

FEMALES APPRAISAL DISTORTIONS IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) initiated by women is vastly under researched compared to violence initiated by men. Socially, the quest to understand IPV has almost exclusively focused on violence perpetrated by men and the bulk of research on the topic has followed suite (Heise et al., 1999; Williams, 2004) Data indicates that most violence occurring within heterosexual relationships is bidirectional. (Hines, 2007; Hamby, 2009). The aim of this thesis is to examine the common themes and distortions that occur as women engage in violence within their relationships. Building on the existing work, this work specifically looks at appraisal distortions of women during IPV. Researchers recruited participants for this study using snowball sampling. The participants for this study consisted of 13 African American women (n=13) using a semi-structured interview procedure to examine their cognitive processes while using violence. Interviews of participants were conducted by phone and the interviews were recorded and coded for themes. The analysis of the results revealed that the most common appraisal distortions were rationalization and blaming. Implications for further research with diverse populations, interventions that promote empathy and increasing skills in recognizing the influence of emotional processing and cognitive distortions are discussed.

FEMALES APPRAISAL DISTORTIONS IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

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By

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) exists as a global problem that affects every demographic group regardless of gender, race, religion, and socioeconomic status (SES). However, despite years of research, implementation of public policy and advocacy towards IPV education and prevention, research that highlights women as perpetrators of intimate partner violence is still widely underdiscussed in research literature. Throughout history, laws, policies, and social constructs have encouraged violence within and between family systems (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Johnson, 2008). Early IPV research appropriately focused on understanding IPV in which women were the impacted victim group given the global history of violence against women who traditionally did not hold equal power to men in social institutions such as marriages, education, business, and government. Thus, early IPV advocacy and research such as Dobash & Dobash, (1979) exposed the complexities of the IPV experiences of women by exploring topics such as the influence of power and control due to patriarchal society, the psychological response to violence and the social barriers such as limited housing and economic options, social shame and stigma to divorce and single parenting that made leaving an abusive partner difficult (Brandwein et al., 1974; Gelles, 1976; Herbert et al., 1991). However, current advocacy and research has not kept pace with exploring the IPV experiences of other populations such as males, transgender males or female, same-sex couples or other racial groups of women who experience IPV (Laskey et. al, 2019; Morin, 2014; Taft et al., 2009).

As a result, the clinical and social response to eradicate IPV through political backing, financial resources, and availability of direct services has also developed with a gendered response to address the needs of IPV victims within particular social locations. For example, studies show that male victims have a fraction of resources and supports intended to address their

unique needs. Douglas & Hines (2011) found that many agencies focus on distributing more resources toward male-to-female IPV than any other types of IPV. Also, less information is known about the particular needs of African American and other women of color who experience violence, and how those needs differ from non-Hispanic White females. Particularly in the context of socio-cultural oppression at the intersection of race and gender that is unique to African American women literature is limited as their experience is often has been incorporated into research among all women (Anyikwa, 2015). Socially positioned within membership in two oppressed groups, Black women experience with IPV is aggravated by risk factors unique to both groups. Likewise, African women who experience violence have an increased risk of negative experiences with the judicial and medical system and therefore may not seek help comparative to other women (Anyikwa, 2015; Taft et al., 2009).

Women are historically more likely to lose their life by an intimate partner than men (UNODC, 2019). Globally, 58 % of all female homicide victims reported in 2017 were killed by an intimate partner or family member (UNODC, 2019). Much research has been done on the topic of IPV, however there are many populations and experiences that research has yet to capture. The goal of research is to produce new knowledge to deepen understanding of a topic or issue. Within the field of family studies continuing to concentrate primarily on IPV through a gendered lens silences the voices and ignores the diverse needs of all IPV victims. Directional research serves merely to eradicate violence perpetuated against certain groups of women and overlooks violence occurring in relationships (Bates et al., 2019; Machado et al., 2017). By unintentionally ignoring IPV minority groups (i.e. ethnic minorities, same sex couples), the limited lens cripples research that influences inclusive policy and equitable intervention funding for all IPV victims. Furthermore, it diminishes the urgency for advocacy towards increasing our

understanding of the constructs that influence the experiences of non-Caucasian heterosexual females as IPV victims (Taft et al., 2009; Yodanis, 2004). Within this thesis the current literature is explored related to female perpetration of violence, IPV prevalence rates (by typology and context), availability of resources for minority IPV victims, and the appraisal distortion of females when perpetrating violence against men.

Need for this Study

According to research, U.S. men experience victimization at rates similar to women respectively impacting 1:4 women and 1:9 men (Black et al., 2011; Velopulos et al., 2019). However, women are injured significantly more than men (Archer, 2000; Kimmel, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Despite data that indicates women are also perpetrators of violence in their relationships research examining female perpetration of violence is minimal when compared against the plethora of research on male perpetrators of IPV. (Anderson, 2002; Chan, 2011; Hamby, 2009; Kelly, 2008; Krahe et al., 2014). There remains controversy within the literature regarding the rates of female perpetrated IPV particularly Intimate Terrorism (IT) (Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Hines & Douglas, 2010b). Johnson (1995) proposed that men primarily are the perpetrators of IT whereas, he maintained women chiefly engage in violent resistance. While evidence supports both genders engage in violent resistance, empirical data disputes the argument that women only use violence in self-defense (Saunders, 1986; Straus M., 2005; Swan et al., 2008).

A slowly growing body of research indicates that women not only initiate violence in their intimate relationships, but also their initiation of violence is more complex and used in a much wider context than originally purposed (Archer, 2000; Richardson, 2005; Steen & Hunskaar, 2004). Researchers such as Langhinrichsen-Rohling et. al, 2012 supplies evidence that

women perpetrate greater levels of bi-directional violence than their male partners. Furthermore, provided evidence that women engaged in high rates of psychological aggression and physical violence in their intimate relationship.

Despite the limited research available, there exist evidence that men sustain negative outcomes related to IPV like women. Male IPV victims reported experiencing severe violence by their wives that resulted in physical injuries due to being punched, kicked, beat up, and use of a knife or gun used against them (Hines et al., 2007; Straus & Gelles, 1986). IPV in men results in negative psychological effects such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hines et al., 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). When comparing lesbians to bisexual women involved with a same sex partner, Messinger (2011) found that lesbians reported higher rates of victimization. Within the previous year findings existed for all IPV forms: control behaviors (55.56 %) verbal aggression (44 %), physical aggression (25%), and sexual abuse (3.57%).

When considering the population of this study, it is noted that black women experience higher rates of IPV and are less likely to seek mental health help (Cheng & Lo, 2015). This places them at an increased risk for negative outcomes due to the influences of the broader social systems (governmental, political, social and cultural) which all have an impact on the experience with IPV. Furthermore, research indicates that social status, race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class also impact outcomes for individuals experiencing IPV (Hamel, 2014). Due to systemic oppression, black women experience greater barriers to medical and judicial help.

Thus, given the clear association between psychological abuse and negative health outcomes, and limitations in research for literature about female perpetrators of IPV, complexity of the IPV experience and greater risks for minority groups, further exploration is necessary to better understand such topics.

Purpose of this Study

To further advance the interventions, social education, and delivery of services related to female perpetration of IPV more research must be conducted to examine the constructs of female violence within intimate partner relationship. It is the aim of the research to explore the cognitive distortions and appraisal processes that female perpetrators engage in when deciding to use violence within their intimate relationships. Utilizing the grounded theory study of Whiting, (2008) and Whiting et., al (2012) as models to approach the data to deepen the literature related to the appraisal of female perpetrators in violent partnerships and how these contribute to violence against men.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the CDC, IPV is any threat or use of physical violence, stalking, sexual violence, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; Carlyle et al., 2014; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Waltermaurer, 2005). IPV varies in both frequency and severity and results in negative consequences for its victims that includes in its extreme occurrences death (Black et al., 2011; Breiding et al., 2015; Dicola & Spar, 2016; Tolan et al., 2006; Zara & Gino, 2018). As a worldwide social problem, IPV impacts every country, religion, sociodemographic, and cultural background (Ali et al., 2016; Ellsberg et al., 2014). Victim impact includes not only physical harm but also acute, long-term emotional and psychological injury as well as negative health outcome for victims (Black et al., 2011). Research demonstrates that exposure to violence contributes to the beginning and exacerbation of mental health conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse (Suggs, 2015; Golding, 1996). For a richer understanding of the impact and prevalence of IPV, research must consider the impact on not only victims but of family members and the larger system around the victim.

Socially, the impact of IPV includes the onslaught of the health care, judicial system, and community-based resources. In the United States (U.S.) alone IPV has astounding costs that are estimated to exceed \$8 billion annually (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; McDowell, 2014). According to recent estimates the lifetime cost exceeds \$100,000 per female victim and \$23,000 per male victim (Peterson, et al., 2018). Consideration of the 43 million U.S. adults with victimization history the population economic burden swells to \$3.6 trillion (2014 US\$) over victims' lifetimes. Peterson et al., (2018) estimates included \$2.1 trillion in medical costs, \$1.3 trillion lost productivity among victims and perpetrators, \$73 billion in criminal justice activities,

and \$62 billion in other costs. Such staggering cost supports the need for rigorous research and intervention to reduce IPV rates for all victim groups.

Definitions of Abuse and Violence

IPV involves many forms of violence including physical, sexual, psychological, digital, and economic abuse. Physical violence refers to but is not limited to the intentional use of physical force to inflict pain, injury, or physical suffering to the victim. It includes the use of any body part or object to inflict physical harm or cause death (Black et al., 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Sexual violence refers to “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (Black et al., 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006) In the context of IPV, it also includes forcing a partner to have sex without protection (World Health Organization, 2014). Psychological violence refers to the use of various behaviors intended to humiliate and control another individual in public or private. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000 Digital violence has become a new form of IPV by which abusers use technology to exert control over victims. Digital IPV includes but is not limited to the unauthorized disclosure of sexually explicit images (Franks, 2017), use of digital location services to physically stalk the victim; virtual stalking; monitoring victim contacts on social networks, phones, and email; installing spyware on victim devices (Freed et al., 2017). Economic abuse involves the use of economic control over the victim through limiting their ability to gain or keep financial independence (Hageman & St. George, 2018).

Legal and Administrative Abuse (LA) was introduced into the IPV literature by Tilbrook et al., (2010) through their qualitative study of 15 male IPV victims a distinct form of IPV that

they termed as Legal and Administrative Abuse (LA). They defined LA as occurring when “some perpetrators manipulate legal and administrative resources to the detriment of their...partners” (p. 20). Hines et al., (2015) took the first step within literature towards developing and validating a scale to measure LA. Although Tilbrook et al. (2010) presented that LA was unique to men as victims and women as perpetrators Hines et al., 2015 found gender symmetry in both victim and perpetrators.

