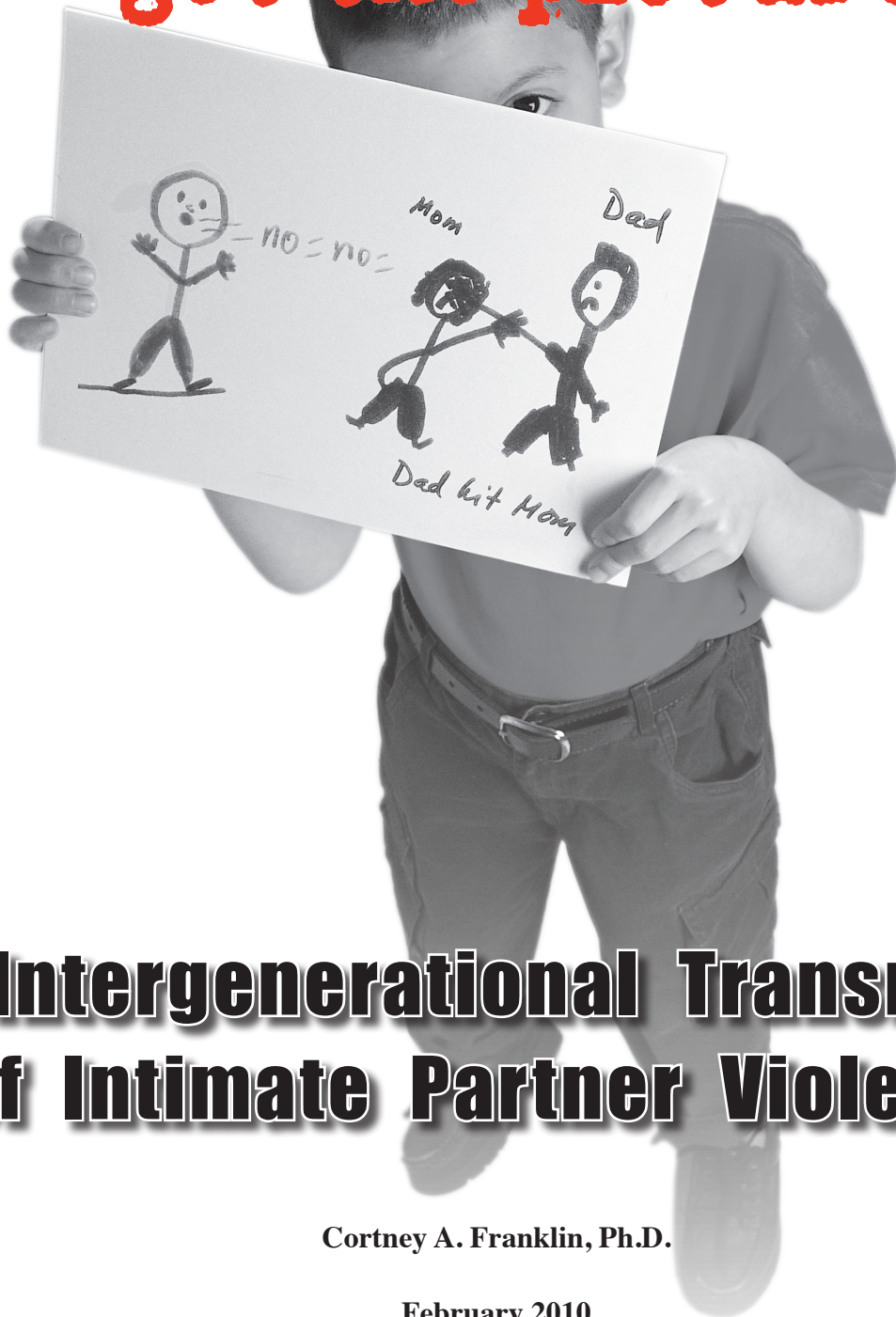


**If there's violence
in the home, the kids
get the picture.**



The Intergenerational Transmission of Intimate Partner Violence

Cortney A. Franklin, Ph.D.

February 2010



Crime Victims' Institute • Criminal Justice Center • Sam Houston State University

...from the Director

In 2007 the Crime Victims' Institute conducted a statewide survey that inquired about intimate partner violence among Texas citizens (Kercher, Johnson & Yun, 2008). This kind of violence occurs in dating relationships and cohabitation as well as in marriages. This report is based on the 2007 dataset and focuses on the intergenerational transmission of intimate partner violence. Not everyone who witnesses violence in the home while growing up will become a perpetrator or a victim. This report examines the factors that make it more likely that these children will become either victims or perpetrators. It is our hope that the findings reported here will increase understanding of the conditions and situations that lead to intimate partner violence and lead to constructive ways to both prevent it and assist those persons who are victimized.



