Reviewer's report

**Title:** Actor-partner effects associated with experiencing intimate partner violence or coercion among male couples enrolled in an HIV prevention trial

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 4 June 2013

**Reviewer:** Christian Grov

**Reviewer's report:**

Overview: This study looked at 95 MSM couples (dyads, N = 190 individuals) to investigate factors associated with intimate partner violence. The authors used the actor-partner independence model, which is appropriate given their dyadic data. As the authors note (and to my knowledge), there is scant data on IPV using dyadic data, thus this manuscript has much promise, even though analyses were exploratory in nature and they were underpowered for some analyses. The manuscript is very well written, the study design seems solid, and the statistics seem accurate. This reviewer is familiar with the AIPM, but less so with the specific analytic steps needed to run a model. The results seem sound, but I would encourage the editor to seek out additional statistical review for verification. I have only minor concerns that the authors might consider, but I would not say are "required" to.

Discretionary Revisions:

The methods indicate that participants were assessed separately. I would add more detail. Were they in separate rooms? (especially for something like IPV, it would be important that dyads couldn’t “intimidate” each other into false responses… which could happen if they were completing the survey “separately” but in the same space.. if that makes sense).

I prefer to describe the association between variables as an “association” (not relationship). Especially in a paper about relationships between couples, perhaps best to use the term “association” when talking about variables and “relationship” when talking about people.

On the first page of the discussion, the authors discuss unpublished data which suggest that different groups may define IPV differently. I am a little uncomfortable with the unpublished nature of these data. Is there anything more concrete/empirical that could be said instead? Or just say something to the effect that it is well known in the literature that variables/scales/experiences can be interpreted differently based on a person’s race (and cite appropriately).

Major Compulsory Revisions: None
Minor Essential Revisions: None
Level of Interest: High
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'