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THE EFFECT OF AGGRESSIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS ON WOMEN'S PERPETRATION OF AGGRESSION

By

TRACY DICKENS

Under the Direction of Sarah Cook

ABSTRACT

Women’s use of aggression in intimate partner relationships is consistently debated by researchers of intimate partner aggression. One tenet suggests women use aggression within intimate relationships at similar rates as men. Conversely, a second tenet acknowledges women’s use of aggression but suggests that the meaning and consequences associated with women’s aggression is not coercive or severely injurious, which are typical characteristics of men’s use of aggression. The current study evaluated incarcerated women in order to build upon an integrative approach that suggests that women’s use of aggression is related to the relationship dynamics generated from variations in coercive and conflictual behaviors. Further, the current study evaluated the moderating relation of childhood abuse history and posttraumatic stress symptoms between relationship dynamics and women’s use of aggression. Ninety-six women, who participated in a larger research project that investigated incarcerated women’s life experience, reported on the dynamics of their most recent abusive heterosexual relationship, their own use of aggression (minor and severe) and childhood abuse history and posttraumatic stress symptoms.

Findings suggest that incarcerated women involved in intimate relationships characterized as highly conflictual use significantly more minor and severe aggression toward their partners than women involved in relationships with low levels of conflicts. The finding is significant regardless of the level of coercion present in the relationship. Lastly, neither childhood abuse history nor posttraumatic symptoms moderated the relation between intimate partner relationship dynamics and women's use of aggression. Various reasons for the lack of support for the moderating effect of history on women's use of aggression are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Incarcerated women, Relationship conflicts, Coercion, Women's aggression, Intimate partner aggression, Intimate partner violence, PTSD and intimate partner aggression

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By

TRACY DICKENS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Historically, research and media depicted women as passive recipients of intimate partner violence (White and Kowalski, 1994). Current studies indicate that women actively and strategically employ myriad behaviors aimed toward changing their abuser's aggressive acts (Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, and Cook, 2003). Straus and Gelles (1995) reported in their survey research of representative population samples that women are equally aggressive and at times more aggressive than their male intimate partners. Despite empirical evidence indicating women’s use of aggression in their intimate relationships, a lack of understanding remains regarding the relational dynamics that surround women’s use of aggression. The current investigation posits that a woman's use of aggression changes with her understanding of the dynamics (i.e., coercion or conflict) at play within the intimate relationship. Specifically, the interpersonal interactions within a relationship determine the manifestation of women’s use of aggression (i.e., slap, push, choking). Though research relating to women's agency in the face of abuse including aggression, is empowering for women, it has elicited erroneous theories (e.g., "battered husband's syndrome") and egregious perceptions that women's use of aggression is an imminent threat equal to that of men who use aggression (Kimmel, 2002). The current study will place women's use of aggression in an interpersonal context in order to obtain a better understanding of intimate partner violence than is currently provided by current family conflict and feminist perspective literature.

Straus and Gelles (1986, 1995), who support the family conflict perspective, reported that intimate partner aggression is common and manifests as intermittent conflicts, which exhibit gender symmetrical aggression. Thus, men and women are equally likely to use and be victims of aggression. Other researchers support family conflict survey findings (see Archer, 2002 for list) and claim that women's use of aggression result in injury to their male partners, but men under report their injuries (Cook, 1997; McNeely, Cook, & Torres, 2001). Straus (1999) noted that women experience greater frequency and severity of physical and psychological injury despite gender symmetry in aggression perpetration. In contrast the feminist perspective, also noting the difference in severity and frequency in injury, argues that intimate partner aggression is the result of a patriarchial societal value that a man controls "his woman" (Bograd, 1990). Advocates of this view acknowledge women's use of aggression; however, they also state that women's acts of aggression illustrate motivations of self-defense and/or retaliation and not harm (Dasgupta, 2002; Hamberger, 1997).

Johnson (2004) developed a typology for intimate partner violence (IPV) in order to validate family conflict and feminist's perspectives, while stressing the importance of evaluating the dynamics of the intimate relationship. He also argued that the battle for power and control within the relationship establishes a pattern of interactions that elicits varying aggressive behavioral responses. The view allows for greater complexity and stresses the importance of the variations in coercive/controlling behaviors within a relationship that serve as the foundation for the four distinctly different relational dynamics that construct Johnson's typologies.

Each of the four intimate partner relationships discussed by Johnson have distinct characteristics. For instance, IPV is most often characterized as one partner using coercion and control (either physical or psychological) toward the other partner. Overtime aggression

escalates in severity and frequency. The feminist perspective suggests the IPV relationship generally involves a man aggressing toward a female; thus, theorist from this school of thought present research that supports the IPV relationship. Mutual couple's violence (MCV) is characterized by equal perpetration of aggression, which is often minor physical aggression (e.g., push, slap) and psychological aggression (e.g., yell, name calling) related to a finite conflict. The expressed aggression does not escalate, severity of aggression remains minor, and frequency is intermittent (typically related to a specific crisis). The family conflict survey perspective parallels this category. Violent resistance (VR) depicts the woman as the primary aggressor responding to past, anticipated, and/or perceived threats. The category challenges long held beliefs that women are not aggressive and/or women only use aggression for defensive purposes. Men experience greater injury in these relationships than IPV and MCV; however, women report self-defense as their primary motivation for aggression. Lastly, mutual violence (MV) relationships are the most tumultuous and results in similar injury to persons, equal use of coercive and controlling tactics, and equal use of physical and psychological aggression. The four categories allow for the complexity of relational dynamics that support IPV.

Additionally, Johnson's typologies spur a conceptual basis for understanding women's use of aggression within the relationship. For instance, research indicates the relational dynamic of IPV will inhibit the use of women's aggression (Johnson, 2000; MacQuarrie, 1994). The severity and frequency of violence within an IPV relationship establishes a hostile atmosphere in which reciprocal aggression leads to increased risk of injury to the woman (MacQuarrie, 1994). Conversely, relationships characterized by intermittent conflicts pose minimal risk of physical harm to either person involved in the relationship (Straus and Gelles, 1986). Due to the predictive and situational quality associated with conflicts coupled with minimal frequency and

severity of aggression, women experience little fear regarding use of minor aggression. As a result, women's use of aggression may exceed her partner's use of aggression; thus, giving credence to the family conflict perspective.

Straus and colleagues (1995) support the claims that women experience greater injury and that coercion is an important factor in intimate partner violence; however, they express concern that current day research has experienced a pendulum swing toward greater emphasis on acts of aggression and coercion and diminished emphasis on the role of conflicts, which are present in all relationships and may or may not incite coercive/controlling acts, within the relationship. Thus, a balanced investigation involving coercion and conflicts is needed to increase the understanding of interpersonal dynamics and their influence on women's use of aggression. Specifically, what differences might one observe regarding women's use of aggression if a relationship is characterized as conflictual and noncoercive vs. conflictual and coercive?

In order to understand the dynamics of an aggressive relationship, one must have both a working definition of aggression and basic understanding of the manifestation of aggression in men and women. Aggression is generally defined as an act intended to harm another person, oneself, or an object. Research suggests men and women use different types of aggression and use aggression for different reasons (e.g., self-defense vs. control partner) (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Specifically, women are more likely to use minor physical aggression (e.g., push) and psychological aggression (e.g., manipulation) in order to gain acceptance and understanding (Huesmann, Guerra, Zelli, & Miller, 1992). On the other hand, while men are as likely to use psychological aggression as often as women, they are more likely to use physical aggression in order to achieve power (Archer, 2002; Huesmann, et al, 1992). Further,

investigators suggest that women use both psychological and physical aggression in intimate partner relationships; however, they use minor physical aggression (e.g., pushing, slapping), while men use forms of aggression that pose a greater risk of injury (e.g., punching, kicking).

Babcock, Miller, and Siard (2003) reported that among court reported women who use aggression toward their intimate partners are heterogeneous, similar to the heterogeneity reported by researchers of aggressive men (Holtsworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). Specifically, some women aggress toward their partner-only (PO), while other women are categorized as generally violent (GV). The researchers reported that PO women's use of aggression was aimed at current partners and motivated by self-defense. Additionally, women characterized as PO had a history of abusive adult relationships, in which they learned that aggression was appropriate for conflict resolution. Consequently, GV women were aggressive toward anyone, were more likely to have a criminal history, and have a history of childhood abuse and/or lived in a violent environment during their childhood. The significant difference between the two groups of women was the presence of childhood trauma and/or abuse for the GV women. Thus, women's use of aggression may be associated with her previous life experiences. Researchers posit that prior traumatic experiences generate a hyperaroused nervous system that triggers "fight or flight" responding in situations that present any level of threat (Seaman, 2003). In other words, past experiences of abuse and/or trauma may cause a woman to over attend to environmental cues and/or behave in ways to prevent future harm.

Although research has noted the influence of prior victimization on relationship functioning (Babcock et al., 2003; Jones, Ji, Beck, & Beck, 2002) and the independent effect of conflict and coercion in intimate relationship dynamics (Johnson, 2000;Straus, 1979, 1990; Straus and Gelles, 1986), studies have not adequately evaluated how prior victimization,

coercion, and conflicts interfaces with women's use of aggression. Nor have previous investigators adequately assessed these variables in incarcerated women, whom researcher reporter have rates of past victimization and aggressive relationships. The proposed investigation suggests that women's use of aggression is dependent to some degree on the pattern of interactions established by the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship. Specifically, interaction patterns within relationships are established based on variations in the intensity of conflict and coercion, which establishes an atmosphere conducive to women's perpetration of minor or severe physical aggression. Further, the dynamics of the relationship are affected by women's prior victimization and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Greater understanding of the interplay between these variables (relational dynamics, history, and women's aggression) enables the development of prevention and intervention programs that can better train women on issues related to interpersonal dynamics and conflict resolution skills. As a result, intervention and resources aimed at helping victims and prosecuting aggressive perpetrators may be overlooking important information that can generate better outcomes. Thus, it is imperative that clinicians, advocates, and policy makers understand interpersonal violence as it relates to conflicts, coercion, and prior victimization in order to inhibit the pattern of violent interpersonal interaction.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Abused women were once viewed as trapped in a "learned helplessness" cycle, in which they acquiesced to their abuser, because their attempts to end the abuse were consistently met with more abuse; thus leaving women feeling defeated (Walker, 1979). The perspective that viewed women as passive victims of their partner's violent behavior is challenged by current research suggesting women actively engage in behaviors, which include the use of aggression, designed to attenuate their abusive experience (Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003). Additionally, research on women's use of aggression toward children and intimate partners illustrates that women are aggressive toward others, including their loved ones (Straus, 1979; Straus & Gelles, 1986, 1995). In light of evidence indicating women use aggression, the historical question, "Are women aggressive?" has been answered and has paved the way to the current pressing question, "Under what circumstances are women aggressive?" Bjorkqvist & Niemela, (1992) reported that men and women use aggression at similar rates and encouraged critical investigations into the context surrounding men and women's use of aggression. As a result, an increasing number of researchers actively attempt to place women's use of aggression into a conceptual frame that is respectful and accurate. The current research uses the conceptual frame of context (i.e., established by the unique interpersonal dynamics of the relationship) and women's history (i.e., influence of past victimization) to better understand women's use of aggression.

Aggression, simply defined is, "an act intended to harm another person, oneself, or an object." The seemingly simple definition belies the complexity of aggression, which makes it difficult to operationally define. Though many researchers involved in intimate partner aggression research agree on what constitutes an aggressive act (e.g., belittling comments, push, punch), they fail to adequately attend to the issue of "context" and its relation to intent. Context is the condition/setting surrounding an event. In order to understand context, one must consider intent, the state of mind an act is committed. Poor attention to intent has resulted in great dissension regarding how to study acts of aggression (e.g., counting acts, injury reports), and distracts from the growing need to engage in a critical analysis of the influence of context in the establishment of the context surrounding women's use of aggression.

