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Violence in the family of origin, intimate partner violence, and romantic relationship satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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A history of violence in the family of origin and subsequent relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships is an issue believed to be affecting millions in the United States. Specifically, this study sought out to investigate how the family of origin may have an influence on adult intimate relationships, especially in terms of repeating the cycle of violence with regard to abusive behaviors. The study examined 180 NIU students. Findings generally supported the hypothesized associations between the study variables. For instance, a history of violence in the family of origin tends to be associated with violence in romantic relationships and relationship satisfaction. Limitations of the study, implications for professionals and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

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VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE,
AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Thesis Director:
Dr. Florensia Surjadi

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DEDICATION

To my family, my mom, Christi Slavenas, for being the strongest survivor I know. To my dad, Ronald Slavenas, for being the husband Christi deserves, and the only father I've ever known. Thank you both for reminding me that if I never screwed up I'd be the only one who hadn't. You've taught me so much; mistakes are a part of growth, not a sign of failure; if I don't freak out from time to time that it just means I don't know what is going on; and that the best parents want to see their kids do better. To my brothers, for doing your part to shape the person I am today, even if I am a little rough around the edges.

To all survivors of domestic and sexual violence. You are not alone, and it is not your fault.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Annually, physical violence is believed to occur in 4 to 6 million intimate relationships across the United States (Honor, 2005). The actual occurrence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) may be much higher as the exact figure is hard to determine due to underreporting. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2014) IPV is threatened or actual harm by a current or former romantic partner, including marital, cohabiting, or dating partner. The types of harm that constitute IPV might vary from physical, sexual, psychological, and financial. Physical violence refers to the intentional use of physical force that causes injury or harm to others. Sexual violence might include unwanted sexual advances, comments or forced acts. Psychological violence can include behaviors like verbal aggression, stalking, and dominant or jealous behaviors. Financial abuse can include putting a partner on an allowance, telling partners what they can and cannot buy, or taking control of their bank account. All of these behaviors and actions constitute IPV. Although IPV shares a similar connotation to domestic violence, IPV focuses solely on the interaction between romantic partners, either past or present, whereas domestic violence might occur between other dyads in the home, including between non-romantic family members. The victim in IPV refers to the target of the violence or abuse, whereas the perpetrator refers to the individual inflicting the violence or abuse on the victim (Salzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 2002).

IPV has both physical and psychological consequences. Some of the psychological effects of IPV typically seen in survivors include: posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and lowered self-esteem (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000), as well as drug and alcohol abuse and attempted suicides (Golding 1996; Campbell, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995). Statistics have shown that most of the victims in IPV are women. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2012 Uniform Crime Reports, 1,256 individuals were murdered by their girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, or husband, 992 or almost 79% of those killed were women.

Results from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) in 2005 show the high costs of confronting the aftermath of IPV is what makes this issue so salient. Aside from the chaos, IPV had been associated with more than 2 million reported injuries (NVWAS, 2005), 8.0 million days of lost work productivity (NVWAS, 2005), intervention by police and relational stress, and negative child-related outcomes. With respect to children, more than half of women who are victims of IPV had been found to live in a household with children under the age of 12 and the children are often the unintended victims of IPV (USDOJ, 1998). Children who witness IPV at home might be injured when they are trying to protect the victimized parent from the aggressing parent. Other than the possibility of being injured during a battering episode, children who are exposed to IPV are also at an increased risk for aggression, anxiety and depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and pro-violent attitudes (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2006). Additionally, long-term consequences of witnessing IPV in the family of origin are often cited by researchers.

Some negative long-term consequences include increased probability of teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, post traumatic stress disorder, and compromised school performance, which can hinder future career prospects (National Council of Juvenile and Family

Court Judges, 2006). Perhaps more alarming is the possibility that children who were exposed, directly or indirectly, to violence between their parents were also subsequently more likely, as adults themselves, to perpetrate violence against a partner and to be treated violently by a partner than were adults, who as children, were not exposed to violence (Margolin & Gordis, 2004). Lichter and McCloskey (2004) found that 30% of adolescents who witnessed IPV as a child later engaged in some form of dating violence, either as the perpetrator or the victim.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse (Ehrensaft, Cohen, Smailes, Chen, & Johnson, 2003) theory has been used to describe the cycle of family violence from one generation to the next. Although the intergenerational transmission of abuse theory (ITA) historically has been used to explain the tendency of children of abusive parents to abuse their own children, the ITA can also be more broadly applied to the cycle of witnessing IPV between parents and the continuing cycle of committing or becoming a victim of adult IPV. According to ITA, behaviors are learned by witnessing others using the same or similar behaviors. According to this theory aggression can be attributed to the process of modeling another's undesirable acts. The more children witness aggressive interactions, the more likely they are to be reinforced in their own tendencies for aggression in subsequent social interactions. Moreover, when children see abuse being used as a means to gain control and to "win" in a dispute, they are being motivated to reproduce the same actions. The self-perpetuating cycle of violence is chiefly troubling due to the long-term consequences in future relationships.

