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## Official Incidents of Domestic Violence: Types, Injury, and Associations with Nonofficial Couple Aggression

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### Abstract

Official police reports of intimate partner violence (IPV) were examined in a community sample of young, at-risk couples to determine the degree of mutuality and the relation between IPV arrests and aggression toward a partner (self-reported, partner reported, and observed). Arrests were predominantly of the men. Men were more likely to initiate physical contact, use physical force, and inflict injuries than women, although few injuries required medical attention. In the context of nonofficial aggression toward a partner, overall, women had higher levels of physical and psychological aggression compared to men. Couples with an IPV arrest were more aggressive toward each other than couples with no IPV arrests; however, nonofficial levels of aggression were not higher for men than for women among couples experiencing an IPV incident.

### Keywords

aggression; arrests; domestic violence; injury; police reports

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There is substantial evidence from survey studies in the United States that as many or more women engage in some degree of violence toward a romantic partner as do men (e.g., see Archer, 2000, for a meta-analysis; Williams & Frieze, 2005). However, there is still controversy regarding this issue, because women are more likely than men to be victims in domestic violence arrests (e.g., Melton & Belknap, 2003) and in crime surveys (e.g., Rennison, 2003). For example, according to the National Violence Against Women Survey, married/cohabiting women self-reported higher rates of victimization in physical assault in the previous 12 months and lifetime compared to the men surveyed (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Despite such growing interest, understanding engagement of men and women in the perpetration of violence and their relative levels of violence in terms of severity and injury, as well as the degree of mutuality of violence in couples, is still limited.

Johnson (1995) posits that there are two distinct types of intimate partner violence (IPV): one involving patriarchal or intimate terrorism, hypothesized to be of high frequency and severe and one sided, with men usually as perpetrators, and the second involving the majority of couples and lower levels of violence or “common couple violence” that is of low frequency, much less severe, perpetrated by men and women, and much less likely to result in injuries. The two types of violence are construed to be based on different motivations and interpersonal dynamics (Johnson 1995). The evidence for such a distinct typology, as well as the conceptual underpinnings, have been questioned (Capaldi, Kim, & Shortt, 2007). Despite controversies, most experts would expect that *arrests* for IPV would involve a higher prevalence of men inflicting serious violence and more serious injuries than commonly found in survey studies

(Duncan, Stayton, & Hall 1999; Straus 1997) for a variety of reasons, including possible more severe violence by men (Johnson 1995), men's greater size and weight (Felson, 1996), and arrest policies.

Critical information that could inform prevention and treatment programs is whether such arrests occur among couples that show a *predominant* pattern of one-sided violence or whether mutual violence seems more typical of such couples. Although arrests are a strong and objective measure of domestic violence, each arrest represents just one occasion of violence for that couple. For crime, in general, it is well known that arrests represent just the "tip of the iceberg" of actual crime. For example, in the case of youth delinquency, the ratio of police contacts to self-reported offenses has been estimated at around 3–10:100 (Elliott & Voss, 1974; Gold, 1966), and self-report measures and official records are considered to provide two alternative views on offending behavior (Farrington et al., 2003), which are related to different empirical findings, but are both considered critical for understanding the phenomenon. In order to better understand violence in couples, it is necessary to examine the men's and women's aggression in different contexts using multiple informants and methods.

In the current study, IPV arrest incidents were tracked and police reports were examined for longitudinal study participants (men in the Oregon Youth Study; OYS); in addition, data from three different nonofficial violence measures, namely self- and partner reports and observational data on aggressive behavior toward a partner, were examined. The men's and women's reports of their own and their partner's aggressive behavior sampled behavior over time, whereas the observation of behavior sampled one occasion where aggression might occur, during a problem-solving interaction. Whereas many studies rely on single informant reporting, this study was unusual in having multimethod and multiagent assessments of violence including arrest data. As it is well known that any single method of assessment (e.g., self-reports or arrest data) has unique biases (e.g., Campbell & Fiske, 1959), multiple methods of assessment strengthen the validity of measurement and findings.

The study had two main goals. First, for the OYS men involved in an IPV arrest incident and the women involved with them, we described (a) the types of violence that occurred during the incident and (b) the nature of the injuries that occurred. The types of violence and the injuries during the arrest incident were examined for the men and women regardless of who was arrested, as some incidents involved mutual violence and injuries. Second, we described (a) prevalence rates of aggression toward a partner for the larger group of OYS men, including those who were not involved in an IPV arrest, and (b) compared overall mean frequencies of constructs of physical and psychological aggression toward a partner as well as reported severe aggression between those who involved in IPV arrest incidents and those who were not involved in such incidents. For levels of violence, in addition to physical aggression, psychological aggression (including verbally offending or degrading behavior) toward the partner was examined because it is associated with, and may precede, physical aggression (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989).