Yet, research evidence from the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS), which is based on counts of aggressive acts, purports that aggression is gender symmetrical (Straus, 1979) and gives minimal attention to the issue of context. Men report the need to control, elicit fear, and jealousy as the main instigators of their aggression; thus, their aggressive acts possess, at a minimum, the intent to harm their partner (Dowd, 2001). Women on the other hand report the need to get partner's attention, obtain respect, and prevent injury (Malloy, McCloskeyl, Grisby, & Gardner, 2003; Perilla, Frndak, Lillard & East, 2003). Control is last on their list of motivation and when control is listed it is often associated with an attempt to control the violence she is experiencing (Dowd, 2001; Malloy et al, 2003; Hamberger 1997). Thus, even in instances of similar aggressive acts and similar environmental conditions, the intent of the aggression is dissimilar.

Further, disregarding intent takes away contextual information, which can lead to the conclusion that men and women’s use of aggression, men and women's experience of aggression,

and men and women's consequences of aggression are similar. Researchers report that women tend to use minor physical aggression (e.g., pushing, slapping) at a rate equal to men's tendency to use forms of aggression that pose a greater risk of injury (Archer, 2002; Straus and Gelles, 1990). As a result, women experience more fear and anxiety related to their experience of aggression than their male intimate partner even when they are the main perpetrator of aggression (Hamgerger & Guse, 2002; Malloy et al. 2003). Straus (1990) noted that despite symmetrical reports of aggression, women suffered more severe injury. Moreover, investigators argue that men are better at dominating and/or controlling the dynamics of a relationship via threats, fear, and coercion (Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, Rushe, Babcock, & Holtzworth-Munroe, 1994). Though women are capable of these same tactics, their attempts are typically met with humor (Hamberger & Guse, 2002). In light of gender differences in the types of aggression used and the experience of aggression, it can be concluded that the experience and consequences of men and women’s use of aggression are different.

Simply stated, understanding women's use of aggression is a great undertaking because the research tradition of counting aggressive acts is actively being challenged and researchers, policy developers, and interventionists are forced to leave room for two truths: women are perpetrators and/or victims of aggression. This study addresses the question, "Under what circumstances do women use aggression intimate partner relationships?" I contend that the interaction patterns established within an intimate relationship maintain a dynamic that creates the context for women's use of aggression. More specifically, interaction patterns around coercion (e.g., threats used to control others’ behavior) and conflicts (e.g., disagreements) will elicit differential manifestations of physical aggression (e.g., pushing, punching) in certain instances. For example, women will use physical aggression in relationships characterized by

minimal conflicts and coercion. The minimal risk of injury will increase her comfort in yelling and pushing in order to get her partner to understand her perspective (Straus, 1995). Conversely, relationships with high levels of coercion and conflict demonstrate that woman will not aggress physically for fear of injury.

The Different Perspectives of Intimate Partner Violence(IPV):

Straus (1979) presented research findings that indicated intimate partner violence was common and gender symmetrical. The report created dissention that remains today among researchers of intimate partner aggression. The seminal study by Gelles and Straus (1979), referred to as The National Family Violence Surveys (NFVS), indicated that IPV is present in over 50 percent of homes and men and women report equal use of aggressive behaviors. These researchers argue that the individuals within a relationship possess different conflict resolution skills and the intermingling of the differences creates an atmosphere conducive for the use of psychological and/or physical aggression that manifest in ongoing conflict (Straus, 1995). Conversely, feminists posit that instances of symmetrical aggression are illustrative of women defending themselves against violence and coercion. In short, they argued that aggression was asymmetrical (Dobash & Dobash, 1992a, 1992b; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1998; Hamberger, 1997; Dowd, 2001). More recent research suggests that while IPV is common and can be gender symmetrical, the manifestation of relational aggression is based on the interaction patterns that involve coercive and controlling behaviors (Johnson, 2000). Further evaluation of these disparate perspectives must be undertaken to better understand women's use of aggression in intimate relationships.

Family conflict perspective. Family Violence theorists suggest individuals involved in violent interpersonal relationships have poor problem solving skills; thus, their difficulties with

expressing their personal interest manifests in conflicts and gender symmetrical aggression. In an effort to measure the prevalence of family violence and identify causal factors (i.e., conflicts, coercion, social norms), Murray Straus and Richard Gelles came together in the early 1970's and conducted the NFVS. Based on a sample of 2000 randomly selected families, the authors reported that 58% of adults surveyed were recipients of IPV. Additionally, Straus and Gelles (1986, 1990, 1995) reported that the initiation and perpetration of violence was practically gender symmetrical. Numerous studies offer support for gender symmetrical aggression (Archer, 2002; Moffitt & Caspi, 1999; Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; Straus, 1993, 1999; Straus & Gelles, 1986, 1995).

Although these studies identified gender symmetrical violence perpetration, the majority of the studies used the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979), which has been subject to great criticism. The CTS was designed to identify commonalities or traits related to conflicts within a relationship. Namely, the researchers looked for elements related to conflict resolution. Interviewees are presented with a list of 18 acts of psychological and physical aggression such as "discussed an issue calmly", "cried", "threw something", and "beat him/her up". Additionally, respondents reported the frequency in which they perpetrated each act during a conflict within the past year and how frequently they were on the receiving end of the act. The format and the resulting FCVS perspective came under attack for many reasons, one of which was that it did not address the context and consequences of aggression, thus, ignoring the evidence indicating women experience greater injury at the hands of their aggressive partners (Archer, 2002; Hamberger and Guse, 2002). In order to address the criticism regarding injury, Straus and colleagues (1995) revised the CTS and included questions specific to injury rates on the Conflict Tactic Scale-Second Edition (CTS-2) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996)

Despite alterations to the scale, Kimmel (2002) considered the family conflict perspective to be erroneous for several reasons. First, the perspective creates a perception that men experience significant injury and physical assault at the hands of women. Archer (2002) conducted a meta-analysis examining research related to men and women's use of aggression. In his study, which evaluated over 80 articles that represented diverse forms of relationships (e.g. dating, married, separated, and divorced), over 50 percent of the acts of aggression that resulted in injury were perpetrated by men toward women. Instances involving women who injured their partner, the injury was minor. Second, Kimmel argued that the suggestion that family violence is common and minimal injury occurs attenuates concerns for cases of severe victimization as well as allows for a climate of indifference, which leads to funding cuts and deleterious policy decisions. Lastly, Kimmel and others (Johnson, 1995; Swan & Snow, 2003) resoundingly state that control and coercion establish contexts for men and women's use of aggression; thus control and coercion must be acknowledged. Swan and Snow (2002) posit that the person who reports greater use of aggression is not necessarily the person with the power in the relationship. In short, the use of aggression should not be considered without contextual information. Failure to acknowledge context leaves victims powerless to deal with an individual's desire to control via coercive and dominating tactics, because it implies that intimate partner aggression is normal and/or there's nothing that can be done to stop their partner's behavior. In total, the family perspective overlooks and oversimplifies the variables that may have a significant impact on the image one generates regarding domestic violence.

Straus (1997) rebuked critics' claims that his research was faulty because it failed to address the consequences of family aggression. He stated that the criticism was, "akin to thinking that a spelling test is inadequate because it does not measure why a child spells badly or does not

measure the possible consequences of poor spelling, such as low self-esteem or low evaluations by employers” (p. 218). However, Gelles and Straus (1999) stated that their 1975 NFVS and follow-up research is often misinterpreted, misreported, and misunderstood by researchers and laypersons. Both contend that it is incorrect to suggest that the number of "battered" men is equivalent to battered women. Nonetheless, not attending to the issue of women who perpetrate violence is also incorrect.

Additionally, Straus (1995) compelled researchers to attend more to intimate partner conflicts (i.e., yelling, inability to resolve disagreements) because in his research it was consistently more robust than physical aggression. He stated that all relationships experience conflicts and it was more informative to understand the couple's pattern of interactions around resolving conflicts (i.e., conflicts are ongoing/unresolved), which may elicit coercive behaviors. Ridley and Feldman (2003) evaluated the conflict communication styles of 153 female volunteers participating in a "conflict and disagreement" program. They reported that relationships characterized as "severe" had high rates of male verbal aggression and contemptuous conflicts that escalated. Women, who scored high on aggressiveness, were more likely to try and calm things down as conflicts escalated; however the conflict escalated and the women employed minor aggression, which was reciprocated by severe aggression. Others support the claim that the pattern of interactions surrounding conflicts needs special attention because conflicts elicit verbal aggression, which precipitates contemptuous verbal aggression that gives way to physical aggression (Feldman & Ridley, 2000; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Despite the recognition that conflicts contribute to the relationship dynamics that allow controlling behaviors, researchers have not adequately examined the relationship between context and conflict within a violent intimate partner relationship.

Feminist perspective. Advocates of the feminist perspective use gender inequality as the lens in which they interpret intimate partner violence. Theoretically, feminist purport the existence of societal structures that enable gender asymmetry; thus, inhibiting the escape from violent intimate partner relationships. Dobash & Dobash (1992a) state that family violence is a normal aspect of a society that maintains gender inequality through legal, social and medical systems. Simply stated, larger societal structures are reflected in family roles. Thus, inequality begins during childhood as men are socialized to use aggression in order to obtain and maintain control and women are scolded for aggression and taught to acquiesce (Eron, 1992). The differences in the socialization process for men and women sends an implicit message to men, it is "normal" to use any means to control his partner and an implicit message to women, it is "normal" for men to use aggression to obtain and maintain control (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992).

Advocates of the feminist perspective view men as perpetrators, women as victims, and instances in which women perpetrate aggression are acts of self-defense. Men's socialization process puts them in a position to engage in behaviors that maintain their position in society. As a result, feminists challenge the thinking that conflicts within families are simply manifestations of personal interests, which family conflict theorist purport. They believe the real issue underlying intrafamilial conflict is the desire to maintain the power that role/status within the family affords. For instance, a family has several subunits (e.g., husband, wife, parent, child, sibling). Each subunit has assigned power that is predetermined by cultural norms. As a result, conflicts arise as people attempt to exhort and maintain the power they are "entitled" (Yllo, 1993). Although society strives to present marriage and courtship as a "conversation of equals", the reality is that men are groomed for dominance in various aspects of their lives, including

relationships, (Lloyd and Emery, 2000). As a result, the couple is pressured to hide relational inequalities and the tactics that men use to maintain the control that he has been afforded socially and institutionally. In short, conflicts are resolved based on societal norms which shape individuals' expectations regarding who should have control and/or who should win a conflict. Consequently, conflicts have little to do with expressing and maintaining one's personal interests.

If relationship conflicts and intimate aggression are constructs in, or outcomes of, a gendered society, then egalitarian societies, which purport gender equality, should report no occurrences of intimate partner aggression. Lepowsky (1994) wrote about the people of the Vanatinai egalitarian society, who are a group of people who live on a small island off New Guinea. The society of approximately 2,000 people does not subscribe to any formal system of rank or authority. Aggression is rare within the society and those who employ aggression bring shame upon their family. Lepowsky observed the people for approximately 10 years and reported only five instances of aggression, four of which were women assaulting their husbands and the fifth was a woman assaulting another woman. Thus, she concluded that male-domination and male-to-female aggression is virtually nonexistent in egalitarian societies.

Critics of the feminist perspective challenge the notion of societal indifference and/or implicit support of men's use of aggression toward women. Arias and Johnson (1989) evaluated college men and women regarding their feelings about men's use of physical aggression toward women and women's use of physical aggression toward men. Research findings indicated that men who were physically aggressive toward women were viewed as highly negative, and more negative than women who physically aggressed toward men. This research is at minimum a challenge to the feminist supposition, at least as far as individual attitudes are concerned that society supports physical violence toward women.

Additionally, critics indicate that feminist researchers evaluate only the intimate partner violence experience of women who are in shelters, hospitals, or police stations. Thus, the data is based on an ungeneralizable and/or unrepresentative sample of women, who are exposed to extreme intimate partner violence. Additionally, critics note that the feminist perspective fails to acknowledge the growing literature that evaluates intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships. Renzetti (1992) indicated that same-sex relationships experience similar rates of intimate partner violence as heterosexual relationships. The nonexistence of the stereotypical heterosexual gender-role dynamic in homosexual relationships indicates another variable elicits intimate partner aggression. Specifically, all persons involved in a relationship (plutonic and romantic) struggle with issues related to inequality of power. Therefore, it may be more accurate to state that society supports the use of power, domination, and coercion as means to gain and maintain control. Thus, it is not an issue of gender-roles that influences intimate partner violence, but an issue of who is going to establish and maintain power in the relationship.