Adults who perpetuate the cycle of violence tend to have lower relationship satisfaction than couples that employ less aggressive methods of conflict resolution. In a study by Williams and Frieze (2005) both men and women are negatively affected psychosocially when they're in romantic relationships that involve violence. An inability to resolve conflict within relationships

in a non-confrontational way appears to have a positive correlation when measuring levels of distress in consideration of the severity of abuse. This is especially true for women. Williams and Frieze (2005) found that measurements for distress are especially high in women where severe victimization is occurring. However, men who are being severely victimized do not measure as highly in distress as women (Williams & Frieze, 2005). This indicates that women may indeed be more widely and deeply affected by the pattern of abuse than equally abused men. Panuzio, and DiLillo (2010) also found that psychological abuse is consistent with predicting low marital satisfaction.

Importance of the Study

Given the potential long-term negative consequences of IPV for children who witness violence in their family of origin, it is important to study the link between witnessing IPV in the family of origin, subsequent use of violence in adult romantic relationships, and the level of satisfaction one reports in the contexts of their relationship. Currently, most available research measuring IPV and relationship satisfaction has focused mostly on interactions between older, married couples (Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007). Although important to understand for policy and intervention, focusing the majority of research on this pair, to the exclusion of many others, leaves a large gap in understanding and addressing IPV in other adult relationships. Other types of romantic relationships such as short-term exclusive dating relationships, cohabiting relationships, and long-term but not married relationships are virtually unrepresented in literature regarding ITA, subsequent adult IPV occurrences, and relationship satisfaction. Nevertheless, previous research has indicated that the presence of IPV might be higher among dating and

cohabiting partners. Married individuals were also found to be less likely to physically or psychologically abuse their partners and to become victims of psychological or physical abuse than their cohabiting or dating peers (Franklin, 2010).

As young adulthood is also a time when many individuals begin to make decisions about more permanent romantic relationships and marriage, identifying factors that can contribute to future relationship difficulties before marriage will have important implications for policy and practice. For example, if significant hostile interaction is found across generations among pre-marital couples, family practitioners can develop interventions that stop the cycle of abuse. A better understanding of the risk factors of IPV might help them to be more pointed in their questions and interpretations of what may be happening in the current romantic relationship. According to the National Center for Education Statistics 2009 findings, the latest year available, 41.3% of people aged 18-24 were enrolled in degree granting institutions. This means that the university setting is convenient for conducting studies that are fairly representative of the age group that until now has been vastly understudied.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between witnessing intimate partner violence in the family of origin, current intimate partner violence and romantic relationship satisfaction in young adulthood.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that college students who witnessed greater IPV in their family will have lower relationship satisfaction in their current romantic relationships than those who witness lower IPV in their family; this is due in part to higher violence in current romantic relationships.

Independent Variable: IPV in the family of origin.

Mediating Variable: Violence in young adult romantic relationship.

Dependent Variable: Romantic relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Cycle of Violence in IPV

IPV is defined as a pattern of many physical, sexual, and/or psychological behaviors committed by past or present intimate partners (Honor, 2005). According to the CDC (2013), IPV is the struggle to gain power and control over another person in a romantic relationship. Scholars and practitioners dealing with the issue of IPV have suggested that four stages exist in almost all of these relationships, commonly known as the Cycle of Violence (Walker, 1979). In the Cycle of Violence Walker (1979) recognizes four distinct stages found in many abusive relationships. The first stage is the tension building stage, when poor communication occurs, passive aggression is employed, and rising interpersonal tension increases. During this stage victims may notice their partners seem easily agitated and tend to lash out more readily. Many victims report feeling they were walking on eggshells during this stage. The abusive partner may ignore the victimized partner entirely, critique every thing they do, slam doors or cupboards, and yell at pets or children. Second is the acting out phase, occurring when one partner becomes abusive, physically or emotionally, towards their partner in a bid to gain and maintain power and control over the other and the relationship. During the third stage the abuser is often contrite, and will lavish the victim with positive attention, apologies, and sometimes gifts as well as promises to change. This third stage is commonly called the “Honeymoon Stage”. During the

fourth and final stage, the abuser and victim revert to a calm and seemingly normal state, but when tensions inevitably begin to increase they move back into the tension building stage. This cycle may continue multiple times in the context of a single relationship, sometimes even multiple times in a day. Typically, as the relationship continues, the cycle will escalate in frequency and intensity. Additionally, the honeymoon phase and normal stage will tend to disappear altogether, leaving only the stages of abuse and tension building. Although the patterns may vary by couple, elements of the Cycle of Violence are evident in many relationships where IPV is occurring (Walker, 1979).

Effects of Witnessing Domestic Violence on Children

Among about 53 million children living in two parent homes, almost 30% lived with parents who reported IPV in 2001 (McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & Green, 2006). About 7 million of these children lived in homes with severe IPV present (McDonald et al., 2006). The effects of witnessing IPV at home for children may include emotional, behavioral, physical, social and cognitive impairments. The degree of impairment in these areas may vary depending on the stage of development the child is in when exposure to IPV occurs. Children exposed to IPV often show internalizing behaviors, such as greater depressive symptoms, anxiousness, and persistent worry, than those who have never been exposed to such violence (Moretti, Obsuth, Odgers, & Reebye, 2006). Intrusive re-experiencing of the events in dreams or flashbacks, hyperarousal, and an exaggerated startle response are typical indicators of children observing IPV (Moretti et al., 2006). Other reactions such as anger, unpredictability, and sadness are also common in children witnessing IPV and can work in tandem to compromise

the quality of interaction and organization in the family environment, leading to the development of behavioral and emotional problems in children (Durand, Franca-Junior, & Barros, 2011).