The underlying framework of the current study is the dynamic developmental systems approach, which emphasizes the importance of the developmental risk of *both* partners and dyadic processes, including mutual conflict (Capaldi, Shortt, & Kim, 2005; Kim & Capaldi, 2004; Morse 1995; Stets & Straus, 1990). Prior work with the current long-term study of men and their partners examined both partners' reports of psychological and physical aggression, as well as observations of the couples' problem-solving interactions, and indicated that aggression was predominantly bidirectional rather than one sided (Capaldi, Shortt, & Crosby, 2003; Capaldi et al., 2005). In the current study therefore, we expanded our previous work by examining IPV arrest incidents and by examining violence toward the partner outside of the arrest incident for couples who did and did not experience an arrest incident.

IPV arrest occasions represent critical incidents of violence in couples, and the police reports of such incidents are a little-tapped source that can provide important information to address questions regarding violence. Police arrive soon after IPV events have occurred, gather physical evidence, and interview the victim, usually the perpetrator and any witnesses. A major focus of such reports is to document if a violent event has occurred, the nature of both the violence and any injuries involved, and the identity of the perpetrator and victim. Only a limited number of studies have utilized police reports of partner violence. These studies have focused on examining the occurrence of injuries (e.g., Duncan et al., 1999) and comparing IPV incidents in which men versus women were arrested (e.g., Busch & Rosenberg, 2004).

## Violence Types and Injuries

In a previous study of police reports of men's IPV, the most common acts of violence reported were slapping/pushing and punches to the face or body (Dobash & Dobash, 1984). For men and women arrested for IPV, they were equally likely to commit at least one act of severe aggression (e.g., punching, choking, kicking), with rates of 87% for men and 92% for women, although men were more likely to use a higher number of severe violent tactics in the IPV incidents compared to women (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004).

A further consideration of the developmental systems model is the impact of aggression toward a partner. Gender differences have been found in the likelihood of injury. For men and women arrested for IPV, women were as likely as men to inflict injuries, but more women than men reported being victimized or injured (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004). For patients seeking emergency medical services for IPV injuries, women reported more frequent and severe injuries in the past year and lifetime than men (Phelen et al., 2005). Further, in the United States, women are more likely to be killed by intimate partners than by any other type of perpetrator (Campbell et al., 2003). Across studies involving IPV arrests, 19% – 25% of the sample had injuries that required medical attention (Busch & Rosenberg; Duncan et al., 1999). In a study of police reports, Duncan et al. found that 17.4% of the incidences resulted in injuries, and of those injured, 90% were women and 10% were men. About one half of the injuries involved bruises, scratches, or pain, with other common injuries including swelling and redness. Severe injuries (e.g., broken bones, loss of consciousness) were relatively rare. Less than 1% of men and women arrestees have been found to inflict serious injuries in IPV incidents (Martin, 1997). One cause of differing findings regarding severity of injuries and arrests among studies of police reports is that arrest policies differ by state in the United States, with some having mandatory arrest policies and some not. As more arrests are likely to occur because of mandatory arrest policies, the severity of injuries might be expected to be lower for IPV arrest incidents in these areas. The State of Oregon, where the majority of couples in the current study resided, has a mandatory arrest policy.

## Mutual Versus One-Sided Aggression

There is substantial evidence that much physical violence in couples is bidirectional or mutual. Overall, prevalence rates for IPV toward a partner among young adults have been found to be relatively high and similar for men and women, although slightly higher for women (e.g., Archer 2000; Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005). Perpetration rates are estimated to range from about 36% to 51% for young women and 22% to 43% for young men (Moffitt & Caspi, 1999). Similar to nonphysical patterns of mutual negativity, such as contempt/belligerence and reciprocated aversive behavior observed in the interactions of aggressive couples (e.g., Jacobson et al., 1994), much IPV is best described as mutual, particularly in young couples (e.g., Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Stets & Straus, 1990; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007). Aggressive couples reported mutual physical aggression in about one half of the incidents in both the National Family Violence Survey (Stets & Straus) and on the

National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health at ages 18–28 years (Whitaker et al., 2007). Men and women in mutually aggressive couples report about equal frequency and severity of physical aggression perpetrated and sustained (Gray & Foshee, 1997; Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd, & Christopher, 1983). Within a birth cohort of young adults, women were more frequently the perpetrators in relationships defined as nonclinically abusive whereas both men and women were the perpetrators in those defined as clinically abusive, involving aggression linked to psychopathology (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004). Physical violence is frequently *initiated* by women according both to self-reports (Morse 1995; Whitaker et al., 2007) and to behavior observed during problem-solving interactions (Capaldi et al., 2007). Reports of relative levels of initiation of physical aggression by men and women range from about equal responsibility (Henton et al.) to more initiation by the women found in a birth cohort of 25 year olds, where 58% of the women compared to 32% of the men reported that they initiated aggression as perpetrators (Fergusson et al., 2005).

