THE REVISED CONFLICT TACTICS SCALES:

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of BLANCA IDALIA CARO find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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THE REVISED CONFLICT TACTICS SCALES:  

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Abstract

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization and perpetration has many clinical and research implications as high stakes decisions are made using data collected with IPV measures. Because of these implications, it is of utmost importance that the construct of interest is accurately measured – especially when instruments are adopted as universal assessments of violence. In the current study, the psychometric properties of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996), a measure of IPV, were evaluated. The CTS2’s five-factor model (i.e., Straus’ theory of violence) was also tested by imposing it upon data collected from American men and women experiencing IPV. Consequently, the data was evaluated through confirmatory and measurement invariance tests. A 10-factor model of violence, IPV perpetration and victimization, was used to conduct the confirmatory factor analyses. The results revealed that the data was a poor fit with the model across gender and type of violence experienced. Measurement invariance tests were also conducted on this data; the results indicate that gendered comparisons in this sample will be inaccurate. The study’s findings support the need to take a more critical approach toward the assessment of IPV across genders.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) assessments provide clinicians and researchers the ability to collect information regarding the experiences of perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence. The data gathered from IPV assessments provides researchers with the ability to better understand the type, severity, and frequency of violence perpetration and victimization. Additionally, the data also shed light on gender differences. However, findings in the intimate partner violence literature created controversy as results were markedly different. Some research demonstrated that women were found to be more violent (Carney, Buttell, & Dutton, 2006), less violent (Miller & Melloy, 2006), while other research asserted that women are equally violent (Magdol, Moffitt, Capsi, Newman, Fagan, & Silva, 1997) as men. This lack of cohesion in the literature sparked the gender symmetry debate as scholars dispute the true nature of men and women’s violence.

Gender symmetry, or the belief that men and women experience equal rates of IPV victimization and perpetration, is a highly contentious topic in the literature. Many scholars (e.g., Worcester, 2002) argue that violence perpetrated by men and women is different depending on context, type, and severity. Scholars maintain that ignoring the contextual factors surrounding IPV creates a lack of consensus in the literature examining violence perpetration and victimization across genders. Consequently, a debate emerged in the literature regarding whether researchers should use umbrella (one size fits all) approaches toward assessing partner violence.

Proponents of the umbrella approach argue that gender symmetry exists in IPV perpetration and victimization. They believe that the opponents use the lack of context critique
to negate women’s violence against men (Dutton, 2006). The opponents state that they are not denying women’s use of violence against men. Instead, they are challenging the use of umbrella assessments of violence because they are believed to be the source of the conflicting findings (Flynn & Graham, 2010). They posit that this approach creates wrongful reporting because violence used in self-defense may be contributing to women’s high rates of IPV perpetration (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994).

At the forefront of this debate is the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) a self-report assessment of IPV perpetration and victimization. The CTS2 has become synonymous with the gender symmetry debate as it is believed to be a gender-neutral IPV assessment. Others argue that separate assessments are needed because gender differences have been found in the motivation (Hamberger, 1997) severity (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995), frequency (Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994), and consequence (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991) of partner violence. In addition to this critique, they note that the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) was normed and is primarily used in heterosexual couples. Ergo, it is unknown if the CTS2 is an adequate measure of violence occurring within same-sex relationships.

Notably, scholars like Johnson (2006) further contend that the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) does not fully capture violence perpetrated by women, creating conflicting findings in the literature. In his seminal article, Johnson categorizes IPV within heterosexual couples into four typologies: intimate terrorism, violent resistance, situational couple violence, and mutual violent control. Intimate terrorism is described as actions by men against women to create dominance and control. While violence resistance is women’s use of violence against men to resist or
defend against further victimization and control. Situational violence is described as behavior used by both individuals against one another without the intention to gain control. In the last category, violence by men and women are used equally to control one another. Johnson’s typologies are used to further argue towards contextualizing IPV as they provide a new framework by which to contextualize IPV. Johnson reports that men in his study (n=97) were more likely to be categorized as intimate terrorist compared to women (n=3). Conversely, women were predominantly the aggressors in violent resistance (n=96) compared to men (n=4). The remaining two categories demonstrate gender symmetry as men and women were equally categorized within these typologies. Other scholars (Swan & Snow, 2006) provide their own theories that depict women’s violence as different from men. These theories provide an alternative framework by which to measure and describe women’s violence against men. These theories also provide an alternative to the current standard in the literature: one-size-fits-all intimate partner violence assessments.

The Problem

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is physical, emotional, sexual, and/or psychological abuse from one partner against the other. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS, 2013), over 800,000 American women and 170,000 men are victimized by an intimate partner annually. This finding becomes increasingly glaring because the numbers of intimate partner homicide victims may be much higher than what is actually reported. The BJS relies on voluntary reports from police departments and precincts across the United States. The number of IPV victims may be much higher as the BJS may not receive reports from police departments overwhelmed with other crimes or with limited resources.
Addressing the aftermath of IPV requires a deeper understanding of these relationship dynamics. To begin understanding this complex problem, Straus (1979) developed the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS), an instrument used to quantify intimate partner violence. Straus used his scale in the first National Family Violence Survey (NFVS; 1985) to measure the degree to which men and women experience intimate violence in relationships. The results were surprising to many researchers in that men and women reported IPV victimization at nearly equal rates (Straus & Gelles, 1986). That men and women were reporting equal amounts of IPV led scholars to take a critical look at these findings. Consequently, a subcategory of IPV research was created to addressed the emerging disparity in IPV research: gender symmetry.

Controversial findings, like those from the National Family Violence Survey, found women to perpetrate violence at levels rivaling men. These results led researchers to take a closer look at the properties of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus et al., 1996). Feminist scholars (e.g., McHugh, Livingston, & Ford, 2005), attributed the disparity in findings to the limitations inherent in IPV assessments such as the CTS2. Scholars like White and Kowalski (1994) argue that these instruments fail to consider the context in which violence occurs. They also asserted/posited that instruments such as the CTS2 weigh violence items equally despite the level of lethality (Kimmel, 2002), and fail to include the comprehensive breadth of violence acts disproportionately committed against women (e.g., stalking).

The main criticism of measures like the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is the umbrella approach to the assessment of violence. Said differently, scholars disagree with the use of a unisex approach IPV assessment. This disagreement stems from the belief that one instrument cannot fully capture the gender differences existing in IPV perpetration and victimization.
Studies finding gender differences in the perpetration and victimization of violence are often cited as evidence against this umbrella approach. Therefore, evaluating the CTS2 is important to determine whether the chosen construct is measured across groups to create more accurate comparisons. That is to say, it is important to know if the groups under comparison experience the same type of intimate partner violence. Unknown differences can lead researchers to make inaccurate between and within group comparisons.

Using intimate partner violence assessments with a one size fits all approach can lead to making wrongful conclusions from study findings. These wrongful conclusions create further confusion in the literature as men and women are found to be more, equally, or less violent than one another. These findings are further complicated by the reporting bias found in IPV studies as most use self-report instruments. Researchers have found that violence is misreported due to social desirability and the shame of being an IPV victim or perpetrator (Jenkins & Aube, 2002). The widespread use of umbrella assessments of violence only increases the divergence in research findings. That is to say, researchers using a one size fits all approach toward IPV assessment are contributing to the inconsistent findings. A modified, or personalized, approach toward IPV assessment may lead to more cohesion in the literature through accurate comparisons, meaning better comparisons will be made through contrasting violence across similar circumstances (e.g., self-defense). Inaccurate comparisons will continue to provide weak, or unrepresentative contributions to the body of knowledge on IPV. Moreover, this weak or unrepresentative literature prevents the creation of effective treatments and interventions for IPV victims and perpetrators. Therefore, current clinical practices are maintained. Male batterer interventions are used on women while men are treated with programs developed for female victims (Henning & Feder, 2004).
The Research Question and Purpose

Research on IPV gender differences has led to findings that women are more likely to act in self-defense (Bachman, 1998), use violence to retaliate (Stuart, Moore, Hellmuth, Ramsey, & Kahler, 2006), and that their motivations for violence differs from that of men (Jurik & Winn, 1990). Despite these findings, researchers continue to use a one size fits all approach to IPV assessment. Using these umbrella approaches is believed to lead to the conflicting findings in the literature. This lack of cohesion prevents scholars from seeing patterns that can guide research and practice. Violence researchers (e.g., Johnson, 2006; Kimmel, 2002) contend that adding contextual questions to IPV studies will create cohesion within the literature. They urge scholars to abandon the umbrella assessment of violence to create more accurate comparisons. The appropriateness of using umbrella assessments of IPV, predominantly the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is a topic of great debate.

The gender symmetry debate divided the literature into proponents (Dutton, 2006) and opponents (2006) of the umbrella approach to IPV assessment. The CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is at the center of this debate due to its one-size-fits-all assessment of partner violence. The CTS2 caught researchers’ attention because of its widespread adoption as a gender-neutral IPV assessment. This assessment gained rapid popularity as it is believed to create accurate comparisons regarding gendered violence (Straus et al.). In fact, the CTS2 has been cited in nearly 4,500 studies worldwide. Consequently, the CTS2 and the gender symmetry debate are inextricable; one cannot be discussed without including the other.

This debate has created separation within the IPV literature leading to a paucity in the creation of interventions and treatment programs for victims and perpetrators. In essence, the
gender symmetry debate is as follows:

1. Gender differences exist in the experience of violence.
2. These differences indicate that there are separate explanations (i.e., theories) of men and women’s use of violence.
3. These differences also indicate that umbrella, or one-size-fits-all, approaches to violence will lead to inaccurate results.
4. The CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) creates inaccurate findings due to its umbrella approach to IPV assessment.
5. Researchers should modify the CTS2 and include context-specific questions to understand the nature of the IPV under report (e.g., self-defense).

The CTS2 remains controversial due to its notoriety within gender symmetry research. Its status as the unofficial gold standard IPV assessment continues to fuel this debate creating opposition rather than cohesion within this research field. The current researcher will contribute to the aforementioned debate by addressing the following question:

Are the results produced by the CTS2 invariant across gender?

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to determine if the results produced by the CTS2 are measurement invariant across gender. Determining the properties of data produced by this assessment provides information regarding the quality of comparisons made about gender differences and similarities. Making comparisons with measurement variant data leads to inaccurate findings because the construct of interest is not fully measured in one or both groups.
Significance of the Study

The gender symmetry debate brought women’s violence against men to the forefront of the literature. Yet, the lack of consensus among researchers hampers the creation of programs and interventions created specifically for female batterers and male victims (Dasgupta, 1999). In fact, many domestic violence shelters and intervention programs use models created for male batterers. Conversely, male victims are treated with techniques and approaches created specifically for female victims of abuse without consideration for gender disparities. These practices are concerning for the following reasons: 1) they perpetuate the assumption that no gender differences exist in regards to the types, severity, and motivation behind violence use, and, 2) a general, non-gender specific approach facilitates the assumption that both genders are impacted by violence in the same way (e.g., physically, psychologically).

The argument against the one size fits all approach toward IPV assessment is the belief that gender differences exist in the perpetration and victimization of partner violence. That is to say, researchers (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995) argue that an umbrella approach to IPV assessment fails to fully capture IPV across genders. They argue that the factor structure (i.e., theoretical model) of the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) does not fully capture each genders experience with violence perpetration and victimization. These scholars cite studies using confirmatory factor analyses that have failed to support the original model in female samples.

Few studies have evaluated the CTS2’s (Straus et al., 1996) theoretical model using confirmatory factor analyses within specific populations such as postpartum (Newton, Connelly, & Landsverk, 2001), Deaf (Anderson & Leigh, 2010), and incarcerated women (Jones, Ji, Beck, & Beck, 2002). Moreover, even fewer studies evaluated the results produced by CTS2 for
measurement invariance. It is important to note that studies using clinical samples (e.g., battered women) are not generalizable to most populations, meaning that treatments or interventions developed with data gathered from these groups may not be fully effective for general (i.e., community) populations.

Therefore, the analyses in the current study will add to the literature by critically evaluating the use of the CTS2 as a *one size fits all* measure of violence. Analyzing the factor structure will provide information regarding its limitations as an umbrella measure of violence. The widespread use of this assessment warrants an examination of the psychometric properties of the data it produces. Understanding the benefits and limitations of its use can better inform future researchers and help with clinical practice by developing IPV intervention and treatment programs using information from research findings.

The current study is the first to use a measurement invariance analysis of the results produced by CTS2 on national data set (Straus et al., 1996). This study is also the first to evaluate the CTS2’s foundational model with standards of model fit accepted within the literature (i.e., Browne & Cudek, 1993). The findings from this study will provide additional information regarding the psychometric properties of the data created by this assessment. This information can inform researchers regarding the benefits and limitations of using the instrument under evaluation.

**Theoretical Framework**

The author will use Feminist Empiricism (FE) as the lens through which studies within the literature are examined. Feminist Empiricism is essentially the inclusion of feminist
principles in empirical research — in both the critique and execution of scientific studies. Feminist Empiricists use feminist critiques of science to develop and guide their research and the interpretation of their findings. Some of these critiques include researcher bias, the lack of underrepresented samples in research (e.g., transgender participants), and using men as the standard by which to compare women.

Feminist Empiricism is not itself a theory, instead it is a set of principles by which to guide and improve current research practices (Tuana, 1992). Feminist Empiricists contend that including these principles in scientific research increases the validity and reliability of study findings. These same scholars contend that FE improves current research practices through increased scientific rigor. For example, a feminist empiricist is more likely to include underrepresented participants in his or her research to improve the generalizability of the study’s findings. This same researcher may continue to sample a population so that he or she does not compare unbalanced samples.

Another way that FE diverges from other theories is by maintaining that research is value-laden and that no researcher is without his or her conscious or subconscious biases (Campbell, 1994). Therefore, feminist empiricists often examine the cultural, political, and religious-based nuances that may influence every step of the empirical process, including the interpretation of a study’s findings. That is to say, feminist empiricists critique scientific studies based on their understanding of social norms and their impact on scholarly inquiry. For example, a feminist empiricist may critique the unbalanced racial distribution (e.g., predominantly Black) in a sample of incarcerated individuals. This critique stems from the scholar’s knowledge of the social injustices and inequalities faced by black men and women that increase the likelihood of their arrest.
Lastly, FE deviates from common scholarly practice by critiquing value-laden mainstream practices in an attempt to create a less biased and more comprehensive scholarly inquiry (Hundleby, 2012). Feminist empiricists believe that these practices hurt men and women alike by silencing voices of minority groups and maintaining deleterious social norms. For example, one researcher surveys 30 men and 70 women to examine the effects of single parenthood on academic achievement. The study’s sample limits the generalizability of the findings and may not accurately reflect the academic challenges faced by single fathers. The inclusion of FE principles in the development of this study would have focused on balanced samples to increase the accuracy of gender comparisons.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms will be used throughout the current study: contextualization, gender symmetry, and intimate partner violence.

*Contextualization:* taking the context under which the violence occurred into consideration. Contextual factors related to intimate partner violence include: motivation, consequence (e.g., injury), violence history and severity, and the aftermath of the violence (e.g., psychological distress). Understanding these factors creates separate narratives to further understand intimate partner violence experienced across a variety of circumstances. Therefore, violence occurring in self-defense will not be compared to that used for dominance and control. Including contextual factors in IPV assessments is believed to create accurate comparisons leading to cohesion in the literature (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995).