Externalizing behaviors tend to occur more often for children exposed to IPV than those who are not (Moretti et al., 2006). Common externalizing behaviors include problems such as acting out towards other children, and a tendency to engage in bodily aggression. Girls appear to exhibit the externalizing behavior of social aggression, psychotic behavior and sexual concerns (Spilsbury et al., 2007). Some studies suggest that boys tend to display externalizing factors more than girls (e.g., Moretti, Obsuth, Odgers & Reebye, 2006), but other studies appear to refute this position (Spilsbury Kahana, Drotar, Creedon, Flannery & Friedman, 2008).

Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse

According to Black, Sussman and Unger (2009), the ITA theory is issued to explain the relationship between childhood exposure to IPV in the family of origin and subsequent IPV in adulthood. That is, children tend to recreate abusive family environments through the process of modeling what their parents practiced. The theoretical underpinnings of IPV can be traced to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1963). This theory suggests that children learn through the process of modeling and therefore may be equipped with negative forms of conflict resolution when they observe IPV in their families of origin (Bandura, 1963). The theory of ITA may act in two distinct ways to influence future relationships. The expectation of children who witnessed parental IPV may become conditioned to believe that aggression towards, or from, romantic partners is acceptable and even normal. Or they may recognize, due to a myriad of other factors, IPV is unacceptable and they may actively resist repeating the cycle in their own relationships.

Barnett, Mills- Koonce, Gustafsson, and Cox (2012) argue that any conflict in the family of origin can cause deleterious effects on children. It has been suggested that because of the ITA, future victims are being created by current victims' mere observance of family abuse. This is particularly alarming as in a study examining the effects of IPV on children, Knutson, et al., (2009) found that 31% of women who were abused indicated that in more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of cases children were either in the same room or in a room adjacent to where the abuse occurred. Smith, Ireland, Park, Elwyn and Thornberry (2011) found that witnessing severe IPV in childhood consistently increased the risk of perpetrating IPV, becoming a victim of IPV, or both, especially early in adulthood.

Effects of Witnessing IPV in Early Adulthood

According to Gover, Kaukinen, and Fox (2008), childhood exposure to violence is a consistent indicator for future relationships involving IPV. The study found that college women who witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers were 72% more likely to be physically abused than their non-exposed peers. College women exposed to IPV as children were also shown to have higher levels of abuse overall in their own romantic relationships, higher rates of depression, more anti-social behaviors, and greater reports of trauma symptoms (Maker, Kemmelmeier, & Peterson, 1998). These findings were consistent with other studies that found lower levels of social competence in college-aged women who recalled violence between their parents (Henning, Leitenberg, Coffet, Bennet, & Jankowski, 1997; Silvern, Karyl, Warlde, Hodges, & Starek, 1995). Furthermore, in a three-generation study of domestic violence it was

found that witnessing domestic violence was predictive of aggression towards women and children across all three generations for males (Hornor, 2005).

Significant correlations between family of origin abuse exposure, aggression in same sex friendships, and aggression in dating relationships have also been documented. Boys who witnessed father perpetrated IPV had been found more likely to be physically aggressive towards their same-sex friends (Moretti, et al., 2006). Among male college students, associations with negative peers were also found to predict abuse towards dating partners (Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001). This interplay of negative peer relationships seems to indicate that while friends may become victims of aggression, they can also work to normalize such behaviors. In a study of college students, violence in the family of origin was a strong predictor of dating violence perpetration (Kaura & Allen, 2004). This finding complements the Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe study (2001) that indicates violence in the family of origin is a predictor of college students' involvement in abusive dating relationships and negative beliefs about gender and interpersonal violence. In terms of violence perpetration, male perpetration appears to be tied to maternal violence, while female perpetration is tied to paternal violence (Kaura & Allen, 2004).

Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Relationship Satisfaction

In a meta-analytic review of 32 articles, Stith, Green, Smith and Ward (2007) showed that low levels of relationship satisfaction often occurred in romantic relationships where physical aggression existed. Testa and Leonard (2001) researched 543 couples participating in a study of newlyweds to measure the impact of marital aggression on women's psychological and marital functioning. The findings of the Testa and Leonard study showed that women whose

husbands were physically aggressive in their first year of marriage had higher levels of stress and lower levels of relationship satisfaction than their peers who were not experiencing physical aggression in their relationships (2001). Additionally, the couples were also more likely to separate due to the marital problems (Testa & Leonard, 2001). According to Williams and Frieze (2005) in a study of 3,519 men and women, individuals in violent relationships tend to report lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of distress, than their nonviolent counterparts. Some researchers suggest that women are as violent as men, but the trajectory of aggression on wives' parts is more highly correlated with relationship dissolution than men's aggression; in other words, women who use violence in their relationships tend to have higher rates of marital dissolution (Lawrence and Bradbury, 2007). Additionally, women who were severely abused reported greater levels of distress and lower levels of satisfaction in their marriages than severely abused men did (Williams & Frieze, 2005). Lawrence and Bradbury (2007) in their study of 164 newlyweds also showed that over the course of three years, men who used violent aggressive tactics in their marriage reported lower levels of satisfaction over time. The researchers proposed that violence is not initiated due to marital distress, but that when their physically aggressive attempts to resolve conflict fail the perpetrators subsequently became dissatisfied in their marriages.