**Glen Kercher, Director
Crime Victims' Institute**



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to

- conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- improve services to victims
- assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

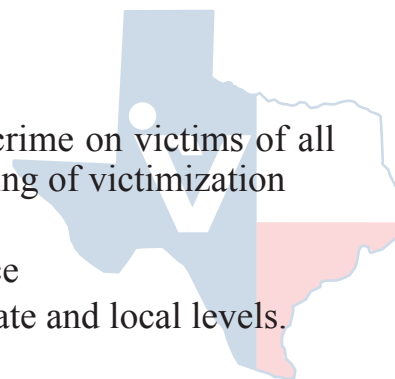


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Executive Summary

Intimate partner violence has received significant research attention. Based on a random sample of 700 Texas residents, the Crime Victims' Institute reported that, of those individuals in a romantic relationship, 11.8 percent of individuals reported experiencing physically violent forms of intimate partner victimization (which equated to 9.1 percent of the total sample), and 17.1 percent reported perpetrating physically violent forms of intimate partner abuse in the 24 months prior to their participation in the survey (Kercher, Johnson, & Yun, 2008). Despite the frequency with which family violence occurs, much remains in terms of better understanding the etiology of this particular form of abuse. The purpose of this report is to investigate the role of the intergenerational transmission of violence on adult intimate partner victimization and perpetration. Specifically, this report examines the notion that violence may be transmitted intergenerationally from the family-of-origin among this sample of Texas residents and tests the possibility that witnessing violence between parents or being the recipient of physical punishment during childhood may preclude later adult victimization and perpetration in intimate relationships.

- Family-of-origin violence increased odds of any IPV perpetration and psychological forms of intimate partner abuse.
- The sex of the respondent had no significant impact on the likelihood of perpetrating any form of intimate partner violence in this sample.
- Older individuals were less likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence than their younger counterparts.
- Respondents who were unemployed were more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence.
- White respondents were less likely than Black respondents to perpetrate psychological forms of intimate abuse.
- Respondents who were married were significantly less likely than those who were cohabitating and those who were dating to perpetrate physical violence in their romantic partnerships.
- Family-of-origin variables significantly increased the odds of any IPV victimization in and psychological victimization in intimate partnerships.
- Females were 1.6 times more likely than their male counterparts to be victimized by their intimate partners.
- People who were older were less likely to be victimized in their intimate partnerships when compared to their younger counterparts.
- Having a job decreased the odds of victimization for both any IPV victimization and psychological victimization.
- Race did not significantly impact the likelihood of intimate partner victimization among this sample of Texas community members.

- People who were married were less likely than their cohabitating or dating counterparts to be victimized.
- None of the variables considered here had an affect on physical violence victimization.

These results are discussed in terms of their potential implications for prevention programs for children and their parents.

About the Author:

Cortney A. Franklin earned her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice at Washington State University and is currently an assistant professor in the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University. Her current research focuses on violence against women, female inmates/offenders, and corrections. Her recent work has appeared in *Feminist Criminology*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Women and Criminal Justice*, *Criminal Justice Studies*, and *Social Justice Research*.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Intimate Partner Violence

Cortney A. Franklin, Ph.D.

Despite scholarly attention and advocacy spanning the last few decades, intimate partner violence remains a pressing social concern. Lifetime estimates of violence indicate that 25 percent of women will experience abuse perpetrated by a known intimate. Additionally, annual incidence rates find that 1.5 million women and 834,732 men report intimate partner victimization (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In 2007, the Texas Council on Family Violence, in conjunction with the Texas Department of Public Safety, reported 189,401 incidents of family violence (Abuse in Texas, 2008). Moreover, victims report experiencing a variety of adverse mental health consequences and life outcomes including post traumatic stress disorder, depression, self-esteem deficits, anxiety-related illnesses, and homelessness (Coker et al., 2000; Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993). In light of these concerns, research has explored the factors related to violence perpetration and victimization in relationships.

One of the most widely studied theoretical explanations surrounds the role of childhood family characteristics on later adult violence. In particular, this approach, termed the intergenerational transmission of violence, argues that kids who experience violence at the hands of parents and/or witness parents' violence toward one another will learn that violence is appropriate in interpersonal settings and will imitate these early childhood lessons in their adult relationships (Egeland, 1993). While most studies find fairly robust support for the intergenerational transmission of violence (Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2003; Renner & Slack, 2006), a number of inconsistencies have been reported (Stith et al., 2000). Specifically, studies report that, in some cases, witnessing parental violence (as opposed to experiencing violence) has a greater influence on later perpetration and victimization (Kalmuss, 1984). Other studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between experiencing childhood abuse/corporal punishment and later adult violence in relationships (Caetano et al., 2000; DeMaris, 1990; Corvo & Carpenter, 2000; MacEwen, 1994; Simons, Lin, & Gordon, 1998). Some studies have suggested that witnessing and experiencing violence during childhood produces an exponential impact on the degree to which an individual will engage in adult relationship violence and, similarly, experience intimate partner victimization (Ehrensaft, et al., 2003; Kalmuss, 1984; Markowitz, 2001; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). While the details of family-of-origin variables are inconsistent, taken together, these studies provide fairly firm support for the social learning theory approach to understanding the transmission of violence within families.