*Gender Symmetry:* gender equality in the perpetration and victimization of intimate partner
violence (Belknap & Melton, 2005). Intimate partner violence gender symmetry is a growing subcategory of research within the IPV literature. Gender symmetry researchers test the belief that men and women experience equal rates of violence perpetration and victimization.

**Intimate Partner Violence:** intentional behavior used to intimidate, manipulate, and/or harm an intimate partner. The harm experienced by victims of intimate partner violence includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Gilfus et al. (2010) concisely define IPV as:

...a constellation of abusive and controlling behaviors including psychological abuse, sexual coercion, financial abuse, isolation, threats, stalking, and physical violence that taken together create a climate of fear and intimidation that maintain one partner in a position of domination and control with the other partner in a position of subordination and compliance (Gilfus et al., 2010, p. 246-247).

**Summary**

Results from the 1975 National Family Violence Survey challenged the notion that women are the sole victims of intimate partner violence (Bachman, 1998). Straus and Gelles (1986) found that women and men were equally likely to perpetrate violence against an intimate partner. This finding created controversy within the IPV literate and sparked the gender symmetry debate amongst researchers. One of the main arguments against IPV gender symmetry is the contradictory findings found among studies using the umbrella, or *one size fits all*, approach to violence assessment.

Many scholars argue that the widespread use of the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) and the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996) creates inconsistent research
findings. Critics argue that using an umbrella approach toward IPV assessment (i.e., CTS and CTS2) fails to fully capture the true nature of men and women’s violence. They argue for gender-specific assessment of violence to make better comparisons. Conversely, Straus (1979) and Straus et al. (1996) state that these instruments create reliable gender comparisons, reporting acceptable psychometric properties in their findings. However, other scholars such as Kimmel (2002) highlight prominent gender differences in the literature as an argument against the one size fits all approach to IPV assessment.

Kimmel (2002) and other scholars do not argue against the use of the CTS2 – instead they call for a comprehensive assessment of the relationship and situational dynamics surrounding gendered violence (e.g., motives). This understanding begins by addressing the specific need of the instrument user and that of the target population. Addressing the specific needs of the target population may require the modification of the CTS2 as the one size fits all approach is not suitable for all. For example, a researcher surveying a sample of paraplegic men may wish to omit or modify the items such as number 73 “kicked my partner” or number 49 “I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement” (p. 312). The umbrella approach to IPV assessment does not work in this population because some items ask about actions these men are physically unable to perform.

The current researcher chose to examine the properties of data created by users of the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) to address the aforementioned critique. Consequently, this study will use a national sample to determine the gender differences and similarities found in the data produced by the CTS2. These findings will highlight the benefits and limitations of using the CTS2 as a one-size-fits-all measure of violence.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The Civil Rights movement occurring in 1964 created insurmountable social change and policies affecting millions of people across the United States. Men and women alike unified to address social injustices and change the lives of marginalized groups. The Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s emerged from the Civil Rights movement, inspired by the work of radical feminists working with battered women in Duluth, Michigan (Mirchandani, 2004; Tierney, 1982). Social workers, counselors, advocates, researchers, and feminists worked diligently to empower women in abusive relations. Abused women began receiving counseling, calling hotlines, and seeking shelter from violence. Feminists and social justice proponents established these services through grassroots movements organized by individual communities (Rothenberg, 2003).

Prior to the Battered Women’s Movement, intimate partner violence (IPV) was viewed as an anomaly, unrepresentative of the status-quo (Davis, 1987). Intimate partner violence was believed to only occur in dysfunctional, or deviant, households. The belief that IPV was rare and shameful maintained the dearth of services available to victims and perpetrators. Women working in social service sectors recognized the need for treatment and intervention programs to help families across the US. These feminists, specifically radical feminists, increased public awareness regarding violence against women through consciousness-raising (CR) groups. According to Kravetz (1978), “CR groups have often been described as the cornerstone of the new feminism, as the heart of the women's liberation movement (p. 169).” These groups provided women with an opportunity to share narratives surrounding sexism in their daily lives. Group members became empowered through mutual support, knowledge sharing, and
exchanging stories of hardship. These safe spaces raised the participant's consciousness regarding the inherent sexism in modern-day society (Kraventz, Marecek, & Finn, 1983).

As the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) grew, so did the media attention it received. Feminist activists and their messages became a growing area of social interest (Rosenthal, 1984). Yet, radical feminists, who advocated for the creation of CR groups, found that their message was filtered out of media depictions of the Women's Liberation Movement (Rosenthal). Media depictions of feminists as men-hating women motivated some to soften the message regarding violence by men against women. The radical feminist belief that men oppress women was perceived to be detrimental to the support of feminist agendas. Consequently, mainstream depictions of the WLM were created through a liberal feminist lens. Liberal feminism ideals communicated by activists and scholars alike sparked community interest by providing progressive, not extreme, steps towards positive change. Women and men attended workshops and consciousness raising groups to learn about and further explore women’s experience with violence and oppression.

Consciousness raising groups were open to women from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Yet, it is important to note that these groups were primarily comprised of well educated, middle-class, White women (Kraventz, et al., 1983). Influential women used their power to educate the public regarding the common narratives shared by group members from diverse backgrounds: sexism, discrimination, and violence. Ergo, researchers, counselors, and other influential women infused their work with the feminist message of gender inequality and men's oppression of women (Kraventz, 1978).
Prior to the WLM, popular media and social welfare groups obscured the problem of violence against women from the public eye. Intimate partner violence was viewed as a shameful problem between two partners, not a social concern. The shameful and private nature of IPV prevented men and women from seeking help as social services to protect victims were nonexistent at the time. Consequently, feminists and women’s rights advocates transformed the public’s perception regarding violence against women from a private and individual problem to one caused by social injustice (Lehrner & Allen, 2009). Women’s rights advocates created social programs to help victims and their families while educating communities regarding the pervasive nature of IPV. Thus, domestic violence evolved from a private disgrace to a public interest. Yet, the absence of research restricted opportunities to educate the public at large regarding this form of interpersonal violence (Tierney, 1982). Helping professionals and other scholars called for research to create intervention and treatment programs to aid families affected by IPV.

The increased attention created by the BWM sparked an interest in understanding the many factors (e.g., motives) surrounding IP. The National Institute of Mental Health began funding domestic violence research in the early 1970s, creating a new field of research: intimate partner violence (Tierney, 1982). The work of feminist scholars and the NIMH fueled the Battered Women’s movement – hundreds of community programs were created to provide women with the services needed to stay safe (Lehrner & Allen, 2009). These services include mental health counseling, community education, and the creation of domestic violence shelters. The demand for these services provided advocates with statistics regarding the prevalence of intimate partner violence within communities across the US. These statistics were used to lobby
for the creation of laws to protect victims and punish perpetraons of partner violence. Above all, violence against women was at the forefront of the criminal justice system. Intimate partner violence became a crime and perpetrators were prosecuted (Mirchandani, 2004).

Intimate partner violence research exclusively focused on violence against women by men. A new field of research grew as clinicians created treatment and intervention programs for violent men (Davis, 1987). This field required new theories to conceptualize, study, and explain violence against women by men. Scholars explained men’s violence against women through sociological, psychological, and evolutionary theories of violence. These theories predominantly focused on violence as a social problem created through patriarchal view about women by men (Lehrner & Allen, 2008). In contrast, evolutionary theories view men’s use of violence to instill fear in women, preventing them from reproducing with other men (e.g., Wilson & Daly, 1998). The multitude of theories within the literature provided researchers with opportunities to study violence from various perspectives. Straus and Gelles’ findings (1986) that women and men were equally victims and perpetrators of IPV led to a paradigm shift in the literature. The IPV literature moved away from exclusively researching violence against women by men to a new focus of violence by women against men.

Researchers (e.g., Davis, 1987) began to examine the motives and consequences of violence by women against men. Opponents of the Battered Women’s Movement welcomed this paradigm shift as they critiqued the IPV literature for providing a one-sided argument (Frieze, 2005). These opponents cited studies finding women to be equally or more violent than men (e.g., Straus & Gelles, 1986) urging scholars to consider a different perspective (i.e., women are also violent). At first, these findings were largely ignored and rejected; women’s use of violence
was interpreted by scholars as self-defense. Later, the growing literature supporting women’s use of intimate partner violence could no longer be ignored. Researchers started reporting *gender symmetry*, defined as gender equality in the perpetration of intimate partner abuse (Belknap & Melton, 2005), in their findings.

The National Family Violence Survey (NFVS, 1975) provided data regarding violent behavior in homes throughout the United States (Allen, 2011). The National Institute of Mental Health funded this project which surveyed over 6,000 adults in heterosexual intimate relationships over the telephone. Murray Straus and Richard Gelles, the lead researchers, created the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) to collect data on relationship violence for this project (Bachman, 1998). Straus and Gelles (1986) reported that women’s use of violence rivaled that of men. The researchers found that 12.1% of women and 11.6% of men were victimized by their intimate partners. This finding sparked what is now known as the gender symmetry debate. This area of research has rapidly grown to address the controversy resulting from these findings. Moreover, researchers began to use the term *intimate partner violence*, in place of domestic violence, to include cohabitating couples, those in long-term dating relationships, and in same-sex partnerships.

**The Conflict Tactics Scale: Controversies Surrounding Gendered Violence**

Gender symmetry research has drawn substantial backlash from feminist scholars who assert that the umbrella approach to IPV assessment does not fully capture men and women’s experiences (e.g., McHugh et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2006). Additionally, they assert that methodological problems in the assessment of violence across genders create contradictory
findings (Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994). Additionally, the methodology used in
gender symmetry studies has been widely scrutinized for not examining the circumstances under
which violence was used, or its contextualization (e.g. Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Dasgupta, 1999;
Hamberger, 1997; Kimmel, 2002; McHugh et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2006). Scholars (e.g.,
Bachman, 1998; McHugh et al., 2005) contend that women’s use of violence for self-defensive
purposes merits attention because it contributes to the high reports of violence used by women
against men. These scholars propose that violence used in self-defense should be measured
separately from that used to control or dominate a partner. However, some scholars (e.g.,
Dutton, 2006) misinterpret this critique; they believe it is used to minimize women’s violence
against men. This critique has been used to urge for the inclusion of contextual factors (i.e.,
contextualization) in IPV research. It is believed that the lack of contextual information within
research studies is a major contributor to the lack of consistency in research findings (e.g.,
McHugh et al.).

The primary proponents for the contextualization of IPV are feminist scholars advocating
for examining the motives and consequences of IPV (e.g., Belknap & Melton, 2005). These
scholars contend that women’s use of violence cannot be understood without the consideration of
the factors leading to the violent interactions and they assert that such considerations are rooted
within the contexts women occupy. Moreover, these scholars accuse researchers of minimizing
men’s use of violence by comparing it to that of women as if to suggest that the consequences of
male perpetrated violence against women in heterosexual dyads (e.g., injury) are the same
(Bachman, 1998).
Conversely, proponents of gender symmetry research responded by stating that this backlash is the result of feminists denying women’s use of violence (Dutton, 2006). Scholars like Dutton contend that opponents of IPV gender symmetry are only interested in refuting the existence of domestically violent women. He further argues that feminist researchers are primarily interested in refuting the existence of violent women by critiquing the use of the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996).

Moreover, the methodology used across studies utilizing the CTS (Straus, 1979) has been heavily criticized as flawed and biased (e.g., Johnson, 2006). Specifically, the use of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS; Straus, 1979), an instrument measuring the frequency of violent acts used in relationships, has been criticized as not contextualizing the use of women’s violence. Scholars (e.g. McHugh et al.) state the CTS only provides a quantitative view of women’s violence, ignoring the motives and consequences of its use. Unlike the CTS, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996) does not assess for sexual violence, a crime committed almost exclusively against women (Kellerman & Mercy, 1992). Yet, although the CTS2 possesses excellent psychometric properties and measures more acts of violence, the CTS has come to be viewed as a gold standard. The CTS appears to have become the gold standard IPV assessment due to its use and citation in nearly 6,000 scholarly papers. Although IPV researchers have widely adopted this assessment and its successor, other scholars (e.g., Kimmel, 2002) criticize these instruments because it uses a *one size fits all* approach to measuring violence. For example, the types, motives, and consequences of violence perpetrated by each gender is not individuated. Both scales are discussed in further detail in subsequent sections of this review.
Straus (2007) addressed criticism towards his instrument, the CTS (Straus, 1979) by responding to the most prominent critiques in the literature. In his article, Straus (2007) acknowledged the importance of assessing contextual factors and the consequences of IPV. He contends that these variables should be measured through psychometrically sound instruments (e.g., personality inventories) in addition to the use of his assessments. Meaning, Straus agrees that his assessment alone cannot fully capture all elements of gendered violence. Consequently, he recommends that his assessments be used in conjunction with other psychometrically sound assessments to provide contextual data. Moreover, Straus urges gender symmetry researchers to use theories of violence and aggression in their assessment of intimate partner violence. This recommendation supports the argument against the umbrella approach toward IPV assessment. Straus provided researchers with two instruments by which to measure partner violence. Yet, it seems that they have been heavily misused leading to harsh scrutiny against their use.

Some scholars (e.g., Dutton, 2006) believe that the harsh scrutiny against IPV assessments stems from resistance to accepting women’s violence against men. Dutton argues that the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) appropriately assesses IPV across genders and that it faces scrutiny due to the controversial findings created by its use. Despite Dutton’s accusation, scholars have published articles exclusively focusing on female perpetrators (e.g., Bourget & Gagné, 2010; Dasgupta, 1997; Frieze, 2005; Girshick, 2002, Hamberger, 1997; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Worcester, 2002), despite accusations that violent women are often overlooked. In their article, Deconstructing the Myth of the Nonaggressive Woman: A Feminist Analysis, White and Kowalski (1994) interpret women’s use of violence in a social context. White and Kowalski outline advantages to perpetuating the myth of women as non-violent and non-aggressive
including: subordination to men, reinforcing the power imbalance between men and women, the denial of women into powerful and competitive roles (e.g., politics), and labeling aggressive women as deviant. The authors contend that society benefits from viewing women as non-aggressive by silencing their voices to maintain male dominance.

Similarly, Worcester (2002) addressed challenges scholars face in acknowledging women’s use of violence in relationships. Worcester encourages scholars to examine women’s use of violence with the same scrutiny regarded to men and to consider gender differences in the patterns of violence used by men and women. Like White and Kowalski, the author maintains that women’s use of violence should be evaluated based on the social inequalities that exist to ending couple violence. She further contends that gender differences exist regarding the consequences and context under which violence is used. Lastly, Worcester urges feminist scholars to focus their research on women’s use of violence “so that information on female violence is no longer given from just antiwomen, backlash perspectives” (p. 1392).