There is some evidence that even more frequent and serious aggression, which has been hypothesized to be one sided (Johnson, 1995) also may be mutual. Capaldi and Owen (2001) found that the proportion of couples where both partners were frequently aggressive (defined as a cutoff score of 19 or more acts) was 6 times higher than expected by chance. In addition, injuries were likely to have occurred for both partners at three times the rate expected by chance for such mutually aggressive couples. Findings from Whitaker and his colleagues (Whitaker et al., 2007) also support the argument that injuries are more likely to occur when aggression is mutual rather than one sided. Further, McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, and Green (2006) found that 67% of women in domestic violence shelters (who had to have experienced at least one act of partner physical violence in the past year) had engaged in *severe* violence toward a partner according to self-reports. Thus, there is evidence of a high prevalence of mutual violence even among couples where more serious violence occurs.

## The Current Study

The current study presents a unique opportunity to examine hypotheses related to arrests for IPV and aggression toward a partner outside of arrest occasions in a community sample of at-risk men and their romantic women partners. The study focused on IPV incidents that resulted in the arrest of the OYS young man or his partner. The IPV arrest incidents were expected to be predominantly arrests of the man (in keeping with the prevalence of such arrests for men and women nationally; Greenfeld et al., 1998) and, therefore, to reflect more violence by the men and a greater likelihood of injury for the women. However, it was also expected that the types of injury would be varied, with the majority being minor, similar to the findings from survey studies. We also hypothesized that there would be an association between IPV arrests and aggression toward a partner outside of the arrest incident. It was predicted that couples experiencing an IPV arrest incident would show involvement by *both* the men and women in IPV (i.e., psychological aggression and physical aggression) assessed by self- and partner reports and observational data, thus indicating some mutual engagement in aggression. It was also expected that both men and women in couples experiencing an arrest incident would show involvement in severe aggression toward a partner (assessed by self- and partner reports). However, given that the men arrested in the IPV incidents were expected to be some of the more severely aggressive men, and as men show higher levels of antisocial behavior than women in general (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986), the men were expected to have significantly higher levels of physical, psychological, and severe aggression toward a partner outside of the arrest occasion, compared with the women. Sexual coercion was not within the scope of the current study. For a study regarding sexual coercion for the OYS men see Teten, Hall, and Capaldi (2008).

## Method

### Sample

The young men and their women partners participated in the Couples Study, an ongoing multiagent and multimethod longitudinal study. The men ( $n = 206$ ) were originally recruited for the OYS from the fourth-grade (ages 9–10 years) classrooms of schools with a higher than usual incidence of delinquency for the area in their neighborhood. When the men were ages 17–18 years, the Couples Study was initiated to examine the OYS men and their intimate partners' adjustment in young adulthood. Approximately 150–160 couples were assessed four times in late adolescence (aged 17–20 years; 1991–1995), young adulthood (aged 20–23 years; 1994–1998), and early adulthood (aged 23–25 and 25–27 years, respectively; 1997–2002). Note that the slight overlap in years is because of the fact that there were two cohorts of OYS men. At the time of the initial recruitment of the OYS men (1983–1984 for Cohort I and 1984–1985 for Cohort II), 206 families or 74% agreed to participate. The families were predominantly Euro-American. For 64% of the families, their annual household income was less than \$20,000. The occupations of 72% of the mothers and 75% of the fathers were categorized as skilled manual or lower (Hollingshead, 1975) at the time of recruitment. The men have been annually assessed since then, with the retention rate of 93% or above, over 2 decades. One hundred ninety-four men (95.6% of 203 living participants) still remained as part of the study at ages 26–27 years.

Because somewhat limited information was collected at the late adolescence assessment, data collected only in the young and early adult waves were included in the current study (subsequently referred to as Times 1 through 3; T1, T2, T3). At T1, T2, and T3, a total of 158, 148, and 161 men respectively participated in the Couples Study assessment with their partners. The women ranged in age from 16 to 42 years ( $M = 20.8$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ) at T1, 16 to 47 years ( $M = 23.1$ ,  $SD = 3.8$ ) at T2, and 17 to 48 years ( $M = 24.9$ ,  $SD = 4.0$ ) at T3. The average length of the relationship was approximately 1.6 years at T1, 2.8 years at T2, and 3.5 years at T3. The proportion of couples who were married increased across time, from 18% at T1 to 42% at T3; the proportion of couples who were cohabiting was unchanged (37% at T1 to 38% at T3); and the number of couples who were dating or engaged decreased across time, from 45% to 20%.