IPV Prevalence

Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime (Black et al., 2011). In the US, every minute approximately 20 people suffer physical abuse by an intimate partner (Black et al., 2011). The lifetime prevalence of all forms of IPV for women estimates are as high as 36% and 29% for men (Black et al., 2011; Breiding, (2015). Young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 years of age report the highest prevalence of IPV victimization when compared with other age groups. Current or former boyfriends or girlfriends (7.8%) committed a greater percentage of all violent victimization of their partners than spouses (4.7%) and ex-spouses (2.0%) combined (6.7%) (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Over 30 percent of all violent victimizations in the U.S. were committed by a well-known or casual acquaintance. Truman & Morgan, (2014) report that 1 in 7 women and 1 in 25 men sustain injuries because of IPV.

As confounding as IPV data rates are, researchers theorize that data for marginalized subgroups of IPV victims is traditionally underreported. Prevalence estimates range from 17% to 52% in heteronormative relationships and between 25% and 50% in gay and lesbian relationships (Murray & Mobley, 2009; Ristock, 2005). Underreporting is a systemic and tragic problem for minority groups given that groups such as gay men experience IPV more often than lesbian women (Messinger, 2011). Walters et al. (2013) reported the lifetime prevalence for

sexual violence victimization for gay men at 40 % and 47 % for bisexual men. They also reported that a lifetime prevalence for physical violence being 26 % for gay men and 37 % for bisexual men. Thus, IPV research has slowly expanded to embrace more inclusive perspectives to examine men's and women's use of IPV (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011). This new trend incorporates perspectives that scrutinize factors of the individual and/or couple (where appropriate). The significance and urgency to gaining a better understanding of the intersection of gender, race and violence in intimate relationships is particularly of importance for same-sex and racially diverse couples.

Influences on IPV Prevalence Reports

To understand IPV prevalence, one must first define the context in which the subject is examined and the terms used to define the individuals of interest. Across the globe in many societies, IPV is considered a private issue that is responded to as a family matter (Chuemchit et al., 2018; Loseke, 2005). Thus, “family” or “intimate relationship” must first be defined to understand the statistics and driving force for research. However, finding a suitable and adequate definition for the term “family” to encompass the fluid diversity and ever-changing structure is unfathomable.

Another level of complexity is added when anyone whose gender identity is different from the gender assigned at birth. Until recently IPV literature according to Calton, et al., (2016) excluded individuals who “do not identify within the gender binary, identify as transgender, and/or identify as genderqueer in addition to, or instead of, identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.” Thus, prevalence reports of IPV victimization are unintentionally skewed due to the use of assessment tools designed primarily to capture the IPV experience of heterosexual women. The most researched IPV tools available to practitioners were developed and tested on

non-Hispanic White women and show low sensitivity to identifying abuse experienced by other groups. Likewise, rates of perpetration and victimization differs amongst population samples, study type and theory. Kimmel, (2002) shows that results from studies measuring the experience of violence in relationships based on different conceptualizations vary significantly.

Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that due to the complexities of family structures (Brown et. al., 2015; Cancian et. al., 2011; Joslin, 2009) gender identity (Calton, et al., (2016) and IPV itself (Black et al., 2011; Breiding et. al., 2015) there persists a demand for a continuous evaluation of the conceptualization and modification of the frameworks used to understand IPV in the context of victims, perpetrators, and prevalence. Furthermore, when examining IPV, it is important to note the cultural and historical factors that influence both the acceptability and definition of partner violence (Bradley, 2015; Heise et. al.,1999; Sandberg et al., 2018).

Gender Symmetry and Bidirectionality

At the onset of exploring the nature of violence within the family, the assumption was once that rates of violence perpetration were highest for men and primarily unidirectional. However, within the past 20 years data from national surveys and longitudinal family conflict studies indicate that violence between partners occurs bidirectionally, (Renner & Whitney, 2012; Renner & Whitney, 2010; Strets & Straus, 1989). Without the constricting focus of defining or explaining IPV primarily as violence perpetuated against women, reports of partner violence within intimate partnerships expands to similar rates for both women and men (Bates et al., 2019; Black et al., 2011; Dutton D. G., 1994; Dutton & Nicolis, 2005; Dutton & Wells, 2013; Litman, 2003; Lucal, 1992; The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Violence, 2019). In their 2017 analysis of data from the 2010-2012 U.S. National Intimate Partner and

Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) Smith et al. (2017), found an estimated 142 million U.S. adults had experienced 1 or more forms of IPV by an intimate partner, acquaintance, person of authority, or family member during their lifetimes.

Couples with a history of use of any form of violence have experienced bidirectional rates of aggression as high as 69.7 % (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). In studies that have intentionally examined the issue of gender symmetry, rates of initiation by women at times are as high as rates of initiation by men (Straus, 2011; Straus, 2005). Thus, according to such findings the labels of perpetrator/victim, responsibility for initiation, and frequency of violence perpetration, is gender neutral (Henton et al., 1983; Choi et al., 2017). Kimmel (2002) argues that women's violence ought not be ignored, his stance is reiterated in this research for expanding the literature related to understanding women's use of violence. By understanding when, how, and why all individuals use violence within their most intimate relationship everyone and everything with the IPV cycle benefits.

Females and Violence

One of the key justification's with IPV research for ignoring female perpetrators is the reality that men commit significantly more violent infractions than women during perpetration of IT (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Pollock, Mullings, & Crouch (2006) noted when people think of violence and crimes habitually, they do not think of women. As such, most research seeking to understand violence has been conducted on male populations. The common mistaken assumption has been that outcomes can be generalized across genders. Nevertheless, the increase in female's annual violent crime statistics and, their violence is creating a trend of considerable concern (Lim et al., 2019; Pollock et al., 2006)

Although women have gained some power and influence in various social structures, there remains factors that contribute to gender-based differences in aggression and use of violent behaviors. There is limited empirical and theoretical understanding of why and how females are violent. Thus, the underlying mechanisms of females' use of violence remains grossly misunderstood. Consequently, there are limited empirical models that specifically address the causal mechanisms contributing to females' use of violence in their relationships. Likewise, there are limited models that attempt to identify whether such mechanisms differ from those of men.

Females as Perpetrators of IPV

Research provides conflicting information about the rates at which women cause severe injuries to their partners (Ananthakrishnan et al., 2006; Dutton & Wells, 2013; Felson & Cares, 2005) and their use of violence as intimate terrorism (IT) to seek power and control (Hines & Douglas, 2010). IT according to Johnson (1985) entails the use of coercive control thru acts of aggression against one's partner to establish and maintain a dominance in the relationship. In several studies of men seeking help as a result of IPV in their relationship, researchers found women typically engaged in violence to both harm and control their partners (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Hines & Douglas, 2010b; Hines et al., 2015). Notably, Hines & Douglas, 2010a found that females partners were 5–6 times more likely to use physical and severe psychological aggression and controlling behaviors against their male partners.

Furthermore, female perpetrator rates of physical and psychological aggression were twice as high as their male partners. Correspondingly within the same study when examining the female partners between the two sample groups, the female partners of men seeking help engaged in significantly higher rates and frequency of all types of IPV. Thus, resulting in men in the help seeking group being more likely than men in the community group to have sustained an

injury. This was consistent with data for female victims who seek help due to higher rates of IT (Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Johnson M. P., 1995)

Theoretical Perspectives of IPV

Theory supplies supporting evidence to provide context, predictions, and the generation of new research. In analysis of theoretical perspectives related to IPV, Dixon & Graham-Kevan, (2011) provides a synthesis of recent IPV research and inferences the need for empirically sound research to accurately impact IPV practice and policy. Critiquing the dominant theories that examine etiology of IPV is beyond the scope of this article, however they are briefly discussed here including Cognitive Behavioral Theory(CBT) which influences this work.

Research that support the feminist theory while investigating IPV research primarily examines violence perpetrated by men against women and the societal structures and patriarchal principles that support the subjection of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 2004; Hines et al., 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). Thus, IPV as a gender problem, recognizes the unequal distribution of power in society (access to resources, legal and political influence, social norms, ect.) that mediates role assignments for perpetrators or victims.

Researchers that identify IPV as a social problem from the family violence perspective posits that IPV originates from social norms that accept the use of violence to address problems (Straus et al., 1980). As a socially accepted norm violence thus infiltrates the family structure; resulting in female and male family members emerging as both perpetrators and victims of violence (Straus, 2011; Straus et al., 1980).

Cognitive Behavioral Theory and IPV

It would seem a reasonable expectation for anyone who finds themselves victimized by an intimate partner to presume access to supports and acknowledgement of their

experience. However, not all victims are treated equally as victims (Strobl, 2004), nor does everyone's self-identification as an IPV victim align with socially constructed definitions of such (Dunn, 2008). Consequently, stereotypical social responses and victim-blaming attitudes severely hinder victims' vulnerability to disclose their experiences (Meyer, 2016). Thus, limiting the ability for society and research to understand how to assist and intervene appropriately. Therefore, limiting the inclusion of research participants in all roles stifles acknowledgement of the victims experience, availability of resources and provision of support.

To minimize the long-term negative outcomes for individuals, couples and families experiencing IPV, intervention is key, and CBT is a widely researched interventions for IPV interventions by focusing on altering cognitive biases, working on self-regulation, focusing on building assertive, communication, and problem-solving skills (Iverson, et al., 2011; Latif & Khanam, 2017). It is one of the most empirically validated theories that yields positive influences on many of the different presenting outcomes of IPV such as but not limited to depression (Williams et al., 2013), anxiety (Lyneham & Rapee, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2012), anorexia nervosa (Grave, Calugi et al., 2013), and post-traumatic stress disorder. CBT suggests dysfunctional thinking as the source of influence on mood and behavior with couples' dynamics (Beck, 2013). Thus, within the use of IPV intervention it has the potential to effectively, work with both the victim and perpetrator. Its value and effectiveness in helping to generate change is recognized by both organizational and governmental leadership; thus, resulting in advocacy for its use with many special populations. supports for use of CBT with IPV perpetrators and victims respectively.

Distortions.

How one observes and processes information about violent interaction such as rationalizing “it is normal for couples to fight”, not the actual situation itself, typically has a great influence on one’s psychological response, emotions, and behavior. Cognitive distortions are negative biases in the cognitive processing of self, others, and the environment (Beck, 2011). Cognitive processing errors occur when one perceives a threat to a vital aspect of one’s life such as security, safety, and close relationships (Beck, 1988). Internalized cognitive representations of relationships influence generalized expectations and assumptions about relationships and guides the processing of incoming social information. Distortions in cognitions during interactions can lead to an escalation of emotions, resulting in conflict in an intimate relationship. These distortions lead to behaviors that look to generate confirmation of about one’s partner or self. Individuals cognitive and emotional processing and behavioral responses favor the person’s distortion (Whiting et al., 2012). Common behaviors include lying, deliberate misrepresentation of information, defensiveness, and exaggeration of things to one’s benefit or justification of one’s behavior by making excuses or denying that something occurred.