Feminist scholars do not argue against the existence of domestically violent women, rather, for a more comprehensive and contextualized examination of IPV and its use (e.g., Worcester, 2002). The literature has revealed that there are many methodological barriers preventing scholars from coming to a consensus regarding the true nature of partner violence. Specifically, the use of the CTS (Straus, 1979) appears to be one of the most cited sources of contention in the literature. It appears that the CTS created more questions than answers. Feminist scholars argue for a critical analysis of these gender differences to create a more accurate model of female-perpetrated violence (e.g., White & Kowalski, 1994).
To best understand the feminist criticism surrounding the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) and the gender symmetry debate, the author chose to review the current literature from a Feminist Empiricism framework. Literature surrounding the gender symmetry debate, among other studies of gendered violence, was evaluated through this theoretical lens. The major tenets of this epistemological approach are described in further detail in the next section.

**Feminist Empiricism**

Feminist Empiricism is a form of epistemology, or philosophy of knowing, in which feminist principles are incorporated into scientific inquiry (Campbell, 1994). That is to say, Feminist empiricism is not itself a theoretical framework, but is instead a way to conduct scientific research in a socially-responsive manner. Feminist empiricism (FE) is socially responsive because it is used to improve the visibility and understanding of minority communities. FE involves the application of feminist thought, critiques, and principles into the current well-established research norms (Stanley & Wise, 1990). Researchers (e.g., Hawkesworth, 1989; Walby, 2001) argue that the inclusion of feminist critique and principles in the creation and evaluation of studies will help science move towards creating a less biased and more comprehensive knowledge base (Naples & Gurr, 2014).

Feminist empiricists believe that feminist theories can be proven through objective scientific practices (Campbell, 1994). That is to say, feminist theories are created then proven through mainstream approaches to sciences. This practice affords feminist scholars the ability to validate theories of gender inequality, violence against women, and other social issues of interest. What was once considered a feminist agenda, can now be verified through the same scientific rigor as the natural sciences.
Feminist empiricism does not solely advocate for the inclusion of more women in research studies (Tuana, 1992). FE is used to argue that our current research practices must be more inclusive of the non-dominant gender. That is to say, more men should be included in research studies in which women are traditionally the dominant participants. For example, a study examining the experiences of single parents would more accurately inform our current knowledge by including both single mothers and fathers. If this study were to gather data from a largely female sample, it would not accurately depict the experiences of single fathers. Feminist empiricists aim to improve current research standards (e.g., balanced samples), rather than simply furthering feminist agendas.

Harding (1986b), a seminal contributor, writes that FE is not a feminist methodology but an evaluation of current research practices through a feminist lens. Harding contends that there is no one approach, or methodology, endorsed by feminist empiricists. Instead, feminist principles such as including voices from marginalized populations, challenging gender norms, and critically analyzing sources of oppression, are incorporated into scientific inquiry. To illustrate, a feminist researcher studying college women may use more responsive recruiting methods to ensure that female students of color are represented in her sample. This scholar would take into consideration the impact of excluding the voices of minority women on the study’s findings (e.g., lack of generalizability).

**Feminist Empiricism: Critiques of Standard Practices**

Feminist empiricism is also used to critique the use of research findings to reaffirm dominant social attitudes and beliefs (Riger, 1992). These social attitudes and beliefs vary across
gender, culture, and socioeconomic groups, to name a few. Some examples of common social attitudes include: women’s mathematical skills are weaker than men’s,

For example, Hundleby (2012) notes that most gendered research is androcentric, meaning that women are compared to male standards. Androcentrism can also be considered as the standard used to compare, assess, describe, and understand women, and feminine characteristics. Simply stated, women's experiences, or characteristics, are considered deficient or abnormal if they do not closely mirror the male norm. For example, a study finds female bosses to be less authoritarian than their male counterparts. The difference in this study will be interpreted as women being weaker bosses than men because they displayed less authoritative characteristics. Meaning, the researchers will use men’s scores as the baseline by which to compare female participant characteristics.

Feminist empiricism is also used to critique biases found in current research practices. Some of these practices include, using men as the standard by which to compare women, making gender comparisons with significantly unbalanced samples, and excluding minorities (racial, gender, religious, among others). Many of these biases perpetuate gender stereotypes by not directly addressing any bias found within study. For example, a researcher surveying engineering students may use an unbalanced sample in his study believing that female engineering students are difficult to sample. This researcher is, knowingly or unknowingly, influenced by social stereotypes that women find math too challenging. The use of a small sample of female engineers in his study continues to support the belief that women are not skilled in mathematics.
The Politics in Scientific Inquiry

Feminist empiricism also challenges the notion that scientific inquiry is apolitical; FE proponents contend that the researchers’ own experiences, including bias, power, and privilege, impact their work in many ways (Naples & Gurr, 2014). Feminist researchers (e.g., Harding, 1986b) uphold the belief that scientific inquiry is not free from bias because the scientist’s worldview and personal experience influence the research question, methodology, and interpretation of the findings. This viewpoint deviates from the widely practiced approach to social inquiry, which denounces any form of bias or conflict of interest in research studies (Campbell, 1994). FE supports the argument that bias in research is unavoidable because it may exist subconsciously, especially when considering the patriarchal and androcentric nature of our society.

To illustrate, two poverty researchers, one from a working-class background, the other from an upper middle-class background, will approach their research from two different worldviews. The researcher from the upper middle-class background may conduct a study attempting to understand the hardships experienced by communities in poverty. The other researcher, having either directly or indirectly experienced poverty, may conduct his or her study to understand the sources of resilience in communities of poverty. The disparate worldviews held by the two researchers impacts their perceptions of people in poverty. One researcher, sympathetic to the needs of communities in poverty, may approach his or her study from a needs-based perspective. The other researcher, encouraged by the resilience found in these communities, may design his or her study from a strengths-based approach.
Moreover, FE's stance regarding the political nature of scientific research controversial as scholarly inquiry is believed to be objective and fair – free from bias and social influence. Feminist empiricists (Campbell, 1994; Harding, 1987) argue that researchers are not without their own bias. Feminist empiricism proposes that research questions and hypotheses are derived from the researcher(s)’ experience with, and knowledge of, gender stereotypes (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). That is to say, current scientific standards preserve stereotypes by continuing to conduct research in ways that maintain, or support, widely held beliefs (e.g., the truth). Research findings deviating from mainstream thought, or acceptance, will be interpreted as lesser than, or deficient (Riger, 1992). For example, the findings in a study in which women were found to be physically stronger than men will be explained by a difference in the female sample. That is to say, the researcher conducting the aforementioned study will perpetuate the belief that women cannot be physically stronger than men. This finding will be discounted by attributing its occurrence to unknown differences, confound variables, within the study.

**Gender Similarities**

Feminist scholars also critique the dismissal of gender similarities in IPV studies. That is to say, researchers rarely – if ever – interpret findings when there are gender similarities. Feminist empiricists argue that many studies focus solely on gender differences and ignore or gloss over similarities (Riger, 1992). Researchers contrasting male and female characteristics often fail to interpret gender similarities within their study. That is to say, studies often dismiss shared characteristics, similarities, between women and men. It is as if gender similarities are assumed to be understood by all, and therefore, their interpretation is unnecessary or redundant.
Kohlberg and Gilligan’s Seminal Study

Kohlberg and Gilligan’s study (1971) is an early example of a study on gender differences. In their seminal study, Kohlberg and Gilligan examined children’s law-abiding beliefs and perceptions regarding justice and morality. Kohlberg used the Heinz Dilemma, wherein Heinz, a man with modest means is forced to choose between two different actions. These actions include stealing an expensive drug to save his wife's life and the choice of not stealing the medicine, consequently leading to her death. The researchers told children in their study that the druggist (pharmacist) only paid $200 for the medication, but sold it for $2,000, ten times the actual cost. Heinz sought support from friends and family, but was only able to collect half the cost of the drug. Heinz was unable to persuade the druggist to allow him to pay for the other half later, or reduce the cost of the drug. Finally, or as a result, Heinz chose to steal the drug to save his wife’s life. The children were asked if Heinz should have stolen the medication.

Kohlberg (1984) noticed differences in the responses given by the girls and boys in his story. Kohlberg found that boys made their decision on the appropriateness of Heinz’s behavior based on justice and the need to abide by the laws set forth by society. Girls in this study made their decisions based on the impact of their behavior on their personal relationships. Although girls acknowledged that stealing the drug was wrong, they considered the druggist unjust for not giving the drug to Heinz, be it at a discount, or through monthly installment payments. The boys noted that although the druggist was not being empathic or fair, it was ultimately up to Heinz to make the “right” decision to respect the law.
The conclusion made by the researchers (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971) is that girls in their study were less morally developed than the boys. They came to this conclusion by comparing the differences in the stages of moral development across genders. Kohlberg’s (1984) theory of moral development, created through interviews with an all-male sample, was the basis by which girls were compared to boys. Comparing beliefs held by adult men to that of young girls will, understandably, create gender differences. Gilligan did not agree with the interpretation that women were less morally developed than men. That is why she decided to challenge their findings by conducting her own study (1982).

Carol Gilligan: Challenging Kohlberg’s Findings

Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking research (1982) focuses on the ways that women's morality differs from that of men. Gilligan developed her own theory by which to describe women’s moral development as different from, not weaker than that of men. She found that men made moral decisions based on abiding laws and their perception of justice. Women’s decisions are influenced by relationships and the care for self and others. Using the Heinz dilemma as an example, women would be more likely to consider caring for the protagonist’s wife. They would justify Heinz stealing the drug by stating that the druggist is unjust by not considering the welfare of others. Men would be more likely to report that, although unfair, the druggist should be paid for the drug. Male participants would also be more likely to denounce stealing the drug, regardless of its price.

Gillian paved the path for feminist research as she provided an alternative approach to interpreting gender difference. The standard during Gilligan’s time was to use male
characteristics and abilities as the standard by which to compare women. Gilligan challenged this practice by challenging the notion that gender differences indicate a deficiency or weakness in female research participants.

Gilligan’s research (1982) provided an example of research grounded in feminist principles. As a result, scholars began critiquing modern research practices through a critical feminist lens (Campbell, 1984). Feminist scholarship generated feminist epistemologies and methodologies that are used to guide research across distinct disciplines (e.g., feminist criminology). Specifically, Gilligan’s work indirectly influenced FE by providing an example of feminist scholarly inquiry.

Using feminist principles to guide the development, execution, and interpretation of scholarly research increases scientific objectivity. Feminist empiricists direct address their own biases by becoming aware of how these biases affect how they conduct research and interpret their results. The current author chose FE to guide the review of the literature, the development of the research question, and the interpretation of the findings. FE will also be used to guide the recommendations to further IPV research.

**Conflict Tactics Scale: History and Considerations**

The Conflict Tactics Scales is a scale that measures the use and frequency of specific violent and non-violent conflict tactics (i.e., conflict resolution strategies) (CTS, 1979). The CTS was first published in the Journal of Marriage and the Family by Straus (1979). Since its development, the CTS has been used in over 600 research studies, cited in nearly 6,000 articles/studies, and is one of the most widely used IPV assessments (Straus, 2007). The CTS is
unique in that it allows researchers to not only measure family violence as experienced and perpetrated by their research participants in their communities, but also across the United States through national surveys conducted over the phone. The CTS has allowed researchers to quantify the rates of family and intimate partner violence across the United States and other countries.

The CTS (Straus, 1979) was developed using Conflict Theory (Coser, 1956) to measure family and couple violence. Straus used the following definition of conflict as derived by Coser: “the means or behavior used to pursue one’s interest rather than conflict of interest itself” (p. 76), as the basis of his instrument. Coser’s theory maintains that conflict is inevitable and often necessary within society and relationships. Coser believes that conflict maintains group identities and that is a normal form of socialization. Conflict was also believed to be a way to create and maintain boundaries between groups. Coser argues that societies would suffer without conflict as it creates structure and order.

Straus, influenced by Coser’s theory, developed his own conflict research to better understand family violence. Straus was specifically interested in learning the how families and couples resolve conflict through violent and non-violent means. Therefore, the items in the CTS reflect responses to familial conflict and disagreement (Straus, 1990). Straus’ instrument, the CTS, was one of the first family violence assessments in the violence literature. The creation of the CTS provided researchers with the opportunity to research family violence in households across the US.
The CTS (1979) includes three scales: reasoning, verbal aggression, and violence. Straus listed the items on the CTS based on the social acceptability of each. That is to say, the less socially acceptable items – those describing severe violence – are placed at the end of the scale (Straus, 1996). Straus believed that placing the socially undesirable nature of IPV, either as victim or perpetrator, would lead to socially-desirable responses (i.e., underreporting violence). Therefore, socially acceptable items – those dealing with verbal conflict resolution strategies, were placed at the beginning of the scale. Straus believed this approach reduces participant discomfort by slowly introducing violent tactics in a hierarchy, based on violence severity.

Straus’ instrument, the CTS (1979) includes the reasoning scale, measuring an individual’s ability to resolve conflict through verbal interactions. The items within the reasoning scale assess for the use of non-violent tactics to resolve an argument or dispute. The three questions within the reasoning scale ask about how often the respondent and their partner discuss their problems calmly, obtain additional information to support their argument, and use of a mediator to resolve disputes.

Next, the verbal aggression scale measures the type and frequency of experiencing and/or perpetrating verbal and nonverbal attacks. These verbal attacks include threats of bodily harm and insulting or swearing. Non-verbal acts include stomping out of the room and breaking and/or throwing items to inflict injury. Sample questions from this scale include, “did or said something to spite him/her” and “sulked or refused to talk about an issue” (CTS; Straus, 1979).

Lastly, the violence scale measures the frequency and extent to which physical violence is used to resolve conflict. Straus (1979) defined violence as, “an act carried out with the
intention, or perceived intention, or causing physical pain or injury to another person” (p. 467).

The items in the violence scale are divided between minor and severe to differentiate the type of abuse experienced by victims. Examples of minor violence include, “slapped him/her” and “threw something at him/her.” Examples of severe violence items include, “choked him/her” and “used a knife or fired a gun” (CTS; Straus, 1979).

The first version of the CTS (Straus, 1979) is divided into two forms, each form is designed to measure dynamics between specific family members. For example, Form A was developed to measure conflict resolution acts used by the husband. The scale includes 14 questions regarding conflict resolution strategies, five of which assess reasoning, three for verbal aggression, and six physical violence items. The survey respondent reports the number of times they used each conflict strategy in the last year. The following options as provided as responses: never, once a year, two or three times, often but less than once a month, about once a month, and more than once a month.

In the second version of the CTS (Straus, 1979), form N, is the most widely used version as it includes more violent acts and can be administered face-to-face. The directions in form N ask respondents to reflect on an instance, in the past 12 months, when they were in conflict with a specific family member (e.g., child or spouse). The instrument lists a variety of conflict tactics and a range of frequencies: never, once, twice, three to five times, six to ten times, 11-20 times, more than 20 times, and don’t know. The respondent answers each question (i.e., a specific violent tactic) by indicating the number of times they used, or perpetrated, each item in the assessment (i.e., violence tactic). For example, one participant may endorse that in the past 12
months he or she was "slapped" three to five times and did not experience (i.e., never) being pushed, grabbed or shoved. The participant also indicates the frequency that their partner used, or perpetrated, the same tactics against them (i.e., victimization). The participant is also asked to endorse whether any of the tactics (i.e., items) were used more than 12 months prior to the assessment. Form N includes four reasoning items, eight verbal aggression items, and seven physical violence acts. Lastly, the survey administrator has the option to assess the use of these tactics throughout the history of the relationship (i.e., lifetime prevalence).