Toward an integrative perspective. Jack (1999) stated, "We cannot know the meaning or the intent of an aggressive act without knowing both its relational setting and its meaning within that setting. Aggression expression is shaped by the structure of a relationship, including power, gender, and economics, and by the quality of the relationship—its feeling tone, its violations, its intimacies" (pp.44). In other words, in order to truly understand the nuances of aggression and how it is perceived, one must know the dynamics of the relationship. Johnson (1995) was the first to provide a new view that could explain disparate findings presented by family and feminist researchers. He suggested that findings from the family conflict and the feminist perspective appeared to be at odds because the two research entities were tapping into significantly different samples that possessed differing relationship dynamics. Specifically, family violence research

investigated self-selected individuals who did not fear the consequences of speaking about conflicts and intimate partner aggression. Johnson referred to the phenomenon of conflict and aggression in this setting as common couple violence (CCV) later referred to as situational couple violence (SCV) (Johnson and Ferraro, 2000; Johnson In Press). On the other hand, feminist research investigated women who were in shelters and/or hospitals. Thus, their experience of domestic violence was significantly more traumatic. He referred to the pattern of aggression in these relationships as patriarchial terrorism (PT) (Johnson, 1995), he later termed intimate-partner violence terrorism (IPVT) to include violence present in same-sex relationships (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). In short, Johnson suggested that a methodological factor of sampling was responsible for the debate and that theorists in both schools of thought were correct.

The construct that appears to shape the differences between the groups is the pattern of interactions that are related to control and coercion. In Johnson's (1995) review of the differences between situational couple violence and intimate partner violence, he noted dominance in a relationship is maintained by physical aggression as well as other methods of control and coercion. An example of establishing control through coercive means are as follows: "I will leave you", "I will kill myself", "I will harm the children", or "I will find you and kill you if you leave me." Control can be established without coercion, however. For instance, isolation (restricted or prohibited contact with friends or family) is one element often reported in relationships characterized by IPV. Holly Johnson's (1998) study of 2300 Canadian women, who reported a history of abuse, reported that the lack of social contact and low levels of commitment were highest among women who reported experiencing severe coercion and control. Beyond social isolation, control can be established by other means such as choosing the words that a woman says or choosing what a woman wears by statements such as, "Don’t say that, you're

stupid," or "You look like a whore, go change your clothes". Yet, another method is "gaslighting" (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998). The term, "gaslighting" was influenced by the film Gaslight, in which a man convinces a woman she is going insane by consistently denying her experience of reality. For example, a man will hit his woman partner and when she confronts him later, he denies the behavior by stating that it is inconsistent with his personality and suggests that her accusations are in her mind. These coercive behaviors combine into a pattern of interactions that escalates and occurs with and/or without provocation and are at the core of intimate partner violence. Notably, they are absent from relationships classified as situational couple violence, which experience intermittent conflicts that do not escalate.

Johnson's (In Press) typologies demonstrate the variations in intimate partner relationships. The first typology is an interaction pattern in which one person is non-controlling and aggressive coupled with someone who is non-aggressive or who is also violent and non-controlling. Such a relationship interaction pattern is called situational couple violence (SCV). Individuals within a SCV relationship report conflicts related to a specific situation, minimal injury, mutual psychological aggression, and no escalation in aggressive behavior. Second, a relationship may involve one person who is aggressive and non-controlling, coupled with a controlling and aggressive person. The pattern of interactions is referred to as violent resistance (VR) and is illustrative of women’s perpetration of aggression. Research findings indicate that in such relationships in which the woman is the primary aggressor but not attempting to exert control over her partner, her use of aggression is related to motivations of self-defense and/or retaliation of previous abuse (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Johnson, In Press). O'Keefe (1997) reported that what typically leads to this pattern of interaction is a high level of social isolation, which limits women's access to outside support; thus, they aggress against their partner in

attempts to stop aggression. Third, an aggressive and controlling person can be coupled with a person who is either non-aggressive or aggressive but non-controlling. The interaction pattern between the two people is referred to as intimate partner violence terrorism (IPVT). Individuals in this relationship report that one person uses coercive tactics (physical and psychological) to maintain their control over a partner in a relationship. The frequency of abuse is high, injury often requires medical attention, and the intensity of the conflicts and aggression escalates. Last, is the relationship interaction pattern involving an aggressive and controlling person coupled with another person who is aggressive and controlling. Individuals in this relationship are characterized as mutual violent control (MVC), in which both persons report using similar rates of psychological and physical coercion in order to control the other's behaviors. Despite the mutual use of aggression, the woman receives most of the significant injuries and psychological distress.

Johnson's (In Press) study used a data set by Irene Frieze that contained data from married and formerly married females, who lived in Pennsylvania. He used cluster analysis to identify the different pattern of interaction based on the presence of control, escalation, and who frequently perpetrated the aggression within the relationship. The analysis revealed the four different typologies as well as variations in the prevalence of the typologies. Specifically, he reported that violent incidents were more frequent and escalated in 76% of IPVT relationships compared with SCV relationships, which demonstrate significantly fewer incidents of violence and escalated in 28% of cases. Johnson's typologies bolsters family conflict and feminist perspective in that the male is the predominant perpetrator of violence in IPV relationships, women are the perpetrator of aggression in VR relationships, and gender symmetry is present for MCV and SCV relationships. Further, support for the differing perspectives is observed in the

prevalence rate of each relationship typology: SCV comprised 44% of the 330 person sample; IPVT comprised only 29%; VR relationships comprised 23 %; and the remaining 4% of the sample was MCV.

Johnson's initial findings and suppositions were replicated by Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003), who used a sample comprised of females from shelters, males from prisons, and college students. The researchers reported that of the 492 participants, 27% demonstrated a tendency to employ high control techniques in their relationship and the remainder of the sample was considered low control. Additionally, Graham-Kevan and colleague reported that 49% of the sample was nonviolent, 11% could be classified IPV, 6% demonstrated characteristics of VR, 3% were classified as MVC and 28% were considered to display characteristics of a SCV relationship. Similar to Johnson's findings, IPV was observed in more males, while females were the dominant perpetrators in VR relationships. It should be noted, that in cases of an IPV female, the use and severity of aggression was significantly different than her male IPV counterpart. Specifically, women used weapons in severe cases of violence and severe injury to men was rare. The finding supports what many researchers posit, the woman's experience of aggression and use of aggression is intermingled with issues related to control and contextual features of the relationship.

The Role of Trauma

Beyond contextual issues related to the dynamics of the interactions within an intimate interpersonal relationship are the life experiences of women. As previously mentioned, Johnson (1995) recognized that both family conflict and feminist perspective had valid findings, but the populations they discussed were significantly different. Superficially, population differences limit the generalizability of research findings to other groups. On a deeper level that is more

relevant to this study, is the idea that differences in life experiences shape a person's experience and response to their environment. Constructivist psychologists have posited that the mind is efficient and people are a sum of the meaning they subscribe to their life experiences, which shape what they perceive and how they react (Harter, Erbes & Hart, 2004; Sewell & Williams, 2002). Sewell used the example of a middle-aged woman who holds the explicit construct that church is safe, her assertiveness is valuable, and the physical strength of men is desirable. However, when a man physically assaults her in church, her construct of herself and her environment is invalidated. Prior to the assault she recognized the constructs of danger and physical aggression, but they were implicit (the information she used to determine that church was safe). Sewell suggests that it is not the traumatic event itself that will alter the woman's future behaviors, but her past experiences with the implicit information that will lead her toward PTSD or viewing the event as isolated. Specifically, if her past experience is that some people have poor impulse control, which she considers a sign of weakness, and/or physical aggression is met with harsh social and legal consequences her post-traumatic stress reaction will be buffered. The example illustrates how the life experiences of two different people who experience the same circumstance will behave distinctly different. Denying the impact of a person’s life experiences, especially traumatic interpersonal experiences, may result in missing an important piece of each individual’s experience of the interpersonal context.

Literature related to women's life experiences builds upon the supposition that life experience shapes perception and behavior. Trauma and victimization research indicates women have a high prevalence rate of childhood sexual and physical abuse. Forty-eight percent of Walker's (1984) sample of abused women reported being repeatedly sexually abused by a male relative as a child. Community research suggests that sexual abuse occurs in 1 out of 5 women.

Researchers suggest that many children, who experience childhood abuse are retraumatized by threats of harm if they talk about the abuse; the child does not see their abuser receive negative consequences related to their violation, and/or their emotions related to the abuse are invalidated (Harter, Erbes, & Hart, 2004). As a result, the children grow up emotional numb, experience difficulties regulating and understanding their emotions, and are often distrustful of others. The experience and other's reactions to the abuse often leads to a numbness regarding adult relationships that possess similar abusive characteristics; thus, increasing the likelihood of revictimization and high rates of symptoms related to anxiety depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Chu & Dill, 1990; Dowd, 2001; Dutton, 1995; Dutton & Goodman, 1994). Post-traumatic stress disorder is the most common diagnosis for women who experienced childhood sexual abuse and adult abuse (Dutton & Goodman, 1994; Hamberger & Guse, 2002) and is characterized by symptoms such as hypervigilance, intense reactivity when exposed to external or internal cues related to the trauma (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Additionally, researchers report that revictimization has a cumulative effect which leads to moderate to high symptoms of PTSD; thus, leading to emotional deregulation and poor perception of environmental cues (Herman, 1992; Litz & Keane, 1989). As a result, a woman's reaction to future abuse may be an increased or decreased use of aggression. Moffitt and Caspi (1994), reported that women who reported experiencing abuse in previous relationships were 10 times more likely to perpetrate violence compared to men who reported an abuse history and were 19 times more likely to perpetrate violence in general.

Babcock, Miller, and Siard (2003) reported in their research study of using 60 women, who were enrolled in a class for domestically violent women that women's use of aggression is heterogeneous. Women perpetrators tend to fall into two categories of general violent (GV), who

more likely to control their partner and partner only (PO), who aggress only toward their partner as a learned reaction to previous adult relationships characterized by abuse. Fifty percent of the women (n=30) were classified as GV women and reported being motivated by wanting to control their partner, feeling they were "losing control" or "he was asking for it". Conversely, PO women reported being motivated by self-defense. Additionally, GV women were more likely than PO women to have experienced severe childhood trauma, which included sexual and physical abuse. Researchers suggest that the GV women's early childhood experience was a significant predictor for the reports of: "choked partner in the past year" and "report using other forms of severe physical aggression toward partner". Lastly, an overwhelming majority of the GV women had a criminal history, which suggests that childhood trauma is a risk factor for both future victimization and maladaptive behaviors that can lead to incarceration. As previously discussed, childhood abuse may result in distrust in others and difficulties understanding emotions due to invalidation of traumatic childhood experiences; as a result, women's perception of internal and external cues may be distorted and trigger "survival" behaviors that are maladaptive and/or illegal.

Research related to incarcerated women offers support for a link between traumatic life experiences and criminal behaviors. Specifically, several studies illustrate that over 75% of incarcerated women meet the diagnostic criteria for at least one mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and PTSD, (Jones, Ji, Beck & Beck, 2002; Jordan, Schlenger, Fairbank, & Caddell, 1996; Keaveny & Zausniewski, 1999; Ladwig & Anderson, 1989; Snell, 1994). Further, approximately 65-80% of women in prison report a history of childhood sexual and/or physical abuse (Bradley & Davino, 2002; Keaveny et al, 1999; Singer, Bussey, Song, & Lunghofer). Keaveney and colleagues reported that 90% of the 62 women

housed in general population reported experiencing at least 10 negative life events within the last 12 months. The researchers indicated that the number negative life experiences for the women in their study were higher than other research findings, with the exception of research related to incarcerated women, which indicates that incarcerated women consistently report more negative life events than community samples (Jones, et al, 2002; Ladwig & Anderson, 1989).