Beck (1988) suggests that the interpersonal coding system through which we process information is developed early in life. Although this coding system provides a sense of comfort, it is subject to fault through distorted cognitions and erroneous meaning making. Faulty information processing within IPV leads to the negative attributional processing of one’s partner and distorted appraisal of the right to use violence.

It is necessary to address the complexities that are associated with men who become subjected to intimate partner violence within their relationships. Cognitive distortions influence the internal evaluations of self and ones’ partner and influences each partners behavior and

appraisals (Whiting et. al., 2012). In their study examining the how gender interacts with appraisal distortions for both perpetrators and victims Whiting et. al., 2012 summarized that individuals engage in too numerous cognitive distortions to list. Some of the most common that literature discusses such as minimizing, denial, blame, rationalization, overreaction, and excuses impair victims from appropriately making appraisal about their situation.

Beck (1999) has asserted that cognitive distortions involved in IPV is the result of activation of "primary thinking", a narrowed and automatic thought process during the conflictual incident. Furthermore, Beck (1999) insisted that misinterpretations of information (cognitive distortion) are preceptive in the formation of belief systems and utilized during future situations when processing similar and new information. Appropriately he cautioned CBT as "most appropriate for people who have the capacity for introspection to reflect about their own thoughts" (Beck A. T., 1976). Cognitive distortions by default occur during the misinterpreting the reality of information about self, environment, and/or the future. By focusing on and identifying inaccurate thoughts that reinforce negative thinking or emotions, Beck found success in helping the depressive symptoms of patients (Beck A. T., 1976).

Distortions and Victimization.

Psychological factors in addition to biology play important roles alongside socio-cultural influences in incidences of IPV. Holtzworth-Munroe (2000), found that limitations in neuropsychological functioning impair the ability to assess interpersonal stimuli accurately and, enhance cognitive distortions and anger arousal in response to negative relationship events. The inability to appropriately process emotions has been shown to influence violence in several populations, including sexual and violent offenders (Gillespie, Rotshtein, Satherley, Beech, & Mitchell, 2015). Attribution of hostile intentions to others has been shown to increase

interpersonal problems and IPV (Babcock et al., 2008). Accordingly, this diminished sensitivity, along with hostile attribution bias, can lead to interpersonal problems, such as behavioral disinhibition and violence, due to their importance for understanding other's facial expressions in social interactions (Babcock et al., 2008; Romero-Martínez & Moya-Albiol, 2013). Thus, understanding people's opinions and perceptions that attribute to distortions of events, is necessary to design services and programs reduce IPV.

Rationalization as Victim Blaming

Men are less likely than women to tell anyone of their victimization or make reports. Sixty-four percent of male victims in a survey did not think what had happened to them was a crime (Strets & Straus,1989). However, empirical research has found disputed support for the preeminence of self-defensive explanations for women's IPV. Some of the current data utilized to support females use of violence in their relationships and minimize the impact it has on men comes from data collected with the assumption that the man is the perpetrator and the woman is defending herself. Data used by Straus et al. (1980) never asked who used violence first so the question of self-defense cannot be answered by that data set. Contrarily over 70% of the women stated they struck first over 50% of the time (Strets & Straus,1989). Despite the self-defense motive theory, Kelly & Johnson, (2008) found that one quarter of the women and half of the men did not attribute the women's IPV to self-defensive motives.

Traditionally, the response to violence perpetrated by women is often socially more accepted as women's violence is presumed to be motivated by self-defense (Simon et al., 2001). Similarly, women's use of violence is often minimize due to research that maintains women's violence towards men is less injurious (Dobash & Dobash, 2004) Such research conceptualizes

women's use of violence primarily as a resistance to patriarchy and men's deliberate use of violence to maintain power and control in their relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand the appraisal and cognitive distortion females made when using violence within their relationships. The researcher aimed to explore partner appraisals to better understand this research topic and add to the body of knowledge about IPV. To allow for the emergence of theory, the researcher utilized a grounded theory approach for the design of this study due to the exploratory nature of the research into the appraisal distortions of women when engaging in IPV.

Study Design

Grounded Theory

This study utilized a grounded theory research design. Grounded theory is well suited for use within the social science field to provide a systematic process for qualitative data collection and analysis by which to generate theory (Creswell, 1998; Urquhart, 2013). The premise of grounded theory research design is consistent with qualitative methods and does not test or measure hypotheses. Rather, grounded within the process of analyzing the lived experiences of participants are theoretical constructs that support the research questions (Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005).

Assumptions of grounded theory research.

Although Glaser and Strauss never state the assumptions of grounded theory, Eaves (2001) provides a synthesis of the inherit major assumptions from their writings and other grounded theorist. Inquiry within grounded theory is structured by discovery of social and social psychological processes. Researchers collect data and analysis phases of research proceed simultaneously. Both the processes and products of research are shaped from the data rather than from preconceived logically deduced theoretical frameworks. The analytic processes prompt

discovery and theory development rather than verification of pre-existing theories. Theoretical sampling refines, elaborates, and exhausts conceptual categories. Grounded theory methodology is not only aimed at studying processes, but also assumes that making theoretical sense of social life is itself a process. The systematic application of grounded theory analytical technique leads progressively to more abstract analytic levels (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Charmaz 1983). Key assumptions of grounded theory are the use of inquiry to discover social psychological processes; data analysis processes prompt theory; and making theoretical sense of social life is itself a process (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Charmaz 1983).

Procedures

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were comprised of adult females from the ages of 25 to 50, who were assigned the biological sex of female. Participants lived within the South Eastern and Midwestern United States. Participants were reached through mixed methods of theoretical sampling and purposive sampling through the distribution of flyers and emails. Participants were also recruited through snowball sampling, in which participants were given flyers about the study to give to other potential participants. The flyers contained information about the study and asked for female participants who had experienced intimate partner violence at any point in their life course. Participants aimed to recruit participants until the primary researcher interviewed at least 10 participants as determined due to limitations of the availability of participants. Within the scope of this research study, the primary researcher conducted 13 interviews. This number of participants represents a small sample size according to Creswell, (1998 pg.56) recommendation of 20-30 interviews to saturate the categories.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for this study was determined by participants self-identifying as a female who had experienced intimate partner violence at some point during her lifetime. The researcher had participants fill out a brief demographic screener during the initial interview with questions such as “Assigned sex at birth?” “How do you define your race/ethnicity?” Inclusion criteria for this study included the following categories:

- Individuals identifying as female, cisgender females
- Individuals 18 years -50 years 11 months of age
- Individuals identifying as not currently involved in a relationship involving IPV
- Individuals identifying as previously having experienced IPV
- Individuals identifying as previously initiated use of violence in an intimate relationship

Exclusion criteria for this study will include the following categories:

- Individuals identifying as male, transgender male, or gender non-binary
- Individuals 0 months -17 years 11 months and 51 years 0 months or older
- Individuals currently identifying as involved in a relationship involving IPV
- Individuals identifying as never having experienced IPV
- Individuals identifying as never having initiated use of violence in an intimate

relationship

Data Collection

Prior to each interview, the researcher conducted an informational session with each participant to discuss the nature of the research and qualify eligibility for inclusion according to the criteria established for approval by the University’s research ethics committee. Once eligibility was established an interview was scheduled. During the initial interview, the

researcher reviewed the informed consent, had the participants complete a demographic questionnaire, and again with each participant information that details the study purpose, participants ability to discontinue at any time, confidentiality and limitations to confidentiality, and cost and benefits of participating. Each interview was audio-recorded with the verbal and written consent of participants. At the end of the interview, participants were given an information sheet with mental health resources if necessary.

Demographic questionnaire. A questionnaire asking for demographic information was given to each participant at the beginning of the interview session. The questionnaire asked participants to identify a pseudonym to use during the recorded interview to help maintain confidentiality and ensure the anonymity of the participant. When participants failed to identify a pseudonym one was randomly assigned by the researcher. The demographic information gathered basic information around age, race or ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, level of education, and income. This information served to gather background information to explore intersectional factors that might impact the participants' life experiences.

Interview. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are the most frequently used interview technique due to its versatility, flexibility and variability to the study purpose and research questions (Kelly, 2010). The in-depth interviews provided participants an opportunity to share their life experiences in detail (Creswell, 1998). Individualized interviews were scheduled and conducted by the lead researcher. The researcher recorded the interviews with a voice recording device that was not be visible to limit any anxiety the participants may have about being interviewed. Each participant was asked questions in a semi-structured interview format that allowed the conversation to continue naturally but also guided the conversation. The interviewer was sensitive to the previous

experiences of the participants as IPV victims and adjusted the conversation as not to blame the participants for their roles in the violence. Some questions this interview explored included (the full interview guide can be seen in Appendix D):

How would you define intimate partner violence/abuse?

Tell me about what you think about violence initiated by females in their intimate relationships?

What do you think is different about violence initiated by males versus females?

Why do you think females use violence in their relationships?

Informed Consent

Researchers engaged the process of informed consent throughout any contact with the participants. The participants were notified of the voluntary nature of the study, that they may withdraw from the study at any point, the purpose of the study, any costs and benefits of participating, and information about confidentiality. Each participant was also asked to consent to audio recorded. The participants were then asked to sign the informed consent form (Appendix E) and were given the opportunity to express any questions or concerns

Confidentiality

The researcher informed participants of all measures and methods used within the research project to secure their confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality. The researcher attempted to ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality by ensuring digital data is password protected. Each participant selected a chosen pseudonym and an assigned participant code, all notes and data were de-identified to provide participants anonymity. The researcher and IRB approved assistants coded data to ensure information that would potentially identify the participant were removed. The researcher used a password protected computer with anti-virus software to store demographic information sheets with the name of the participant and their

pseudonym. Only the primary researcher (PR) labeled audio files and transcription documents with the participant code and stored in a manner that only allows access to the PR and research advisor. All electronic documents are password protected. All data will be stored for a minimum of 1 year from the completion and the study and will then be destroyed

Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory research is a synthesized process to allow the emergence of the built story through the connection of the categorical information to the theoretical propositions. The purpose is to discover patterns of behavior that provide understanding into how people define their reality. The researcher used the synthesized method described by Eaves (2001) to analyze data in a grounded theory study. Interviews and analysis happened concurrently to aid comparative analysis and category development. Analysis occurred after each interview with research memos and journaling, which track the primary researchers thoughts, questions, and comments (Creswell, 1998). The analysis process began with transcribing the interviews through REV.com. After the first interviews were transcribed, the primary researcher read the transcripts while listening to the recordings to correct any transcribing errors to allow for correct coding. Then, the researcher read the transcripts for analysis and began open coding to generate categories focused on identification of relationships between categories during coding. In this step, the researcher read each transcript to gain an understanding of each participant's experience. The researcher wrote memos about concepts to identify dominant codes for each interview and compared those emerging with the other interviews. Categories were formed from the most explanatory and frequent codes.