### Procedures

Court record searches were conducted regularly for the OYS young men and their partners in all the states they lived (e.g., Oregon, California, and Alaska). Some arrests may have been missed if they occurred while they were traveling out of their home state. Rates of unreturned court records from a particular area averaged at about 1.6%. Coverage and return of court records for the study was comparatively high (Wiesner, Capaldi, & Kim, 2007). For the women, only incidents of domestic violence with the OYS man were examined at the time of assessment. Note that the offenses for the OYS men were considered with any woman across all study years. The charges involving violence between the men and their partners included assault, assault in the presence of a minor, coercion, menacing, intimidation, harassment, carrying a concealed weapon, criminal mischief, burglary, trespassing, kidnapping, and violating a restraining order. The police records could not be obtained for five cases of violent offenses (four cases of Assault IV and one case of Intimidation I) that could have involved IPV incidents or might have involved, for example, a fight with another man. The police interviewed the OYS men in 89% of the cases, the women in 98%, and other people in 57%.

Assessments for the Couples Study included a separate interview and questionnaires for the OYS men and their partners, assessor ratings, and a videotaped session composed of a series of interactive tasks. At T1 and T2 assessments for the Couples Study, the total discussion was 34 minutes long and included a warm-up task and party-planning segment (5 minutes each),



problem-solving discussions (7 minutes for each partner's issue related to the relationship), and discussions of each partner's personal goals (5 minutes each). There was an additional discussion segment on discipline for couples with children. At T3, a 5-minute discussion session on how they met was added. In the current study, all of the discussion sessions, except the warm-up task and discipline discussions, were included in the observational variables. For a description of safety procedures in the study, see Capaldi et al. (2003).

Constructs of aggression derived from the couples' assessment were available for the majority of couples with IPV arrests. For the 30 women involved in an IPV incident with an OYS man, only 7 had not also participated in 1 or more of the couples' assessments. For the 23 participating couples who were involved in an official IPV incident, nonofficial aggression measures were taken from their first assessment as a couple (which might have been at any of the three Couples Study time points). For the OYS men not involved in an IPV incident, their data were taken from a randomly selected Couples Study wave. This provided a reasonable match to the arrested group as the arrests might occur at any time across the study period. Selecting study measures from only one particular time point, such as the first assessment, would produce some bias related to developmental stage and relationship length.

## Measures

**Ratings of the IPV police reports**—A rating system was created on the basis of information available in the first 12 police reports reviewed (Capaldi et al., 2005). Items included in the current study were (a) the prevalence of each type of violence perpetrated, (b) injuries experienced for both the men and women, and (c) the mutuality of the physical fight and who appeared to have made the first physical contact. Two trained research staff who were blind to research hypotheses of the study independently coded each incident. Disagreements were resolved by rereading the report and a discussion between the two coders.

**Coding of the interaction tasks**—The Family and Peer Process Code (FPPC; Stubbs et al., 1998) was used to code the couples' interaction. All coders were professional research assistants who received approximately 3 months of training. The behavioral and emotive contents of each couple's interaction were recorded in real time. To assess coder reliability at each wave, two coders independently coded a randomly selected minimum of 14% of the tasks. The overall content and affect kappas (Cohen, 1960) ranged from .73 to .82 across the three time points, the kappas for psychological aggression ranged from .63 to .69 and for physical aggression from .53 to .65. Physical aggression occurred less often in interactions at the older ages; therefore, reliability of the codes dropped somewhat. For reports of the prevalence of physical aggression in the interaction tasks, see Capaldi et al., (2007).

**Constructs**—As described by Patterson, Reid, and Dishion (1992), the strategy at the outset of the OYS was to develop several indicators for each theoretical construct from multiple agents and methods. In building scales and constructs, items constituting the indicator or scale had to show internal consistency (i.e., an alpha of .6 or higher and an item-total correlation of .2 [ $p$  approximately .05] or higher). Second, items had to converge with the other indicators designed to assess the construct. These criteria ensured that items and indicators assessing the theoretical construct were used for the psychological aggression construct. However, for physical aggression, these criteria were not considered appropriate. It is not necessarily the case that if one type of physical aggression is present for a couple (e.g., punching) that another is likely to be present (e.g., hitting with an object), but there is no doubt that both of these behaviors are acts of physical aggression. Using the alpha criteria above, some acts of physical aggression that are more rare could be excluded from the construct inappropriately. Similarly, the occurrence of physical aggression during the problem-solving discussions was relatively infrequent and, therefore, showed lower convergence with other measures of physical

aggression. Again, it was considered to be significant and worthy of inclusion in the measure of physical aggression. Technical reports providing additional detail are available from the Oregon Social Learning Center upon request.