Panuzio and DiLillo (2010) suggest that greater occurrences of physical, psychological and sexual aggression were associated with decreased marital satisfaction. Among the different types of aggressive behaviors, psychological aggression was most consistently related to poor marital satisfaction (Williams & Frieze, 2005). This suggests that psychological aggression, such as name-calling and personality insults, may have a more deleterious effect on relationships than other researchers (Panuzio & DiLillo, 2010) previously thought. While Williams and Frieze

(2005) suggest that women tend to have lower levels of marital satisfaction when there is mild or severe victimizing, Panuzio and DiLillo (2010) argue that husbands may be as impacted by their partner's aggressive behaviors as wives.

Summary

In sum, IPV is occurring in homes across the United States. Although an exact number is hard to determine, it has been estimated that one in four women will be the victim of IPV in her lifetime (ICADV, 2013). Out of this estimate, over 3 million children bear witness to the constant cycle of violence among their parents (Horner, 2005).

Witnessing IPV has a plethora of negative effects on children. Children who are exposed to parental conflict are at an increased risk for internalizing behaviors, such as depression, anxiety, and intrusive re-experiencing of the events (Moretti et al., 2006). Other children may externalize behaviors as a consequence of what they have been exposed to. Externalizing behaviors may include bodily and social aggression, psychotic behaviors, and sexual concerns (Durand, Franca-Junior & Barros, 2011; Moretti et al., 2006; Spilsbury et al., 2007).

The children who observe the abuse perpetrated by one adult in the home against another are also at an increased risk to normalize the aggression and view it as an appropriate means to gain and maintain control in future romantic relationships (Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolf, 2001; Bandura, 1969). The ITA theory has been used to explain the continuation of abuse witnessed as a child into one's own romantic relationships as an adult. This theory may help to explain why college students and others in early adulthood, who have been exposed to parental IPV as children,

report greater occurrences of IPV in their own romantic relationships (Kaura & Allen, 2004; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001).

In addition to being at an increased risk for aggression in romantic relationship, adults who witnessed IPV as children may also suffer from poor attachment (Watt and Scrandis, 2013). This is due to the inability for them to have securely attached to a parent as a child in a chaotic home. Parents who are caught in the cycle of violence may have less emotional availability for their children. This unstable attachment, in addition to an increased risk for perpetuating the violent behaviors modeled by parents, may affect relationship satisfaction into adulthood.

Much research on married couples has indicated low levels of satisfaction in couples where physical aggression is present. Aggression can negatively impact men's and women's psychological and marital functioning, and increase their feelings of distress, compared to their nonviolent counterparts, though this appears to be especially true for women. Additionally, men's marital satisfaction may also suffer when their physically aggressive attempts to resolve conflict fail. Finally, studies indicate that IPV need not be physically violent to negatively effect relationship satisfaction; psychological aggression may have as negative an effect.

Building from previous research, the proposed study aims to expand the literature by investigating the association between witnessing intimate partner violence in the family of origin, current intimate partner violence and relationship satisfaction in dating and cohabiting relationships in young adulthood.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling from Northern Illinois University (NIU) undergraduate classes. In order to be included in the final analyses, participants must have been in a current or past romantic relationship with a member of the opposite gender. Participation was on a voluntary basis and, depending on the professor's discretion, extra credit was offered as incentive to participate in the study. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct human subject research was sought and received from the NIU Institutional Review Board (IRB). Required curriculum for Social and Behavioral Research, offered by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), was also completed prior to seeking IRB permission (Appendix A).

Procedure

Interested students were given an informed consent form. Upon reviewing the form, participants were given an anonymous questionnaire to complete. The informed consent sheet also included the researcher's email address in the event that participants wished to review study

findings. Results will be shared with interested participants via email at the conclusion of the study. In addition to the following measures, demographic information such as age, college classification, gender, relationship type, length of current relationship, and ethnic background were collected from participants (Appendix B).

Measures of IPV in the Family of Origin

History of IPV in the family of origin was measured using an amended version of Sherin's Hurt, Insulted, Threatened with harm, and Screamed at (HITS: Sherin, Sinacore, Li, Zitter, & Shakil, 1998) Tool for Intimate Partner Violence Screening. This short self-report measurement tool consists of four questions asking how often the respondent's parents (or similarly involved adult caretakers) were engaged in physically aggressive, insulting, threatening, or screaming and cursing directed at the other parent. Each item was scored from 1-5 with a score of one representing the answer "never" and a score of five representing an answer of "frequently". The items were averaged so that higher score in this scale will indicate higher levels of IPV in the parental relationships. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .831

In addition to measuring IPV in parental relationships, similar items (Appendix B) were also used to screen for violence in each participant's grandparents' relationship. Participants were asked to indicate 'yes' (score 1) or 'no' (score 0) on four items such as how often the respondent's grandparents (or similarly involved individuals) were engaged in physically aggressive, insulting, threatening, or screaming and cursing directed at the other grandparent. The items were summed so that higher score will indicate greater IPV in the grandparents' relationship. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .827.