In spite of this, much remains with regard to advancing an understanding of the factors that increase risk of victimization since many studies employ clinical samples (Corvo & Carpenter, 2000; Dutton, van Ginkel, & Starzomski, 1995), use university populations (Alexander, Moore, & Alexander, 1991; Carr & Vandeuze, 2002), use high school student samples (O'Keefe, 1998; Simons et al., 1998), or investigate the prevalence and predictors among the male perpetrator/female victim dyad of intimate partner violence possibilities (Dutton et al., 1995; Whitfield et al., 2003). Additionally, many studies focus only on physical perpetration and victimization (Caetano et al., 2005; Caetano et al., 2000; Corvo & Carpenter, 2000; Jankowski et al., 1999; Kalmuss, 1984; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2004; MacEwen, 1994; O'Keefe, 1998; Rosen, Bartle-Haring, Stith, 2001), despite the documented risk

that psychological forms of abuse may have on cognitive and behavioral functions and the consequences that psychological abuse has on an intimate relationship (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000). That said, however, recent investigations have begun to include male victims (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Gover, Kaukinen, & Fox, 2008), and some studies have controlled for factors beyond family-of-origin-characteristics, like gender ideology, attitudes toward women (Gover et al., 2008), masculinity, and the social acceptance of violence in interpersonal relationships (Sugarman & Frankel, 1996).

The Intergenerational Transmission of Violence

With its roots in the social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1973), the intergenerational transmission of violence approach suggests that children who witness or experience violence learn that violence is appropriate for conflict resolution and is acceptable in intimate interpersonal settings (Egeland, 1993). Ultimately, parents model behavior by engaging in various forms of violence both among one another and directed at their children (Stith et al., 2000). When children witness abuse between parents, they receive direct messages about the appropriateness of marital aggression. As adults, they may reproduce the lessons they learn in early childhood surrounding aggressive interaction. This theoretical framework has been supported in empirical research (Alexander et al., 1991; Barnett, Martinez, & Bluestein, 1995; Caetano et al., 2000; Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Kowng et al., 2003; Kalmuss, 1984; Stith et al., 2000). This same learning process applies to psychological maladaptive behavior (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2006). In other words, exposure to domestic violence (e.g., psychological abuse tactics) in childhood may result in later adult psychological aggression.

According to the intergenerational transmission of violence approach, children may also be the recipients of violence, and, for some, these experiences pave the way for future violence in adulthood. Specifically, children see that parents use violence in frustrating situations and to cope with difficulty. Children may be unable to distinguish those instances in which aggression is appropriate and, as a result, develop similar aggressive behavior (Herzberger, 1983). Research has supported these propositions and finds that children who grow up in abusive families have a greater tendency to aggress against their adult partners when compared to those who are not abused as children (Stith et al., 2004). Scholars have included harsh physical discipline (power assertive) within this violence umbrella. Indeed, parents who use corporal punishment teach their children that it is appropriate and sometimes necessary to hit those closest to them (Simons et al., 1998). Studies have provided support for these propositions reporting a correlation between receiving harsh physical punishment during childhood and perpetrating later adult partner violence (Carroll, 1977; Stith et al., 2000; Simons et al., 1995).

Additional investigations have modeled the relationships between experiencing violence and later adult victimization in intimate relationships. In other words, individuals who grow up in violent families, who experience violence as children, and who witness violence between parents have an increased chance of experiencing victimization as an adult (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Marshall & Rose, 1988). Further, the etiology of victimization may function differently for males than for females. Studies have reported differences in the prediction of victimization for women when compared to men. For example, Gover et al. (2008) reported a significant relationship between witnessing abuse between parents and dating victimization for women but not for men. In their meta-analysis of the intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse, Stith et al. (2000) found that both growing up in a violent home and experiencing child abuse was significantly related to adult victimization, and the relationship was stronger for females

than for males. Fergusson et al.'s (2006) results counter these findings as they reported no significant victimization differences between the men and women in their sample.

Scholars argue that the link between early childhood violence, witnessing violence between parents, experiencing severe forms of physical punishment, and later adult marital aggression is complex. One explanation focuses on the degree to which children learn positive ways of relating and interacting with others. When children model antisocial behavior, they develop deficits in interpersonal skills and are ill-equipped to manage relationships using prosocial alternatives to problem solving and conflict management (Eron, 1997). Normative peers have less tolerance for kids with maladaptive social behaviors and, thus, reject their attempts at friendship. Children whose exposure to interpersonal violence is high will likely gravitate toward maladapted peer groups who reinforce aggressive tendencies and may display aggression and engage in various forms of deviance. As they age, these adolescents select dating and romantic partners from this same pool of individuals (Krueger et al., 1998)—all of whom have deficits in interpersonal functioning (Feiring & Furman, 2000), which may result in later relationship conflict. Similarly, this presents the potential for intimate partner violence.