The researcher then imported the transcriptions into an excel file to allow for side by side comparison of participants comments. Each line was read, examined, color coded and labeled

according to the conceptual content that included categories of meaning, action, and cognitive processing (Creswell, 1998). During the next step the primary researcher examined the codes and the conditions under which they occur (violent episode), the responses to this event (appraisal), and the result of the responses (participant reflection). During this phase, the researcher examined the effect of violence characteristics on categories, specifically the participants attitude, cognitions, and the type of violence. Through connecting categories and examining categories for more abstract concepts, a theory began to form (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data gathering and analysis continued until the categories in the theory were exhausted.

The researcher and triangulated researcher conducted separate line-by-line in-vivo coding on the transcripts of participants to identify key phrases in the informants' own words to provide validity of concepts. Next, researchers discussed and compared codes to provide validity of the emerging concepts of appraisals and themes. Researchers discussed discrepancies in their interpretation of the data codes to come to a consensus of definitions. Fact checking amongst researchers was high, codes without consensus were not included in this body of work. After analyzing each transcript and cross comparing participant responses within the list the researcher then grouped formulated meanings into thematic clusters. The process of grouping the formulated meanings also included assigning metaclusters that are common among the participants experience and then decided on various thematic clusters.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness and validity, the researcher adhered to the qualitative methodology suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) of note taking, journaling, and use of a triangulated researcher. During the data analysis process, the researcher was the instrument for analysis and therefore determined coding judgements and theming, and decontextualizing and

recontextualizing of the data. To examine researcher biases and information collection, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a process of journaling and notetaking during the interview and transcription process. During the initial process of the study, the researcher followed Crewell (1998) recommendation for self-reflection and journaling to fully describe their unique experience with the phenomenon. Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed the process of keeping a journal of researcher interpretations and reactions aids in the security of the confirmability of the findings. Hereby, the researchers journaled reflections are incorporated into the study findings as a process to establish whether the findings are thus grounded in the data.

The researcher used the process of triangulation to support establishing the credibility of the findings. Utilization of a third party during the data analysis process in order to examine what has been found from the research is supported by qualitative researchers across disciplines (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thurmond, 2001). Involving another researcher in the data analysis to code themes and check these themes against the findings of the primary researcher establishes credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, discussion of the separate findings of triangulated researcher and primary researcher results in the integration of new themes into the data analysis (Creswell, 1998). To further establish trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis process researchers discussed personal experiences and biases regarding use of definitions, participant responses, and the analysis process.

CHAPTER 4: REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 5: PUBLICATION MANUSCRIPT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is not specific to a religion, gender, racial group, or socioeconomic class (Black et al., 2011). It is a complex global social problem supported by social norms and constructs social norms that accept the use of violence to address problems (Black et al., 2011; UNODC, 2019; Violence, 2019). While abuse manifest itself with some commonalities across demographic groups, the experiences of every victims and perpetrator is unique. The common denominator shared amongst all abusers or perpetrators of IPV is the use of violence, insults, or manipulative tactics to violate the right to safety of victims. In the United States more than 10 million women and men annually experience intimate partner violence. During their life course 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience some form of IPV (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime (Black, et al., 2011). Young adults, sexual minority, and racial minority group report the highest prevalence of victimization when compared with other groups (Black, et al., 2011; Randle & Graham, 2011).

Therefore, there is a need to understand the influences that affect the use of violence within intimate partner relationships. As a human problem, IPV results in health consequences including depression, suicide, anxiety, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, and death (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Golding, 1996). Moreover, IPV has been shown to have significant cost to victim and larger society around them. IPV is a product of the larger social problem of violence that requires both micro and macro examination at the structures that promote and maintain violence. Lately there has been a social outcry against systemic oppression of minority groups within the US. In the wake of the death of George Floyd, an unarmed African American male, during an arrest by white police officers the spotlight has intensified on the injustices of African American men and women experiences with the US. There has been

immense civil unrest in the US through mass protest and riots aimed at creating discussions and change to end systemic racism and oppression for marginalized individuals. Thus, this study posits that all violence within relationships is important for study and every victims experience deserves acknowledgement.

Need for this Study

According to research, U.S. men experience victimization at rates similar to women respectively impacting 1:4 women and 1:9 men (Black et al., 2011; Velopulos et al., 2019). However, women are injured significantly more than men (Archer, 2000; Kimmel, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Despite data that indicates women are also perpetrators of violence in their relationships research examining female perpetration of violence is minimal when compared against the plethora of research on male perpetrators of IPV. (Anderson, 2002; Chan, 2011; Hamby, 2009; Kelly, 2008; Krahe et al., 2014). There remains controversy within the literature regarding the rates of female perpetrated IPV particularly Intimate Terrorism (IT) (Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Hines & Douglas, 2010b). Johnson (1995) proposed that men primarily are the perpetrators of IT whereas, he maintained women chiefly engage in violent resistance. While evidence supports both genders engage in violent resistance, empirical data disputes the argument that women only use violence in self-defense (Saunders, 1986; Straus M., 2005; Swan et al., 2008).

A slowly growing body of research indicates that women not only initiate violence in their intimate relationships, but also their initiation of violence is more complex and used in a much wider context than originally purposed (Archer, 2000; Richardson, 2005; Steen & Hunskaar, 2004). Researchers such as Langhinrichsen-Rohling et. al, 2012 supplies evidence that women perpetrate greater levels of bi-directional violence than their male partners. Furthermore,

provided evidence that women engaged in high rates of psychological aggression and physical violence in their intimate relationship.

Despite the limited research available, there exist evidence that men sustain negative outcomes related to IPV like women. Male IPV victims reported experiencing severe violence by their wives that resulted in physical injuries due to being punched, kicked, beat up, and use of a knife or gun used against them (Hines et al., 2007; Straus & Gelles, 1986). IPV in men results in negative psychological effects such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hines et al., 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). When comparing lesbians to bisexual women involved with a same sex partner, Messinger (2011) found that lesbians reported higher rates of victimization. Within the previous year findings existed for all IPV forms: control behaviors (55.56 %) verbal aggression (44 %), physical aggression (25%), and sexual abuse (3.57%).

When considering the population of this study, it is noted that black women experience higher rates of IPV and are less likely to seek mental health help (Cheng & Lo, 2015). This places them at an increased risk for negative outcomes due to the influences of the broader social systems (governmental, political, social and cultural) which all have an impact on the experience with IPV. Furthermore, research indicates that social status, race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class also impact outcomes for individuals experiencing IPV (Hamel, 2014). Due to systemic oppression, black women experience greater barriers to medical and judicial help.

Thus, given the clear association between psychological abuse and negative health outcomes, and limitations in research for literature about female perpetrators of IPV, complexity of the IPV experience and greater risks for minority groups, further exploration is necessary to better understand such topics.

Purpose of this Study

To further advance the interventions, social education, and delivery of services related to female perpetration of IPV more research must be conducted to examine the constructs of female violence within intimate partner relationship. It is the aim of the research to explore the cognitive distortions and appraisal processes that female perpetrators engage in when deciding to use violence within their intimate relationships. Utilizing the grounded theory study of Whiting, (2008) and Whiting et., al (2012) as models to approach the data to deepen the literature related to the appraisal of female perpetrators in violent partnerships and how these contribute to violence against men.

Literature Review

According to the CDC, IPV is any threat or use of physical violence, stalking, sexual violence, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; Carlyle et al., 2014; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Waltermaurer, 2005). IPV varies in both frequency and severity and results in negative consequences for its victims that includes in its extreme occurrences death (Black et al., 2011; Breiding et al., 2015; Dicola & Spar, 2016; Tolan et al., 2006; Zara & Gino, 2018). As a worldwide social problem, IPV impacts every country, religion, sociodemographic, and cultural background (Ali et al., 2016; Ellsberg et al., 2014). Victim impact includes not only physical harm but also chronic, acute, short and long-term emotional and psychological injury as well as negative health outcome for victims (Black et al., 2011). Research demonstrates that exposure to violence contributes to the beginning and exacerbation of mental health conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse (Suggs, 2015; Golding, 1996). For a richer understanding of the impact and prevalence of IPV, research must

consider the impact on not only victims but of family members and the larger system around the victim.

Socially, the impact of IPV includes the onslaught of the health care, judicial system, and community-based resources. In the United States (U.S.) alone IPV has astounding costs that are estimated to exceed \$8 billion annually (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; McDowell, 2014).

According to recent estimates the lifetime cost exceeds \$100,000 per female victim and \$23,000 per male victim (Peterson, et al., 2018). Consideration of the 43 million U.S. adults with victimization history the population economic burden swells to \$3.6 trillion (2014 US\$) over victims' lifetimes. Peterson et al., (2018) estimates included \$2.1 trillion in medical costs, \$1.3 trillion lost productivity among victims and perpetrators, \$73 billion in criminal justice activities, and \$62 billion in other costs. Such staggering cost supports the need for rigorous research and intervention to reduce IPV rates for all victim groups.

Typology of IPV

Research for understanding knowledge regarding IPV typology beyond labelling perpetrators by identifying how violent behaviors are used in relationships. Research focuses on identifying the various patterns of violence to explain the severity and diversity of experiences for victims. Intimate Terrorism) is defined as the use of controlling tactics such as but not limited to intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying, and blaming. It may or may not include the use of physical violence and does not necessarily manifest itself in high levels of violence (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). IT violence is more frequent and severe in the shelter population compared to the community samples and statistically more likely to be perpetrated by men in heterosexual relationships. Mutual Violence Control (MVC), consists of two intimate terrorists, where both individuals use diverse types of violence to control each

other. Violent Resistance is described by Kelly & Johnson (2008) as the use violence to stop violence against oneself or to stand up for oneself. Situational Violence originally common couple violence is defined as "dynamic in which conflict occasionally gets 'out of hand,' leading usually to 'minor' forms of violence, and more rarely escalating into serious, sometimes even life-threatening, forms of violence" (Johnson, 1995, p. 285). Thus, men and women mutually engage in acts of violence not as a means of controlling one's partner, but as the result of a temporary motivation to establish control during a conflict (Johnson, 1995). SCV is low level IPV and hypothesized to be experienced by the majority of IPV couples in community samples. Separation-instigated violence is defined by the separation or divorce of a couple where there was no prior history of couple violence. Tilbrook et al., (2010) introduced into IPV literature through their qualitative study of 15 male IPV victims a distinct form of IPV that they termed as Legal and Administrative Abuse (LA). They defined LA as occurring when "some perpetrators manipulate legal and administrative resources to the detriment of their...partners" (p. 20). Hines et al., (2015) took the first step within literature towards developing and validating a scale to measure LA. Although Tilbrook et al. (2010) presented that LA was unique to men as victims and women as perpetrators Hines et al., 2015 found gender symmetry in both victim and perpetrators.