**The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale**

In 1996 Straus, Hamby, McCoy, and Sugarman published the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2) in response to criticisms existing in the gender symmetry literature. This revision included more items (78) to increase both the reliability and validity of the instrument. Moreover, the researchers reported that the original items were reworded to increase specificity and contextualize specific acts of violence. For example, the CTS asked respondents to indicate how often they had thrown something at their partner. In the CTS2 “that could hurt” was added to this same question to identify severe violence. Using this same example, if a man and woman endorsed this question, it may appear that they were both violent. This revision allows for the differentiation between each partner’s use of violence. It could be that one threw a remote control while the other threw a pillow. The extent and degree to which each of these objects causes bodily harm to their intimate partner can greatly differ.

Next, the CTS (1979) was developed to be administered through interviews and not formatted to be used in survey research without modification. The CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) was designed to be a self-administered questionnaire and now includes questions regarding the
partner’s behavior after each statement. For example, after the respondent indicates how often they swore at their partner, they are asked about how often this behavior was perpetrated by their romantic partner. The researchers report that this change will also decrease the amount of time needed to complete the survey instrument.

Furthermore, items in the CTS2 are interspersed to reduce response sets and increase the validity of the scores (Straus et al., 1996). The researchers note that past studies indicate that the hierarchal order – based on social acceptability – decreases its psychometric properties because it creates inattentive responses. That is, individuals considering themselves to be non-violent may mark “never” in all violence items without reading the questions. They further note that studies using interspersed items report higher prevalence rates than their hierarchal counterparts.

Straus and colleagues (1996) renamed the original scales to reflect changes in the IPV research. The IPV literature began to examine other factors related to partner violence, such as sexual assault and severe injury. These changes were reflected in the latest iteration of the CTS2 through modifying the original scales and including questions assessing for sexual violence and physical injury. The reasoning scale was renamed negotiation, reflecting current research on communication and marital stability (Straus et al., 1996). Further, the verbal aggression scale was renamed psychological aggression to conceptualize the newly added non-verbal items. Lastly, the physical assault scale replaced the violence scale in the revised CTS.

Later, two more scales were included in the CST2: sexual coercion and injury. The authors defined sexual coercion as “behavior intended to compel the partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity” (p. 290). Sexual coercion includes seven items to assess the extent to
which individuals use physical force and verbal persistence to sexually persuade their partner to engage in sexual activity (e.g., fellatio). Lastly, the injury scale assesses frequency at which physical injury resulted from conflict resolution. Questions within the injury scale assess for the need to seek medical attention, type of bodily damage experienced/perpetrated, and the severity of the physical pain experienced/perpetrated.

Straus et al. (1996) also included additional violence tactics, and differentiated violence from minor and severe. The language in the assessment was also modified to reflect a sixth grade reading level, increasing the accessibility of this instrument. The authors also examined the language within the items to determine which questions may prove problematic. For example, Straus et al noted that the original CTS (Straus, 1979) item “swore or yelled at my partner”, was vague and included an array of verbal expressions. Meaning, this item is open to interpretation and leads participants to provide inaccurate responses. For example, a participant may endorse this question believing it to ask if they have used a swear word when talking to their partner (non-confrontationally). Therefore, this item was revised to “shouted or yelled”, to more precisely assess this form of psychological abuse.

Later, Straus et al. (1996) conducted a pretest by administering the instrument to 60 undergraduate students. The instrument used in this pretest included 47 items from all scales, except sexual coercion. Next, the researchers administered the same items and included the sexual coercion scale in a sample of 37 students. The students were asked to answer all items and provide feedback and comments regarding the items they were administered. The student’s feedback was incorporated in the revision of the CTS (Straus, 1979). After the revision, a total of 60 items were included in the CTS2.
Later Straus et al. (1996) normed the CTS2 by administering the instrument to 541 undergraduate college students in two universities. After excluding ineligible participants and incomplete surveys, 317 participant responses were used to norm the scale. The researchers reported that although college students were used to norm the scale, the data reflects similar factor models, or patterns, to data collected from clinical and national samples. However, one shortcoming of their assertion that the college sample is comparable to the general population. The participants’ demographic information revealed that most students came from well-educated families; the participants’ fathers (55%) and mothers (37%) received a college or graduate degree. The students may have been less exposed to IPV during childhood because their parents were highly educated. College educated individuals are not inherently less violent – but victims and perpetrators may be more aware of and have easier access to community resources. Also, the negative impact of an IPV offense on a professional career may further motivate offenders to seek help. Therefore, IPV exists in partnerships in which both or each couple are highly educated. Yet, their educational background may provide the resources (i.e., money) or motivation to seek help or leave a violent partnership.

**Psychometric Properties**

Factor analyses conducted on the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) reveal differences in the way that men and women report experiencing and perpetrating violence. Factor analyses, described in further detail below, provide researchers with information regarding patterns found within data. These patterns are used to examine gender differences and similarities found in the participants’ response patterns. The following sections highlight the different factor analyses conducted on the CTS and CTS2 for the original scales
and their translated counterparts. The author will identify the models (e.g., three factor) that differed from Straus' original three factor (CTS) and five factor (CTS2) models of violence. The relevance of the instrument's items on the sample being used will also be explored.

**The Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS)**

The Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) assesses violence victimization and perpetration through a three-factor model of violence. The author administered the assessment to a sample of students and asked them to answer questions regarding their knowledge of their parents’ conflict tactics. The students’ parents were also asked to complete the survey to compare the answers given by all three informants: the student, his or her mother, and father. Straus reported moderate to strong correlation coefficients in the reasoning scale, and strong correlations in the verbal aggression and physical assault scales of the CTS. The author reported low correlations in all scales for wives and husbands save the violence scale. The answers given by the participants concerning the use of violence by husbands resulted in a moderate correlation. Yet, the author notes that the sample used to obtain this data was small, only 57 husbands and 60 wives completed and returned the surveys. Lastly, Straus reported adequate construct validity for the items within the scale.

Among the studies validating the use of the CTS, the literature reveals that this instrument has been found to have two (Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, O'Leary, & Slep, 1999), three (Pan et al., 1994; Unger, Sussman, & Dent, 2003), and four factors (Muñoz-Rivas, et al., 2007) of partner violence. The factors found in these studies are impacted by the samples’ characteristics. For example, a researcher surveying convicted IPV offenders will report higher
violence perpetration scores than one using a community sample. The IPV offenders will most certainly report perpetrating IPV due to their arrest and conviction. Yet, sampling from a general community creates variability in the background characteristics of the study’s participants. A community sample is less likely to report high rates and prevalence of IPV perpetration, compared to the aforementioned group.

The previous example depicts the importance of considering the background characteristics of study participants when interpreting study findings. Interpreting factor structures through factor analyses requires observing patterns within the data produced by study participants. If the entire sample under observation possesses a noteworthy trait (e.g., arrest history), it will most likely impact the results of the study findings. The study findings may be impacted by an unknown, or confound, variable. Confound variables negatively impact study findings because they lower the reliability and validity of study findings. Controlling for and limiting the number of confound variables decreases their impact on study findings.

Increasing the reliability and validity of study findings is important because it creates cohesion within the literature. The following section will highlight two studies with disparate findings. These two studies also include distinct samples (e.g., different countries and languages) which may have impacted the results. The studies are contrasted in the following section.

**Two factor model.** Cascardi et al. (1999) found a two-factor model in their study with a high school student sample. Male (n=1,180) and female (1,140) college students were surveyed regarding their experiences with IPV. Half of this sample was used to conduct an exploratory
factor analysis (EFA) and the other for a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The researchers identified students who were recent daters (male=54.5%, female=41.2%) (i.e., past, not current, dating history) and current daters (male=45.5%, female=58.8%) to determine what differences, if any, existed between the two groups. The authors defined current daters as individuals within a relationship, regardless of the length of dating.

Later, Cascardi et al. (1999) used the Modified Conflict Tactics Scales (M-CTS) which includes an additional item, "have you physically restrained your partner?" and excludes, "have you used a knife or a gun?" The researchers' EFA revealed a two factor model to explain the conflict tactics used by the male daters (current). The two factors, physical aggression and psychological aggression accounted for 29.8% and 13.8% of the total item variance, respectively. The female sample of recent and current daters revealed the same factor structure yet psychological aggression only accounted for 7.2% of the total variance while physical aggression accounted for 30.7%. The researchers noted that the male and female models differed in the psychological aggression factor. The male model included two physical aggression items: verbal aggression and threats of physical violence. The female model included: threats, verbal insults, and aggression against an object. The authors interpreted the findings as female participants intimidating male partners by aggressing against an object. The authors also note that although this aggression is considered psychological abuse, it is essentially physically violent.

Later, the researchers conducted a CFA on the second half of the male and female date. They found that the model was a poor fit when items were constrained to one factor. The
researchers noted that the male model fit improved when one item loaded on both factors and four items were allowed to correlate with one another. The findings indicated that these items were all related to physical aggression. The authors stated that this difference may be due to the possibility that students endorsed the physical assault and psychological aggression items, perceiving them as similar behaviors. The female students' model also improved when two items were allowed to correlate on the physical and psychological aggression factors. These findings suggest that the types of violent acts used by this student sample varied across genders.

Four factor model. Muñoz-Rivas et al. (2007) found a four-factor model in their study. The researchers conducted a CFA using data from adolescent students to validate the Spanish adaptation of a modified CTS (Straus, 1979). The sample included 5,355 male (63.3%) and female (36.7%) students living in Spain. The factors found in the perpetration and victimization models included: mild physical aggression, psychological aggression, severe physical aggression, and argumentation. It appears that the original three factor model is not appropriate for this sample. The data produced by this assessment best fit a model in which violence was divided into mild and severe physical aggression.

The argumentation scale, includes one item loading on the perpetrator (.54) and victim (.60) model. Psychological aggression includes five items in the perpetrator model and four in the victim model, all with similar loadings. Mild physical aggression perpetration includes five items ranging from .31 to .60, while the victim model includes seven items with loadings ranging from .54 to .72. Lastly, severe physical aggression includes one item in the model (.71) while the victim model includes three items ranging from .73 to 80. These findings suggest that the modified CTS was a better measure of violence victimization than perpetration for this sample.
The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996) includes a different factor structure from its predecessor. These items include: negotiation, psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury. Researchers have confirmed this five-factor model in forensic settings (Lucente et al., 2001), in Spanish (Calvert, Corral, & Estevez, 2007), with Mexican-American samples (Sugihara & Warner, 2002), and in the Deaf community (Anderson & Leigh, 2010). Other studies have found a different five-factor model (e.g., Newton, Connelly, & Lansverk, 2001) which includes: negotiation, minor psychological aggression, severe psychological aggression, minor physical assault, and severe physical assault. Additionally, Jones, Ji, Beck, and Beck (2002) found a four-factor model in their study with incarcerated women.

The internal consistency reported for the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is much higher than its predecessor. Across all scales, high alpha coefficients are reported, ranging from .79 to .95. After examining the frequency of each item, those with bimodal distribution were eliminated from the study. Next, each scale was examined to eliminate items decreasing the assessment’s internal consistency. The construct validity of data produced by this instrument was also tested by analyzing the scores found in correlations conducted among scales. For example, the negotiation scale was weakly correlated with the injury scale. That is to say, the use of negotiation tactics is not correlated with high instances of injury. The authors report that there is evidence of construct validity as most scales were highly or negatively correlated with the predicted items. Lastly, the authors report discriminant validity for the injury, sexual coercion, and negotiation scales.
These factor analyses reveal differences across genders; these differences can lead to variations in factor loadings and variability in item inclusion. This section will focus on factor analyses conducted on the CTS2. The author will highlight studies evaluating the factor structure of this assessment.

**Four factor model.** Jones, Ji, Beck, and Beck (2002) administered the CTS2 to a sample of 264 incarcerated women. Their model included the original five factors, but combined the physical assault and psychological aggression items into one factor. Meaning, that although the original factors were represented, the authors tested a modified five factor model. The authors found that this modified model explained 58% of the item variance. Yet, it is important to note that the factor structure of the CTS2 might have been altered by the high rates of violence perpetration and victimization reported by the women in the study.

**Alternative five factor model.** Connelly et al. (2005) and Newton et al. (2001) found an alternative five-factor model consisting of: negotiation, minor physical assault, severe physical assault, minor psychological violence, and severe psychological violence. Newton and colleagues administered the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) to 295 high-risk postpartum women while Connelly surveyed 405 English and Spanish-speaking Latinas. Both studies compared an alternative five-factor model to the original (Straus et al). The results of these studies indicated that model fit improved with a five-factor model. This determination was made after model fit improved by differentiating between minor and severe psychological and physical violence.

**The Conflict Tactics Scales: Criticism and Limitations**

The CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) continue receiving mass criticism,
perhaps due to their widespread adoption as *one size fits all* measures of violence. Two major critiques exist in the literature: the lack of weight given to severely violent items and the failure to assess the context under which violence occurred. First, the CTS does not weigh violent acts based on severity, leading to underestimating men’s violence and overestimating women’s violence (Kimmel, 2002). To illustrate, a woman endorsing that she has pushed her male partner will be rated as violent as a man endorsing that he has choked his female partner. This discrepancy is alarming due to the more violent nature of strangulation.

Understanding the context under which intimate partner violence occurred can shed light on its motives and consequences. Without context, the motivation behind the violent act can be greatly misunderstood. For example, researchers cannot deduce if violence was done in self-defense nor can they predict the result of IPV (e.g., death or injury) by simply asking if pushing occurred in the last past 12 months. Similarly, ignoring context fails to provide information regarding the severity of IPV. To illustrate, two women endorse being shoved during an argument, one against the wall while the other was shoved down a staircase. The items will be weighed equally, largely discounting the severity of violence the second woman experienced. Discounting the motive and severity of violence, among other important contextual clues, can lead to wrongful conclusions regarding the nature of partner violence. Excluding gender differences in the assessment of IPV has created more questions than answers regarding women’s use of violence against men (e.g., Anderson & Leigh, 2010).

The following sections will outline limitations and considerations found in studies using the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). These limitations were compiled by critiquing these studies from a feminist empiricism lens. This critique revealed the following
limitations in using the CTS and CTS2: inconsistent findings, lack of contextualization, exclusion of sexual violence, injury severity, inaccurate reports, and the exclusion of lethal and near-lethal violence. These considerations will be described in further detail in the subsequent sections.

**Inconsistent Findings**

The gender symmetry debate is fueled by studies with contradictory findings regarding the rates by which each gender perpetrates IPV. Some researchers report gender symmetry in intimate partner violence perpetration and/or victimization (e.g., Chan, 2012) while others do not. Notably, it is common for studies to use samples with significantly unbalanced gender distributions (e.g., Melton & Belknap, 2003). Further, few studies used balanced samples to make gendered comparisons (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004).