Additional Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence

In addition to family-of-origin variables, researchers have identified important connections between additional variables that may impact violence in adult relationships. In particular, specific demographic factors like education may play a role in adult and dating perpetration and victimization risk (O'Keefe, 1998; Sprigs, Halpern, Herring, & Schoenbach, 2009), where the stress and strain associated with a lack of education, and thus lower income, may produce negative relational outcomes. Poverty is also correlated with intimate partner violence outcomes (Bair-Merritt et al., 2008). Additionally, traditional gender role attributions and reporting positive attitudes toward the use of violence in interpersonal relationships have been correlated with intimate partner violence (Santana, Raj, Decker, Marche, & Silverman, 2006), and may mediate the intergenerational transmission of violence (Alexander et al., 1991), or may altogether be better predictors of violence in adult relationships when compared to family-of-origin factors (Stith et al., 2000; Stith et al., 2004). Likewise, alcohol use has played a significant role in violence against women generally (see Koss et al., 1994), and intimate partner violence more specifically (see Jasinski, 2001 for a review). Recently, general alcohol consumption patterns have emerged as significant predictors in both Stith et al.'s (2004) meta-analytic review of domestic violence risk factors as well as Whiting et al.'s (2009) study of adult victimization. Finally, religious involvement may negatively influence victimization risk (Coker et al., 2000). In particular, increased church attendance has significantly reduced violence in dating relationships (Gover, 2004; Laner, 1985), underscoring the potential contribution of the faith community in protecting intimate partnerships.

Methodology

The purpose of the study presented in this report is to advance the literature on the intergenerational transmission of intimate partner violence by using a random sample of men and women drawn from the State of Texas. The current study included family-of-origin variables, masculine gender role orientation, attitudes toward the use of violence in relationships, religiosity, and relevant demographic controls to determine the impact of experiencing physical punishment and witnessing violence in the family-of-origin (or during childhood) on later adult psychological and physical intimate partner perpetration and victimization.

Data were derived from the Fourth Annual Texas Crime Victimization Survey (Kercher, Johnson, & Yun, 2008). This particular data was collected in 2007 by the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University. Through use of a computer-assisted digitized dialing system, 700 citizens were randomly selected from the State of Texas and contacted over the telephone for interviews.¹ The current study was concerned with respondents' experiences of multiple forms of intimate partner violence in the previous 24 months. As a result, this analysis was limited to subjects who were either currently in a romantic relationship (married, cohabitating, or dating) or had been in a romantic relationship in the previous 24 months. Additionally, 47 cases were deleted as a result of pertinent missing data. The final sample for the analysis was 502 cases, which included 189 males and 360 females.

Sample Characteristics

Figures 1 and 2 present the demographic characteristics of the sample and reveal that 34.4 percent of the subjects were male, and 65.6 percent were female with an average age of 46.6 years. Further, 59% self-identified as White, 26 percent as Hispanic, and 9.7 percent identified themselves as African American. Just over a quarter of the sample had completed some college, with 21 percent reporting a 4-year degree and 18 percent indicating a high school education. The remaining subjects reported having a graduate degree (13.9%), completing some high school (6.4%), dropping out before 9th grade (5.5%), graduating from a technical/industrial school (3.8%), completing a professional degree (2.9%), and having no formal schooling (2.2%) (Table 1). In terms of employment, 62.8 percent of the sample were currently employed and 35.9 percent were without paid employment (Figure 3). Just over half of the sample (52.1%) reported an income of \$30,000 or less as compared to 27.9 percent earning \$30,001 to 60,000, with 20.2 percent of the sample earning over \$60,001 (Figure 4). When considering religious service attendance, half of the participants reported weekly church participation. Only 16.7 percent said they “never” or “rarely” attended religious services (Table 2). Finally, 72.5 percent of the subjects were married, 6.7 percent were cohabitating, and 5.5 percent were involved in a dating relationship (Table 3).