IPV Prevalence

Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime (Black et al., 2011). In the US, every minute approximately 20 people suffer physical abuse by an intimate partner (Black et al., 2011). The lifetime prevalence of all forms of IPV for women estimates are as high as 36% and 29% for men (Black et al., 2011; Breiding, (2015). Young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 years of age report the highest prevalence of IPV victimization when compared with other age

groups. Current or former boyfriends or girlfriends (7.8%) committed a greater percentage of all violent victimization of their partners than spouses (4.7%) and ex-spouses (2.0%) combined (6.7%) (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Truman & Morgan, (2014) report that 1 in 7 women and 1 in 25 men sustain injuries because of IPV.

As confounding as IPV data rates are, researchers theorize that data for marginalized subgroups of IPV victims is traditionally underreported. Prevalence estimates range from 17% to 52% in heteronormative relationships and between 25% and 50% in gay and lesbian relationships (Murray & Mobley, 2009; Ristock, 2005), Underreporting is a systemic and tragic problem for minority groups given that groups such as gay men experience IPV more often than lesbian women (Messinger, 2011). Walters et al. (2013) reported the lifetime prevalence for sexual violence victimization for gay men at 40 % and 47 % for bisexual men. They also reported that a lifetime prevalence for physical violence being 26 % for gay men and 37 % for bisexual men. Thus, IPV research has slowly expanded to embrace more inclusive perspectives to examine men's and women's use of IPV (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011). This new trend incorporates perspectives that scrutinize factors of the individual and/or couple (where appropriate). The significance and urgency to gaining a better understanding of the intersection of gender, race and violence in intimate relationships is particularly of importance for same-sex and racially diverse couples.

Influences on IPV Prevalence Reports

To understand IPV prevalence, one must first define the context in which the subject is examined, and the terms used to define the individuals of interest. Across the globe in many societies, IPV is considered a private issue that is responded to as a family matter (Chuemchit et al., 2018; Loseke, 2005). Thus, “family” or “intimate relationship” must first be defined to

understand the statistics and driving force for research. However, finding a suitable and adequate definition for the term “family” to encompass the fluid diversity and ever-changing structure is unfathomable.

Another level of complexity is added when anyone whose gender identity is different from the gender assigned at birth. Until recently IPV literature according to Calton, et al., (2016) excluded individuals who “do not identify within the gender binary, identify as transgender, and/or identify as genderqueer in addition to, or instead of, identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.”

Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that due to the complexities of family structures (Brown et. al., 2015; Cancian et. al., 2011; Joslin, 2009) gender identity (Calton, et al., (2016) and IPV itself (Black et al., 2011; Breiding et. al., 2015) there persists a demand for a continuous evaluation of the conceptualization and modification of the frameworks used to understand IPV in the context of victims, perpetrators, and prevalence. Furthermore, when examining IPV, it is important to note the cultural and historical factors that influence both the acceptability and definition of partner violence (Bradley, 2015; Heise et. al.,1999; Sandberg et al., 2018).

Gender Symmetry and Bidirectionality

At the onset of exploring the nature of violence within the family, the assumption was once that rates of violence perpetration were highest for men and primarily unidirectional. However, within the past 20 years data from national surveys and longitudinal family conflict studies indicate that violence between partners occurs bidirectionally, (Renner & Whitney, 2012; Renner & Whitney, 2010; Strets & Straus, 1989). Couples with a history of use of any form of violence have experienced bidirectional rates of aggression as high as 69.7 % (Langhinrichsen-

Rohling et al., 2012). Kimmel (2002) argues that women's violence ought not be ignored, his stance is reiterated in this research for expanding the literature related to understanding women's use of violence not for establish gender symmetry rather to prevent violence in relationships. By understanding when, how, and why all individuals use violence within their most intimate relationship everyone and everything with the IPV cycle benefits.

Females and Violence

One of the key justification's with IPV research for ignoring female perpetrators is the reality that men commit significantly more violent infractions than women during perpetration of IT (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Pollock, Mullings, & Crouch (2006) noted when people think of violence and crimes habitually, they do not think of women. As such, most research seeking to understand violence has been conducted on male populations. The common mistaken assumption has been that outcomes can be generalized across genders. Although women have gained some power and influence in various social structures, there remains factors that contribute to gender-based differences in aggression and use of violent behaviors. There is limited empirical and theoretical understanding of why and how females are violent. Thus, the underlying mechanisms of females' use of violence remains grossly misunderstood. Consequently, there are limited empirical models that specifically address the causal mechanisms contributing to females' use of violence in their relationships. Likewise, there are limited models that attempt to identify whether such mechanisms differ from those of men.

Females as Perpetrators of IPV

Research provides conflicting information about the rates at which women cause severe injuries to their partners (Ananthakrishnan et al., 2006; Dutton & Wells, 2013; Felson & Cares, 2005) and their use of violence as intimate terrorism (IT) to seek power and control (Hines &

Douglas, 2010). IT according to Johnson (1985) entails the use of coercive control thru acts of aggression against one's partner to establish and maintain a dominance in the relationship. In several studies of men seeking help as a result of IPV in their relationship, researchers found women typically engaged in violence to both harm and control their partners (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Hines & Douglas, 2010b; Hines et al., 2015). Notably, Hines & Douglas, 2010a found that females partners were 5–6 times more likely to use physical and severe psychological aggression and controlling behaviors against their male partners.

Furthermore, female perpetrator rates of physical and psychological aggression were twice as high as their male partners. Correspondingly within the same study when examining the female partners between the two sample groups, the female partners of men seeking help engaged in significantly higher rates and frequency of all types of IPV. Thus, resulting in men in the help seeking group being more likely than men in the community group to have sustained an injury. This was consistent with data for female victims who seek help due to higher rates of IT (Hines & Douglas, 2010a; Johnson M. P., 1995)

Theoretical Perspectives of IPV

Theory supplies supporting evidence to provide context, predictions, and the generation of new research. In analysis of theoretical perspectives related to IPV, Dixon & Graham-Kevan, (2011) provides a synthesis of recent IPV research and inferences the need for empirically sound research to accurately impact IPV practice and policy. Critiquing the dominant theories that examine etiology of IPV is beyond the scope of this article, however they are briefly discussed here including Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) which influences this work.

Research that support the feminist theory while investigating IPV research primarily examines violence perpetrated by men against women and the societal structures and patriarchal

principles that support the subjection of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 2004; Hines et al., 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). Thus, IPV as a gender problem, recognizes the unequal distribution of power in society (access to resources, legal and political influence, social norms, etc.) that mediates role assignments for perpetrators or victims. Feminist studies that include reports of female violence against men within data attributed women's use of violence to self-defense, self-assertion, or retaliation (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 2004). Whitaker et al., 2007 findings suggest violence has different effects when it is perpetrated by women versus men. Such findings suggest injuries resulting from IPV is related to the size differences between genders. However, when scrutinized under rigorous research criteria by family violence researchers the results are not always consistent (Hines et al., 2007; Hines & Douglas, 2010).

Researchers that identify IPV as a social problem from the family violence perspective posits that IPV originates from social norms that accept the use of violence to address problems (Straus et al., 1980). As a socially accepted norm violence thus infiltrates the family structure; resulting in female and male family members emerging as both perpetrators and victims of violence (Straus, 2011; Straus et al., 1980).

CBT and IPV

It would seem a reasonable expectation for anyone who finds themselves victimized by an intimate partner to presume access to supports and acknowledgement of their experience. However, not all victims are treated equally as victims (Strobl, 2004), nor does everyone's self-identification as an IPV victim align with socially constructed definitions of such (Dunn, 2008). Consequently, stereotypical social responses and victim-blaming attitudes severely hinder victims' vulnerability to disclose their experiences (Meyer, 2016). Thus, limiting the ability for society and research to understand how to assist and intervene appropriately.

Therefore, limiting the inclusion of research participants in all roles stifles acknowledgement of the victims experience, availability of resources and provision of support.

To minimize the long-term negative outcomes for individuals, couples and families experiencing IPV, intervention is key, and CBT is a widely researched interventions for IPV interventions by focusing on altering cognitive biases, working on self-regulation, focusing on building assertive, communication, and problem-solving skills (Iverson, et al., 2011; Latif & Khanam, 2017). It is one of the most empirically validated theories that yields positive influences on many of the different presenting outcomes of IPV such as but not limited to depression (Williams et al., 2013), anxiety (Lyneham & Rapee, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2012), anorexia nervosa (Grave, Calugi et al., 2013), and post-traumatic stress disorder. CBT suggests dysfunctional thinking as the source of influence on mood and behavior with couples' dynamics (Beck, 2013). Thus, within the use of IPV intervention it has the potential to effectively, work with both the victim and perpetrator. Its value and effectiveness in helping to generate change is recognized by both organizational and governmental leadership; thus, resulting in advocacy for its use with many special populations. supports for use of CBT with IPV perpetrators and victims respectively.

Distortions.

How one observes and processes information about violent interaction such as rationalizing "it is normal for couples to fight", not the actual situation itself, typically has a great influence on one's psychological response, emotions, and behavior. Cognitive distortions are negative biases in the cognitive processing of self, others, and the environment (Beck, 2011). Cognitive processing errors occur when one perceives a threat to a vital aspect of one's life such as security, safety, and close relationships (Beck, 1988). Internalized cognitive representations of

relationships influence generalized expectations and assumptions about relationships and guides the processing of incoming social information. Distortions in cognitions during interactions can lead to an escalation of emotions, resulting in conflict in an intimate relationship. These distortions lead to behaviors that look to generate confirmation of about one's partner or self. Individuals cognitive and emotional processing and behavioral responses favor the person's distortion (Whiting et al., 2012). Common behaviors include lying, deliberate misrepresentation of information, defensiveness, and exaggeration of things to one's benefit or justification of one's behavior by making excuses or denying that something occurred.

Beck (1988) suggests that the interpersonal coding system through which we process information is developed early in life. Although this coding system provides a sense of comfort, it is subject to fault through distorted cognitions and erroneous meaning making. Faulty information processing within IPV leads to the negative attributional processing of one's partner and distorted appraisal of the right to use violence.

It is necessary to address the complexities that are associated with men who become subjected to intimate partner violence within their relationships. Cognitive distortions influence the internal evaluations of self and ones' partner and influences each partners behavior and appraisals (Whiting et. al., 2012). In their study examining the how gender interacts with appraisal distortions for both perpetrators and victims Whiting et. al., 2012 summarized that individuals engage in too numerous cognitive distortions to list. Some of the most common that literature discusses such as minimizing, denial, blame, rationalization, overreaction, and excuses impair victims from appropriately making appraisal about their situation.