In her study, Harned (2001) surveyed 874 college students (female=56%; male=44%) to determine if they perpetrated and experienced equivalent rates of intimate partner violence. After administering the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales, Harned found that men (87%) and women (82%) in the sample experienced high rates of psychological abuse. Participants also reported experiencing comparable rates of sexual victimization (39% of women, 30% of men) and physical aggression (22% of women, 21% of men). The author also found that men and women reported experiencing different types of violent acts; men endorsed high rates of psychological abuse whereas women reported greater rates of sexual victimization. It is important to note that 76% of the sample comprised of White (non-Hispanic) students, limiting the generalizability of these findings.
In another study, Katz et al. (2002) administered the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) to female (n=78) and male (n=45) university students. These students reported equal rates of once-violent partnerships (13%) while more men than women reported high rates of partnerships with repeated violence (29% and 14%, respectively). The researchers also found a similar number of men (n=13) and women (n=11) reported repeated IPV victimization. The findings in this study should be interpreted with caution as the sample’s gender distribution (64% female) may have impacted the results. Additionally, 75% of participants reported being in less committed (i.e., dating) relationships. IPV exposure is limited when participants do not live with their partners. These limitations should be considered when interpreting these results.

Notably, one study conducted by Busch and Rosenberg (2004) used a balanced sample to determine the prevalence of IPV perpetration and victimization across genders (n=98). This sample was comprised of court-mandated men and women in a probationary program. These participants’ arrest records were examined and they were administered the Conflict Tactics Scales. Researchers collected information regarding participants’ violence history, primarily interested in the age at which their first crime was committed. Information regarding the number of violent and non-violent crimes committed by the participants was also collected. Male participants in this study were more likely to have a domestic violence related criminal records than female participants, 26% and 13% respectively. Men were also more likely to have used more severely violent acts (m=2.27, sd=1.76) than female participants (m=1.44, sd=1.10). Women (24%) were more likely to have reported, or shown evidence, of IPV-related injury at the time of their arrest compared to men (7%). Lastly, female participants were more likely to report using weapons in severely violent confrontations.
In another example, Melton and Belknap (2003) used criminal records to identify gender differences in the violent behaviors of individuals arrested for IPV-related offenses. The researchers found significant differences regarding the characteristics of these IPV offenders. Firstly, women (n=109, 33%) were more likely than men (n=108, 6%) to report involvement in cross-complaint criminal cases. Meaning, these participants were involved in cases where they were arrested, along with their partner, upon police intervention. This finding suggests that women may have used violence in a self-defensive manner. Men (n=204) were more likely than women (n=24) to be involved in multiple domestic violence arrests during the selected 12-month time span. The majority of men (90%) and women (93%) committed only one IPV-related offense that year.

Gender differences were also found in the types of violence perpetrated by participants. Men were more likely to threaten their partners with physical violence (12.5%), shove or push (35%), grab or drag (11%), physically restrain (4%), and strangle (19%) their victims. Women were more likely to bite (6.4%) and strike their victims with an object (18%) or vehicle (1.5%). However, the gender distribution of the study participants (male=85%) limits the generalizability and interpretation of study findings.

**Lack of Contextualization**

Above all, the main criticism of the CTS (1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is that these instruments do not contextualize violence used by women (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995). This critique led researchers to examine the causes and motives for women’s use of violence against men (e.g., Hamberger, 1997). For example, Stuart et al. (2006) surveyed 87 women enrolled in domestic violence intervention programs. The researchers aimed to understand the women’s
reasons and motives for using violence against their intimate partners. The researchers reviewed the literature to find common reasons women use IPV against male partners. The researchers used this information to create the Reasons for Violence Scale, assessing 29 different reasons for using IPV. Later, women were asked to report the percentage of the time they used IPV for each of the reasons listed in the survey. The findings indicate that women used violence in self-defense (38.7%) to retaliate for emotional abuse (35.3%) and because their partner provoked the violent incident (38.9%).

Similarly, Dasgupta (1999) interviewed 32 women either arrested, court-ordered, or self-referred to batterer intervention programs. Findings from the interviews revealed that all but a few women had been, or were currently, in abusive relationships. Interviews revealed eight themes regarding women’s use of violence against their male partners; among these themes were “I wanted him to pay for his behavior”, “I wanted to hurt him because he threatened my family”, “I wanted him to stop abusing me” and “I wanted to get some control over the situation.” Abuse and the need to act against violence are the central themes found in this study.

Exclusion of Sexual Violence

Another limitation of the CTS (Straus, 1979) and the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is the exclusion of violence commonly perpetrated against women. Namely, sexual violence is not assessed in the original CTS but is included in the CTS2. While the CTS excludes rape and sexual assault, the CTS2 includes question regarding sexual assault perpetration and victimization. The inclusion of sexual violence in assessments of violence is important because sexual violence against women is ubiquitous within the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2009) out of every 100,000 people, 1.4 women and .03 men will be the
victim of a sexual assault. Further, findings from this report state that 80% of women are raped by men.

To illustrate, Harned (2001) surveyed 874 students to examine gender differences in dating violence perpetration and victimization. Among other variables, sexual abuse and assault were both assessed in each gender. Female participants reported more attempted rapes and sexual victimization than male participants. Moreover, 100% of female victims were raped by male offenders. Interestingly, nine percent of men reporting rape by an intimate partner identified the offenders’ sex as male.

Notably, neither of the two Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979; Straus et al., 1996) assess stalking behavior or death threats – violent acts disproportionately committed against women (McFarlane, Campbell, & Watson, 2002; McFarlane et al., 1999). Intimate partner femicide, defined as the murder of a woman by an intimate partner, is the most severe form of intimate partner violence (Taylor & Jasinski, 2011) and a growing field of study.

For example, McFarlane et al. (1999) surveyed 208 victims of attempted femicide and proxy informants for victims of completed femicide. These researchers explored the perpetrator’s stalking behavior in the 12 months prior to the completed or attempted femicide. Participants in 75% of femicides and 85% of attempted femicides reported at least one episode of stalking in the 12 months preceding the violent attack.

McFarlane et al. (2002) conducted a similar study by surveying groups of femicide and attempted femicide victims (437) and abused controls (384). The authors created a 16-item instrument, Stalking and Threatening Behaviors Inventory, using questions from two instruments
in the existing literature. The authors found that stalking behavior was high in the control and attempted/completed femicide groups, 51% and 68%, respectively. Further, reported mean stalking scores, ranging from zero to six, were higher in the attempted/completed femicide group (2.4) than in the control group (1.4). Furthermore, the authors created a Stepwise Multiple Logistic Regression to predict homicide risk and found that stalking was significantly associated with attempted or completed femicide. This finding held even when the researchers controlled for demographic variables. Stalking led to a twofold increase in a woman’s risk for attempted or completed femicide victimization.

**Sampling Bias**

Additionally, studies using the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) have been criticized for their sampling bias (e.g., Gilfus, Trabold, O’Brien, & Fleck-Henderson, 2010; Hamberger, 2005; Johnson, 2006). Many of these studies make gender comparisons in highly imbalanced samples of men and women. For example, Katz et al. (2002) surveyed college students to examine gender differences in violent relationships. The sample included 283 college students, 37% of which were male. Further, Melton and Belknap (2003) collected data from domestic violence cases in the criminal justice system to identify gender differences and similarities. The researchers examined 2,670 cases, 86% of these records were from men convicted of domestic violence. In the final example, Henning and Feder (2004) examined gender differences in the demographic backgrounds, domestic violence history, and arrest records of their male and female participants. Of the 6,704 cases examined by researchers, 16.8% were from female domestic violence offenders.
These three studies are not isolated examples – unbalanced samples are common due to the limited access to this specific population (i.e., female violence perpetrators). The limited access to female IPV offenders has established a practice in which unbalanced samples are used to make gendered comparisons. This practice becomes problematic when generalizations are made without accounting for the inherent limitations of this approach.

**Injury Severity**

An additional critique in the literature focuses on ignoring gender differences in the negative and emotional effects resulting from IPV victimization. Although the CTS (Straus, 1979) does not assess for injury, the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) includes six questions regarding severe (4) and minor (2) injury. However, neither scale includes questions regarding the psychological consequences of the IPV, specifically depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and posttraumatic stress disorder – all psychological disorders experienced by victims of long-term domestic violence (Stuart et al., 2006).

To illustrate, Vivian and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1994) surveyed couples in which both individuals perpetrated violence towards the another. The researchers aimed to examine if each gender was equally victimized – that is to say, they wanted to determine if IPV gender symmetry existed in this sample. The researchers used an adapted version of the CTS (ACTS, Vivian, 1990 as cited in Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling) and added the following indices: injuries, psychological abuse, depression, and severity of violent acts. Gender differences were found in the effects of intimate partner violence. Specifically, women reported sustaining more injuries and negative psychological effects than their husbands. These women were also likely to have sustained more severe physical injuries (e.g., cut or bruise) than their husbands.
With these findings in mind, other researchers use qualitative techniques to examine the effects of women’s violence against men (e.g., Miller & Meloy, 2006). For instance, Anderson and Umberson (2001) conducted in-depth interviews with 33 heterosexual men in domestically violent relationships. The researchers wanted to understand men’s perceptions of women’s violence against their person. Men did not describe fearing severe violence by their female partner, regardless of whether she used a weapon. These same men also reported that their female partners sustained more injuries requiring medical attention (e.g., broken ribs). Moreover, these participants trivialized women’s violence, believing this behavior to be ineffective. For example, one participant described a confrontation in which his partner threatened him with a knife yet did not report feeling afraid.

**Inaccurate Reports**

The limitations inherent to using self-report in IPV assessment is an additional critique within the literature. Studies have found that men and women underreport men’s violence and over-report women’s use of violence. Kimmel (2002) suggests that these findings are due to the socialization of violence in men and women, in addition to gender norms and expectations. That is to say, men are socially conditioned to be violent and male gender norms support the use of violence. Yet, women are not socially conditioned to use violence – doing so goes against widely accepted gender norms. Thus, violence by women is more memorable because it is contrary to the social expectation for women to resolve conflict in non-violent ways. Conversely, the ubiquitous nature of male violence results in its dismissal or normalization. In other words, male violence is commonplace and its use is not notable; violence perpetrated by women is more remarkable and thus, more likely to be reported.
To illustrate, Jenkins and Aube (2002) examined aggression severity and frequency in men and women in dating relationships. Jenkins and Aube compared the scores of the 85 couples by administering the CTS (Straus, 1979), the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1987), and the Psychological Maltreatment Inventory (PMI; Kasian & Painter, 1992). The instruments were administered privately and individually to enhance participant honesty and comfort. In addition to the aforementioned scales, the couple also endorsed questions in the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire (EPAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979) an assessment of social desirability. The authors found small gender differences; women reported perpetrating more physical, symbolic, and psychological aggression. Further, men reported being victimized at higher rates than their female partners.

Jenkins and Aube (2002) noted that the couples’ reports of IPV victimization and perpetration frequency were in accord. Yet, they reported that the individuals in each could did not always agree to the type of violence reported to be perpetrated by the other. For example, women were more likely to report perpetrating more symbolic aggression than men, yet their male partners reported that these same women were instead psychological and physically aggressive. The authors explained the high incidence of violence used by women as having been affected by current social norms. They suggest that both genders over-reported female violence because it deviates from social expectations and is more remarkable. Moreover, the authors found that men scoring high on social desirability were more likely to report low perpetration rates. These findings also suggest that individuals scoring higher on the gender role scale are more likely to perceive themselves as non-aggressive. The results also indicate that men may be under-reporting their use of violence because of the socially undesirable nature of IPV.
Exclusion of Lethal and Near-Lethal Violence

Lastly, items in the CTS (Straus, 1979) and CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) do not assess for attempts or threats of intimate partner homicide – a crime committed almost exclusively against women. To illustrate, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009) reports that 1.07 per 100,000 women were killed by an intimate partner, whereas men were killed 0.47 per 100,000 male residents. According to the same report, five percent of male homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner compared to 45% of female victims. Researchers have also overlooked the paucity existing in the intimate partner homicide (IPH) literature. This paucity is reflected in the significantly disproportionate number of IPH studies dedicated to each gender. The current author searched for studies on female-perpetrated IPH as far back as the 1980s to obtain a dozen articles for this review. Conversely, the current author easily found studies on male-perpetrated IPH within the current decade. It remains unclear as to why IPV assessments do not include questions regarding lethal violence, either attempted or threatened.

Abandoning the One Size Fits All Approach to IPV Assessment: Contextualizing Violence Against and by Women

Although using the CTS (Straus, 1979) has created widespread criticism, it has not been rejected by all scholars. McHugh and colleagues (2005) note that the CTS has made it possible to examine the extent to which intimate partner violence exists in our society. They also state that the CTS allows researchers to compare the use of violence across different gender, cultural, and socioeconomic groups. Yet, McHugh et al. propose that using *one size fits all* assessments, like the CTS and CTS2, limits the definition of intimate partner violence to only the actions
listed within the instruments. Excluding violent acts committed against intimate partners prevents researchers from examining the full scope of IPV. Meaning, other forms of abuse perpetrated against men and women, such as sexual coercion, humiliation, and isolation, are overlooked.

Above all, examining the differences between men and women’s violence should include a comprehensive assessment of intimate partner violence. For example, many men and women experience stalking by current or former intimate partners. Stalking can result in an array of consequences including fear, loss of work productivity, and even psychological distress. Actions such unwanted phone calls and monitoring the victim’s work or residence, are detrimental to the victim’s quality of life.

Abandoning the current umbrella approach to IPV assessment includes a comprehensive examination of gendered violence. That is to say, the focus should be on the types of violence most often perpetrated by and against each gender. For example, Girshick (2002) outlines challenges to researching and addressing sexual violence perpetrated by women against women; chiefly, the acknowledgment that violent women exist. Moreover, other researchers (Stuart et al., 2006) have addressed the importance of researching violent women to facilitate the creation of programs and organizations to help families in our communities. Feminist scholars (McHugh et al., 2005) promote examining female-perpetrated violence by moving beyond items on the CTS (Straus, 1979). McHugh and colleagues believe that researching the full-scope of female-perpetrated IPV includes assessing motivations, behavior, and cognitions (e.g., entitlement).
Researchers have yet to reach a consensus regarding which gender is more violent than the other. But, amongst many studies (e.g., Henning & Feder, 2004; Jenkins & Aube, 2002) the common theme is that gender differences do exist. Research (e.g., Busch & Rosenberg, 2004; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991) has shown that men and women differ in their use of specific violent acts and motivations. Despite these findings, scholars continue administering one size fits all assessments without modification to men and women across distinct communities (e.g., convicted IPV offenders). Researchers rarely analyze the psychometric properties of the data produced by the instrument they are using. Analyzing the data for measurement invariance provides researchers with information regarding the quality of their comparisons.

Researchers cannot agree as to why their findings contradict one another. Yet, some scholars (e.g., Kimmel, 2002) propose that including questions regarding contextual information in IPV assessments may create more cohesion within the literature. Feminist scholars (e.g., McHugh et al., 2005) encourage researchers to abandon one size fits all approaches to IPV assessments. Abandoning the umbrella IPV assessment requires researchers to closely examine the context under which each gender uses violence. The current practice of using unmodified standardized IPV assessments without requesting additional contextual information appears to be causing conflict among the literature.