For instance, Hattendorf, Otten, and Lomax (1999) interviewed 18 women who were convicted of murdering their violent partners. They reported that 17 of the women reported symptoms that met criteria for moderate to high Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Further, more than half of the women reported numerous experiences of physical abuse throughout their lifetime. Jones and colleagues (2002) reported similar findings when they used the CTS-2 to investigate the intimate partner violence experience of 264 incarcerated women as well as validate the scales use on unique populations. The researchers reported that approximately 70% of the women in their sample reported childhood and/or adult abuse. Moreover, the rate of abuse was significantly higher than the rates of abuse reported by the college sample used to validate the CTS-2.

Bradley and Davino (2002) reported similar findings in that a large percentage of women in their incarceration sample reported childhood and/or adult sexual and physical abuse. Specifically, 43% of the 65 women in their study reported both all four types of abuse. Interestingly, the women who experienced higher frequency of childhood and adult abuse reported that the prison environment was safer than their childhood and adulthood homes. The idea that the prison environment, which is often viewed as oppressive and indifferent, is a safe haven seems unusual at first glance. However, research indicates that approximately two-thirds of women in prison experienced the stressors of low-income environments and a childhood

and/or adult abuse history (Bradley & Davino, 2002; Keaveny & Zauszniewski, 1999; Singer, Bussey, Song, Lunghofer, 1995). Many women turn to alcohol and drugs to deal with their oppressive and abusive life experiences (Singer, et al, 1995). Ironically, their involvement with drugs places them at greater risk for their own perpetration of aggression as they experience solicitation for prostitution and additional physical and/or sexual victimization. In short, it seems that the combination of childhood abuse coupled with low-income stressors may elicit coping behaviors that are maladaptive and illegal.

Walker (1989) reported that severity and frequency of physical abuse served as a moderator for women who reported PTSD symptoms and lethal aggression toward their husbands. O'Keefe's (1997, 1998) studies provided some support to the claim that severity of abuse elicits women's use of lethal aggression. Specifically, fifty of the seventy-six women interviewed assaulted or murdered their spouse. She reported common factor among the women who murdered their partner was a history of severe injury. Additionally, 61% of the women who murdered their partner reported severe childhood sexual and/or physical abuse. Though O'Keefe measured PTSD and noted the high percentage of women reporting significant PTSD symptoms, she did not formally investigate the variable as a moderator for women's use of aggression in the context of an abusive relationship. It is here at the intersection of relationship dynamics and women's life experience that researchers must expand their understanding of women's perpetration of intimate partner aggression. Researchers consistently report that childhood abuse is a risk factor for adult post-traumatic stress symptoms. Moreover, the more severe and/or frequent the abuse the more severe the symptoms which often results in emotional deregulation, due to numbness and lack of understanding of their emotions (Dutton & Goodman, 1994;

Walker, 1989). As a result, women with childhood abuse histories appear to be more likely to react with aggression once they perceive a potential threat.

Purpose of Study and Hypothesis

Despite growing research findings indicating women use aggression and their use of aggression is to some degree influenced by context, researchers have not adequately addressed the complexity of women's perpetration of aggression. Johnson (1995) posited that the presence of control and coercion establishes a pattern of interactions within intimate partner relationships. Further, Straus (1990) indicated that the decision to use coercive and controlling tactics is effected by each person’s conflict resolution style. Though the current study cannot address conflict resolution style, it will address the issue of conflicts playing a role in violent intimate partner relationship dynamics. Thus, the relationship dynamic within the current study will be shaped by variations in the two variables conflict and coercion. Results from the current study may provide greater insight into Johnson's findings of prevalence of the different relationship typologies as well as evaluate Straus's (1990) claims that interpersonal conflicts elicit women's use of aggression, and Hamberger and Guse's, (2002) claim that a man's use of coercion limits women's use of aggression.

Further, a woman's decision to use aggression may be shaped by prior learning and experience with abuse. Specifically, women who experience childhood sexual and/or physical abuse are at an increased risk of vulnerability to revictimizaton, which often has a cumulative effect. As a result, revictimized women report high rates of psychological symptoms associated with PTSD. The symptoms associated with PTSD have been linked to increased likelihood that a woman will aggress toward her partner, despite risks of injury (Dutton, 1995; Dutton & Goodman, 1994; Okeefe, 1997, 1998). The current study may provide more information

regarding the relation between women with severe abuse history and perpetration of aggression toward their partner, despite relationship dynamics that present a high risk of the woman experiencing injury.

The first aim of the current investigation is to identify the four unique interpersonal relationship dynamics (high coercion and high conflict (HiCoer/HiCon); high coercion and low conflict (HiCoer/LoCon); low coercion and high conflict (LoCoer/HiCon); low coercion and low conflict (LoCoer/LoCon)) that resemble Johnson's (2002) typology. It is hypothesized that the four groups of women will be significantly different in their perpetration of minor and/or severe aggression toward their intimate partner. Table 1 illustrates the group dynamics and the affect on women's use of minor and/or severe physical aggression.

Table 1

Proposed significant group differences for women who use minor or severe physical aggression across levels of intimate partner coercion and conflict

	LoCoer/LoCon	**LoCoer/HiCon**	**HiCoer/LoCon**	**HiCoer/HiConf**
Women's Use of Minor Physical Aggression	A	<B	<C	=C
Women's Use of Severe Physical Aggression	A	=A	=A	<B

Note: Groups with different letters ("A", "B", "C") indicate significant group mean differences.

The second aim of the study is to investigate the impact childhood abuse and/or post-traumatic stress symptoms on women's perpetration of aggression. It is hypothesized women's post-traumatic symptoms and history of childhood abuse moderates the link between coercion and perpetration of severe aggression and conflict and perpetration of severe aggression.

The aim of the current investigation was to acknowledge the complexity of aggression. In doing so, interventions may be tailored to address relevant intrapersonal, societal and life variables that support aggressive behavior. Further, both victims and victim advocates may reframe aggressive behavior as maladaptive behaviors that once served as adaptive behaviors related to past trauma and/or sexual and/or physical abuse. Therefore, at the crossroad of relationship dynamics, history, and the type of aggression used is a better understanding of the experiences of those involved in violent intimate relationships and an opportunity to develop policy and interventions that can appropriately address those experiences.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Data presented in this study is a subset of a larger project, The Women's Life Experience Project (WLEP), that examined the traumatic life events, coping, and mental health in a group of urban incarcerated and non-incarcerated women.

Interview Procedures

Incarcerated women were recruited at Metro State Women's Prison (MSWP) in Atlanta between June 2000 and June 2001. MSWP is a maximum-security facility and serves as the central receiving and diagnostic unit for the state's correctional system and the catchment institution for inmates with serious mental illness and special health care needs. All of the women who serve sentences in a Georgia correctional facility begin at the Diagnostic Unit at MSWP, where they typically spend two to four weeks receiving physical examinations, mental health assessments, and adjusting to life in prison. After this assessment period, inmates remain at MSWP or are transferred to a similar facility for women.

Each week, we randomly selected approximately twenty women from a list of all inmates entering the diagnostic unit and invited them to an informational meeting about our study. At this meeting, we described the study, informed consent procedures, confidentiality, and participant rights. We also explained that under Cason V. Seckinger (1994), we are required to report to the warden disclosures of sexual relations of any kind between inmates or between inmates and correctional staff, including sexual harassment and physical contact. Due to the Department of Corrections regulations for institutional research, compensation was not offered.

Eighty-seven percent of all women invited to a meeting attended (n=708). Four-hundred and eight-two women consented to participate; yet, eighty-four percent presented for an interview (n=403). The other women either declined due to lack of interest, time, relocated, or had an unstable emotional state. The final participation rate was 57% (n = 403).

After giving informed consent, women were assigned an interview date within a two-week period. Graduate research assistants conducted the majority of interviews, assisted by several upper-level undergraduate and post-baccalaureate psychology majors. Interviewers completed an intensive, weeklong training session at MSWP where they learned about institutional security and safety, prison life and culture, policies and procedures for routine events and emergencies, as well as extensive training on research interview techniques and psychiatric emergency procedures. Interviews were conducted in small, private, soundproof, windowed rooms located close to a security station. Prior to each interview, interviewers reviewed confidentiality limitations and obtained informed consent again. Each interview lasted approximately one and one-half to two hours. All interviews were administered verbally because of the low literacy rates in incarcerated populations and we created response books for questions using Likert scales.

At the end of the interview, researchers debriefed participants, further explained study objectives, and thanked them for participating. If participants reported feeling upset or anxious after the interview, interviewers encouraged them to meet with their assigned mental health counselors in the diagnostic unit. We also provided inmates with an opportunity to ask questions, and many briefly reflected on the interview process. Further, we collected contact information for participants who wished to receive a summary of study results and sent follow-up

information after we completed data collection and analysis. We sent each participant a thank-you letter with pamphlets for community resources pertaining to violence against women.

Participants

Although four hundred and three inmates elected to complete our study, after completing the first interviews (n=168), changes were made to the interview resulting in a participant group split. This paper investigates variables that are only measured in version 2 (n =197). Among version 2 participants, 51% (n=96) reported experiencing physical violence by their most recent male partner before entering prison. Notably, another 38% (n = 67) reported to us about physical violence perpetrated by a partner other than the most recent partner. However, the current study focused on women who reported recent experiences of interpersonal violence (n=96).

Within this sample of 96 women, age ranged from 19-58 years (M = 34, SD =8.06). All participants identified as “black” (63%) or “white” (37%). Approximately 46% of the women reported they were single, while 31% were separated or divorced, 21% were married or in “common law” relationships, and .01% were widowed (the files of the remaining 2% of women did not contain marital information). A high percentage of women reported having at least one child (79%), with two being the average number of children. Ninety-seven percent of the women reported a religious belief, with a majority identifying as Baptist (70%) and the second greatest denomination being Holiness (12%). Regarding education level, 44% of the women did not complete high school. However, the remaining women completed high school, obtained a GED (32%), attended trade or vocational school (10%), some college or earned a college degree (14%). A majority of the women (72% of 96) reported employment as their primary source of income before incarceration, while the remaining women reported significant income from public aid, their partner, family, or illegal activities.

The women’s most serious original offense for which they were currently serving their sentence was frequently classified as minimum-security status. Though women could be serving sentences related to five offenses, a majority of the women (62%) were serving time based on one offense. Original offense information could not be obtained for 4 women because it was not provided in the diagnostic records provided by the facility. Of the remaining 92 women, twenty-eight percent of the crimes committed were theft related, 32% alcohol and/or drug possession and/or sells, 16% financial crimes such as fraud or forgery. 10% burglary, robbery, or criminal trespassing, 10% aggravated assault, rape, and cruelty to a child and slightly less than half of a percent were convicted of voluntary manslaughter or murder. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, obstruction of police/justice, or another crime comprised the remaining 12% of the original offenses.

Variables

Aggression in the intimate partner relationship. The current study used the complete Conflict Tactic Scale-2 (CTS-2) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996), which includes questions about women’s experiences of and use of physical aggression in the relationship. Psychological, physical, and sexual abuse was assessed; however, only women's perpetration of physical abuse data is analyzed in the current paper. The physical abuse measure contains thirteen physical abuse items such as “push you” and “choke you”. The physical aggression items are categorized as "minor" and "severe" physical aggression based on previous research that operationalized minor and severe physical aggression using the CTS-2 (Straus, 1995). Minor aggression items are as follows: "twist arm", "push", "slap", "grab", and "throw something". Each participant’s responses to the minor aggression items will be summed to generate a sum score for perpetration of minor physical aggression. Severe aggression items are

as follows: "punch", "kick", "beat", "use a knife or gun", "hit", "Choke", and "slam against wall". Each participant's responses to the severe aggression items were summed to generate a sum score for perpetration of severe physical aggression. The sum scores serve as a proxy measure for severity of aggression used toward an intimate partner. The alpha coefficient for minor aggression is .65 and the alpha for severe aggression is .72.