**Physical aggression:** The physical aggression constructs for the men and women were composed of self- and partner reports, coder ratings, and the observed interactions. Each indicator was standardized using a 0–3 scale and then averaged to produce construct scores. Sample items and internal consistency information for each instrument (e.g., Adjustment with Partner Questionnaire) assessing the construct are described in Table 1. For observed physical aggression, the overall rates per minute of two content codes (Physical Aggression and Physical Attack) in four affects (neutral, distress, aversive, and sad) were used from the FPPC coding of the interaction task. The observed Physical Aggression Code reflected items on the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) that were considered to be of low severity (e.g., grabbing, slapping, shoving). The observed Physical Attack Code included moderate and severe aversive physical contact (e.g., kicking, punching, hitting with an object with force) in only neutral or negative affect (i.e., occurrences in positive affect were excluded). Severity of behaviors in the two combined codes ranged from a slight shove to hard hits (e.g., shoving the partner on the shoulder, poking with a pencil, hand slaps, kicks, hitting across the head).

For the analyses conducted on severe physical aggression only, items reported by the men and the women to their own and to their partner's frequency of kicking, beating up, choking and burning from the Adjustment with Partner Questionnaire were used. Thus, both self- and partner reports were used for each of their behaviors.

**Psychological aggression:** This construct was measured using the same assessment agents and modes as for physical aggression (Table 1). Each indicator was standardized using a 1–5 scale and then averaged to produce construct scores. Observed scores for psychological aggression included the rate per minute of three behaviors in neutral or negative affect: Negative Interpersonal Behavior (i.e., verbal expressions of disapproval of the partner), Verbal Attack (i.e., name calling, threats, and specific humiliation of the partner), and Coerce (i.e., demand for behavior change coupled with a threat of personal injury). Further details regarding the measures for the physical and psychological aggression constructs are provided in Table 1.

## Results

### IPV Arrests

Police records for 47 IPV incidents involving an OYS man and any woman with whom he was in a romantic relationship were located. Of these arrests, 85% or 40 involved an arrest of the OYS young men, 6% or 3 involved an arrest of women, and 9% or 4 involved a dual arrest of OYS men and partners. The 44 IPV arrests of the OYS men were attributed to a total of 28 men -- 19 men with 1 IPV arrest and 9 men with 2 or more IPV arrests (2 men had 3 arrests, 1 man had 4 arrests, and 1 man had 5 arrests). The women arrested for an incident with an OYS man were each arrested one time for such an incident. The *N* for the analyses of IPV arrests was the 47 incidents. Because of nonindependence in the data because (a) the 47 incidents involved 31 men and 30 women and (b) multiple types of violence and injury could occur during one incident, significance tests were not conducted on the IPV arrest data.

**Types and severity of violence—**The prevalence and the type of any violence occurrence reported in the IPV incidents is shown in Table 2. The most common type of violence included pushing, grabbing, shoving, and slapping, which would be considered less severe and minor violence. Men appeared to be more likely than women to participate in violence in the incidents.

There were some types of violence such as hitting partner with an object, restraining or choking partner, and burning partner that were only carried out by the men. Examples of violence by the men included several cases of pinning the woman down, banging the woman with a door or hitting with a car door, pushing her so she hit her head on a shelf, dragging her across a street, holding a hand over her mouth or mouth and nose, twisting a wrist, and threatening with a gun.

**Injuries**—During the IPV incidents, a minority of the men and a majority of the women were injured. The prevalence of any injury and each type of injury is shown by gender in Table 3. The most common injuries reported included bruising, cuts, and scrapes, and the rates for these injuries were two to four times greater for the women than the men. There were some injuries, such as being knocked down and knocked unconscious, that only occurred for women. There were no cases of broken bones, and only two women received medical treatment. For example, one case involved a severe laceration to the woman's foot when the man ran over it with his car when trying to leave the house during an argument.

**Mutuality of the fight and first physical conflict**—The relative balance of the men's and women's contributions to the physical fight during the incidents was coded on a 7-point scale from *all or almost all* the man (7) to *all or almost all* the woman (1). The physical aggression was coded as all or almost all from the man in 51% of the cases, with a further 30% being more the man than the woman. The remaining 19% was split between 11% appearing mutual, 2% all or almost all the woman, and 6% being predominantly the woman. Regarding first physical contact, the man was rated as making the first physical contact in 66% of the cases, the woman in 15% of the cases, in 17% of the cases it was ambiguous, and in 2% not available.