Measures of IPV in Current Relationship

Violence in current romantic relationship was measured using an adapted version of the Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI; Shepard & Campbell, 1992). The ABI is a self-report instrument used to reveal a variety of abusive behaviors, including physical and psychological abuse, as well as sexual abuse. The ABI was developed to evaluate a domestic abuse program and has been proven to be reliable (Chronbach's α overall = .92, (Zink, Klesges, Levin & Putnam, 2007). The ABI is a 30-item scale with a 5-point Likert-type response options ($1=Never$, $5=Very\ Frequently$). For the purpose of this study, items that were not typically relevant for the current population, such as: "Told you that you were a bad parent and put you on an allowance" were excluded. The current instrument consists of 2 sets of 21 items that indicate perpetration and victimization of IPV. The respondent was asked to give their closest estimate of how often an event occurred in the last six months with their current romantic partner. Events, such as "Threatened to hit or throw something at you", "Accused you of paying too much attention to someone or something else" and "physically forced you to have sex" indicated participant as a victim of IPV in the current relationship. Events, such as "Threatened to hit or throw something at your partner", "Accused your partner of paying too much attention to someone or something else" and "physically forced your partner to have sex" indicated participant as a perpetrator of IPV in the current relationship. Responses for all items were averaged. The higher the score, the more abusive the current relationship. Cronbach alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .939$. For perpetration and victimization of IPV in romantic relationships.

Measures of Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is a generic measure for general relationship satisfaction. The RAS has been used in previous research to predict whether couples will stay together or separate. The scale explores how well one's partner meets his/her needs, problems, feelings of love, and expectation fulfillment of reporting couples. The RAS is a seven-item scale with a 5-point Likert-type response options (*1=Poorly, 5=Extremely Well*). Items such as "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship" and "How good is your relationship compared to most," were part of this scale.

The RAS provides a single score indicating overall relationship satisfaction, with a lower number indicating a lower level of satisfaction and a higher number indicating higher relationship satisfaction. Each question has a point value of 1-5, so a score of 35 would indicate the highest level of satisfaction possible, while a score of seven would indicate the lowest level of satisfaction possible. Reverse coding was applied to two items (i.e. survey numbers 4 and 7). An overall score of RAS was calculated by averaging all the items so that higher score indicated greater satisfaction.in romantic satisfaction. Cronbach alpha for this scale was .926.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Participant Description

One hundred and eighty students participated in the study. The majority of participants (63%) were between the ages of 19 and 22. Of the 180 students, three were age 18 or younger (2%). Forty-four were between the ages of 19 and 20 (24%), 69 were between 21 and 22 (38%), 29 were between 23 and 24 (16%), and 35 were 25 or older (19%). The majority (69) were between 21 and 22 ($SD=1.087$). Sixty two percent ($n=111$) were juniors. Fifty six percent ($n=101$) identified themselves as female. Fifty five percent of participants reported being White, 17% were Black, 12% were Hispanic, 13% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% identified themselves as “other” (see Table 1).

Participant Relationship Status

The participants described their romantic relationship status in the following ways: 34% were currently single, but had been in a romantic relationship; 35% were dating, 12% were cohabiting with their romantic partner; 6% were married; 13% ($n=23$) had never been in a serious romantic relationship. In terms of the length of their current relationship, 43% were not in a current relationship; 6% had been in one for 0-3 months; 4% had been in one for 3-6

months; 8% had been in one for 6-12 months, 39% had been in one for over a year (see Table 2).

For the purpose of this study, only those who were currently or had ever been in romantic relationships were included in the final analyses (n = 126).

Table 1
Demographics Characteristics

Variable	n	%
College classification	4	2.2
Freshman	4	2.2
Sophomore	15	8.3
Junior	111	61.7
Senior	35	19.4
Graduate student	15	8.3
Gender		
Female	101	56.1
Male	79	43.9
Ethnic background		
White	100	55.6
Black	30	16.7
Hispanic	22	12.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	23	12.8
Other	5	2.8

Table 2

Participants' Romantic Relationship Status and Length of Current Relationship

Variable	n	%
Current relationship status		
Single, but have dated	62	34.4
Dating	63	35
Cohabiting	21	11.7
Married	11	6.1
Never dated	23	12.8
Length of current relationship		
Not in relationship	77	42.8
0-3 months	10	5.6
3-6 months	8	4.4
6-12 months	14	7.8
Over 12 months	70	38.9

Correlation Among Study Variables

A correlation matrix was produced to better understand the relationships among the study's variables. The correlation between IPV in parents and grandparents' relationships was .155 ($p < .05$). This means that higher violence in grandparents' relationship tends to be associated with also higher violence in the participants' parent's relationship. The correlation

between IPV in parents' relationships and current use of violence in romantic relationships was .306 ($p < .01$). This means that higher violence in parents' relationship tends to be associated with higher violence in the participants' relationship. Violence in participants' romantic relationships and decreased relationship satisfaction was $-.315$ ($p < .01$). This means that greater violence in romantic relationships tends to be associated with lower satisfaction in relationships.

Table 3
Correlation Among Main Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent Behavior	-					
Grandparent Behavior	.155*	-				
Partner's Behavior	.250**	.071	-			
Participant's Behavior	.330**	-.064	.682**	-		
Violence in Relationship	.306**	.019	.950**	.877**	-	
Relationship Satisfaction	-.315**	-.152	-.494**	-.267**	-.441**	-

Testing the Study Hypothesis

This study proposed that higher exposure to IPV in the family of origin was associated with lower relationship satisfaction, in part, due to higher violence in current romantic relationships. In order to test for the mediation hypothesis, a series of regression analysis was run in SPSS to obtain the regression coefficient and standard error for the influence of: 1) IPV in the family of origin and violence in young adult romantic relationships, 2) IPV in the family of origin and relationship satisfaction, 3) violence in young adult romantic relationships and relationship satisfaction, and 4) IPV in the family of origin and violence in young adult romantic relationships predicting romantic relationship satisfaction. Scores for participant perpetration and victimization by partner were combined to measure for overall relationship violence.