Beck (1999) has asserted that cognitive distortions involved in IPV is the result of activation of "primary thinking", a narrowed and automatic thought process during the

conflictual incident. Furthermore, Beck (1999) insisted that misinterpretations of information (cognitive distortion) are prescriptive in the formation of belief systems and utilized during future situations when processing similar and new information. Appropriately he cautioned CBT as “most appropriate for people who have the capacity for introspection to reflect about their own thoughts” (Beck A. T., 1976). Cognitive distortions by default occur during the misinterpreting the reality of information about self, environment, and/or the future. By focusing on and identifying inaccurate thoughts that reinforce negative thinking or emotions, Beck found success in helping the depressive symptoms of patients (Beck A. T., 1976).

Distortions and Victimization.

Psychological factors in addition to biology play important roles alongside socio-cultural influences in incidences of IPV. Holtzworth-Munroe (2000), found that limitations in neuropsychological functioning impair the ability to assess interpersonal stimuli accurately and, enhance cognitive distortions and anger arousal in response to negative relationship events. The inability to appropriately process emotions has been shown to influence violence in several populations, including sexual and violent offenders (Gillespie, Rotshtein, Satherley, Beech, & Mitchell, 2015). Attribution of hostile intentions to others has been shown to increase interpersonal problems and IPV (Babcock et al., 2008). Accordingly, this diminished sensitivity, along with hostile attribution bias, can lead to interpersonal problems, such as behavioral disinhibition and violence, due to their importance for understanding other's facial expressions in social interactions (Babcock et al., 2008; Romero-Martínez & Moya-Albiol, 2013). Thus, understanding people's opinions and perceptions that attribute to distortions of events, is necessary to design services and programs reduce IPV.

Current Study

The aim of this study is to further understand the appraisal distortional of women who use violence in their intimate relationships. The researchers aim to explore the thoughts and social norms and messages that influence the participants decisions to use violence to resolve relational conflict. This research utilized a grounded theory design therefore, hypotheses about the finds were not developed. However, questions of interest are what motivates women to use violence in their relationships.

Method

Design

This study utilized a grounded theory research design. Grounded theory (GT) is suited for use within the social science field to provide a systematic process for qualitative data collection and analysis by which to generate theory (Creswell, 1998; Urquhart, 2013). The premise of grounded theory as a qualitative research method is to develop theory by systematically gathering and analyzing data. GT research design is consistent with qualitative methods and does not test or measure hypotheses. Rather, theory is developed within the process of analyzing the lived experiences of participants are theoretical constructs that support the research questions (Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005)). Key assumptions of grounded theory are the use of inquiry to discover social psychological processes; data analysis processes prompt theory; making theoretical sense of social life is itself a process (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Charmaz 1983).

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were recruited through mixed methods of theoretical sampling and purposive sampling through the distribution of flyers and emails. Flyers were given to organizations that provide IPV and therapy services. Flyers were also posted on social media sites (e.g. Facebook).

Participants were also recruited through snowball sampling, in which participants were given flyers about the study to give to other potential participants. The flyers contained information about the study and ask for female participants who have experienced intimate partner violence at any point in their life course. Criteria for inclusion in this study was determined by participants self-identify as having initiated IPV in past or current relationships. Once participants contacted the primary researcher with interest, participants were given more information. Of the 19 individuals who reached out with interest to participate, 13 schedule and attend an interview. Researchers did not compensate participants in any way.

Participants ranged from 25 years to 50 and all identified as heterosexual African American females. The mean age of participants was 35.46 years of age. The sample included participants from a variety of social location backgrounds. All participants lived in the southeastern and Midwestern United States. Further demographic information for the participants is located in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory research is a synthesized process to allow the emergence of the built story through the connection of the categorical information to the theoretical propositions. The purpose is to discover patterns of behavior that provide understanding into how people define their reality. The researcher used the synthesized method described by Eaves (2001) to analyze data in a grounded theory study. Interviews and analysis happened concurrently to aid comparative analysis and category development. Analysis occurred after each interview with research memos and journaling, which track the primary researchers thoughts, questions, and comments (Creswell, 1998). The analysis process began with transcribing the interviews through REV.com. After the first interviews were transcribed, the

primary researcher read the transcripts while listening to the recordings to correct any transcribing errors to allow for correct coding. Then, the researcher read the transcripts for analysis and began open coding to generate categories focused on identification of relationships between categories during coding. In this step, the researcher read each transcript to gain an understanding of each participant's experience. The researcher wrote memos about concepts to identify dominant codes for each interview and compared those emerging with the other interviews. Categories were formed from the most explanatory and frequent codes.

The researcher then imported the transcriptions into an excel file to allow for side by side comparison of participants comments. Each line was read, examined, color coded and labeled according to the conceptual content that included categories of meaning, action, and cognitive processing (Creswell, 1998). During the next step the primary researcher examined the codes and the conditions under which they occur (violent episode), the responses to this event (appraisal), and the result of the responses (participant reflection). During this phase, the researcher examined the effect of violence characteristics on categories, specifically the participants attitude, cognitions, and the type of violence. Through connecting categories and examining categories for more abstract concepts, a theory began to form (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data gathering and analysis continued until the categories in the theory were exhausted.

The researcher and triangulated researcher conducted separate line-by-line in-vivo coding on the transcripts of participants to identify key phrases in the informants' own words to provide validity of concepts. Next, researchers discussed and compared codes to provide validity of the emerging concepts of appraisals and themes. Researchers discussed discrepancies in their interpretation of the data codes to come to a consensus of definitions. Fact checking amongst researchers was high, codes without consensus were not included in this body of work. After

analyzing each transcript and cross comparing participant responses within the list the researcher then grouped formulated meanings into thematic clusters. The process of grouping the formulated meanings also included assigning metaclusters that are common among the participants experience and then decided on various thematic clusters.

To establish trustworthiness and validity, the researcher adhered to the qualitative methodology suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) of note taking, journaling, and use of a triangulated researcher. During the data analysis process, the researcher was the instrument for analysis, determines coding judgements and theming, and decontextualizing and recontextualizing of the data. During the initial process of the study, the researcher followed Creswell (1998) recommendation for self-reflection and journaling to fully describe their unique experience with the phenomenon. Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed the process of keeping a journal of researcher interpretations and reactions to aid in the security of the confirmability of the findings. Hereby, the researchers journaled reflections are incorporated into the study findings as a process to establish whether the findings are thus grounded in the data.

The researcher used the process of triangulation to support establishing the credibility of the findings. Utilization of a third party during the data analysis process in order to examine what has been found from the research is supported by qualitative researchers across disciplines (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thurmond, 2001). Involving another researcher in the data analysis to code themes and check these themes against the findings of the primary researcher establishes credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, discussion of the separate findings of triangulated researcher and primary researcher results in the integration of new themes into the data analysis (Creswell, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

The participants were given an informed consent form and were notified of the voluntary nature of the study, that they may withdraw from the study at any point, the purpose of the study, any costs and benefits of participating, and information about confidentiality. At the beginning of the interview, as well as throughout, participants were given an opportunity to express any questions or concerns. All participants were asked to consent to audio recording and all participants agreed. The researchers have attempted to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality using a participant chosen pseudonym and an assigned participant number, de-identification of all notes and data, and password protection of all data. All data with identifying information as well as audio files were kept in locked rooms and only the primary researcher and research team had access to the information. A research team of 1 undergraduate student and 1 graduate aided as triangulated researcher's audio files. The research assistants were IRB approved and had training in confidentiality practices.

Results

The data from the interviews revealed 338 significant statements, 319 formulated meaning statements, 3 primary appraisal distortions, and 3 emergent themes, which demonstrate the experiences of intimate partner violence according to the participants. The appraisals most significant to this study include: (a) rationalization, (b) denial and (c) blame.

This study utilized the theoretical model proposed by Whiting, (2008) see figure 1. which demonstrates how the relational stance of partners interacts with the appraisal about one's relationship and partner. Appraisals according to Whiting involves the process of analyzing, reflection, and meaning making "in the moment" of couple interactions and conflict. In this body of work, we aim to build upon Whiting's work to look specifically at the appraisal of female

perpetrators of violence. Whiting (2008) maintained that appraisals distortions are a result of valuing one's own needs over others.

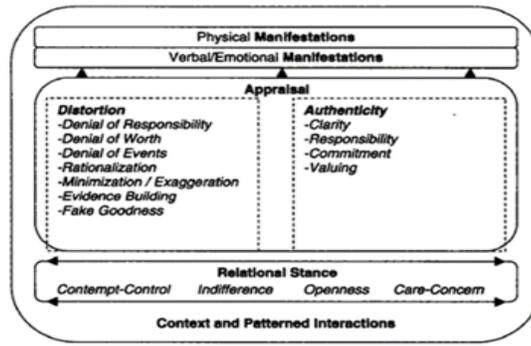


Figure 1. Theoretical model of appraisal distortion and conflict

When examining the data consideration was given to the simultaneous relational stance and appraisals that occur internally and in relationship to others that influences conflict within relationships. Accordingly, we suppose that individuals within IPV experiences may engage in both appraisal distortions about their partner/relationship while simultaneously engaging in appraisal distortions about their own actions. One participant demonstrated engaging in denial of worth (personal safety) while rationalizing the use of violence. She acknowledged recognizing she was not physically capable of causing the same amount of harm as her partner “We're not as strong. So we can't hurt them” however when having difficulty processing her emotions she rationalized the use of violence under the influence of alcohol “I was mad and I just punched him and that lead to a full blown fight”. Another also demonstrated engaging in the appraisal distortion of rationalization “it's just I didn't give a crap at the time” (intrapersonal) while making an exaggerated appraisal related to her partner “he put his foot on me and I have a thing about

feet.” Thus, the processing of valuing one’s needs over others involves both interpersonal and intrapersonal appraisal.

Initiation

In the scope of this study, researchers were interested in interviewing participants whom self-reported and had an proper concept of the term “initiate.” Thus, researchers asked each participant to supply a working definition for the term initiate to guide the interview process. All participants had a definition consistent with the Merriam Webster definition “to cause or facilitate the beginning of: set going” initiate. (n.d.) In Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/initiate>. Rose defined initiate as “Initiate is the person who commits the action. They're the first one to do something.” Lilly defined it as “Initiate it, is to start something, to bring on something.” Mauri defined it as “Initiated, starting it. You're the person that instigates the fight.”