### Association Between IPV Arrests and Aggression Toward a Partner

The prevalence of physical and psychological aggression toward a partner, as well as severe physical aggression toward a partner, was examined for men and women who had been involved in an IPV arrest versus those who had not. All couples in both groups had engaged in psychological aggression toward a partner, at least to the extent of endorsing one such item. Regarding physical aggression, 74% of the men and 87% of the women who had experienced any IPV arrest were reported or observed to use some physical aggression in their relationship, compared to 43% of the men and 60% of the women in couples that had not experienced an IPV arrest. Regarding severe physical aggression, 44% of the men and 39% of the women who had experienced any IPV arrest were reported to use severe physical aggression, compared to 5% of the men and 10% of the women in couples that had not experienced an IPV arrest. It was hypothesized that there would be an association between arrests for IPV and aggression toward a partner outside of the arrest incident, and it was also predicted that couples involved in an IPV arrest incident would show involvement of both the men and women in IPV outside the arrest incident, but that the men would show higher levels of aggression than the women. To test these hypotheses, levels of physical and psychological aggression overall were examined by arrest group and by gender, and levels of severe physical aggression (e.g., kicking, punching, choking) were also examined. First, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the men's and women's physical and psychological aggression construct scores. The two between-participants factors were IPV arrest group (couples with no IPV arrests versus couples with one or more arrests of the man, a woman, or both) and gender. Shown in Table 4, Panel I are the mean levels of aggression toward the partner by IPV arrest group and gender. The multivariate IPV arrest group effect, Pillais-Barlett trace (2, 177)  $F = 6.88$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the gender effect, Pillais-Barlett trace (2, 177)  $F = 8.84$ ,  $p < .001$ , were significant. The IPV arrest group by gender effect, however, was not significant, Pillais-Barlett trace (2, 177)  $F = 0.07$ ,  $p = .929$ . As expected, there was an association between IPV arrests



and aggression toward a partner -- couples involved in one or more IPV incidents had higher levels of physical and psychological aggression than couples with no IPV incidents. Women had higher levels of physical and psychological aggression than the men overall. Men that were arrested did not have higher levels of aggression toward a partner overall compared to the women involved in the incidents. Second, an analysis of variance was conducted for the men's and women's mean frequencies of severe physical aggression (each being a combination of self- and partner reports). Again, the two between-participants factors were IPV arrest group and gender. Findings (Table 4, Panel II) indicated that the IPV arrest group effect,  $F(1) = 37.48, p < .001$ , was significant. However, neither the gender effect,  $F(1) = 1.35, p = 0.247$ , nor the IPV arrest group by gender effect,  $F(1) = 0.10, p = .750$ , were significant. Thus, whereas the IPV arrest group engaged in higher mean levels of severe physical aggression than the no-arrest group, there was no significant difference between the men and women in levels of severe physical aggression toward a partner for either of the groups.

## Discussion

Violence and injuries during IPV arrest incidents, as recorded in police reports, were examined for both men and women in an at-risk community sample of couples. Types and severity of IPV arrest incidents were examined and compared with nonofficial aggression toward a partner using self- and partner reports and observational data. Of the approximately 200 men in the larger OYS, 28 men were involved in 47 incidents of IPV resulting in the arrests of 1 or both of the partners (including 4 arrests of women only and 3 dual arrests). For the men arrested, one third were multiple IPV offenders (cf., Feder & Henning, 2005). Although significance tests could not be conducted, twice as many arrest incidents involved some violence by the men compared to women, and four times as many women as men were reported to be injured.

There was convergence between official IPV and nonofficial aggression toward a partner: couples with IPV arrests had elevated levels of physical and psychological aggression by *both* partners compared with couples not involved in an arrest incident. A particularly important finding of the study was that, although men were more likely to be arrested in the context of the official IPV, nonofficial data indicated that the men in the group experiencing an official IPV incident were not significantly higher than were their women partners in physical and psychological aggression or in mean levels of more severe physical aggression. In fact, the women were more likely to show higher levels of overall physical and psychological aggression (although not of severe physical aggression) in the context of nonofficial aggression toward a partner.

According to the police reports of the IPV arrest incidents, men were likely to initiate physical contact than women and the physical force used in the IPV incidents ranged from minor to severe. The distribution of IPV acts is consistent with reports that IPV incidents resulting in arrest do not necessarily involve severe violence (e.g., Duncan et al., 1999). There was a relatively high prevalence of minor physical contact (e.g., pushing and shoving, slapping) and a lower prevalence of severe types of violence, as is reflected in the injuries that resulted. As predicted, the men used more violence in general and more severe violence than the women during the IPV arrest incident.