Intimate partner homicide is grossly understudied and rarely cited in IPV literature. An overarching theme found across intimate partner homicide studies is that women are overwhelmingly the victim. In fact, the number of women killed by intimate partners in the past
30 years has remained static, yet the rates of men killed by their female intimate partner have sharply decreased (Dugan, Rosenfeld, & Nagin, 2003). The intimate partner homicide (IPH) literature reflects these findings as its primarily focused on male violence against female intimate partners.

Intimate partner homicide is one small subsection of violence in which gender asymmetry remains consistent in the findings. The finding that men are overwhelmingly IPH perpetrators is not considered when developing IPV assessments or models. Perhaps the asymmetric nature of this literature produces evidence against the one size fits all approach to IPV assessment. The argument for IPV gender symmetry begins to unravel when the rates at which women are murdered by men are taken into consideration.

Unlike IPV, intimate partner homicide studies have defined gender differences in the rates of lethal violence perpetrated by each gender. IPH researchers examine lethal violence from various contexts and do not rely on a single or common instrument to measure violence. In fact, most studies use archival data such as criminal and arrest records. Researchers often use contextual information to determine the circumstances under which IPH occurred. Perhaps the use of contextual information, in addition to objective data (e.g., arrest records) increases the reliability and validity of study findings. Scholars can easily discern common gender differences when reviewing the IPH literature as there is more consensus among study results.

The current author will examine the IPV gender symmetry debate by focusing on a specific subset of violence. Consequently, the following section will review the literature regarding perpetrators of the most severe form of violence, intimate partner homicide. Gender
differences, and similarities, will be highlighted to describe the varying motives and background characteristics of these offenders. The rare use of IPV assessments in this field allows for a disparate gender comparison. The literature provides a more rigorous examination of gendered violence because it lacks a uniform assessment. The findings from these studies are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

**Gender Asymmetry: Intimate Partner Homicide**

Overwhelmingly, intimate partner homicide research focuses on risk factors putting women at risk of victimization by male perpetrators (e.g., Cao, Hou, & Huang, 2008). Many of these studies attempt to discover factors driving men’s lethal violence against women. Interestingly, intimate partner homicide studies almost exclusively focus on men as perpetrators and women as victims. This paradigm shift is in stark contrast to IPV research in which gender comparisons are the central focus.

Intimate partner homicide studies also rely on archival, and other forms of objective data (e.g., court and arrest records) to determine the context under which violence occurred (e.g., Mann, 1988). Although some studies continue using survey methods to gather data, qualitative studies are more prevalent in this research field (e.g., Biggers, 1979; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Goussinsky & Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012). Intimate partner homicide studies have increased awareness of men and women as homicide offenders by obviating from survey methods and increasing the exploration of the factors that influence homicide.

In fact, intimate partner homicide research is gender asymmetrical and centered primarily on men’s use of lethal violence against women. Studies on female perpetrators of intimate
partner homicide are largely outnumbered by solely focusing on male offenders. This fact is in sharp contrast to the many studies focusing on gender differences and similarities in the field of intimate partner violence gender symmetry.

The focus on circumstantial and demographic variables in IPH studies facilitates an exploration of the similarities, and differences, found across perpetrators and victims from both genders. Intimate partner homicide research relies less on violence scales, and instead focuses on the demographic and circumstantial factors that increase risk for homicidality. The IPH literature is more cohesive in that distinct patterns are found across perpetrator, victim, relationship, and violence variables. The author will now highlight the most common demographic and circumstantial factors found in literature examining IPH perpetrators. First, the author will provide a brief overview of intimate partner homicide then compare and contrast female and male homicide offenders.

**Intimate Partner Femicide**

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), over 1,700 women were murdered by their intimate partner in 2011 (Violence Policy Center, 2013). The rate of intimate partner femicide in the United States is highly noteworthy, especially considering that these statistics come from voluntary reports. The high rate of intimate partner femicides created an interest reducing the number of women killed by their partners. Studies outline factors putting women at risk of victimization (e.g., Cao, Hou, & Huang, 2008). Yet, intimate partner femicide is a small field of research.
Reckdenwald and Parker (2010) studied the impact of community resources on the number of intimate partner homicides across chosen communities within the US. The researchers note that programs designed to help and protect women have only markedly decreased the rate of men killed by their female partners. Simply stated, programs created to protect women from violent men are mostly protecting men from violent women. The researchers interpreted the findings as supporting the theory that women’s lethal violence is mostly use in self-defense.

In another study, Reckdenwald and Parker (2012) examined intimate homicide trends between 1990 and 2000 in 178 urban cities across the United States. The researchers used exposure reduction, a theory stating that homicide rates reduce when women are given non-violent alternatives to harm reduction. That is to say, the researchers believed that female-perpetrated homicides decline when women are given resources to provide treatment and protect them from severe and lethal violence. Reckdenwald and Parker found that exposure reduction did not affect femicide rates yet decreased the rates of male homicide victimizations. The authors posit that reducing the women’s exposure to violence decreases the likelihood that she will have to use lethal violence in self-defense against a male partner. That is to say, removing women from abusive situations reduces the need to use lethal violence in self-defense thereby decreasing the number of men killed by intimate partners. Although a downward trend in the number of male victims of IPH is found across studies, the number of women murdered by intimate partners remains relatively stable (Dugan, Rosenfeld, & Nagin, 2003).
The Female Homicide Offender

The paucity of research examining female homicide offenders (IPH) impedes the ability for researchers to understand why women kill their male intimate partners. Perhaps the finding that most women kill intimate partners in self-defense created a decline in female homicide studies (e.g., Mann, 1988). Yet, the small number of studies within the literature shed some light on female homicide offender characteristics (e.g., Bourget & Gagné, 2010). Gender symmetry studies are also rare in this field of research as a limited number of studies compare men and women’s use of lethal violence (Gauthier & Bankston, 2004). These studies often include disproportionate ratios of men and women, perhaps due to the uncommon use of lethal violence by women (Jurik & Winn, 1990).

Due to the gender asymmetrical nature of IPH research, women are often excluded from research studies. Again, the current research reviewed literature from over three decades ago due to the scarcity of studies on female IPH offenders. Within the literature, some researchers focus on a subpopulation of IPH perpetrators, female sexual homicide offenders (Chan & Frei, 2013, Chan, Frei, & Myers, 2013). Research studies using female IPH offenders include small participant numbers yet offer in-depth views of women’s aggression. The following sections will describe theories of women’s violence, demographic characteristics, psychosocial factors, and the characteristics of women’s victims.

Demographic Characteristics

In the United States, female homicide offenders are more often married (Kellerman & Mercy, 1992) women of color (Goetting, 1988) with histories of abuse (Yourstone, Lindholm, &
Kristiansson, 2008). Across international studies, most female homicide offenders are women from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Goetting; Weizmann-Henelius, Grönroos, Putkonen, Eronen, Lindberg, & Häkkänen-Nyholm, 2012; Yourstone et al.) and from minority backgrounds (Belknap et al., 2012). In this section, the most prevalent demographic characteristics of female homicide offenders found in the literature will be discussed. Demographic variables include: low socioeconomic status (SES), race and ethnicity, history of childhood physical and sexual abuse, and marital status.

**Socioeconomic background.** Across studies (e.g., Belknap, Larson, L. Abrams, Garcia, & Anderson-Block, 2012) women from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be homicide perpetrators. Female homicide offenders are less likely to attain an education beyond a high school diploma, or its equivalent (Goetting, 1988). To illustrate, Jurik and Winn (1990) examined background characteristics of 50 female offenders. The participants were less likely to obtain education beyond high school (28%), more likely to be unemployed (44%), and have blue collar jobs (40%). The participants appear to be poor women with limited employment options. It may be that low-income women stay in severely violent relationships due to the limited alternatives available to them. The high exposure to severe lethal violence may drive some women to use lethal violence in self-defense.

Further, most studies find female homicide offenders to be unemployed or were receiving public assistance at the time the homicide was committed. Female homicide perpetrators are often women with few resources and from impoverished backgrounds (Bourget & Gagné, 2012). For example, Belknap et al. (2012) described the background characteristics of female homicide
offenders in her study. The majority of women were unemployed (61.5%) and only obtained a high school education (66.6%). It appears that the prevention and intervention resources available to the offenders did not provide enough help and support (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008).

In studies conducted abroad, female homicide offenders are often poor women with little to no formal education (Yourstone et al., 2008). These women are also report being unemployed and receiving public assistance (e.g., Weizmann-Helenius et al., 2012). For example, Yourstone et al. reported the background characteristics of women convicted of homicide in Sweden from 1995 to 2001. The majority of female offenders had a basic education (46%) with only 17% of these women pursuing an education beyond secondary school. Additionally, the majority of these women were unemployed (48%) or receiving pensions (38%). It appears these women lack the resources necessary to obtain help with their use of violence. They may lack transportation or are not be aware of the resources, if any, available in their communities.

**Racial background.** Overwhelmingly, female homicide offenders are women from racial minority backgrounds (e.g., Goetting, 1988). The racial distribution within female-perpetrated IPH studies does not reflect the demographic characteristics of the United States. For example, Chan and Frei (2013) reported that 47.2% of the female sexual homicide offenders in their study were Black while 52.8% are White. The representation of Black women in this study does not reflect the racial distribution of the US at the time.

Jurik and Winn (1990) also examined the racial background of female homicide offenders. Within this population, 12% of women were categorized as Hispanic, 54% as Caucasian, and 26% Black. The racial distribution in the aforementioned study also failed to
reflect the racial distribution of the US at the time. Similarly, Belknap et al. (2012) reported that the female homicide offenders in her study were mostly white (38.5%), Black (30.8%), and Asian American (23.1%). Meanwhile, Muftic and Baumann (2012) reported that female offenders in her study were predominantly Black (71.8%) and equally likely to be White and Hispanic (12.8%). In her study, Goetting (1988) reported that 89.1% of the female homicide offenders in her study were Black. Mann (1988) also reported that 91% of the women in her study were non-white. Women of color are overrepresented in the homicide perpetration studies, perhaps due to the likelihood that they live in disadvantaged communities. Women in these communities may not know what resources are available, if any, to protect them from abuse.

**Marital status.** Female IPH perpetrators are most often married to, ex-spouses of, and in cohabitating relationships with their victim (e.g., Biggers, 1979). For example, Kirkwood (2003) reported that 39% of the female homicide offenders in her sample were the victim’s former or current intimate partner. While Weizzman-Henelius et al. (2012) reported that 43% of the victims in their study were the female perpetrator's spouse. Moreover, Yourstone et al. (2008) found that 56% of female homicide offenders in their study were current or former partners of the victim. Jurik and Winn (1990) reported that more than half (52%) of the female offenders in their study were current or former intimate partners. Further, Goetting (1988) found that 42% of the women in her study had murdered legal or common-law spouses and 17.2% murdered former spouses or intimate partners. Wilbanks (1983) reported that 61.7% of the victims murdered by female offenders were intimate partners, 36.2% of which were spouses. Similarly, Kellerman and Mercy (1992) found that 31.4% of the female perpetrators in their study murdered their spouse while 13.6% murdered an intimate partner. Lastly, Mann (1988) reported that 31.9% of
the female homicide offenders’ victims were common-law spouses and 25% legal spouses. Researchers consistently find that female IPH offenders are most often victimizing their current or former spouses.

**Psychosocial Factors**

Female homicide offenders are more likely to have histories of past physical or emotional abuse (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). These traumatic events begun either in childhood by experiencing or witnessing family violence (Yourstone et al., 2008), or during adult romantic relationships (past or current). Researchers examine the background characteristics of female homicide offenders to understand women’s risk factors for IPH perpetration. In this section, the most prevalent findings regarding female homicide offender’s violence history, legal past, and substance abuse will be highlighted.

**Violence history.** Female homicide offenders report high incidences of child sexual and physical abuse (e.g., Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). Female homicide offenders also report high lifetime prevalence violence victimization by their legal guardians and intimate partners (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008). For example, Kirkwood (2003) reported that 59% of the female IPH offenders’ victims had histories of domestic abuse.

Jurik and Winn (1990) also found that 60% of female homicide offenders had a history of conflict with their victim. Forty-four percent of study participants reported a history of physical conflict between them and their partner. In cases where the victim was an ex-partner, higher rates of physical conflicts (86%) existed than verbal conflicts (10%). Bourget and Gagné (2012) also reported that 35.7% of female IPH offenders’ victims had a known history of violence,
while the rest did not (28.6%), or the violence dynamics were unknown (35.7%). Moreover, Belknap et al. (2012) reported that 44% of male victims had prior arrest for domestic violence. The three studies described in this paragraph provide support for women’s use of lethal violence to defend, or retaliate, for past abuse.

In another study, Yourstone et al. (2008) examined the childhood characteristics of female homicide offenders in their study. They reported that female IPH offenders experienced sexual abuse (34%), physical abuse (46%), and mental abuse (34%). Moreover, nearly one quarter (22%) of these women were exposed to or experienced a traumatic event in their childhood. The researchers also reported that more than half (51%) of female homicide offenders in their study had sought help prior to the commission of the homicide. Specifically, participant sought help from social service organizations and the criminal justice system. These findings suggest that female IPH offenders were unable to find the appropriate resources to prevent the use of lethal violence against their male partners.

**Legal past.** Female homicide offenders are often found to have low incidences of criminal offenses in some studies (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008) and higher rates in others (e.g., Mann, 1988). Unlike their male counterparts, female IPH offenders are less likely to have been arrested for, or convicted of, assault or battery (e.g., Weizmann-Henelius, et al., 2012). Conversely, other studies have found high incidences of prior offenses in female IPH offender samples (e.g., Goetting, 1988; Jurik & Winn, 1990). To illustrate, Wilbanks (1983) compared male and female offenders and found that women were less likely to have committed another crime at the time of the homicide. That is to say, only 8.5% of the women in his sample,
compared to 42.3% of men, were partaking in another crime, such as robbery, before the commission of the homicide. Wilbanks reported that 6.4% of his sample included women using lethal violence after being defrauded during a drug deal.

Moreover, the rates of female IPH offenders with prior criminal records depends on the study’s data collection method. Data collected in IPH studies often come directly from the offender's criminal records (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008) or national crime surveys (Mann, 1988). For example, Goetting (1988) reviewed legal records and reported that 64.7% of her sample had been arrested prior to the homicide. She adds that this number does not describe the types of crimes committed by women, some of which may have been non-violent (e.g., shoplifting) or violent (e.g., assault). Therefore, it is unknown how much of this high rate (64.7%) is comprised of non-violent offences. The types of crimes previously perpetrated by female IPH offenders provides valuable information regarding their propensity to use lethal, or near lethal, violence.

To illustrate, Mann (1988) found that 50.8% of female offenders in her study did not have criminal records. She noted that only 30% of women with criminal records were arrested for committing violent crimes, including battery, assault, and weapon charges. Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2012) also reported that the female homicide offenders in her study were more likely (33.3%) to have been charged with property crimes (e.g., burglary) than violent crimes (17.9%). The finding that women are less likely to have violent criminal backgrounds further supports the belief that IPH was used for self-defense of retaliation.