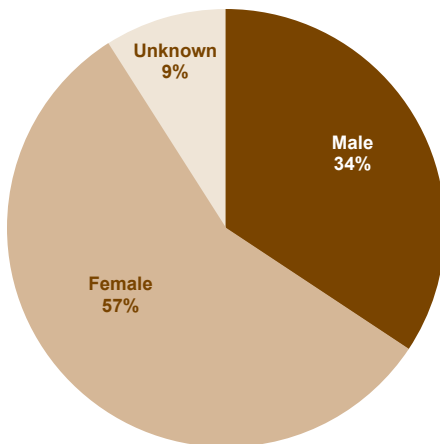


Figure 1. Sex of Respondents

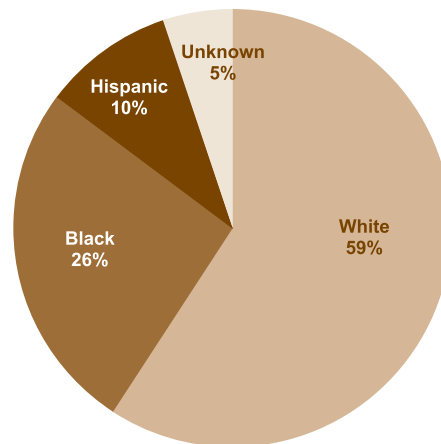


Figure 2. Ethnicity of Respondents

¹ Proper IRB approval was obtained prior to completing the survey administration. Additionally, researchers completed two training sessions totaling four hours and phone calls were monitored during the data collection process. Completion of the survey took an average of 20 minutes.

Table 1. Educational Status of Respondents

Educational Status	Percentage of Respondents
No Formal Schooling	2.2%
Dropped Out Before 9th Grade	5.5%
Completed Some High School	6.4%
High School Graduate	18.0%
Technical or Industrial School Graduate	3.8%
Some College Courses after Graduating High School	25.4%
Four Year College Graduate	21.0%
Graduate Degree (MA, MS, JD)	13.9%
Doctoral or Professional Degree (Ph.D., MD, DDS)	2.9%

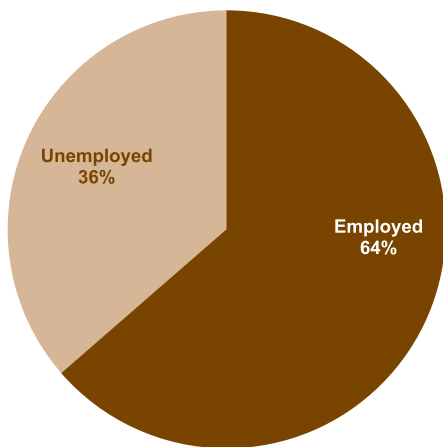


Figure 3. Employment Status of Respondents

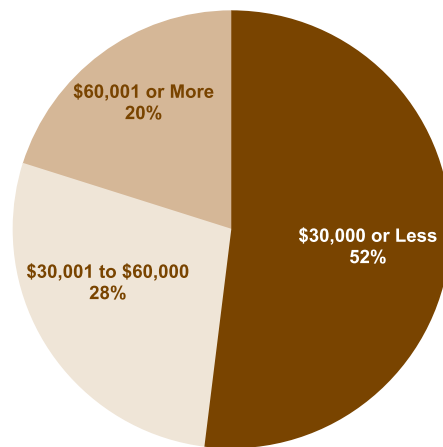


Figure 4. Income Level of Respondents

Table 2. Religiosity of Respondents

Religiosity	Percentage of Respondents
Attend Religious Services Once a Week or More	50.0%
Attend Religious Services Once a Month or More	19.4%
Attend Religious Services Once a Year or More	13.9%
Never or Rarely Attend Religious Services	16.7%

Table 3. Relationship Status of Respondents

Relationship Status	Percentage of Respondents
Married	72.5%
Cohabiting	6.7%
Dating	5.5%

Intimate Partner Violence Measures

The current study includes four dependent variables representing different forms of interpersonal violence: *psychological violence perpetration*, *physical violence perpetration*, *psychological victimization*, and *physical victimization*. The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Strauss et al., 1996) was administered to the sample during the telephone interview. The CTS2 includes a series of questions pertaining to conflict resolution tactics in relationships and captures healthy prosocial conflict resolution (e.g., “discussed an issue calmly”), psychological abuse tactics (e.g., “insulted or swore,” “did or said something to spite him/her,” “threatened to hit or throw something”), and more serious physical abuse tactics (e.g., “pushed, grabbed, or shoved,” “beat up,” “choked,” “used a knife or fired a gun”). Two additional variables were created to represent *any IPV victimization* and *any IPV perpetration*. Table 4 presents the variables included in the current analysis.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Variables used in the Analysis

Dependent Variables	%	Independent Variables	%
Any IPV Perpetration		Witness Violence as a Child	
No	34.4%	No	66.2%
Yes	65.6%	Yes	33.8%
Psychological IPV Perpetration		Physical Punishment as a Child	
No	34.4%	No	20.6%
Yes	65.6%	Yes	79.4%
Physical IPV Perpetration		Acceptance of the Use of Violence	
No	86.7%	No	80.5%
Yes	13.3%	Yes	19.5%
Any IPV Victimization		General Alcohol Consumption	
No	35.3%	Daily	3.8%
Yes	64.7%	Weekly	41.0%
Psychological IPV Victimization		Monthly	16.8%
No	36.7%	Never	38.3%
Yes	63.3%		
Physical IPV Victimization		Masculine Gender Orientation	
No	85.8%	(Scale ranges from 2 to 8)	3.59*
Yes	14.2%	*Mean values are listed.	