The view that official IPV incidents involve much more severe injuries overall than incidents described in community samples was not supported. Any injury during the IPV incident was reported for 21% for the men and 83% of the women, indicating that some type of injury is a common impact of IPV incidents involving the police. The prevalence of severe injuries and injuries requiring medical attention, however, were relatively low. There was one case involving loss of consciousness and no cases of broken bones. Only two women and none of the men visited a physician or hospital for their injuries, which is lower than 19% – 25% for

some other studies involving IPV arrests (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004; Duncan et al., 1999). With only severe injuries brought to the attention of the medical services, police reports can be a source of information about less severe injuries and how these injuries occur (Duncan et al.). Injuries reported in the IPV incidents were similar in type and severity to those described by Capaldi and Owen (2001) using self-reports at about age 21 years for the men and their partners and to those reported at the two later ages included in the current study (not detailed here).

As expected, women experienced more injuries than the men during the arrest incident. This would be expected from the greater total number of violent acts perpetrated by the men during the incidents. In addition, physical differences in size and strength between men and women contribute to the gender differences in injury rates (Felson, 1996). Men are generally heavier and more muscular and likely to cause greater harm than women, even when men and women engage in similar acts of IPV. Men and women arrested for IPV inflict similar types of severe injuries by using different violent acts. Busch and Rosenberg (2004) found that women were more likely to inflict severe injuries on their partners when they used a weapon or object, but men were able to inflict similar types of severe injuries without using weapons or objects.

Both physical and psychological aggression toward a partner using construct scores incorporating self-report, partner report, and observational data were significantly associated with the IPV arrests groupings (any arrest versus no arrest) for both the men and the women, as was reported severe physical aggression. Because of their higher likelihood of arrest for the incident, higher levels of aggression toward a partner were expected for the men than for the women in the IPV arrest group. Contrary to prediction, there was no interaction with gender in these associations. Overall, women in both the arrest and no-arrest groups had higher levels of aggression (but not of severe physical aggression) toward a partner than the men. Thus, the men arrested for IPV were involved in relationships with high levels of physical and psychological aggression by both partners. The view that those involved in official IPV incidents would be couples predominantly characterized by one-sided male-to-female aggression, or “patriarchal” or “intimate terrorism” (Johnson 1995; Johnson & Leone 2005), was therefore not supported. These findings suggest that aggression toward a partner in many of these couples’ relationships can be described as dyadic behavior, with predominantly mutual involvement of men and women.

Whereas the couples involved in any IPV arrest showed an overall pattern of mutual aggression, the IPV that led to police calls and subsequent arrests involved more violent behavior by the men than by the women. This suggests the possibility that IPV incidents resulting in police calls often represent the worst incidents that occur among couples with a pattern of predominantly mutual aggression. It is also possible that the women are more likely to seek police assistance in situations that involve male initiated and unilateral violence than in situations with bidirectional aggression, although in only about one quarter of the incidents was the woman the caller. In the current study, the police were called to the situation by the women in 23% of the incidents, by another person in 32%, by the men in 2%, and by unknown sources for the rest of the cases. In other IPV studies, women also were more likely to call the police than were the men (e.g., Phelen et al. 2005). The police reports are somewhat limited by the information the men and women are willing to report, but the police records may also reflect some bias in recording information and making arrest decisions.

As the physical and psychological aggression of both partners was associated with risk for an IPV arrest for at least one member of the couple, interventions that focus on a couple’s behavior may have a greater effect on reducing IPV than intervention or treatment for men only. The equivalent rates of aggression toward a partner for the men and women also emphasize that aggression and violence in couples’ involve problems shared by both partners. Treating one

partner without the other is not likely to reduce the mutual aggression or violence. Recent evidence further suggests that dyadic-based conjoint group treatment can be an alternative intervention model to reduce IPV in couples. Preliminary work evaluating couple-focused IPV programs indicate that this work can effectively reduce IPV, although not placing women at increased risk for injury (e.g., Stith, Rosen, & McCollum, 2003). This suggests that dyadic-based programs could be a viable option for many young couples.

Some limitations of the study should be noted. First, the number of men and women arrested for one or more IPV incidents was relatively low for hypothesis testing. Second, the purposes of the police report are generally to document that an offense occurred, rather than to collect data for research purposes. Thus, some pertinent information may not have been recorded and the reports may have underrepresented the violence that took place (cf., Harris, Dean, Holden, Carlson, 2001). Third, acknowledging that each method of assessment may have biases, combining data from multiple sources by using constructs defined by multiple indicators for most purposes can provide a comprehensive understanding of the behavior of interest and a more reliable strategy than single data sources (e.g., Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Patterson & Bank, 1986). Like arrests, self-reports of violence and aggression also have limitations, such as difficulties with recall, and social desirability biases limiting reporting of behavior that is negative and illegal, such as underreporting violence toward a partner (e.g., Archer, 1999). The current study, however, involved partner reports and observational data in addition to arrest data.