Substance abuse. Few studies have found that female homicide offenders were under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs during the commission of the homicide (e.g., Goetting,
The rates of substance use and abuse in this population vary greatly across studies due to the samples under investigation. For example, some studies report that the incidence of substance abuse in female IPH offenders is low (e.g., Raskó, 1976) while other studies (Yourstone et al., 2008) have found high instances of drug and alcohol abuse (68%). It appears that the rates of alcohol and drug abuse are impacted by the population of interest.

The lack of consistency among research findings may also be due to way in which drug and alcohol use and abuse is reported. For example, some studies (e.g., Jurik & Winn, 1990; Muftić & Baumann, 2012) reported that women were abusing these substances during the commission of the crime. Yet other studies (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008) report childhood substance and alcohol use in female homicide offenders. Belknap et al. (2012) reported that 33.3% of female homicide offenders had a history of alcohol abuse while 16.7% had histories of drug abuse. It appears that the methods by which substance use and abuse information is gathered, and reported, creates conflicting results in the literature.

The Victims

Female IPH offenders often victimize family and others socially close to their family and social circles (Biggers, 1979; Goetting, 1988; Kellerman & Mercy, 1992; Kirkwood, 2003; Mann, 1988; Paulozzi, Saltzman, Thompson, & Holmgreen, 2001; Raskó, 1976; Wilbanks, 1983). Often, these victims are current common-law or legal spouses rather than former intimate partners (e.g. Jurik & Winn, 1990). Additionally, studies have found that victims often precipitate the homicide (e.g., Wilbanks, 1983). Victim precipitation in homicide is found when the victim engages in acts that provoke the perpetrator, or that act as a catalyst for the violent confrontation. Researchers explore variables associated with the homicide and often find that
female-perpetrated homicide victims were under the influence of drugs or alcohol immediately prior to the commission of the homicide (e.g., Bourget & Gagné, 2010). The finding that female-perpetrated homicide victims were often under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol further supports the use of lethal violence in self-defense by female offenders. Alcohol and illicit drugs reduce the consumer’s inhibition, increasing their likelihood of using lethal, or near lethal, violence during a confrontation.

**Relationship.** A growing area of interest are the gender differences in the types of victims targeted (e.g., Goetting, 1988) by female homicide offenders. For example, Chan & Frei (2013) specifically examine individuals sexually assaulted by female homicide offenders. For the most part, women are more likely to kill their intimate partners and other family members, when compared to men (e.g. Kellerman & Mercy, 1992). Moreover, victims are most often the female homicide offenders’ male intimate partner (Jurik & Winn, 1990). Victims usually have a history of perpetrating physical and/or emotional abuse, usually indicated by examining arrest records or police reports (e.g., Bourget & Gagné, 2010). To illustrate, Jurik and Winn examined 21 cases of intimate partner homicide committed by women. The researchers found that the perpetrator experienced physical abuse in 18/21 cases. Moreover, female IPH offenders reported experiencing abuse that required either medical or police intervention in half of the 18 cases.

Bourget and Gagne (2012) conducted a study in Quebec, Canada to examine the differences between male and female homicide offenders and their victims. The researchers reviewed the coroner’s files from 1991 to 2000, to identify legal and common-law spousal homicides. The authors found 276 partners (85% female) were murdered within the chosen
timespan. Later, the victim’s history was examined and it was found that 15 (35.7%) of the female offenders’ victims had a history of violence compared to 12 (5.1%) victims of male-perpetrated IPH. Moreover, 11 (26.2) of the female offenders’ victims had a history of committing family violence, compared to five (2.1%) of the males’ victims. Victims of both genders were also likely to have history of substance abuse; twenty-one (50%) female offender’s victims 20 (12.8%) of men’s victims abused substances. Additionally, 21 (50%), of the females’ victims had abused substances just prior to the lethal altercation. Conversely, only 51 (21.8%) of male-perpetrated IPH victims were under the influence of a substance prior to the homicide. One limitation of this study is the use of a severely unbalanced sample of female (n=42) and male (n=134) homicide offenders.

**Homicide precipitation.** Goetting (1988) described victim precipitation as “offenses in which the victim is the first in the homicide drama to use physical force directed against his or her subsequent slayer” (p. 12). Many studies (e.g., Goetting) find that the victims often precipitated the lethal interaction, suggesting that they played a pivotal role in the commission of the homicide. Homicide victim precipitation also supports the use of lethal violence by women as self-defensive in nature.

To illustrate, Wilbanks (1983) reported that 29.8% of the victims of female homicide offenders precipitated their homicide. Similarly, 46.8% of victims participated in the offense, meaning that they were engaging in arguments, or committing a crime, with the perpetrator. In another study, Wilbanks stated that only 21.3% of victims in her study were identified as “innocent” (i.e., no precipitation or participation). Goetting (1988) also reported that 56% of the
homicide victims in her study had precipitated the use of lethal violence by the female offenders. While Jurik & Winn (1990) reported that 50% of female IPH victims initiated the physical confrontation resulting in their death. Again, it appears that many of the homicides involving female offenders were initiated by their victim. Consequently, lethal violence was used by the offenders as a way to defend, or protect, themselves from their victims.

Substance Abuse. Victims of female offenders were often under the influence of alcohol, or illicit substances, during the commission of the homicide (e.g., Mann, 1988). For example, Wilbanks (1983) collected data from homicide offenders in Dade County, Florida. Wilbanks conducted interviews and reviewed court files to examine gender differences between male and female homicide offenders. The researcher also found that victims of female offenders were more likely to have consumed alcohol prior to the homicide, compared to men (46.2% and 39.7% respectively). Women (30.8%) were more likely to have murdered victims considered legally drunk, as compared to men (21.4%).

In another example, Mann (1988) found that victims in her study were under the influence of narcotics (18.4%) and alcohol (58.3%) prior to the homicide. Further, Mann reports that victim autopsies revealed that 22% of victims had consumed alcohol or were legally drunk. Muftic and Baumann (2012) also reported that 28.2% of female homicide offender victims had consumed alcohol prior to the homicide, while 17.9% were under the influence of drugs during that time. Moreover, Bourget & Gagne (2012) reported that half of the female homicide offenders’ victims had a known history of substance abuse. Lastly, Goetting (1988) reported that 47.7% of this population’s victims had consumed alcohol just prior to the lethal incident. The aforementioned studies also support women’s use of lethal violence in a self-defensive manner.
Female offenders may have been fighting off, or protecting themselves, from violent attacks perpetrated by inebriated partners.

**Weapons**

Women are more likely to use sharp objects, such as knives, during the lethal altercation (e.g., Bourget & Gagné, 2012). Researchers (e.g., Jurik & Winn, 1990) have linked the use of knives with self-defensive behavior due to their ease of accessibility in most homes. Knives are considered weapons of opportunity and are often associated with impulsive (i.e., not premeditated) violence. Women needing to defend themselves from lethal violence may reach for a knife found in their kitchen, either in a drawer or on their counter.

Female homicide offenders’ use of guns and other firearms is another area of interest. Female homicide offenders have been found to be less likely to use firearms in some studies (e.g., Wilbanks, 1983) while others (e.g. Muftic & Gagne, 2012) report high rates of firearm use. For example, Mann (1988) reported that 51.7% of women in her study used firearms and 44.1% used knives. Similarly, Bourget & Gagne (2012) reported higher rates of knife use (52.4%) and lower rates of firearm use (35.7%) in their study. Goetting (1988) reported that 52.2% of the female homicide offenders in her study used firearms while 35.6% used knives and other sharp objects. Goetting interpreted her findings by positing that women are much more comfortable handling knives due to their use in food preparation. This could help to explain why women also use knives in cases not involving self-defensive behavior.

Muftic & Baumann (2012) also reported a significantly higher rates of firearm use (63.3%) and a lower rates of knife use (21.1%) in their sample. Similarly, Jurik & Winn (1990)
reported that 59% of women in their sample used firearms, only 10% used a knife. Two interpretations exist in the literature to explain the discrepancy in the rates of gun use reported across studies. First, Kellerman & Mercy (1992) propose that the rise in women’s gun use is due to the promotion of handguns for personal protection. Kellerman and Mercy suggest that firearm manufactures targeted female consumers by promoting small handguns for use in self-defense.

The divergent findings related to female homicide offenders’ use of firearms appears to be impacted by the region of the country in which the study was conducted. For example, Mann (1988) reported that the use of guns in her study were higher in specific regions, such as southern cities. Wilbanks (1983) compared male and female homicide offenders use of weapons during the commission of the crime. The weapons of interest included: firearms, knives, blunt objects, personal weapons (i.e., own body), and other. Willbanks found that women (59.6%) were less likely to use firearms, compared to men (74%). In this study women were more likely to have used weapons of opportunity which includes knives (25.5%) and blunt objects (8.5%). The use of firearms in this sample is high, nearly 60% of women used guns. The study’s location, a southern state, may have affected the rate of firearm use.

**Motive**

Qualitative researchers have interviewed female homicide offenders to understand the motivations underlying their use of lethal violence. Female homicide offenders offer many reasons for their crimes, the most commonly reported being self-defense. Women also report using lethal violence to protect their children from severe physical violence. Other women have indicated that they used lethal violence to retaliate for their partners’ use of physical and/or emotional abuse against their person.
Jurik and Winn's (1990) examined the circumstances under which women used lethal violence. They found that in 80% of cases, women killed due to a conflict preceding the homicide. Of these cases, 44% involved the perpetrator engaging in conflict with their romantic partner. Jurik and Winn add that the male victim initiated the violent altercation in half of the cases in which the homicide was precipitated by conflict. This finding suggests that female offenders may have used lethal violence in self-defense.

The Male Homicide Offender

The male homicide offender literature is bountiful and offers a broad understanding important factors and variables that influence their behavior. Research examining background characteristics of male offenders reveals a different picture than studies focused solely on female offenders. In this section, the most common findings in the literature regarding the demographic characteristics, psychosocial backgrounds, victims, weapons used, and motives of male homicide offenders are highlighted. The findings are described in further detail in the subsequent sections.

Demographic Characteristics

Studies (e.g., Wiezmann-Henelius et al., 2012) have attempted to uncover common factors placing men at risk for intimate partner homicide perpetration by examining their demographic characteristics. Many of these studies use criminal records and supplemental homicide reports to uncover patterns in the backgrounds of male homicide offenders (e.g., Jurik & Winn, 1990). The most common demographic variables existing in the literature are socioeconomic background, racial background, and marital status. These three variables will be described in further detail below.
**Socioeconomic background.** The socioeconomic backgrounds found in the literature report that male homicide offenders are usually from low socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Jurik & Winn, 1990) and are often unemployed (e.g., Weizmann-Helenius et al., 2012). Moreover, other studies report that male homicide offenders are usually not educated beyond high school (e.g., Jurik & Winn, 1990). These findings hold true across international studies, which report that these offenders are often unemployed and receive little formal education (Liem & Roberts, 2009). It appears that for men, like their female counterparts, poverty and lack of access to resources increases the likelihood of IPH perpetration.

To illustrate, Dobash et al.’s study (2009) compared men with and without previous criminal convictions. They found that men with previous convictions were less likely to have at a minimum obtained their General Certificate of Standard Education (GCSE), a national exam completed by students aged 14 to 16 in England and is the equivalent of a 10th grade education. The offenders without previous convictions (56%) were more likely than those with prior convictions (35.1%) to have obtained their GCSE or an advanced certificate. Further, men without prior convictions were more likely to be regularly employed (70.8%) compared to those with prior convictions (43.4%).

Dawson (2005) also reported the background characteristics of femicide and femicide-suicide offenders. She found that participants in both groups were likely to be unemployed – in fact, only half the sample was employed. Femicide-suicide offenders were less likely to be employed (46%) compared to femicide only offenders (52%). Additionally, Morton, Runyan, Moracco, and Butts (1998) reported that homicide-suicide offenders in their sample were less
likely to have received an education beyond high school (89%). It appears that poverty is a risk factor for IPH perpetration for men and women.

**Racial background.** Studies examining background characteristics of male homicide offenders report that they are from minority (e.g., Muftić & Baumann, 2012) and majority (e.g., Morton et al., 1998) racial backgrounds. The ethnic and racial backgrounds of male homicide offenders vary across studies and depend upon the location where the study was conducted. For example, Goetting (1991) collected data from femicides committed in Detroit between 1982 and 1983. Goetting reported that 89.1% of the homicide perpetrators in her study were Black. Moreover, she adds that Detroit’s population at the time of her study (1980) was primarily comprised of Black men and women. It appears that the high rate of Black homicide offenders was highly influenced by the high proportion of Black residents in Detroit. In Jurik and Winn’s study (1990), homicide offenders were predominantly Hispanic (34%), White (51%), and Black (15%).

Homicide studies also report high proportions of intra-racial homicides (e.g., Goetting, 1991). For example, Muftić and Baumann’s (2012) reported the racial backgrounds of perpetrators and their victims. Again, racial minority men were more likely to commit femicide, compared to their White counterparts. The arrest records of Black (59.1%), White (23.4%), and Hispanic men (14.6%) were compared to one another. It was found that their victims were predominantly Black (53.6%), White (28%), and Hispanic (15.1%). The racial distribution of the victims and perpetrator closely mirrors the other across many studies (Morton et al., 1998).
**Marital status.** Male homicide offenders are most often married, or in committed relationships (e.g., Morton et al., 1998). To illustrate, Goetting (1991) reported the relationship between femicide victims and the homicide offenders in her study. She found that 36.2% were intimately related, either by current or former relationships while 22% were strangers and 21.2% acquaintances.

Other studies (e.g., Daniel & Holcomb, 1985) compare the marital backgrounds of male domestic homicide and non-domestic homicide offenders. Daniel and Holcomb found that non-domestic homicide offenders were more likely to be single (55.4%) and equally likely to be married and divorced (17.4%). Conversely, domestic homicide offenders were more likely to be single and widowed (31%). It is important to note that the researchers classified domestic homicide as occurring between a victim living with the offender for more than six months. This classification includes parents, children, and grandparents, which can greatly skew the study findings.

Intimate partner femicide studies are more likely to report that the perpetrator is the victim’s legal spouse (e.g., Dawson, 2005). For example, Dobash et al. (2009) compared the relationships of male femicide offenders and their victims. Dobash and colleagues were interested in exploring the background characteristics of men with (n=79) and without prior criminal convictions (n=25). They found that men without prior convictions were more likely to be married (64%) or separated (32%) during the time the murder occurred. Similarly, men with prior convictions were equally likely to be cohabitating and separated during the time of the murder (38%). The unbalanced sample distribution of offenders, 76% with and 24% without previous offenses, could have greatly skewed study findings.
Dawson (2005) reports similar findings; in her study femicide offenders with evidence of premeditation (n=101) were compared to those without (n=93). Dawson found that femicide offenders without evidence of premeditation were more likely to be legal spouses of (69%) or estranged (26%) from their victims. Conversely, femicides with evidence of premeditation were more likely to be legal spouses (48%) and common-law partners (37%). The aforementioned findings support men’s use of lethal violence to regain control over their intimate partners.

