was a significant association between gender and the item "Have you ever physically abused your partner,"  $X^2(1, N = 67) = 5.07, p < .05$ . On the item "Pushing another person is an act of violence," there was not a significant association between gender and the item "Pushing another person is an act of violence,"  $X^2(1, N = 68) = 3.84, n.s.$  On the item "Hitting another person is an act of violence," there was not a significant association between gender and the item "Hitting another person is an act of violence,"  $X^2(1, N = 68) = 0.38, n.s.$

### Discussion

More women in this study answered that they had abused their partners than men did. This was surprising to me because I had expected it to be men who would report more violence. I found it interesting that more women reported physically abusing their partner than men did. It is possible that men were more reluctant to report abusing their partner. There was not a significant association for gender and the lesser acts of violence. Due to only asking seven questions, it made examining motives of violence difficult. When asking questions about people abusing their partners, there is no way to know if the participants answered honestly or wanted to appear non violent. I was under the assumption that men commit more violence in intimate relationships than women do, but it is important to realize that anyone can be violent. Although people think that men are more violent than women, my study shows that it is not always the case and helps to show that there are more female perpetrators of violence than people think.

### Abstract

This study examined if stress caused by school and feelings of inadequacy were the motivating factors leading to intimate partner violence. All of the participants were Boise State University students who either received class credit or were volunteers. Participants were given a survey with questions regarding their levels of stress and feelings of inadequacy. They answered questions related to their year in school and past violent behavior. Also, they were asked if they considered lesser acts of violence to be violent or not. This study supports other studies that found intimate partner violence is not a gender issue.

### References

- Frieze, I. (2005). Female violence against intimate partners: An introduction. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 29*, 229-237.  
Hines, D., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007). Characteristics of callers to the domestic abuse helpline for men. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*, 63-72.

Table 1

Overall Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Items

Survey Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I am stressed by school.	1.73	0.81
2. I have feelings of inadequacy.	1.23	0.83
3. Stress has caused me to act violently toward my partner.	0.22	0.62
4. Feelings of inadequacy have caused me to act violently toward my partner.	0.15	0.49
5. Have you ever physically abused your partner?		
6. Pushing another person is an act of violence.		
7. Hitting another person is an act of violence.		
8. Year in school		
9. Gender		

Notes. For items 1-4 respondents used a frequency scale with 0 = *Never* to 3 = *Always*. Item 5 was answered on a dichotomous scale, with 10.3 % *yes* and 85.9% *no*. Item 6 was answered on a dichotomous scale, with 75.6 % *yes* and 21.8% *no*. Item 7 was answered on a dichotomous scale, with 89.7 % *yes* and 7.7% *no*. For item 8, 21.8% were freshmen, 23.1% were sophomores, 15.4% were juniors, and 19.2% were seniors. For item 9, 35.9% were female and 52.6% were male.