Context of abusive experiences. We asked women who endorsed any psychological, physical, or sexual abuse questions assessing context of abuse. The 7-item Conflict and Coercion Scale (Cook & Goodman, 2005) permits interviewers to ask context questions after each abuse subsection (psychological, physical, and sexual). Participants were told to answer context questions with regards to that type of abuse. For example, one question asked "Thinking of all the times he was (psychologically, physically, or sexually) abusive toward you, how much of the time did he say you had to do what he wanted because you were his girlfriend, woman, or wife?" Responses were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "none of the time" to "all of the time." The following responses: "you could tell that s/he was going to act this way"; "were you in a fight"; "were you in an argument" were summed to obtain a conflict score. While the coercion score was a sum of the following responses: "abuse occurred because you were his girlfriend"; "keep you from doing something you wanted or needed to do"; "s/he acted this way out of the blue"; "s/he acted this way to make you do something you didn't want to do". Median split on both coercion and conflict sum scores will identify the four unique relationship dynamics similar to those discussed by Johnson (2000). The resulting four groups serve as the independent variable in the first analysis. Cook and Goodman (In press) reported alpha coefficients of .71 and .74 for conflict and coercion respectively. The current study reports an alpha coefficient of .71 and .76 for conflict and coercion respectively.

Child physical abuse. We used the 4-item *Child Abuse Questionnaire* (CAQ) (Goodman, 2000) to assess child physical abuse experiences that occurred before age 16 and were perpetrated by a caretaker. Items inquired whether participants had been 1) hit on a part of the body other than the buttocks with a hard object, 2) thrown or knocked down, hit with a fist, kicked, beat up, or chocked, 3) burned or scalded, or 4) threatened with a knife or a gun. All items were binary (0=no, 1=yes). Responses were summed for a total score, ranging from 1-4.

Child sexual abuse. The 11-item *Sexual Abuse Exposure Questionnaire (SAEQ)* (Rodriguez, Ryan, Rowan & Foy, 1996; Rodriguez, Ryan, Vande Kemp, & Foy, 1997; Rowan, Foy, Rodriquez, & Ryan, 1994) assessed child exposure to sexual abuse before age 16. The first 10 items inquired about increasingly invasive sexual experiences ranging from being flashed to being forced to have oral, anal, or vaginal sexual intercourse. Items were scored in a binary manner (0 = no, 1 = yes) and summed them for a total score ranging from 0 to 10.

The 4-item CAQ and 11-item SAEQ generated a total childhood abuse score that is used in the analysis of this study. Previous research reported an adequate test re-test reliability range of .73-.94 for the 10 items related to sexual abuse exposure (Rowan, et al, 1994; Ryan, 1993). The 14 items (sexual exposure and physical abuse questions) used in the current study present a coefficient alpha similar to previous work: .84.

Posttraumatic stress symptoms. Posttraumatic stress symptomatology was assessed with the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale (PSS) (Foa, Riggs, & Rothbaum, 1993). This 17-item scale assesses frequency of PTSD symptoms within the past two weeks using a four point Likert-type scale ranging from zero (not at all) to three (five or more times per week). The measure yields a total score summing all responses and three subscales of symptom clusters that correspond to the PTSD diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-

IV (Association, 1994) (recurrence of experiences/intrusive thoughts, avoidance/numbing and hyperarousal). For the current study, the total score is used in analysis. The PSS was administered only to women who endorsed any interpersonal violence in their lifetime, and we asked these women to consider their interpersonal violence experiences (as assessed by the adult physical, psychological, or sexual abuse measure as their frame of reference when answering the questions. The coefficient alpha representing the summation of the subscales was .93, which is similar to previous research reports of .91 on rape victims (cited above).

Plan of Analysis

In order to test Hypothesis 1 that the dynamics of the interpersonal relationship will effect women's perpetration of minor and/or severe violence, two Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted. The independent variable for the first set of analysis in this study is relationship dynamic with 4 levels: LoCoer/LoCon; LoCoer/HiCon; HiCoer/LoCon; HiCoer/HiCon, which are derived from the variables coercion and conflict. The dependent variables are minor and severe physical aggression used by a woman toward her partner. Two analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted comparing the group mean differences related to minor and severe aggression. In order to observe hypothesized group mean differences, series of planned comparison test were conducted. The test addressed the following hypothesis and proposed group differences for women's perpetration of minor physical aggression:

<u>Planned Comparisons for Women’s Perpetration of Minor Physical Aggression</u>

1) Women in the LoCoer/LoCon group are considered “healthy”; thus, they were compared to the remaining groups (LoCoer/HiCon; HiCoer/LoCon; HiCoer/HiCon). It was hypothesized that the LoCoer/LoCon group would be significantly different from the

other groups on minor aggression in that they would report a low level of perpetration of minor aggression.

2) Women in the LoCoer/HiCon group would report significantly higher rates of minor aggression than the HiCoer/LoCon and HiCoer/HiCon group.
3) Finally, women in the HiCoer/LoCon and HiCoer/HiCon group would be significantly different from each other in their use of minor physical aggression.

Planned Comparisons for Women's Perpetration of Severe Physical Aggression

4) Women in the LoCoer/LoCon, LoCoer/HiCon, and HiCoer/LoCon would be compared to the HiCoer/HiCon women. Women's perpetration of severe physical aggression in the LoCoer/LoCon, LoCoer/HiCon, HiCoer/LoCon groups would be significantly lower than women's perpetration of severe aggression in the HiCoer/HiCon groups.
5) Women in the HiCoer/LoCon would report nonsignificant differences from women in the LoCoer/LoCon, LoCoer/HiCon group in their use of severe physical aggression.
6) Finally, women in the LoCoer/LoCon group would present nonsignificant differences from the LoCoer/HiCon group in their use of severe physical aggression.

A second hypothesis was analyzed. It was hypothesized that women's perpetration of severe aggression is moderated by PTSD symptoms and childhood abuse history. Specifically, women's perpetration of severe physical aggression is determined by her self-reported PTSD symptoms and childhood abuse history regardless of the relationship dynamics. A hierarchial regression will be used to test the hypothesis. The predictor variables were coercion and conflict (which were the variables used to form the four relationship dynamic groups). Women's history of childhood abuse, and post-traumatic stress symptoms were the moderating variables in the analysis. The outcome variable was women's perpetration of severe aggression. All continuous

variables (women's use of physical aggression, childhood abuse, and post-traumatic stress) were centered in order to generate interaction terms. The null hypothesis would be rejected if the R2 change was significant for the interaction.

It should be noted that similar analysis were conducted for minor aggression, due to limitations in sample size. Additionally, debates within the literature appear to be related to women’s perpetration of aggression that results in severe injury. Thus, severe aggression will be used as a proxy for women’s perpetration of aggression that results in severe injury.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Descriptive analysis indicated that 6% of the responses for coercion and conflict were missing. Severe and minor aggression variables were missing 1% of responses. In order to maintain power in analysis, but minimize the risk of reporting inaccurate data, SPSS was used to calculate the mean and substitute the mean for missing data. The resulting variable was used in future analysis. As a result, the independent variables (coercion and conflict), dependent variables (severe and minor aggression), moderators (post-traumatic stress symptoms and childhood abuse) and potential covariates (age, race, marital status, and monthly income) depicted responses from ninety-six participants.

The following analyses were conducted to evaluate two hypotheses: 1) women's perpetration of aggression will vary due to variations in conflict and coercion within the relationship; 2) history of childhood abuse and/or post-traumatic stress symptoms will moderate the relation between coercion and severe aggression and/or conflict and severe aggression.

Table 2 presents the zero-order correlation, mean, and standard deviation all the variables. Coercion and conflict were significantly related to each other and presented a moderate relation. Regarding the hypothesized relation between independent variables and dependent variables, coercion was not significantly related to use of minor or severe aggression; however conflict had a significant moderate relation to both minor and severe aggression. The proposed moderating variables (post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSD) and childhood abuse) were both significantly related to coercion and conflict. PTSD and

Table 2: Correlation between variables and the corresponding mean and standard deviation for each variable.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean	SD
1. Conflict	.--	.38*	.34*	.41*	.39*	.39*	-.15	.07	.05	2.16	1.12
2. Coercion		.--	.23*	-.02	.03	.55*	-.09	-.10	-.04	1.83	1.08
3. Child Abuse Total			.--	.20	.24*	.33*	-.17	.13	.10	3.47	3.52
4. Minor Aggression				.--	.78*	.12	-.21*	.09	-.04	1.94	1.5
5. Severe Aggression					.--	.06	-.22*	-.03	-.14	1.83	1.84
6. PTSD Symptoms						.--	-.03	-.02	-.04	16.09	13.62
7. Age							.--	-.01	.36*	34.00	8.09
8. Race								.--	.20	X	X
9. Marital Status									.--	X	X

Note: N = 96; * p< .05; X = data is categorical.

conflict had a moderate relation, whereas, PTSD had a large relation to coercion. Childhood abuse history had a moderate relation with conflict and coercion. The moderating variable PTSD was not significantly related to changes in minor or severe aggression; however, childhood abuse had a significant moderate relation with severe aggression. Finally, observation of the relation between potential covariates and variables used for analysis indicate that age, which had a significant moderate relation with minor and severe aggression, is a potential covariate. Race and marital status did not have significant relation to variables used in the current study.

Group Differences in Demographic and Life Experiences

Table 3 illustrates the number of women in the four relationship dynamics (LoCoer/LoCon; LoCoer/HiCon; HiCoer/HiCon; HiCoer/HiCon) who reported experiencing childhood sexual and/or physical abuse, PTSD symptoms, and perpetrated minor and/or severe aggression toward their intimate partner. Groups were established by median split on coercion and conflict. As can be observed from the table, black and white women comprised each group relative to their proportion in the study with the exception of women involved in low coercion/high conflict relationships, which presented an even split between the two racial groups, and hi coercion/hi conflict, which indicated more black women comprised the group. Additionally, a majority of the women in the sample reported using at least one form of minor physical aggression; the relation between different relationship dynamics and perpetration of minor aggression was significant (x^2 (3, N=96) = 8.43, p = .04) indicating some groups used significantly more minor physical

Table 3

Demographic and Mental Health Symptoms Across Four Groups of Women

Category	LoCoercion/ LoConflict	LoCoercion/ HiConflict	HiCoercion/ LoConflict /	HiCoercion/ HiConflict	Total N (%)
N/Per Group	33	22	13	28	96
% Black	61	50	69	75	64
% White	39	50	31	25	36
% Perpetrate >1 Minor Aggression	67	86	54	89	76
% Perpetrate >1 Severe Aggression	48	73	46	89	66
% Reported Childhood Sexual Abuse	55	68	46	71	61
% Reported Childhood Physical Abuse	36	59	46	54	48
% Reported 1+ PTSD Symptom	79	77	81	100	85
% Reported PTSD Symptom >Mean of 16	15	41	62	82	47

Note: Total N Column depicts overall percentage of women in the sample, who reported the symptom/characteristic.
Each cell = % of women for each group who reported the symptom/characteristic.

aggression. Additionally, a majority of the women in the sample reported using severe physical aggression. Similar to minor aggression, the relations between group and perpetration of severe physical aggression was significant (x^2 (3, N = 96)=12.68, p = .00). A majority of the sample reported childhood sexual abuse and approximately 50% reported childhood physical abuse; however, neither experience was significantly different across the four groups (x^2 (3, N=96) = 4.55, p = .21; x^2 (3, N=96) = 4.66 p = .19, respectively). Finally, an overwhelming majority of the women in the sample reported at least one PTSD symptom. Interestingly, approximately 50% of the women reported total PTSD scores greater than 16 (the mean for the sample) and most of the women experiencing more symptoms were involved in high coercion/high conflict interpersonal relationships. The relation between high numbers of PTSD symptoms and group was significant (x^2 (3, N=96)=23.67, p = .00).