Appraisals

Understanding the appraisals individuals make when angry or conflict arises in abusive relationships is critical to understanding how to engage and provide interventions for couples. Earlier work has suggested that during this process individuals distort what happened to support their own view and negate their partner’s view (Whiting, 2008). All the participants in the study viewed themselves as victims of violence. None reported being sole perpetrators of violence thus identifying that the type of commonly occurring of violence amongst participants as situational or mutual couples’ violence. Participants provided insight into their appraisals related to their partner/ relationship as demonstrated by “triggers would usually revolve around something he was insecure about” and the appraisals they made related to their own behavior “I may have not realized what I said”. When assessing for participants perception of their partners initiation of

violence in the relationship all participants acknowledged having initiated violence in their relationship with the exception of one participant. When asked “What percentage of the time do you think your partner initiated the violence in your relationship?” the participant replied “100%”. The participant described instances of using psychological violence “...whenever I was suspicious, I was correct, but I didn't go to the point of trying to beat on the other person....I would call them ugly, pick out a feature about them that I thought was unattractive, I would throw that in their face, big nose or whatever, something of that nature. I would use mean words like that in the heat of an argument’.”

Initiation as retaliatory for actions committed by their partners. One woman stated, despite “He liked to do small things that would just, that he knew, would push my buttons. And so, I would just one day, explode in physical violence on him”

Rationalizing

Understanding the attitudinal process of interpersonal violence (IPV) is important for several reasons. Research has found a link between perceptions about violence and committing abuse in relationships (Pease & Flood, 2008; Schwartz, Kelley, & Kohli, 2012). Perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes affect whether people think relationship violence is a serious problem or merely a private matter between partners (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004). Theorists suppose that violence within patriarchy is due to a justification or rationalization of their use of violence (Johnson M. P., 1995). Thus, those who feel justified in the use of violence are more likely to engage in its use when rationalizing that their partners' actions warrant the use of violence. Rationalization involved a relative awareness of one's decision to use violence. One woman reported “I always knew that I was doing it because I actually, I would say I plotted everything.” When experiencing emotional discomfort violence was rationalized as appropriate

“Like I said, I was just was so hurt. I really didn't care how anyone else felt. I wanted them to hurt like I was hurt.” Similarly, when participants engaged in rationalization, their use of violence was deemed warranted when perceiving it as a means to protect themselves. One woman reported “and before, I was always taught, before they can get you, get them. And so when I felt like I was being threatened with physical violence, well, I will pop one off first.” Participants justified their use of violence regardless of type, based on the actions of their partner.

Denial

Denial of problem behavior with couple conflict is a vital part of the interactional processes that contributes to IPV. In couple violence both participants engage in the interactional process of the violence. Without awareness of one's role and contribution to the violence process one is incapable of interrupting the cycle of abuse within the relationship. Denial according to Whiting et.al., 2012 occurs when false descriptions about one's role or intent in an interaction. Denial occurred in a complex manner as it is the opposite of rationalizing. It is a lack of awareness of the actions, emotions, and thoughts that precipitates. One participant described it as such “ No. Well, I wasn't trying to deny it. There's a possibility that I didn't realize what I was doing, but if I realized, oh, I did it and I own it. Yeah.” In the study participants acknowledged knowing their actions were violent but feeling justified in their use of violence due to relational conflict or external factors. This was consistent with findings from previous studies regarding rationalizing appraisal distortion (Whiting, 2008; Whiting et al., 2012).

Blame

In discussing the participants' understanding, perceptions, and cognitive appraisal regarding their use of violence participants described engaging in the distortion of blaming their

partner. Understanding how blame is ascribed during IPV is an area of importance although in need of more research to determine clear constructs of how to define blame. Research has found that male perpetrators are viewed more blameworthy and responsible for the violence than female perpetrators. (Hamby & Jackson 2010; Stewart et al., 2012) One woman stated "because he did this to me way back then" while another stated "I was tired of things that were done to me in the beginning, in the middle....I think I punched him one time, just out of the blue in the face." This demonstrates that violence is not quid pro quo but has a retaliatory mechanism that will be discussed later. Blame also occurred in relationship to taking responsibility for their partners initiation of violence within the relationship. When participants initiation of violence resulted in violence being used against, they blamed themselves for aggravating/provoking their partner. One woman reported "there was several times when I would say that, I initiated, I should've kept my mouth closed." Another reported similar thoughts about "but sometimes, you just get tired and just say, "I'm going to say it any damn way."

Emergent Themes

The aim of the study was to understand the cognitions of the women that precipitated their acts of violence. The major themes noted as we conducted the interviews was violence was a tool used to meet the needs of the perpetrator.

Emergent Theme 1: Retaliation

Participants described their use of violence as means to retaliate against their partners perceived infraction. One woman stated "I would hit them where it hurt. But usually it was out of a response of a long-term process." Participants felt justified in their use of violence because they had "put up" with their partners behaviors for a length of period. One woman stated "I felt like it was justified on my end because I put up with it for so long. So now you're going to feel

how you made me feel.” Of interest to the researchers is that almost every participant admitted to initiating violence 15% of the time or less, yet all of them reported their use of violence was in response to their partners behaviors. One woman reported "You embarrassed me, out in public... So, now I'm mad, I'm embarrassed, I'm upset. The things that I would do or threaten, yeah”

Emergent Theme 2: Control

When examining how women view the motivations for violence in intimate relationships, the researchers examined their perceptions of why men and women initiate violence. Participants described a consensus in believing that the use of violence initiated by males or females is a result of loss of control or a way to regain control in relationships. When asked “Why do you think males/females use violence in their relationships?” participants identified violence as a mechanism of control. One woman stated men used violence in relationships “because they want to control the situation, and they don't know what other way to do that.” Another woman reported “because they were brought up with violence or they left violence or violence is how they control people.” Interestingly noted another woman stated use of violence by women is a loss of control “I think it's about a loss of control. I think that women who lash out, in those ways, have issues with control.” This concept was acknowledged by another woman who reported women use violence to regain control in their relationships “To get back control if they are not already a person that is controlling” However, none noted control as the motivation for their own use of violence.

Emergent Theme 3: Emotional Processing of Violence

The participants in the study appeared to equate a root cause of violence in intimate relationships to be the result of the inability to process emotions and the lack of verbal ability to express emotions. When assessing for participants beliefs related to the causes of violence in

intimate relationships 100% of participants identified emotions and the inability to appropriately process emotions as a contributing factor. One woman equated her use of violence to the inability to process anger “Oh, when I overreacted or went off and do something or hit somebody because I was mad at whatever they did or whatever they did to me, they made me think I need to put my hands on them because of my anger.” Another reported believing men use violence due to the inability to appropriately process emotions “They haven't learned how to deal with their emotions, and they don't know how to express themselves through any other means.”

Emergent Theme 4: Societal Gender Stereotypes

Participants each described as women receiving social messages related to gender stereotypes and the use of violence as women. One participant described “sometimes society allow women to get off with a lot of stuff because sometimes they do some stuff they're not innocent all the way.” Women reported having an understanding of the physical differences between men and women and the potential for violence such that one woman reported “ I think when a man is provoking a woman or hurting someone else it's a very dangerous”. Yet they also acknowledged the social acceptance of violence perpetrated by women “I think society is still on the old keen about men are the initiators. I think society has not really looked at women, possibly, of being the initiator of violence.” Being aware of one’s social messages about violence is important as may influence one’s opinions of the appropriateness of violence use. Participants reported a common belief that it is more “socially acceptable” for a female to hit a male, likely due to out-of-date thinking as stated by one participant “I think society is in denial about it. Society normalizes it.” While all participants have admitted to participating in some form of IPV, they also hold the belief that women ought not use violence in their relationships.

Discussion

This study aimed to further explore the lived experience of women who self-report as having used violence within their intimate relationships. Prior to this study little research has been done specifically looking at the appraisals of women who use violence during IPV. This study explored the appraisals of African American women singularly. While, a sample population of African American women was not intentional in the design of the study, this is significant as there has not been another study to explore the topic. Thus, it is important to note that the findings are exploratory and not generalizable to all African American women or other groups of women.

Lifetime prevalence estimates for IPV indicate that all respondents have experienced physical violence and that two thirds of the respondents have experienced psychological violence. This is significant given the racial demographic of the participants. This finding is consistent with other research that supports higher incidences of IPV for African American women. (Anyikwa, 2015; Taft, Bryant-Davis, Woodward, Tillman, & Torres, 2009). In previous IPV studies African Americans were at an increased risk of injury of IPV however, they are not as likely as other groups to seek medical attention or other aid (Anyikwa, 2015; Gondolf et al., 1988). African American woman are uniquely at risk for IPV due to both their gender and race. Both groups experience higher risk factor for IPV and injury due to low-education, alcohol or drug use, and unemployment, and rates of community violence.

Individuals in minority groups experience societal stress that contribute to and exacerbate common couple conflicts. Additionally, some sociodemographic factors such as education, socioeconomic class, and gender have been cited in the literature as increasing the likelihood of IPV victimization (Hines, 2007; Stith et al., 2004). Members of minority groups have both distal

and proximal stressors that they internalize cognitively that increase their risk factors for added harm when stigmatized by their violence (Meyer,1995). Accordingly, during instances of IPV minorities experience stressors from multiple context and levels (i.e. social, interpersonal, and intrapersonal). Increased health risk associated with IPV include disability, chronic pain, arthritis, and sexually transmitted infections, IPV has been associated with a range of significant short- and long-term negative mental and physical health outcomes. Minorities report increased depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, and mental health disability.

Acknowledgment must thus be given to the social significance of this study given the sample participants racial makeup. Accordingly, the researcher posits that the reports of violence initiation by participants does not imply blame or categorize African American women as an aggressive group. Although it was the aim of the study to examine women specifically, we are not suggesting that there is equal responsibility for abuse for both partners in all incidences of IPV. Contrarily, one of the goals of this research was to advocate for more research aimed at developing interventions that are effective at helping individuals take responsibility for their behavior within relationships.

The researcher also differentiates that the participants reports of violence initiation by does not imply blame for the violence within their relationship or categorize the women as IPV perpetrators. The interactional process of violence is complex and responsibility assignment beyond the scope of this research. Although it was the aim of the study to examine women specifically, we are not suggesting that there is equal responsibility for abuse for both partners in all incidences of IPV. Instead we are advocating for more research aimed at developing interventions that are effective at helping individuals take responsible for their behavior within

relationships. The results of this study indicate that most participants reported engaging in mutual couples' violence which is the most frequently occurring type of violence in community samples.

The results of this study can provide provisional accounting of the appraisals women make while using violence within their intimate relationships. The data describes elements of the interactional process of evaluating one's partners and ones needs and cognitions that influence the appraisals made towards violence use. Although the data suggests intentionality research supports that the decision-making process during situational or MVC is more reactionary. Although the data is limited and specific to this set of participants, it may provide a starting point in providing (a) insight into the cognitive processes of women during violence initiation; (b) support for added scholarship in this area; (c) implications for therapeutic intervene; and (d) further questions for researchers to explore.

Implications

Understanding the impact of appraisals on the presence of violence in intimate relationships is an important issue for marriage and family therapists. The results of the current study contribute to the current body of literature and expand on the multifaceted associations between one's level of differentiation, reality television viewership, marriage readiness, and use of negative conflict communication. The current study has significant implications for future research and applied clinical work.

Future Research.