Independent and Control Variables

Violence in the Family-of-Origin. Two variables were created to capture experiences of violence in the family-of-origin. These variables are the foundation for examining the intergenerational transmission of violence hypotheses. First, respondents were asked if they had *witnessed violence as children*. Second, respondents were asked if they had been *physically punished* (e.g., spanking, hitting, or slapping) *as children*.

Acceptance of the Use of Violence in Relationships. Subjects were asked, “Generally speaking, are there situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a man slapping his wife’s/girlfriend’s/partner’s face?” Similarly, subjects were asked, “Generally

speaking, are there situations that you can imagine in which you would approve of a woman slapping her husband's/boyfriend's/partner's face?" The answers to these two questions were used to create a measure that captured acceptance of the use of violence in relationships.

General Alcohol Consumption. Global alcohol consumption frequency was captured by asking subjects, "In general, how often do you consume alcoholic beverages (e.g., wine, beer, or liquor)?" Subjects selected answers that ranged from "never" to "daily."

Masculine Gender Orientation. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with statements about male control in a relationship as it refers to sexual intercourse ("A man has the right to have sex with his wife/partner when he wants, even though she may not want to") and decisions about working outside the home ("A man has the right to decide whether his wife/partner should work outside the home"). Their responses ranged from "strongly agree," to "strongly disagree." Their responses were summed to create a scale with higher numbers indicating a greater degree of masculine gender orientation.

Several measures were included in the analysis as control variables: sex, age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, employment status, religiosity, and relationship status.

Results

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the variables representing *any IPV perpetration* and *any IPV victimization* were examined in terms of their relationship to the independent and control variables. Second, statistical analyses were run separately for physical and psychological forms of both perpetration and victimization.

The first set of analyses investigated three variables capturing intimate partner violence perpetration. Specifically, the results examining *any IPV perpetration* indicated that both of the family-of-origin variables were statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that violence is transmitted intergenerationally from the family-of-origin. Subjects who witnessed violence between their parents when they were children were 1.9 times more likely than their counterparts to perpetrate any form of intimate partner abuse as an adult. Similarly, subjects who were physically disciplined as children (e.g., spanked, hit, slapped), were 2.1 times more likely to perpetrate any form of intimate partner abuse as adults. Further, younger subjects and those who were unemployed were more likely than their older and employed counterparts to perpetrate any form of intimate partner violence. Table 5 presents the significant correlates of intimate partner perpetration as they correspond with the dependent variable under investigation.

Table 5. Significant Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Perpetration

Any IPV Perpetration	Psychological IPV Perpetration	Physical IPV Perpetration
Witnessing Violence	Witnessing Violence	Acceptance of Violence
Physical Punishment	Physical Punishment	Age
Age	Age	Race
Employment	Employment	

To more clearly identify the ways in which the independent variables operate relative to different forms of perpetration, additional analyses were conducted separately for psychological violence perpetration and physical violence perpetration. When investigating psychological violence perpetration, the two family-of-origin variables remained statistically significant.

Respondents who reported witnessing violence between their parents were 1.95 times more likely than those who did not witness violence to perpetrate psychological victimization as an adult. Further, subjects who reported childhood experiences of physical punishment were 2.18 times more likely than those who were not similarly disciplined to report perpetrating psychological forms of abuse in their intimate relationships as an adult. Several of the demographic control variables also had significant effects on psychological IPV perpetration. Specifically, subjects who were older, employed, and White had significantly decreased odds of perpetrating psychological forms of abuse in their intimate partnerships when compared to younger, unemployed, Black subjects. Whether the respondent was male or female did not significantly impact their likelihood of perpetrating psychological abuse.

Physical violence perpetration was also examined, and the results of this analysis differed from the first two models investigating perpetration. Neither of the family-of-origin variables were statistically significant, underscoring the complex nature of intimate partner violence. Acceptance of violence in interpersonal relationships was, however, significantly correlated with physical abuse perpetration. In particular, individuals who agreed with statements signifying that there are circumstances in which it is appropriate to slap an intimate partner are 2.85 times more likely than their counterparts to report perpetrating physical abuse in their romantic partnerships. Age remained significant, and marital status emerged as a significant predictor of physical violence perpetration. Indeed, for every one-year increase in age there was a 1.03 decrease in the odds of perpetrating physical partner violence. Further, compared to those subjects who were dating, those who were married were significantly less likely to perpetrate physical violence in their relationship, while those who were cohabitating faced similar odds of violence perpetration. Finally, similar to the results for the psychological perpetration model, there were no differences between men and women in the odds of perpetrating violence in intimate relationships. To sum, findings from the first three analyses investigating intimate partner violence perpetration are presented as follows:

- Family-of-origin violence increased odds of any IPV perpetration and psychological forms of intimate partner abuse.
- The sex of the respondent had no significant impact on the likelihood of perpetrating any form of intimate partner violence in this sample.
- Age significantly impacted all three of the perpetration outcome variables so that older individuals were less likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence than their younger counterparts.
- Employment status mattered for any IPV perpetration and psychological perpetration where wage-earned labor acted as a buffer for perpetrating abuse in relationships. In other words, respondents who were unemployed were more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence.
- Race significantly predicted psychological perpetration where White respondents were less likely than Black respondents to perpetrate psychological forms of intimate abuse.
- Marriage also mattered for physical perpetration where respondents who were married were significantly less likely than those who were cohabitating and those who were dating to perpetrate physical violence in their romantic partnerships.

The second set of analyses investigated intimate partner victimization. The results examining any IPV victimization indicate that both family-of-origin variables significantly predicted victimization in adulthood. Similar to the results for IPV perpetration, these relationships suggest that violence in the family-of-origin may also play a key role in

contributing to adult relationship dysfunction in terms of heightening victimization risk. Specifically, witnessing violence between parents during childhood increased the odds of intimate partner victimization during adulthood by nearly 2 times. Further, being the recipient of physical punishment during childhood increased the odds of intimate partner victimization during adulthood by 2.2 times. Age, employment, and marital status also significantly impact victimization risk. Subjects who were older, employed, and married face decreased odds of victimization in their intimate partnerships when compared to their younger, unemployed, and non-married counterparts. Table 6 presents the significant correlates of intimate partner victimization.

Table 6. Significant Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Victimization

Any IPV Victimization	Psychological IPV Victimization	Physical IPV Victimization
Witnessing Violence	Witnessing Violence	
Physical Punishment	Physical Punishment	
Sex of Respondent	Age	
Age	Employment	
Employment		
Marital Status - Married		

To more clearly identify the ways in which the independent variables operate relative to different forms of victimization, additional analyses were conducted separately for psychological violence victimization and physical violence victimization. The results reiterate the importance of family-of-origin characteristics on intimate partner violence. Witnessing violence between parents and experiencing physical punishment as a child significantly increased the odds of psychological victimization by 2.02 and 2.12 times, respectively. Additionally, age and employment continued to exert significant effects where older respondents and those who were employed face decreased odds of victimization in their intimate relationships.

Physical violence victimization was also examined. and, despite the inclusion of theoretically-informed correlates of intimate partner victimization, none of the independent variables or demographic controls exerted significant effects on the dependent variable. Consequently, the results suggest that there may be other unaccounted factors not captured in the current analysis that better explain physical victimization in this particular sample of Texas adults. To sum, the findings of the second three analyses investigating intimate partner violence victimization are presented as follows:

- Family-of-origin variables significantly increased the odds of any IPV victimization and psychological victimization in intimate partnerships.
- The sex of the respondent significantly correlated with any IPV victimization. Specifically, females were 1.6 times more likely than their male counterparts to be victimized by their intimate partners. Being a woman did not have a significant impact on victimization when analyses were conducted separately for psychological and physical forms of victimization.
- Age significantly impacted both any IPV victimization and psychological victimization specifically so that people who were older were less likely to be victimized in their intimate partnerships when compared to their younger counterparts.

- Employment also mattered when predicting intimate partner victimization where having a job decreased the odds of victimization for both any IPV victimization and psychological victimization.
- Race did not significantly impact the likelihood of intimate partner victimization among this sample of Texas community members.
- Marital status significantly impacted experiencing any IPV victimization so that people who were married were less likely than their cohabitating or dating counterparts to be victimized.
- None of the variables considered here had an effect on physical violence victimization.

Conclusions

Scholarship on intimate partner violence spans several decades. One of the most popular approaches to understanding both perpetration and victimization relies on concepts derived from Bandura's (1969, 1973) Social Learning Theory in terms of how messages related to violence and victimization are translated intergenerationally. The study presented in this report adds to the existing literature on victimization in adult relationships by investigating the role of family-of-origin violence on later adult psychological and physical violence, while controlling for a host of competing theoretical constructs and relevant demographic variables among a random sample of Texas residents.

Several conclusions are worthy of additional attention. First, it appears as if family-of-origin factors may contribute to our understanding of both perpetration and victimization in intimate relationships—a conclusion that reiterates much of the existing research on intimate partner violence (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Fergusson et al., 2006; Kalmuss, 1984; MacEwen, 1994; Renner & Slack, 2006; Rosen et al., 2001). That said, however, the manner in which this occurs depends upon the type of violence investigated. Specifically, for the analyses assessing any type of IPV perpetration or victimization, both of the family-of-origin measures were significant correlates of violence. Similarly, in both investigations of psychological violence, the family-of-origin measures remained significant and substantively important.