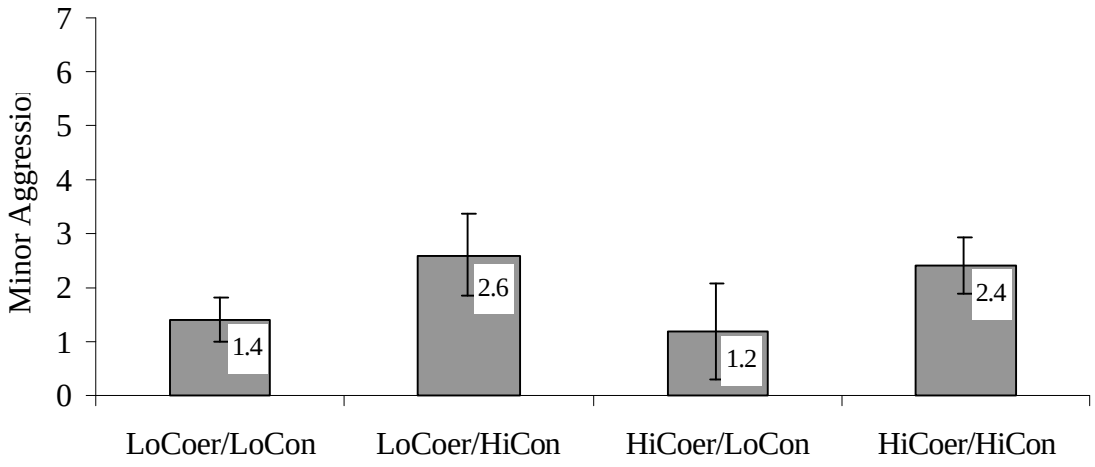
Group Differences for Minor Aggression

Due to the significant correlation between age and the dependent variables (minor and severe aggression), ANCOVAS were conducted to evaluate the effect of the potential covariates on minor and severe aggression. Age did not account for significant variance in minor aggression (F(1,95) = 2.82, p = .10 or severe aggression (F(1,95) = 2.74, p = .10. when entered as the covariate in an equation with the independent variable group (four relationship dynamics). Therefore, the following analysis is an ANOVA with planned comparisons, which will possess greater statistical power and allows for the evaluation of hypothesized differences between the groups.

The initial ANOVA analyzing the effect of relationship dynamic on use of minor aggression indicated that the assumption of equal group variance was not met. In order to rectify the assumption violation, the dependent variable (minor aggression) was transformed by taking

the square root of each value. The statistical manipulation generated a new variable that was used in the respective ANOVA analysis. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met: Levene(3,92) = 1.45, p>.23 The model was significant for group differences in women's perpetration of minor aggression: $F(3,92) = 4.99$, p<.00. Additionally, there was a significant cubic trend: $F(1,95) = 11.15$, p <.00 indicating that there was a linear increase, followed by a decline and an additionally linear increase. Three planned comparisons were conducted to identify the significant group differences. Figure 1 presents the group mean differences.

Figure 1: Minor Aggression Across Four Relationship Dynamics.



Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals for each group.
Lo (Low); Hi (High); Coer (Coercion); Con (Conflict)

It was hypothesized that women in the LoCoer/LoCon group would be "healthy"; thus report significantly lower levels of perpetration of minor physical aggression than the remaining three groups. The first contrast was not statistically significant ($t(3,92) = 1.81$, $p = .04$, one tailed. Evaluating group means indicates that women involved in relationships with low levels of

coercion and conflicts reported lower scores of perpetration of minor physical aggression than women in the remaining three groups; however, when compared the women in the low coercion/low conflict group were compared to the overall perpetration of physical aggression in the remaining three groups they were not significantly different. It was also hypothesized the Lo Coercion/High Conflict group would report greater perpetration of minor physical aggression than the HiCoer/Lo Con and HiCoer/HiCon women. The contrast was statistically significant ($t(3,92) = -1.89$, $p = .03$, one tailed). Mean differences indicate that women involved in relationships with low levels of coercion coupled with high levels of conflict report higher rates of minor physical aggression than women in HiCoer/LoCon and HiCoer/HiCon. The final hypothesis posited that women engaged in HiCoer/LoCon and HiCoer/HiCon relationships would report similar rates of perpetration of minor physical aggression to each other. The contrast was significant ($t(3,92) = 2.74$, $p= 00$, one tailed), which indicates that there are significant differences between the two groups. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported. Group means indicate that women in the high coercion/high conflict group report significantly higher rates of perpetration of minor physical aggression than women in the high coercion/low conflict group. Overall, it seems that women involved in relationship with higher levels of conflict perpetrate more aggression, regardless of the level of coercion present within the relationship.

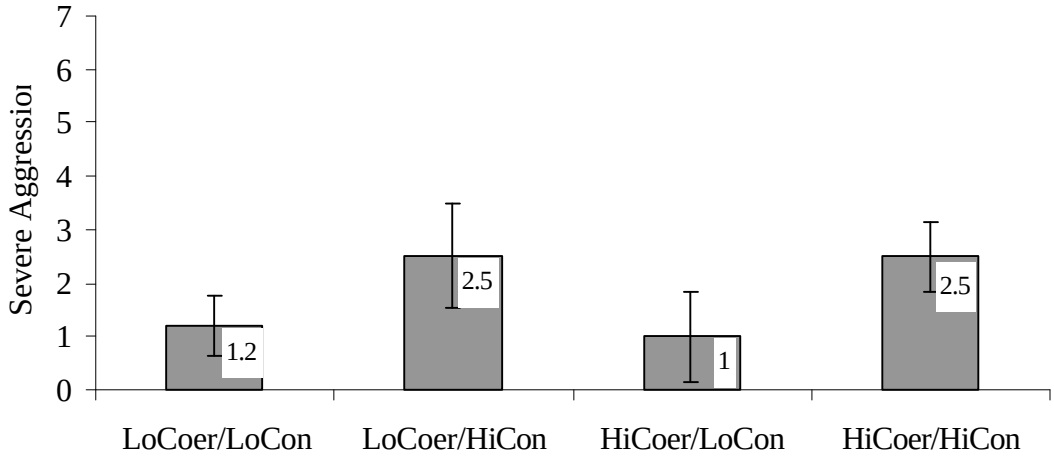
Group Differences for Severe Aggression

The initial ANOVA for group by severe aggression indicated that the assumption of equal group variance was not met. In order to rectify the assumption violation, the dependent variable severe aggression was transformed by taking the square root of each value. The statistical manipulation generated a new variable that was used in the respective ANOVA analysis. The assumption for homogeneity of variance was not met for new variable: Levene (3,

92) = 4.58, p = .00. The model was significant for variation in relationship dynamics based on coercion and conflict on women's perpetration of severe aggression: $F(3,92) = 5.44$, p = .00. Additionally, there was a significant cubic trend: ($F(1,95) = 8.93$, p = .00), indicating that there was a linear increase, followed by a decline and an additionally linear increase. Figure 2 presents the group means and significance values for planned each comparison.

Due to the violation of the homogeneity assumption, the t values will reflect the values for unequal variance. It was hypothesized that women in the LoCoer/LoCon, LoCoer/HiCon, HiCoer/LoCon would report similar perpetration rates of severe aggression to each other; however, the three groups would be significantly different from the HiCoer/HiCon women. Specifically, the HiCoer/HiCon would report the highest rates of perpetration of severe physical aggression. The first contrast was significant ($t(3,92) = -3.31$, p = .00, one tailed). Evaluating

Figure 2: Severe Aggression Across Four Relationship Dynamics.



Note: Bars represent the 95% confidence intervals for each group.
Lo (Low); Hi (High); Coer (Coercion); Con (Conflict)

group means indicated that women involved in relationships with high levels of coercion and conflict reported high rates of perpetration of severe physical aggression; however, they were not the highest of the four groups, which means that the hypothesis was not completely supported. Further, it was predicted the HiCoer/LoCon group would be statistically similar to women in the LoCoer/HiCon and LoCoer/LoCon in their reports of perpetration of severe physical aggression. The contrast was not significant ($t(3,92) = 1.45$, $p = .16$, two tailed). Mean differences indicate that women involved in relationships with high levels of coercion coupled with low levels of conflict report the lowest rate of perpetration of severe physical aggression than women in LoCoer/HiCon, LoCoer/LoCon, and HiCoer/HiCon. Finally, it was hypothesized that women engaged in LoCoer/LoCon and LoCoer/HiCon relationships would report similar rates of perpetration of minor physical aggression. The contrast was significant ($t(3,92) = 2.15$, $p<04$, two tailed), which indicates that there are significant differences between the two groups; thus anticipated relation was not supported. Group means indicate that women in the low coercion/low conflict group report significantly lower rates of perpetration of severe physical aggression than women involved in relationships characterized as low coercion/high conflict. Overall, intimate relationships that involve high levels of conflict experience higher rates of women's perpetration of aggression than relationships characterized by low levels of conflicts.

Moderating Effect of Childhood Abuse and PTSD on Perpetration of Severe Aggression

Analyses evaluating the moderation relation between childhood abuse history and/or PTSD symptoms between coercion or conflict and their relation to minor aggression was not conducted, due to limitations in the sample size. In total, four hierarchical regressions were conducted to evaluate the effect of childhood abuse and/or PTSD symptoms on the link between conflict and severe aggression and coercion and severe aggression. The first hierarchical

regression was performed to evaluate the potential moderating effect of childhood abuse history on women's perpetration of severe aggression. Severe aggression was regressed on conflict in Step 1, followed by total child abuse in Step 2, and the interaction variable generated with the conflict and childhood abuse variables in Step 3. Table 4 illustrates the results of the analysis. The overall model was significant and accounted for 17% of the variance observed in severe aggression scores. A main effect was observed for conflict, which was entered in the first step and accounted for 15% of the overall variance of the model. The remaining two steps did not result in a significant change in R^2; thus, the hypothesis that childhood abuse history moderates the link between conflict and perpetration of severe aggression was not supported.

Table 4

Hierarchical regression with Conflict, Childhood Abuse, and Conflict X Childhood Abuse regressed on Severe Aggression.

Variables	B	SE B	β
Conflict	.36	.39	.35*
Total Childhood Abuse	.06	.06	.12
Conflict x Abuse	.00	.04	.01

Note: $F(3, 92) = 6.12$, $p < .00$; $R^2 = .17$; * significant contributor to model

Secondly, a hierarchical regression was performed to evaluate the effect of childhood abuse history on women's perpetration of severe aggression. Severe aggression was regressed on conflict in Step 1, followed by total PTSD symptoms in Step 2, and the interaction variable generated with the conflict and PTSD variables in Step 3. Table 5 illustrates the results of the

analysis. The overall model was significant and accounted for 18% of the variance observed in severe aggression scores. A main effect was observed for conflict, which was entered in the first step and accounted for 15% of the overall variance of the model. The remaining two steps did not result in a significant change in R^2; thus, the hypothesis that PTSD symptoms moderate the link between conflict and perpetration of severe aggression was not supported.

Table 5

Hierarchical regression with Conflict, PTSD, and Conflict x PTSD regressed on Severe Aggression

Variables	B	SE B	β
Conflict	.67	.17	.41*
PTSD Symptoms	-.01	-.01	-.08
Conflict x PTSD	.02	.01	-.13

Note: $F(3, 92) = 6.65$, $p < .00$; $R^2 = .18$; * significant contributor to model

Preliminary analyses indicated that coercion and severe aggression were not related significantly. Further, PTSD and use of severe aggression are not related significantly. Despite the lack of relation between the independent and dependent variable and between the moderator and the dependent variable, two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted in order to evaluate a moderating effect of PTSD and/or childhood abuse history on the relation between coercion and severe aggression. In the third hierarchical regression severe aggression was regressed on coercion in Step 1, followed by total child abuse in Step 2, and the interaction variable generated with the coercion and childhood abuse variables in Step 3. The overall model

was not significant ($F(3, 92) = 2.07$, $p = .11$) and accounted for less than 1% of the variance observed in severe aggression scores ($R^2 = .06$). In the final hierarchical regression, similar findings were observed to the previous regression, in that when severe aggression was regressed on coercion in Step 1, followed by total child abuse in Step 2, and the interaction variable generated with the coercion and childhood abuse variables in Step 3. The overall model was not significant ($F(3, 92) = .26$, $p = .86$) and accounted for 0% of the variance observed in severe aggression.