Research has examined the motivations of men for use of violence within their intimate relationships. The influence of such research has increased the social acknowledgement of women's experiences as victims of IPV and made available resources to assist with the outcomes

of violence. However, not all victims are treated equally as victims (Strobl, 2004), nor does everyone's self-identification as an IPV victim align with socially constructed definitions of such (Dunn, 2008). Consequently, stereotypical social responses and victim-blaming attitudes severely hinder victims' vulnerability to comprehensively disclose their experiences (Meyer, 2016). Thus, limiting the ability for society and research to understand how to aid and intervene appropriately. Therefore, by increasing the girth of populations of interest as study participants will increase the fields ability to affect IPV minority victim subgroups. Such knowledge will increase acknowledgement, resources, and support for all victims of IPV Research, legislation, and availability of resources that focuses exclusively on men, LGTBQ victims is minute compared to those focused exclusively on women. Subsequently, the truth of their violence is unknown due both to unreported and minimal research. Increasing research with diverse groups will aid the cause to end violence in relationships.

Clinical Implications.

Regarding the field of family studies and Marriage and family therapy the findings indicate a need for trainings about how best meet the specific needs of minority population of IPV victims. With as many as 1 percent of community samples experiencing violence (Kimmel, 2002) it would be advantageous of therapist to marriage and family therapist and mental health professionals to explore how social messages about female violence affect victims' well-being, sense of responsibility and reciprocal use of violence. Likewise, therapist should be aware of the obligation to not replicate victim-blaming behaviors within the therapeutic relationship who work with men or other minority group members who have experienced IPV.

As discussed by Steenwyk (2009), promoting empathy has been beneficial in allowing partners' the space to shift from a blaming perspective to one where they can more effectively

understand each other's experience and how their own behaviors and actions affect their partner. Therapist can use direct yet collaborative, role to help clients engage in self-reflection to identify and record key triggers and strategize how to overcome negative shifts in appraisals about their self and partner (Macrodimitis et al., 2010).

Limitations

The current study's sample only included African American women currently living in the midwestern and southeastern regions of the United States; thus, findings cannot be generalized to reflect the experiences of African American men or women from other regions. The study population was not deliberate and does not allow for a robust expression of the appraisals of other demographic groups. Some participants reported incidences of having initiated acts of violence in their intimate partnerships while discussing the aims of the study prior to their participation. However, during the recordings, they did not divulge the information for collection as data. Although generalizability is not a required criterion for qualitative research limited generalizability can affect the feasibility and applicability of the findings to other groups. Also, women who completed the intervention may differ from women who did not self-select to participate.

Conclusion

In summary, when engaging in the cognitive process of making appraisals to engage in violence individual must be aware of the influence of the social message, processes of emotions, and interactional process with their partner to make authentic appraisals. When individuals lack the ability to reflect upon situations and their role in the conflict, they are more likely to make distortions about the events, their motives, and the motives of their partners. The appraisals that women make about their use of violence experiences is varied and complex. Overall, these

individual's experiences correspond with many concepts of mutual couple violence and IPV prevalence in minority communities discussed in previous research. However, the experiences of the participants within this study and the information gathered from them is unique and important for mental health providers to consider.

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APPENDIX A

Firefox

https://outlook.office.com/mail/search/id/AAQkAGFIMTU5OTM...

IRB: Study Correspondence Letter

umcirb@ecu.edu <umcirb@ecu.edu>

Wed 01/22/2020 10:42 AM

To: Lee, Frandrea Latrice <LEEF06@students.ecu.edu>



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284**
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Frandrea Lee](#)
CC: [Damon Rappleyea](#)
Date: 1/22/2020
Re: [UMCIRB 19-002868](#)
Female Appraisal Distortions

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 1/22/2020. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a Final Report application to the UMCIRB prior to the Expected End Date provided in the IRB application. If the study is not completed by this date, an Amendment will need to be submitted to extend the Expected End Date. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Demographic Survey Questions with CTSS.docx	Surveys and Questionnaires
Female Appraisal Distortion	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Flyer	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Informed Consent	Consent Forms
Interview Guideline	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Social Media Response	Additional Items

APPENDIX B:

Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me today. I am working on this thesis to better understand the cognitive processes and appraisals that occur during intimate partner violence. I will be asking you to think about your relationship with your (ex or current) partner. In doing so, I will be asking you to look at how you understand your part and the appraisals that you made that influenced the violence or abuse that happened in your relationship. During our time together we will try to focus specifically on your thoughts and actions.

As we talk please feel free to share any information that comes to mind for you. Any information that you share will only be used for this thesis project and any published work or presentations stemming from this project. As discussed during the informed consent, your information will be de-identified as much as possible. Your name and/or identifying information will not be used within any published work or presentations. We will identify a pseudonym that I will use in place of your real name throughout any writings or reports of this work. The consent you signed serves as your agreement to be interviewed today. The interview will take about forty-five minutes and will be recorded through audio. You may stop the interview, decide not to continue the interview, or skip any question that you would prefer not to answer. Please let me know if you would like to stop the interview or skip and move on from a question.

Rapport Building Question:

Tell me a little about you – your hometown, your family, your hobbies/interests?

Grand Tour questions:

How would you define intimate partner violence/abuse?

What do you know digital, sexual, finance, verbal, psychological forms of violence?

Tell me about what you think about violence initiated by males in their intimate relationships?

Tell me about what you think about violence initiated by females in their intimate relationships?

How do you define initiated?

What do you think is different about violence initiated by males versus females?

Who do you think is more violent men or women?

What types of violence do you think men are more likely to initiate/engage in?

What types of violence do you think women are more likely to initiate/engage in?

Why do you think males use violence in their relationships?

Why do you think females use violence in their relationships?

Thinking about when an abusive incident happened in your past/current relationship, how did it usually play out?

What percentage of the time do you think your partner initiated the violence in your relationship?

What percentage of the time do you think you initiated the violence in your relationship?

Sometimes when we hurt or abuse a partner in a relationship, it is easier to “justify” the incident or deny its occurrence. We may also insist that our partner keep the abuse “secret.” Can you describe times when you may have denied to yourself/partner that your behavior was abusive or violent even when you knew that it was?

What do you think helped you to be honest about what was happening?

Sometimes when we are in abusive relationships, we may try to make our partner’s behavior seem different to make ourselves feel better. I will read a short example.

[Vignette #1] Samantha and Steven are fighting because Steven received text messages from his ex-girlfriend and deleted them without telling Samantha. Samantha found out Steven has been texting and calling his ex. Samantha is suspicious about the nature of the calls. Steven denies he has done anything wrong because he and his ex-have been friends since 1st grade and should be allowed to communicate. Samantha thinks he is lying because he should not have deleted the text if it was innocent. Samantha eventually becomes so angry that she slaps Steven in the face and calls him a lying cheater. When Steven turns to walk away, she grabs him by the arm, and digs her nails in while screaming he should just tell her the truth. Steven yells “I’m done, it’s over” Samantha begins to cry. When Steven stops walking away, she goes to him and apologizes for slapping him, tells Steven she’s afraid of losing him and promises it won’t happen again. Samantha tells Steven she just gets so afraid and loses control. She admits that she was wrong for getting so angry but concludes that she knows she didn’t really hurt him.

What are your reactions to this example?

Have you ever had any experience like the one in the vignette?

Why do you think Samantha concluded she didn’t hurt Steven?

Please describe any times when you have tried to convince yourself and/or others that there wasn’t abuse occurring in a relationship.

“Please describe times when you may have denied that behavior was abusive or violent even when you knew it was?”

Please describe why you might create reasons to justify abusive behavior?

What are the thoughts about why you do this?

What do you think society's position/ thoughts are about violence initiated by women?

Do you think women think they its ok to hit men because they are smaller?

Do you think women think they can't hurt men

Is there any additional information that I did not cover that you would like to share with me?"

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: Females Appraisal Distortion in Intimate Partner Relationships

Principal Investigator: Frandrea Lee
Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, College of Health and Human Performance, Human Development and Family Science Department
Address: Rivers RW
Greenville, NC 27858
Telephone #: 252-259-6618

Please **PRINT** clearly

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) and Vidant issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this study is to explore relationship dynamics among young adults. There is an interest in learning from you about your experiences and thoughts about relationships and the use of violence in intimate partnerships. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are an adult female who identifies as having experienced intimate partner violence. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn the influence of appraisals and cognition on the use of violence with intimate partner relationships.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

- I understand I should not volunteer for this study if I am not older than 18 years old and/or
- I am currently involved in an intimate partnership relationship experiencing violence and/or
- I have never been in an intimate partnership relationship that experienced violence

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research is two part and will include a brief 30 item demographic questionnaire and in-depth interview. The initial part of the study includes the completion of a questionnaire that will be conducted through an online survey on a computer or phone available to you. The questionnaire is intended to gather information about you and your life experiences. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this portion of the study is about 5-15 minutes. The second part of the study will include a 1:1 interview. The goal of the interview is to gather specific information about you and your experiences with intimate partner violence. The total amount of time you will be

Consent Version # or Date: _____

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Pseudonym _____

Code _____

The purpose of this questionnaire is to allow me to describe participants in more detail. Please read and answer each of the following items. Do not include your name on this document. Please ask any questions that you might have and check all boxes that apply to you.

Assigned sex at birth – Female Male

What is your current age? ____ 63 ____ years

How do you define your race/ethnicity?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native American/Alaska Native/ First Nations
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Multiracial/ Biracial
- White
- Other (specify): _____

How would you describe your current relationship status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Not currently in a relationship
- In a committed relationship
- Other (specify): _____

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- High School graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associates degree (2-year)
- Bachelor's degree (4+ year)
- Master's degree (4+ year)
- Doctoral degree (4+ year)
- Professional degree (JD, MD)
- Other (specify): _____

How would you describe your current employment?

- Employed full time

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS

	Rose	April	Holly	June	Iris	May	Jasmine	Lavender	Primrose	Mauri	Lilly	Analese	Poppy
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	50	47	49	32	25	43	44	43	47	42	50	45	37
Household Income	30,000 to 59,999	30,000 to 59,999	30,000 to 59,999	10,000 to 29,999	10,000 to 29,999	130,000 or more	30,000 to 59,999	30,000 to 59,999	10,000 to 29,999	90,000 to 129,999	10,000 to 29,999	10,000 to 29,999	30,000 to 59,999
Race/Ethnicity	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American	African American
Current Relationship Status	Not currently in a relationship	Unknown	Not currently in a relationship	In a committed relationship	Not currently in a relationship	Married	In a committed relationship	Divorced	Widowed	Married	Divorced	Not currently in a relationship	Married
Education	Bachelor's	Some college but no degree	Some college but no degree	Some college but no degree	Some college but no degree	Master's	Masters	Bachelors	Associates	Associates	High School graduate	Bachelors	Some college but no degree