Second, upon consideration of physical violence in intimate relationships, the family-of-origin factors were no longer significant for either perpetration or victimization. This conclusion suggests that the etiology of psychological violence differs substantively from the etiology of physical violence in this sample. Instead, the acceptance of violence in intimate partnerships emerged as the most substantively important finding when examining physical violence perpetration. This highlights the empirical connection between attitudinal support for violence in relationships and the occurrence of interpersonal violence (e.g., Briere, 1987; Eiskovits, Edleson, Guttman, & Sela-Amit, 1991; Hanson, Cadsky, Harris, & Lalonde, 1997; Saunders, Lynch, Grayson, & Linz, 1987; Smith, 1990; Stith & Farley, 1993). When examining the findings presented for physical violence victimization, a different picture emerges. Specifically, none of the theoretically-relevant factors emerge as significant correlates of experiencing physical violence in intimate partnerships. Similarly, Chen and White (2004) reported no consistent pattern of victimization-related factors in their analysis of intimate partner violence but found several significant predictors of perpetration. In spite of their similar conclusions, the current finding is relatively unexpected in light of the expansive research on intimate partner violence that has established consistent risk factors for victimization (e.g., Lipsky, Caetano, Field, & Larkin, 2005; Schafer, Caetano, & Cunradi, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), and highlighted

the role of family-of-origin violence on later adult victimization (e.g., Whitfield et al., 2003). It may be, however, that instances of violence reported in this community sample fall under what would be characterized as “common couple aggression” rather than “intimate terrorism” (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). In other words, the physical victimization captured in this sample may represent isolated incidents that arise out of the normal relational frustration that occurs in many partnerships. By definition, common couple aggression happens with less frequency, is not connected to a pattern of control, often does not escalate, and is less physically injurious (see also LaViolette & Barnett, 2000). This type of physical violence victimization (as compared to “intimate terrorism”) is also more likely to occur in community samples than in clinical samples (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000), and as a result, may have impeded efforts to uncover a pattern of theoretically-informed predictors in this study.

Third, several of the demographic control variables consistently correlate with intimate partner violence. Specifically, age, employment and marital status exerted significant effects on both perpetration and victimization. People who were older were less likely to perpetrate violence or experience victimization, with the exception of physical violence victimization. Similarly, persons who were currently employed were less likely than their unemployed counterparts to perpetrate or experience psychological violence in their intimate partnerships. Lastly, marriage appears to be a protective factor for perpetration in this sample of Texas community members so that, as compared to individuals who were involved in dating relationships or who were cohabitating, spouses were less likely to perpetrate violence in their relationships. Marriage does not, however, protect against either psychological or physical violence victimization.

Study Limitations

While the results of this study are important in terms of advancing knowledge on the intergenerational transmission of violence and correlates of intimate partner perpetration and victimization, this study is not without limitations. First, this analysis is cross-sectional in nature, making it impossible to imply causation. Any significant and substantive relationships uncovered in this analysis are correlational in nature and must be interpreted accordingly. Second, the questionnaire employed in this study relied on retrospective recall among an adult sample. In other words, adult participants were asked to report their childhood experiences of physical punishment and whether or not they witnessed their parents aggress against one another. Several scholars have highlighted the value in asking respondents to remember if something significant happened during childhood as compared to asking how many times something significant happened during childhood (e.g., Kwong et al., 2003; Moffitt et al., 1997). The phrasing of the questions in this survey and the coding of the items in the analysis reflects this strategy. Third, the reports of current intimate partner violence perpetration and victimization were derived from one member of the two-person partnership. Studies have discussed the importance of involving both partners in capturing data on violence in relationships, yet despite this, research continues to query one member of the partnership with success in terms of identifying violent and aggressive relational behavior (e.g., Bair-Merritt et al., 2008; Whiting et al., 2009). Finally, while this study employs a random sample of adult community members, these participants are residentially located within the State of Texas—a large southern geographic region that may present important cultural considerations when interpreting and generalizing the results of the analysis.

Policy Implications

Results of this study also have important implications for preventing intimate partner violence. Even though not every child who is abused and witnesses violence between parents will become an abuser or a victim, secondary partner violence prevention programs may be warranted for these children, especially before they reach late childhood. As noted earlier, abused children may be especially vulnerable to social learning of the effectiveness of violence as a means of influence and conflict management in close relationships. Prevention programs could be tied to services offered in women's shelters and to orders of protection for domestic violence. Not every child who comes from a dysfunctional family will come to the attention of the authorities or victim service agencies and so similar programs could be provided in schools, churches, and civic groups. Parent training for those who have used excessive punishment with small children may help change a pattern that, for some children, sends them on a trajectory of abuse and victimization. Ultimately, the conclusions presented here reiterate the need for a continued focus on the etiology of intimate partner violence, both in terms of victimization and perpetration, in order to prevent further incidents of violence.

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