Table 6 presents the overall findings for the results section. As can be seen, conflict is consistently present in relationships in which women reported perpetration of severe aggression. Lastly, childhood abuse or PTSD symptoms did not moderate the relation between coercion and conflict.

Table 6

Summary of Findings in the Results Section

Hypothesis	Significance
1. Groups will differ in perpetration of minor and severe aggression.	Lo/Coercion/HiConflict and HiCoercion/HiConflict reported significantly more perpetration of minor and severe aggression than the remaining two groups.
2. PTSD and/or Childhood Abuse History would moderate the relation between coercion and severe aggression or conflict and severe aggression.	Neither PTSD or Childhood Abuse History moderated the relation between coercion and severe aggression or conflict and severe aggression.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The results of the current study offer support to prevailing theories explaining interpersonal aggression. Namely, support was observed for Johnson's (1995, 2000) tenet that intimate relationships are characterized by variations in levels of coercion and controlling behaviors that result in differences in women's perpetration of aggression. Additionally, the present investigation suggests that women who experience high levels of interpersonal conflicts within their intimate interpersonal relationships, regardless of coercion levels, will be more likely to perpetrate both minor and severe aggression toward their intimate partner. These findings support suppositions by Straus (1986, 1995) that difficulties related to conflict resolution accounted for more problems in relationships than issues around power and/or physical aggression. He stated that how couples negotiate disagreements sets the stage for verbal and/or physical aggression. Investigators from the feminist perspective would argue that power is still an issue because conflicts often occur as individuals within the relationship strive to obtain and/or maintain their power (Dobash & Dobash, 1992) Thus, it was imperative to evaluate the conflict resolution style within the relationship as well as issues related to power and control that may be expressed via physical aggression.

Earlier research has provided support for Straus' supposition that conflict resolution style sets the stage for interpersonal aggression (Lloyd & Emery, 2000). Specifically, some individuals involved in intimate partner relationships use a conflict resolution style that possess more verbal (e.g., name calling) and/or physical aggression (e.g., pushing); yet, others take a

more collaborative approach to conflict resolution. Individuals within an intimate relationship will differ on what they perceive to be an important issue. The differences in perception may lead to one person thinking that they are not being heard; thus, the “unheard” individual will employ various conflict strategies in order to be heard. If verbal strategies do not work, the “unheard” person may use physical strategies such as throwing things or pushing.

Previous investigators have suggested that age, ethnicity, and/or marital status are also related to conflict resolution style (Archer, 2002; Straus, 1986; Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999). For example, individuals aged 18-29 involved in dating or cohabitating relationships tend to report the higher rate of interpersonal aggression (e.g., pushing, throwing things) during conflicts than older adults (Archer, 2002; Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999; O'Leary, 1989). Investigators suggest that age brings wisdom and skill development regarding conflict resolution; while cohabitation may lead fear/insecurities that are manifested in aggression toward an intimate partner (Straus, 1995). However, despite the use a relatively young (mean age 34), largely minority (63% African-American), and single (approximately 50% of the women) sample, the current study did not provide support for the effect of age, ethnicity, or marital status on perpetration of interpersonal aggression.

Prior findings related to incarceration offers an explanation for the lack of corroboration of the current sample with results from prior studies. Specifically, investigators posit that the incarcerated women report higher prevalence of experiencing low-income stressors (e.g., homelessness, poor access to resources) than women in community samples (Jones, Ji, Beck, Beck, 2002). Vogel and Marshall (2001) reported that a low-income lifestyle exposed women to numerous vulnerabilities that contributed more to symptoms of abuse and trauma than ethnicity. Further, the numerous traumas coupled with poor access to resources often resulted in

participation in criminal behaviors (i.e., drug use and prostitution) and incarceration. The current study offers additional support the argument that low-income has a powerful impact given that two-thirds of the current study's incarcerated sample reported mental health challenges (e.g., depression, posttraumatic stress symptoms), low income and/or homelessness, sexual and physical abuse as a child and/or an adult. The similarity in life experiences shared by incarcerated women suggests that experience and environment have a powerful effect on a person's functioning in relationships. Although race did not relate to any of the variables, it should be noted that income status and race are typically related, but incarceration appears to present with experiences that may minimize the overall impact of race.

With conflicts setting the stage for perpetration of aggression, where does coercion fit into the picture? Whereas conflicts can elicit aggression due to a person’s frustration, coercion is believed to limit aggression because a person’s behaviors and access to resources are minimized. Yet, the current study's results suggest that women will use both minor and severe aggression in relationships despite levels of coercion. The seemingly lack of regard for coercive behaviors that present a risk of injury can be conceptualized as a woman learning what it takes to survive abuse and get her needs met (Perilla, Frndak, Lillard, & East). Johnson (2000) suggested that women involved in coercive relationships experience a number of restrictions on their behaviors (e.g., limited access to others, restricted range of movement and/or choices). Researchers also posit that women will evaluate their circumstances and determine the best way to minimize and/or stop their abusive experience via strategic responses (e.g., acquiesce, hide money, talk with friends, fight back) (Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003). In relationships characterized as coercive/controlling, women may have limited access to resources (e.g., social support,

money, transportation) that help them cope with intimate partner aggression in an adaptive manner. Thus, women may use aggression to cope with intimate partner coercion.

In addition, incarcerated women present with a unique set of characteristics that may further restrict the types of adaptive strategic responses they employ in controlling relationships. For example, police involvement may not be a realistic strategic response for women who report multiple incarcerations and/or who participate in criminal activity because they risk incarceration. Others have suggested that poor police response to low-income areas and discriminatory behaviors toward African-American men, which may compel women to protect their abuser, also serve as barriers for African-American women's use of legal assistance during severe conflicts (Yoshioka, Gilbert, Bassel, Baig-Amin, 2000). Thus, as conflicts escalate, despite attempts to acquiesce, avoid conflicts, and calm their partner, physical aggression may appear to be the only reasonable choice.

Interestingly, the hypothesis that childhood abuse history and/or PTSD symptoms would moderate the relation between coercion and severe aggression and/or the relation between conflict and severe aggression was not supported in the current study. Although preliminary analysis indicated a significant relation between all five variables (childhood abuse, PTSD, severe aggression, coercion, and conflict), and previous researchers indicated that women with more severe childhood abuse histories tend to perpetrate severe physical aggression in relationships (Babcock, Miller, & Siard, 2003; Dutton, 1995; Jones, et al, 2002; Swan & snow, 2003; Walker, 1989), the current study's lack of support for the large body of literature has a statistical explanation. Specifically, 61% of the incarcerated sample reported childhood sexual abuse and 47% percent reported a large number of PTSD symptoms as compared to prior research conducted with community and/or college samples that found childhood abuse

prevalence rates of 20% (Archer, 2002; Straus, 1986). Community and college samples allow for a wide range of diverse life experiences; however the similar life experiences of incarcerated women may have resulted in constrained variance, which minimized the opportunity to see an effect.

Additionally, the measure of childhood physical abuse was comprised of 4 items, which limits the variability of scores observed in the sample. It may be the use of a measure that taps into various aspects of both childhood sexual and physical abuse would provide a greater range of scores; thus, greater ease at seeing how severity of abuse effects women's use of aggression. On the other hand, it may be that childhood abuse history may be better understood as a mediator. Specifically, women's use of aggression is related to the dynamics of the relationship because women who have an abuse history enter into relationships that increase the likelihood of victimization and abuse history teaches women that aggression is required to obtain power.

Verona & Carbonell (2000), suggested that overcontrolled hostility explained inconsistencies in women's perpetration of physical aggression. Specifically, a majority of the women in their incarcerated sample were one-time offenders who reported one severe violent crime that led to their incarceration. The one-time violent offenders scored high on scales that measured trait anger and overcontrolled hostility. The finding suggests that the women suppress a high level of anger that is presumably related to their reports of childhood victimization. The researchers posited that continuous victimization into adulthood leads to a deregulated expression of anger that is sporadic, violent, and injurious to the recipient. Harter, Erbes, and Hart (2004) offer support to the overcontrolled hostility hypothesis with their findings that women who reported severe childhood sexual abuse reported the highest levels of symptom distress, but reported the lowest scores on emotional expressivity. Harter and colleagues

explained that sexual abuse is often met with threats to remain quiet about the abuse and invalidation of emotions related to the abuse. Therefore, post-traumatic symptoms develop, but the woman's lack of trust in her own judgment regarding what is appropriate, how she should feel, and how she should respond. As a result, a woman possesses myriad responses to trauma and understanding the responses requires greater understanding of the woman as a whole: her environment, her experiences, and the meaning she assigns to her meaning and experiences.

The effect of childhood abuse and PTSD symptoms on women's perpetration of aggression historically has been a challenging finding to interpret. It is clear that researchers have yet to uncover the factors that lead to one woman's adaptive expression of emotions while leaving another numb. The extremely volatile and hostile environment associated with low-income life-style exposes women to continual victimization that may require women to numb themselves to emotions in order to survive. On the other hand, the inconsistent findings are found in community samples that presumably have less exposure to threats. Thus, individual differences (i.e., social support, biological predisposition) may play a vital role that has yet to be identified.

Implications of the Findings

The current study mirrored previous research that sought to take a more complex perspective on women's use of aggression in intimate relationships. In doing so, four categories were formed which vary in their degree of conflict and coercion, which are the variables that are consistently shown to elicit aggressive behaviors in intimate relationships. The idea of studying people based on categorical characteristics has been met with contention and debate for years. Namely, the Diagnositic Statistical Manual (DSM), which is used to diagnose psychological disorders, has been criticized for its dogmatic approach to implementing a categorical medical

approach to human behaviors that are subject to variations related to an individual's environmental, cultural, social, and biological experiences (Widiger, 1993). Johnson (In Press) indicated that categorization often fails to present unequivocal distinguishers for the different group members. Thus, a researcher may have a better idea of the characteristics present for persons within each group, but the complexity of human beings makes it difficult to say why characteristics cluster in a certain manner and if they will always cluster in the same way.

Widiger (1993) recognized that categories provide familiarity, simplicity, communication ease, and consistency with clinical decision-making. However, they exaggerate within-group similarities and imply that group differences exist because of distinctly different etiology. For example in the current study, of the 28 women in the high coercion/high conflict group, 89% perpetrated minor aggression and 66% perpetrated severe aggression. Not all of the women involved in the highly coercive and conflictual relationship engaged in physical aggression toward their partner. Further, not all of the women who reported perpetrating aggression reported experiencing childhood abuse. As a result, that is presumably homogeneous is in fact heterogeneous.

The heterogeneous presentation compels researchers and interventionists to look beyond the immediate context of the relationship and into the myriad spheres of influence that impact a woman’s behavior. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argued that in order to truly understand the context of a person's behavior researchers and interventionists must evaluate four critical systems that shape a person's behaviors: 1) individual system (i.e. socialization, perceptions, past experiences); 2) immediate situation (i.e., family, workplace, current relationship); 3) microsystem (i.e., criminal justice system, shelters, community resources); 4) macrosystem (i.e, cultural and ethnic background). It has been suggested that social economic status and race presented barriers to

women’s use of some strategic responses; this exemplifies the potential effect of a woman’s micro and macrosystems on her perpetration of physical aggression. Moreover, it illustrates how the interaction of the systems surrounding a woman may determine the behaviors she employs and the meaning she assigns to the behaviors.

Arguably, a woman's biological/genetic predisposition also plays a vital role in understanding the context associated with women's perpetration of physical aggression. The diathesis-stress model suggests that people are genetically vulnerable to certain life stressors and/or can tolerate stressors to a genetically predetermined level. Therefore, severe trauma and/or multiple experiences that exceed a person's genetic disposition are catalysts for maladaptive behaviors. This model explains how two women can experience similar traumatic experiences; yet, present different outcomes.