Despite these limitations, the current study made a unique contribution to our understanding of the contexts and impacts of IPV incidents involving arrests, particularly through the juxtaposition of detailed police report information and data on the same couples from an ongoing longitudinal study of romantic relationship adjustment. The association between the types of engagement in violence -- namely the male-dominated violence in the IPV incidents and the mutual aggression toward a partner for these couples more generally -- raises the question of whether different groups of couples indeed engage in distinctive types of violence that have unique origins, developmental courses, impacts, influences, and implications for treatment (Johnson, 2006). The comprehensive consideration of violence and injuries during IPV arrest incidents, and the predominant patterns of mutual aggression for couples who experienced such incidents, produced insights that may be used to inform improvements in prevention and treatment efforts.

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**Table 1**

## Constructs and Scales

Construct and Measures <sup>1</sup>	Respondent	Number of items	Sample Item	Alpha, correlation <sup>2</sup>
Physical Aggression Adjustment with Partner	Self-report	2	When disagreement, how often you push, grab, shove	FP $r = .55$ MP $r = .24$
	Partner	2	When disagreement, partner kick, bite, burn you	FP $r = .56$ MP $r = .53$
Dyadic Social Skills	Self-report	1	You sometimes hurt your partner	
	Partner	1	Your partner sometimes hurts you	
Conflict Tactics Scale	Self-report	6	I (tried to) punched partner	FP .85 MP .73
	Partner	6	Partner threw something at me	FP .83 MP .81
Interview	Partner	1	How many times partner physically hurt you	
Coder Ratings	Coder	4	Did he/she push, grab, slap partner during taping	FP .68 MP .74
Psychological Aggression Adjustment with Partner	Self-report	1	When a disagreement, how often you insult, sulk	
	Partner	4	How often does s/he criticize you	FP .80 MP .85
Dyadic Social Skills	Self-report	10	Do you try to put your partner down	FP .85 MP .89
	Partner	10	Does s/he call you names	FP .86 MP .90
Conflict Tactics Scale	Self-repor	6	When a disagreement, how often you stomped out	FP .80 MP .76
	Partner	6	When disagreement, how often s/he smashed something	FP .78 MP .79
Interview	Self-report	1	I yelled, threatened, or sulked	
	Partner	1	S/he yelled, threatened, or sulked	
Partner Interaction Questionnaire	Partner	17	S/he told you that you were no good	FP .87 MP .86
Coder Ratings	Coder	11	S/he ridiculed partner	FP .93 MP .93

<sup>1</sup>Note. Unreferenced measures were created at the Oregon Social Learning Center

<sup>2</sup>FP and MP are abbreviation for Female Partner and Male Partner

**Table 2**

Prevalence of Any Violence and Types of Violence Reported to be Perpetrated in the Domestic Violence Incidents\*

Perpetrator 47 incidents	Men		Women	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Prevalence of Any Violence</i>				
Any violence	46	98	21	45
<i>Type of Violence Perpetrated</i>				
Threw something at partner	7	15	3	6
Pushed/grabbed/shoved	35	75	7	15
Bit partner	0	0	2	4
Scratched or pinched partner	2	4	4	9
Slapped Partner	18	38	9	19
Tried to hit partner with something	1	2	0	0
Did hit partner with something	6	13	4	9
Punched partner	5	11	3	6
Kicked partner	5	11	3	6
Restrained or choked partner	13	28	0	0
Burned partner	1	2	0	0
Threatened with or used a weapon	13	28	4	9
Total <i>N</i>	106		39	

\* Note. Multiple types of violence were reported for some incidents.

**Table 3**

## Prevalence of Any Injuries and the Types of Injuries Sustained\*

Victim 47 incidents	Men		Women	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Prevalence of any injuries</i>				
Any injury reported	10	21	39	83
<i>Injuries sustained by type</i>				
Bruised/red marks	6	13	30	64
Cut/bleeding/abrasions	7	15	15	32
Knocked down	0	0	19	40
Unconscious	0	0	1	2
Broken bones	0	0	0	0
<i>Injuries needing medical attention</i>				
Visit doctor/hospital	0	0	2	4
Total <i>N</i>	13		67	

\* *Note.* Multiple injuries were reported for some incidents.

**Table 4**

## Mean Levels of Men's and Women's Aggression by IPV Incident Groups

	No incident (N = 157)	1+ incident (N = 23)
Panel I: Physical and Psychological Aggression		
<i>Men</i>		
Physical aggression	.12	.29
Psychological aggression	1.99	2.45
<i>Women</i>		
Physical aggression	.20	.38
Psychological aggression	2.10	2.56
Panel II: Severe Physical Aggression		
<i>Men</i>		
Physical aggression	.03	.33
<i>Women</i>		
Physical aggression	.07	.35

*Note.* Physical aggression in construct scores was scaled from 0–3 and psychological aggression in construct scores was scaled from 1–5.