Results of the regression analyses were presented in Table 4 through 7. As presented in Table 4, IPV in parental relationship was found to significantly predict violence in current romantic relationships ($b = .128$, $SE = .036$, $t = 3.58$, $p < .01$). That is, higher IPV in parental relationships predicted greater violence in current romantic relationships. As presented in Table 5, IPV in parental relationship was found to significantly predict relationship satisfaction ($b = -.339$, $SE = .092$, $t = -3.70$, $p < .000$). That is, higher IPV in parental relationships predicted lower satisfaction in current romantic relationships. As presented in Table 6, violence in romantic relationships was found to significantly predict relationship satisfaction ($b = -1.133$, $SE = .207$, $t = -5.48$, $p < .000$). That is, higher violence in romantic relationships predicted lower satisfaction in current romantic relationships.

Table 4

IPV in Parental Relationship Predicting Violence in Young Adult Romantic Relationships

Variable	b	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	r^2
Constant	1.068	.073				
IPV in parental relationship	.128	.036	.306	3.58	<.01	.094

Table 5

IPV in Parental Relationship Predicting Romantic Relationship Satisfaction (n=126)

Variable	b	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	r^2
Constant	4.518	.186				
IPV in parental relationship	-.339	.092	-.315	-3.70	<.000	.099

Table 6

Violence in Romantic Relationships Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	b	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	r^2
Constant	5.369	.279				
Violence in relationship	-1.133	.207	-.441	-5.48	<.000	.195

Table 7

IPV in Parental Relationship and Violence in Romantic Relationships Predicting Relationship Satisfaction (n = 126)

Variable	b	SE	β	t	p-value	r ²
Constant	5.562	.286		19.46	.000	
IPV in parental relationship	-.214	.089	-.198	-2.39	.018	
Violence in relationship	-.978	.213	-.381	-4.58	.000	

r² = .231

As presented in Table 7, regression of IPV in parental relationships and violence in young adult romantic relationships was predictive of romantic relationship satisfaction. To test for significant mediation effects, a Sobel Test was performed using the online tool from Preacher and Leonardelli (2015). The indirect effect of IPV in parental relationship on current romantic relationship satisfaction via existence of violence in current romantic relationships was significantly different from zero ($b=-2.28^{**}$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$). The mediation hypothesis was supported.

For IPV in parental relationships, participants were asked to indicate how often each item occurred. Each item was scored in a range of 1-5. The items were averaged so that higher score in this scale will indicate higher levels of IPV in the parental relationships. The mean score for this sample was 1.89, indicating minimal use of violence and intimidation. The standard deviation was .83 and the range was 1-4.75.

For IPV in grandparents' relationship, participants were asked to indicate 'yes' (score 1) or 'no' (score 0) on four items and items were summed so that higher score will indicate greater IPV in the grandparents' relationship. The mean score for this sample was 1.78, indicating low use of violence and intimidation. The standard deviation was .44 and the range was 1-2.

For the RAS, only those who were currently, or had ever been, in a romantic relationship (n=126) answered these questions. The possible range of scores was 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). All negatively worded items on the RAS were reverse coded before calculating the scale so that a higher score indicated greater relationship satisfaction. The mean score for this sample was 3.89, indicating fairly high levels of relationship satisfaction. The standard deviation was .88, and the range was 1.29-5.

For the partners' ABI, the possible range of scores was 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). The higher the score, the greater amount of reported abusive behaviors. The mean score for this sample was 1.39, indicating minimal use of reported violence and intimidation. The standard deviation was .45 and the reported range was 1-3.36.

For the participants' ABI, the possible range of scores was 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). The higher the score, the greater amount of reported abusive behaviors. The mean score for this sample was 1.22, indicating minimal use of reported violence and intimidation. The standard deviation was .29 and the reported range was 1-3.00.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Discussion

Research over the last several decades has consistently pointed to wide-ranging effects of IPV on individuals, families, and society. The effects are shown to have vast economic, emotional, and physical detriments. Women whose husbands were physically aggressive in their first year of marriage had been shown to report higher levels of stress and lower levels of relationship satisfaction than their non-abused peers, and the couples were also more likely to separate due to the marital problems (Testa & Leonard, 2001). Much attention has been paid to the effect of IPV on interactions between older, married couples (Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007). Although this population is certainly worthy of analysis the nearly sole focus given to them left a sizeable gap in understanding and addressing IPV in other adult relationships.

The purpose of this study was to investigate if college students who witnessed IPV in their family of origin would continue the cycle of violence in their own relationships, resulting in diminished relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that IPV in the family of origin would indirectly influence relationship satisfaction, through the increased incidence of abusive behavior in current romantic relationships.

Analysis of study variables for 180 NIU students indicated that greater history of abusive behaviors between grandparents was associated with greater abusive behaviors in parents'

relationships. These findings support the findings of the Barnett, Mills- Koonce, Gustafsson, and Cox (2012) study positing that future victims are being created through observation of abuse between parents.