In short, categorization may oversimplify women's experience and lead researchers and interventionists to assume that all the women in a group have similar experiences and have similar needs. The assumption of group homogeneity is highly flawed and may result in failure to discuss important issues relevant to a woman's life. The issue of homogeneity can be more of an issue for incarcerated women who consistently report similar life experiences. As previously discussed, incarcerated women are exposed to numerous life stressors that may elicit similar behaviors, but the meaning they give to the experiences is different; thus, how each woman copes with the experiences is different. Although research is actively attempting to assess the complexity of interpersonal aggression via revisions of the CTS to understand context (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) and other researchers are moving beyond counting hits (Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003), the current study indicates that incarcerated populations add another layer of complexity to understanding women's perceptions within the

relationship and how they respond to relational problems. The high rate of poverty, traumatic life experiences, and abuse history that is coupled with poor access to resources (e.g., medication, therapy, skills training) and poor response from those in the helping profession (e.g., police, doctors, lawyers) encourages researchers and interventionists to carefully address the unique needs and situations of incarcerated women.

Beyond recognizing women's life experiences prior to incarceration, is the recognition of the coercive and conflictual nature of a prison environment. Despite sevenfold increases in women going to prison, women account for approximately 2% of incarcerated persons (Freudenberg, 2002). Women are in a system that is designed for the punishment of men. Some women experience the prison setting as a place of safety from the cruelty of their pre-incarcerated lifestyle (Bradley & Davino, 2002); however, between 10-20% of women report experiencing sexual coercion from male and female staff and/or female inmates (Stuckman-Johnson & Stuckman-Johnson, 2002). Many women will not report their abuse because they have learned from previous experiences that they will not be taken seriously.

Moreover, many women have learned to dissociate from past and present experiences of victimization. Not disclosing the information and dissociating often leads to increased PTSD symptoms, more agitation and/or withdrawal making it difficult for many women, who do have access to interventions within the prison facility, to learn and apply new skills. As a result, staff may view many women as difficult, manipulative, and emotional. Meave (2000) reported that women experience higher rates of placement in isolation, write-ups, and restrictions than men; despite expressing significantly less aggression than men. The finding supports that claim that women are viewed differently and experience prison differently than men.

Psychologists and officers working within the prison system must recognize the link between the unique life-experiences of women prior to their incarceration and the potential for future victimization within the prison setting. Researchers suggest that a woman's pre-incarceration life style and experiences set the stage for her acceptance of incarceration norms (Jensen & Jones, 2001; Maeve, 2000). Thus, awareness of past experiences will provide insight into women's expectations related to her incarceration and give a context to women's reactions to experiences during incarceration. Ultimately, recognizing the link between the past and the present enables the development of interventions and policies that can address the pre-existing needs of women as well as minimize the coercive and conflictual of the prison setting that may exacerbate these issues.

Limitations and Future Directions

Though the current study provided valuable insights related to incarcerated women's experiences and responses to their partner's conflictual and coercive behaviors, it is not without limitations. One limitation was the design of the study. Although, the use of ANOVA's with planned comparisons allowed for the testing of specific hypotheses while simultaneously minimizing Type I error that is associated with post hoc tests, planned comparisons reduce variability by dichotomizing a continuous variable and masks some findings. Specifically, in instances in which one group was compared to two or three other groups, the collapsing of the two or three groups' scores in to one group score often suggested that there were no significant group differences, despite the presence of statistically significant group scores.

Sample size was another statistical limitation because it prohibited the testing of other potential moderators such as frequency of women's experience of aggression and women's drug use. Frequent exposure to aggression has been shown to lead to increased risk of severe injury

and to decrease women's perpetration of aggression (Dasgupta, 2002; Saunders, 2002). However, exposure to frequent severe IPVT has been associated with increased use of drugs and alcohol, which increases the likelihood that women will use aggression toward others (including an aggressive intimate partner) (Ladwig & Anderson, 1989). It is assumed that drug use allows women to dissociate form memories and emotions related to traumatic life experiences. Unfortunately, their escape may lead to vulnerability to future victimization and poor emotional regulation. Thus, understanding the link between frequency of women's experience of abuse and women's drug use can enhance current knowledge related to the effect of childhood abuse history, suppressed anger, women's perpetration of aggression and the risk factors of incarceration.

Another limitation to the current study was the use of only one person's perspective of the relationship dynamic. It is undeniable that people respond to what they believe to be occurring in their environment and these beliefs are in large part established by past experiences (Sewell & Williams, 2002; Harter, Erbes, & Hart, 2004). Thus having one person's perspective can be valuable. However, researchers consistently suggest that men and women view the dynamics of the relationship differently (citations). In light of these findings, one cannot truly understand the context of an intimate interpersonal relationship because the other person operates from a set of life experiences that also shades the relationship dynamics. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) indicated that men who are engaged in abusive relationships often present with traumatic life histories; thus, adding to the complexity of the relationship. Further, women tend to be hyperaware of their own perpetration of aggression because it is socially undesirable (Gilbert, 2002). Therefore contextual information reported by women only, who tend to inaccurately

report their perpetration of aggression, may present a distorted view of relational dynamics and women's perpetration of aggression.

Lastly, in order to better understand women's perpetration of aggression, the use of qualitative techniques should be explored. Qualitative data may provide researchers with a more accurate picture of how women perceive their relationships and why they choose to react in certain ways. Such information is of particular importance when developing interventions for women who participate in criminal activity. Behaviors that seem maladaptive may be expressions of adaptation to traumatic environments. Thus, interventions can focus on the strength and perseverance these women possess and help them use their strengths in ways that will help them succeed in less oppressive environments. The goal is not to minimize or justify women's perpetration of physical aggression toward their partners. The goal is to understand the context (internally and externally) in order to administer the appropriate consequences and provide the best intervention that protects women and men who are victims of intimate partner aggression.

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APPENDIX A

FOY Child Abuse Questionnaire

Physical Abuse Instructions: Now I would like to read to you a list of some of the painful or distressing things that might have been done t you by a parent or someone who was taking care of you while you were growing up, before you turned 16 years old. You may answer yes or no to each of the questions.

1. Before you were 16, did someone hit you on a part of the body other than the bottom with something like a belt, hairbrush, stick, or some other object?

   Yes No DK Refused

2. Before you were 16, did someone throw or knock you down, hit you with a fist, or kick you hard, beat you up, or grab you around the neck and choke you?

   Yes No DK Refused

3. Before you were 16, did someone burn or scald you on purpose?

   Yes No DK Refused

4. Before you were 16, did someone threaten you with a knife or gun?

   Yes No DK Refused

Sexual Abuse Instructions: For the next set of questions, I would like to know if anyone did any of these things to you. This could include a parent, someone who was took care of you, someone you knew, or a stranger, not just a parent; before you turned 16 years old. You may answer yes or no to each of the questions.

5. Before you were 16, did anyone “flash” you or expose their sexual body parts to you?

   Yes No DK Refused

6. Before you were 16, did anyone watch you while you were dressing or using the bathroom in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?

   Yes No DK Refused

7. Before you were 16, did anyone make you watch sexual acts like someone touching themselves or other people having sex?

   Yes No DK Refused

8. Before you were 16, were your private parts touched by another person in a sexual way, or did someone rub up against you when you didn't want them to?

   Yes No DK Refused

9. Before you were 16, did anyone make you touch another person's private parts?

   Yes No DK Refused

10. Before you were 16, did anyone make you have sexual intercourse?

    Yes No DK Refused

11. Before you were 16, did anyone make you have anal sex?

    Yes No DK Refused

12. Before you were 16, did anyone make you perform oral sex on them?

    Yes No DK Refused

13. Before you were 16, did anyone ever perform oral sex on you when you didn't want them to?

    Yes No DK Refused

14. Before you were 16, did anyone make you pose for sexual or suggestive pictures?

    Yes No DK Refused

15. Before you were 16, did you keep any of these experiences secret—that is, not telling anyone about what happened?

    Yes No DK Refused

APPENDIX B

PTSD Symptom Scale

For this section, please answer the following questions concerning your reactions to the experiences you just told me about in your last intimate relationship. Please answer based on feelings you have had over the past 2 weeks. You can choose from the following responses using this scale: (show response card)

0 = Not at all

1 = Once per week or less/a little bit

2 = 2 to 4 times per week/somewhat

3 = 5 or more times per week/ very much

4 = Don't know

5 = N/A

6 = Refused

1. Have you had really upsetting thoughts or memories about your experiences that keep coming back and won't go?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

2. Have you been having bad dreams or nightmares about your experience over and over again?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

3. Have you ever suddenly relived the experience, had a flashback, or acted or felt as if it were happening over again?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

4. Have you been very upset emotionally when you were reminded of the experience? This includes if you were really upset on the anniversary of the day it happened.

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

5. Have you constantly been trying to avid thoughts or feelings associated with the experience?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

6. Have you been constantly trying to avoid activities, situations, or places that remind you of the experience?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

7. Are there any important parts of the experience that you still cannot remember?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

8. Have you lost a lot of interest in your free-time activities?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

9. Have you felt detached or cut off from others around you?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

10. Have you felt that it is really hard for you to have a lot of different feelings? Like it's hard for you to feel loving?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

11. Have you felt that any future plans or hopes have changed because of the experience? Like, your plans for a marriage, career, children, or a long life have been changed?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

12. Have you been having a lot of trouble failing or staying asleep?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

13. Have you been irritable all the time or having fits of anger?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

14. Have you been having a lot of trouble concentrating?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

15. Are you overly alert-Like, you are always checking to see who is around you?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

16. Have you been jumpier, or more easily startled?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

17. Have you been having intense physical reactions (like getting sweaty or having your heart beat really fast) when you are reminded of your experience?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4 ------ 5 ------ 6

APPENDIX C

Georgia Contextual Model of Victimization (GCMV)

Now I want you to think about the circumstances around all the times when a partner (Use name of someone in report) abused you.

0 = Not of the time

1 = Some of the time

2 = About ½ of the time

3 = More than half of the time

4 = All of the time

1. How much of the time did s/he say you had to do what s/he wanted because you were his/her "girlfriend, woman, or wife"?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

2. How much of the time could you tell that s/he was going to act this way?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

3. How much of the time was s/he trying to keep you from doing something you wanted or needed to do?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

4. How much of the time did s/he act this way out of the blue?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

5. How much of the time were you in a fight?

   0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

6. How much of the time did you do something to get him/her to act this way so that no one else would see or hear?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

7. How much of the time did you do something to get him/her to act this way so you could control what she did?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

8. How much of the time did s/he act this way to make you do something you didn't want to do?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

9. How much of the time were you in an argument?

0 ------ 1 ------ 2 ------ 3 ------ 4

APPENDIX D

Women's Perpetration of Physical Abuse

1. Did your most recent partner ever twist your arm or pull your hair?

   Yes No Refused

   a. How many times did your partner act this way?

      1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

   b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

      Yes No Refused

   c. How many times?

      1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

2. Did your most recent partner ever push or shove you?

   Yes No Refused

   a. How many times did your partner act this way?

      1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

   b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

      Yes No Refused

   c. How many times?

      1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

3. Did your most recent partner ever slap you?

   Yes No Refused

   a. How many times did your partner act this way?

      1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

4. Did your most recent partner ever punch or hit you?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

5. Did your most recent partner ever kick you?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

6. Did your most recent partner ever beat you up?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

7. Did your most recent partner ever use a knife or gun on you?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

8. Did your most recent partner ever hit you with something?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

9. Did your most recent partner ever choke you?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

10. Did your most recent partner ever slam you against a wall?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

11. Did your most recent partner ever grab you?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

12. Did your most recent partner ever throw something at you that could hurt?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

13. Did your most recent partner ever Burn or scald you on purpose?

Yes No Refused

a. How many times did your partner act this way?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X

b. Did you ever act this way with your partner?

Yes No Refused

c. How many times?

1X ---- 2X ---- 3-5X ---- 6-10X ---- >10X ----10-100X ---- >100X