Further analysis indicated a significant correlation between participants whose parent's engaged in abusive behaviors and their own engagement in abusive behaviors towards their romantic partners. This finding adds credence to the findings of Smith, Ireland, Park, Elwyn and Thornberry (2011) that witnessing severe IPV in childhood consistently increased the risk of perpetrating IPV, becoming a victim of IPV, or both, especially in early adulthood. It is also similar to the findings of Margolin and Gordis (2004) that those exposed, directly or indirectly, to violence between their parents were also subsequently more likely, as adults themselves, to perpetrate violence against a partner and to be treated violently by a partner than were adults, who as children, were not exposed to violence.

The demonstrated connection between abusive behaviors perpetrated in grandparent relationships, abusive behaviors between parents, and an abusive behavior, or victimization, by college students in their own romantic relationships supports the theory of intergenerational transmission of abuse. This theory, tied to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1963), suggests that children learn through the process of modeling and therefore may be equipped with negative forms of conflict resolution when they observe IPV in their families of origin (Bandura, 1963). That is, when abuse has been witnessed over generations, the validity of abuse as a form of "winning" a conflict becomes normalized and accepted. This is also consistent with the findings of Lichter and McCloskey (2004) that 30% of adolescents who witnessed IPV as a child later engaged in some form of dating violence, either as the perpetrator or the victim.

Finally, a significant correlation also existed within abusive relationships and a negative reporting of relationship satisfaction among NIU students. This link was expected due to the findings of Williams and Frieze (2005) finding individuals in violent relationships tend to report lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of distress, than their nonviolent counterparts.

As doctors, psychologists, and others who work with young adult couples begin to recognize the risk factors for IPV they may be well served in screening for a history of IPV in the family of origin. In the event that a history of abuse is found, they will better be able to screen for root causes of reported problems, such as low self-esteem, high levels of depression, and decreased social competence. The root of the lower functioning, i.e. unresolved trauma due to a history of family abuse, may be better treated through counseling and increasing healthy conflict resolution tactics than by taking medications or participating in anger management.

Parents, teachers, coaches, and other adults that young people engage with can help intervene in the cycle of abuse by discussing healthy relationship practices, and by discouraging replication of abusive behaviors. They can offer referrals about local agencies and online services that exist to increase young adults' knowledge and understanding of the factors that lead to perpetration and victimization of IPV.

One issue of interest in the current study findings was that, on average, participants reported higher incidents of abusive behaviors perpetrated against them, as opposed to by them. Although this could very well be true, it should also be considered that it is possible that the reporter tended to emphasize their own victimization, and rationalize or obscure their employment of IPV acts.

Limitations

Several limitations exist in this study. First, all participants in this study are college students. This may bias the findings due to the fact that the current sample is more educated than a more general sample would be. Future research with a similar sample size, specifically with those who have not been to college, could help illuminate whether education is any sort of buffer for the different variables in this study. Second, the sample drawn is based on convenience so generalizability of the results may be compromised when considering the general population.

Another limitation is that there is a possibility that participants might underreport the presence of IPV in their family of origin, as well as in their current relationship. Underreporting is common theme when measuring the prevalence of IPV. Although the current study intends to minimize this by collecting the data anonymously, social desirability might still influence the study's results. Subsequent studies may benefit from collecting data from multiple sources or other people in the family, such as siblings. It would also be pertinent to survey the current and former partners of participants, in order to give a more balanced finding.

Other influencing factors that can potentially contribute to the lower levels of violence reported in this study may include embarrassment about the phenomena due to social stigma, and fear of reporting the aggressor because of potential legal intervention. Additionally, there may be misunderstanding about what constitutes IPV (psychological, sexual, and financial abuse are not always viewed as IPV by uninformed individuals). To remedy this possibility, future studies could survey students who have had some form of education regarding what is considered IPV or researchers could educate them prior to participation.

During data collection many participants were seated in close proximity to other students. There was not a request made for participants to remain silent during collection. On occasion participants would react to the questions on the survey, even restating some of them out loud. The impression was that they were shocked by some of the questions, and briefly discussing the implications, along with viewing one another's answers. This could unintentionally influence responses due to not wanting to admit perpetration or victimization of certain behaviors. Future studies would do well to separate participants from one another and/or to request total silence throughout the surveying process.

The amended HITS measurement tool is a self-assessment of a history of violence within the family of origin. There is no control for variation in severity for IPV measurement with the amended HITS screening. Although some of the participants may have a clear recollection of the existence of IPV in their family of origin, others may have a distorted or incomplete recollection. The inherent weaknesses of retrospective study designs cannot be ignored.

It is possible that participants who reported having "excellent" relationships, in spite of experiencing IPV, may have been in the honeymoon stage of their abuse pattern. That is to say, if they were caught up in this stage of the cycle, following an abusive incident, they may be able to acknowledge the occurrence of abuse but may feel that it will not happen again and may feel satisfied due to the efforts of their partner to assure them that the abuse will not continue.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a wide range of literature exists showing that there are many other factors that may contribute to the employment of IPV in adulthood. A history of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, marked poverty, and viewing violence in other situations as a socially accepted norm, such as community violence, are all additional factors that may contribute to the prevalence of IPV (Jewkes, 2002). Future research might need to consider

these additional variables in order to gain a more complete understanding of IPV in romantic relationships in young adulthood.

Conclusions

The current study, like similar studies before it, shows a significant correlation between witnessing generational IPV, the use of IPV in current romantic relationships, and diminished relationship satisfaction. Unlike past research this study focused on a specific group that had previously been left out of behavioral research with regard to the stated variables, college students. The findings point to the need for early identification and intervention with regard to the issue of IPV. As with other epidemics such as obesity, the answer to stemming IPV, and its wide-ranging effects, may be in prevention education.

In the last several decades practitioners in the field of domestic violence have focused the majority of resources on intervention and tertiary efforts. One example of a tertiary effort is abuse intervention programs seeking to address attitudes, beliefs, and values that lead to domestic violence incidents. Typical intervention is the response of domestic violence shelters and their staff that offers shelter and services after a victim seeks resources, or police officers responding to a reported incident of domestic violence. While these services are critical, they merely meet the needs of survivors and their abusers. They do nothing to prevent cases and prevalence rates.

Only recently has a move been made to adopt the public health approach to stem violent and abusive behaviors. The CDC (2015) proposes that if we're to prevent violence we must first understand the complex roots and effects of it, using the Social-Ecological Model. This model is

well known to behavioral researchers and considers the individual, their relationships, their community, and their societal influences. The model also considers risk and protective factors, as well as the interplay across the various levels. Once this interplay has been considered the first step of applying the public health approach to violence prevention has begun.

The public health approach is a series of efforts that requires collaborative work involving a multidisciplinary team. Step one requires identifying the problem, including the “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, and “how” (CDC, 2015). Once the problem has been defined, practitioners must identify risk and protective factors, as was also done in the Social-Ecological Model. As the current study demonstrated, a history of family violence, violent peers, and acceptance of violence as a means for resolving conflict would all be considered risk factors. Step three requires the development and testing of prevention strategies. Practitioners must recognize that individuals, their relationships, communities, and societies all differ. For this reason a global approach to violence prevention will be unsuccessful. Once a strategy has been implemented that is responsive to the individual needs of the local community, the program can be implemented. After implementation, evaluation must begin and continue to ensure broad-based effectiveness. Finally, during step four, all stakeholders must work to assure widespread adoption of the evidence-based program. During this final step ongoing evaluation is also required (CDC, 2015). While this is undoubtedly the move with the most logic, the movement is meeting a fair amount of resistance, even from within.

Resources such a time, money and education around the public health approach are all barriers to its implementation. Professionals in the field, especially those who have been in it a long time, may be hesitant to change. Therefore, the need for individuals in the domestic violence field with public health education, rather than those with counseling backgrounds alone,

is crucial. Solely focusing on the secondary, and tertiary outcomes of abuse does very little to prevent the creation of millions of people requiring services. The current study shows that even in relationships involving those in their early 20's, with fewer predisposing factors such as poverty and low education, the ITA of IPV is carrying on into future generations.

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APPENDIX A

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH BASIC/REFRESHER

CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

focus in **Social and Behavioral** research. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

COURSE/STAGE: Basic Course/1
PASSED ON: 09/30/2013
REFERENCE ID: 11100376

ELECTIVE MODULES	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research	09/21/13	No Quiz
Research Misconduct (RCR-SBE)	09/21/13	5/5 (100%)
Data Management (RCR-SBE)	09/22/13	5/5 (100%)
Authorship (RCR-SBE)	09/22/13	5/5 (100%)
Peer Review (RCR-SBE)	09/29/13	5/5 (100%)
Mentoring (RCR-Interdisciplinary)	09/29/13	5/5 (100%)
Using Animal Subjects in Research (RCR-Interdisciplinary)	09/29/13	5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest (RCR-SBE)	09/29/13	5/6 (83%)
Collaborative Research (RCR-SBE)	09/30/13	5/5 (100%)
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR-Interdisciplinary)	09/30/13	4/5 (80%)
The CITI RCR Course Completion Page	09/30/13	No Quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
 Professor, University of Miami
 Director Office of Research Education
 CITI Program Course Coordinator

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM AND INSTRUMENTS

Dear Participant,

This study intends to explore the relationships between methods of conflict resolution employed in the family of origin and current experiences in romantic relationships. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the following questionnaire. The participation may take 15-20 minutes of your time.

The survey will be completed anonymously. No personal identifying information such as name, Z-id, telephone, or address will be collected. In addition to the questionnaire, only relevant demographic information will be recorded, including age, gender, college classification, relationship type, length of current relationship and ethnic background. All collected information will be kept confidential.

A potential benefit of participating in this study is adding to the existing literature about contributing and detracting factors to relationship satisfaction in college students. A potential risk may be insights gained related to potentially destructive relationship practices may evoke negative feelings about yourself, partner, or parents. Your submission of the finished questionnaire will indicate your permission to participate in this study.

If you would like to get a brief summary of the study's results please let me know via email. I will send the document to you as an email attachment after this study is completed. For further questions regarding the study, you can contact me, Sarah Slavenas, at 815-277-6570 or z063954@niu.edu and/or Dr. Flora Surjadi at 815-752-7083 or fsurjadi@niu.edu. If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact Jeanette Gommel at 815-753-8588 or jgommell@niu.edu)

Thank you for taking the time out of your class work to fill out this questionnaire and take part in this important study. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sarah Slavenas

Graduate Student

Applied Family and Child Studies