Psychosocial Factors

Many researchers have examined psychosocial factors that influence a male IPH offender’s use of violence (e.g., Dobash et al., 2009). These studies examine factors placing men at risk for using lethal violence against their female intimate partners. The most prevalent psychosocial variables found across studies are that these men faced childhood adversity, experienced or witnessed family violence, have criminal backgrounds, and a history of substance abuse.

Childhood adversity. Dobash et al. (2009) examined childhood psychological factors of men convicted of intimate partner homicide. The researchers compared 79 men with previous convictions to 25 men without prior convictions for any criminal offense. Men with prior convictions experienced family problems (77.7%), physical (22.2%) and sexual abuse (6.3%), alcohol (27.4%) and drug abuse (15.5%), criminal justice intervention before age 18 (65.3%), and social service intervention (26.1%). Conversely, men without prior convictions did not face much childhood adversity; only 36.1% had family problems, 13% were physically abused, and 8% abused drugs. The results suggest that IPH perpetrators are also individuals without criminal
The aforementioned finding informs clinicians and legal professionals that assessing homicide risk should not rely solely or heavily on the offender’s criminal background.

**Violence history.** Male homicide offenders often have family violence history, such as witnessing or experiencing physical violence (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). Studies have found that homicide offenders have either witnessed or experienced family violence during their childhood (Dobash & Dobash, 2012). The prevalence of family violence in homicide offenders’ childhoods is noteworthy. For example, Dobash et al. (2009) reported the rates at which their participants were victimized as children. They found that male homicide offenders without previous convictions were less likely (13%) to have been physically abused as children compared to those with convictions (22.2%). Further, men with previous convictions were also likely to have experienced child sexual abuse (6.3%). In another study, Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2012) reported high rates of child abuse and witnessing family violence in their sample of homicide offenders. The researchers found that male IPH offender were more likely to have witnessed family violence (40.8%) compared to non-IPH offenders (25%). Non-IPH offenders were also more likely to have been physically abused (44.3%) compared to the other group (24.2%). Lastly, both groups were reported to have the same rate of child sexual abuse (2%).

As adults, male homicide offenders report high rates of violence perpetration against intimate partners. Dawson (2005) reported that 47% of their sample had a prior violence history while Morton et al. (1998) reported that 29% of their sample reported the same experience.

Similarly, Dobash and Dobash (2012) examined the criminal backgrounds of four groups of homicide offenders to determine how many had convictions of assault against a woman. The
researchers examined the background characteristics of male homicide offenders who killed men and women known to the partners, also known as collaterals. The four groups in this study consisted of the following: IPH offenders (control group), offenders who killed children, offenders who killed an ally (e.g., friends and family), and those who killed a new partner. Offenders who killed an ally were more likely (66.7%) to have been convicted of assaulting a woman, followed by the control group (56.8%). Rates in the child group (28.6%) and new partner group (20%) were lower in comparison. The results suggest that IPH offenders who kill allies experience more psychopathic and impulsive tendencies.

**Legal past.** Male homicide offenders are often found to have past criminal backgrounds (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). The offenses committed by male IPH offenders include domestic violence and stalking. Many studies (e.g., Yourstone et al., 2008) have examined the criminal backgrounds of IPH offenders and found that most have little to no history of criminality (e.g., Dobash et al., 2004) while others have found high rates of criminal offenses (e.g., Dobash et al., 2009). Other researchers report that male homicide offenders are also likely to rape their female victims prior to the homicide (e.g., Arbuckle et al., 1995).

Dobash et al. (2004) also examined the criminal backgrounds of 424 men convicted of murdering other men (MM) and 106 men convicted of murdering intimate partners (IP). The researchers reported a high incidence of criminal convictions in both groups. Both groups had, at minimum, one prior conviction (MM=81.8%, IP=72.6%), these convictions included minor assault (MM=40.9%, IP=31.4%) and serious assault (MM=17.1%, IP=13.3%). The researcher further investigated the assault charges and found that 10.5% of those convicted for MM and
56.8% of those for IP were charged with assault against a woman. Lastly, men who murdered other men are more likely to have been in prison (45.8%) than men who murdered their partners (32%). It appears that men who are violent towards other men and those who perpetrate IPH share similar background characteristics. Yet, IPH offenders are more likely to have criminal backgrounds that are specific to violence against women.

Male homicide offenders have also been found to engage in stalking behavior towards current or former romantic partners. For example, McFarlane et al. (1999) interviewed victims of attempted femicide and proxy informants of femicide victims to uncover the rate of stalking perpetration prior to the homicide. Seventy-six percent of participants reported being stalked while 58% indicated that the stalking was reported to the police. Lastly, the researchers found that stalking behavior was higher for women in former (88%) than current relationships (69%). The finding that femicide victims are more often former romantic partners suggests that IPH may be perpetrated out of a need to control the victim. The offender may use violence as the last attempt to regain control over their partner.

**Substance abuse.** There appears to be a high incidence of alcohol or illicit substance abuse in male homicide offender populations (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). Studies examining the context under which intimate partner homicide occurs have found illicit drug use and alcohol intoxication in victims, and perpetrators, of intimate partner homicide (e.g., Muftić & Baumann, 2012). For example, Dobash et al. (2009) compared men with and without previous criminal convictions prior to homicides. They found that 57.2% of men with and 16.7% of men without previous convictions had a history of alcohol or drug abuse. In another
study, Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2012) compared male homicide offenders in two groups, intimate partner homicide and non-intimate partner homicide. The researchers reported that non-intimate partner homicide offenders had higher instances of drug use/dependence compared to the other group (23.6% and 12.6% respectively. Although both offender groups reported similar rates of drug use, non-IPH offenders reported higher usage than the other group (69.5% and 52.3% respectively). These findings suggest that some IPH offenders may be motivated, or influenced, to use lethal violence by substances during the commission of the homicide. An intoxicated state may also impede the perpetrator’s ability to control the severity of the violence they use against their partner.

Dobash, et al. (2004) compared the background characteristics of men who murder intimate partners (n=106) and those who murder other men (n=424). Of the men who murdered intimate partners, 37.4% had a history of alcohol abuse and 14.7% a history of drug abuse. Conversely, men who murdered other men had a higher incidence of substance abuse. Alcohol abuse was found in 56.6% of participants and drug abuse in 35.6% of participants.

Suicidality. Researchers have examined the background characteristics of homicide offenders who commit suicide during, or immediately following, the commission of murder. Murder-suicide has been found to be almost exclusively committed by men (e.g., Bourget et al., 2010). The rates at which men and women commit murder-suicide are disparate. To illustrate, Dawson (2005) analyzed data gathered from homicides committed in Ontario, Canada in the years 1974 to 1994. She compared the victims’ and offenders’ background characteristics, situational factors leading to the homicide, relationship status, motives, and premeditation. Two
groups were used in this study: femicide-suicide (N=194) and femicide-only (N=509).

Researchers found group differences; femicide-suicide was found to be three times more likely to involve premeditation. In fact, Dawson found that only 20% of femicide-only involved premeditation compared to over half of femicide-suicides. Femicide-suicide offenders were also found to be 55 or older and less likely to have a history of domestic violence against their partner. Additionally, the researchers found relationships between illness and other life stressors with femicide-suicide. It appears that femicide-suicide offenders, in this sample, murdered their partners for reasons other than dominance and control.

In accord with Dawson’s findings (2005), Bourget et al. (2010) found that almost half of male homicide-suicide offenders were diagnosed with an illness. Bourget et al. (2010) compared victim and perpetrator characteristics in homicide and homicide-suicide committed by older offenders (ages 65 and over). They reviewed the coroners’ files of 25 men and two women who murdered either a family member or spouse in Quebec, Canada from 1992 to 2007. The researchers found that 70% of the cases involved homicide-suicide; of these cases, 68% resulted in competed suicides. In particular, only 4 (15%) of the homicides were associated with spousal violence suggesting intimate partner homicide. Further, the mental health status for only 15 of the 19 homicide-suicide offenders was known – 87% had a history of major depression. Substance use was present at the time of the homicide in nearly 32% of these offenses.

**The Victims**

The victims of male homicide offenders involve more complex factors than those of women. There are significant differences in the relationships between the male offender and his
victim. When the victim is not a stranger or an acquaintance, they are more likely to have a romantic history in which violence and emotional abuse is present. The following subsections highlight the different variables in the literature describing victims of male homicide offenders.

**Relationship.** Studies examining national crime statistics, such as FBI supplemental homicide reports, report information regarding the type of relationship the offender and victim had prior to the commission of the homicide (e.g., Kellerman & Mercy, 1992). Unlike their female counterparts, the victims of male homicide offenders are diverse (Cao, Hou, & Huang, 2008). These offenders often target strangers, acquaintances, family members, and intimate partners (past and present). The rates at which individuals in these types of relationships are targeted vary across studies. However, when the scope of the study involves examining murders of individuals known to the offender, the victim is most often their former intimate partner (e.g., Dobash et al., 2004). While the majority of studies focus on male perpetrated homicides against female partners, researchers (e.g., Goetting, 1991) have broadened the scope of investigation by including strangers. For example, Jurik and Winn (1990) found that 25% of male homicide offenders’ victims were murdered during the commission of a crime, such as robbery.

Men in Jurik and Winn's study (1990) were more likely than women to kill strangers and acquaintances. Only 27% of male homicide offenders killed within their family with 10% of victims being intimate partners; strangers consisted of 27% of the victims targeted by men. Another study conducted by Dawson (2005) found that the type of relationship the victim shared with the offender determined if the homicide included premeditation. She discovered that cases involving common-law relationships were more likely to involve premeditation than marriages.
Further, men are more likely than women to kill collaterals, or innocent bystanders known to the victim (Dobash & Dobash, 2012). Examples of collaterals include current intimate partners, children, coworkers, family members, or roommates. Dobash and Dobash (2012) used the data from their Murder in Britain study examining the circumstances and context of homicides including those which occurred in Scotland, England, and Wales. Dobash and Dobash compared the background characteristics of intimate partner murderers (IPM; n=104) and intimate partner collateral murderers (IPCM; n=62). Three types of IPCM were identified by the researchers: new partner, child, and ally. Dobash and Dobash found that collateral murders involving children (n=19) involved a history of severe physical abuse against both the child and his or her mothers in 65% of the cases. In fact, the IPCM were the biological parent of the murdered child in only 31% of the cases, which further supports the Sexual Proprietariness Theory by Daly and Martin (1993). Cases involving the murder of an ally (n=19; 12 women and seven men) included relatives, friends, neighbors, and helping professionals. The pre-homicide dynamic involved in this type of murder are more complex; almost half of the female allies were raped by the IPCM prior to the homicide. The male allies murdered by the IPCM were often related to the victim (71%). In particular, the ally was targeted as the primary victim and in some instances their intimate partner witnessed the murder. The last category involves the homicide of the IPCM's ex-intimate partner's new romantic partner (n=24, 22 men and 2 women). In these cases, the IPCM and their ex-intimate partner had been separated, some for many years. In 42% of these cases, the IPCM and their ex-intimate partner had a history of physical violence. In fact, researchers found that in 13% of cases, the IPCM had a history of violence towards the new partner (i.e., the victim).
Abuse history. The victims of male homicide offenders are often intimate partners they have physically abused (e.g., Arbuckle et al., 1995). These victims were more likely to have left or attempted to leave the relationship. Studies have found that the most dangerous time for women is when they attempt to leave a violent relationship (e.g., McFarlane et al., 2002). Moreover, studies (e.g., McFarlane et al., 1999) have found that femicide victims often sought help from the criminal justice system to protect themselves from the offender’s violence.

Liem and Roberts’ study (2009) compared the background characteristics and relationship dynamics between the victims and the homicide perpetrators. The researchers were interested in the background characteristics of homicide offenders who committed a self-destructive act (i.e., suicide) and those who did not. Male homicide offenders who committed suicide were less likely to make death threats against the victim (10%) than those who did not commit suicide (15%). Further, male offenders who were not suicidal were more likely to have committed violence against their intimate partner (52%) than those who were suicidal (38%).

In the study conducted by Morton et al. (1998), femicide victims were reported to have experienced intimate partner violence prior to the homicide. The researchers reported that 34% of the femicide victims were previously victims of intimate partner violence. Morton et al. then compared the rates at which femicide victims in separated versus not-separated relationships were victimized. Women separated from the homicide offender were more likely to have been victimized (49%) than those who were not separated (21%). Lastly, Goetting (1991) reported that 39.2% of the femicide victims in her study were killed during a domestic argument, suggesting a history of intimate partner violence in this relationship.
Weapons

The types of weapons used by male homicide offenders are vastly different than those used by women. Men are more likely to use personal weapons, or their own body, during the commission of a homicide. Researchers (e.g., Allen & Fox, 2013) have linked the use of personal weapons with reactive violence. That is to say, this type of violence is not premeditated and most likely is the result of a strong emotional reaction. Further, the use of guns has been linked to homicide premeditation (e.g., Dawson, 2005).

Across studies (e.g., Goetting, 1991) men are more likely to use firearms than other weapons. To illustrate, Morton et al. (1998) conducted a study to examine background characteristic of homicide-suicide offenders (n=99), their victims, and the context of the homicide. Morton and colleagues found that firearms were the weapon most commonly used in both the homicides (96%) and the suicides (96%). Another study conducted by Muftić & Baumann (2012) supports these findings. In this study, the characteristics of male (n=364) and female (n=39) homicide offenders were compared in addition to the weapons used by the perpetrator. In this population, firearms were used by 60.8% of the male offenders compared to the use of blunt objects (12.9%), knives (17.1%), and asphyxiation (7.8%).

Further, personal weapons are almost exclusively used by male homicide offenders. To illustrate, Allen and Fox (2013) conducted a study to determine if the relationship between age and gender of the offender predicts the type of weapon used in the homicide. The researchers compared weapons used in the sample, including: handguns, knives, long guns, clubs, strangulation, other weapons, and no weapon. The use of strangulation in murders was more
common in men (n=394) than in women (n=9). Further, men (n=7,108) were more likely than women (n=4,002) to use handguns. Men (n=2,671) were also more likely than women (n=1,009) to use long guns (e.g., rifles).

**Motive**

Across studies (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 2011) men report jealousy, control, and anger as reasons for using lethal violence against an intimate partner. Researchers have explored the underlying motives driving men to murder their intimate partner. Qualitative studies (e.g., Goussinsky & Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012) and research using archival data (e.g., Bourget et al., 2010) provide information regarding the rationale and causes for men’s use of lethal violence.

For example, Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) interviewed men convicted of domestic violence (n=18) and completed intimate partner homicide (n=18) in Israel. The researchers were interested in comparing: differences in participants’ motivation for using violence, the existence of IPV in their relationship, their use of control, and the perpetrator’s intent to use lethal violence. The researchers analyzed data gathered from semi-structured interviews and found that three themes emerged in the data: background and motive, self-control and intent/planning, and physical violence. Background and motive explained differences in how men used violence to control women deviating from their expectations. The majority (75%) of convicted men murdered their partner when she attempted to leave the relationship. Men who did not use lethal violence attempted to control their intimate partner when he felt her behavior was out of his control. In both situations violence is a means to regain control over their intimate partner.
Moreover, Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) describe self-control and intent/planning as the process by which murder became acceptable to the offender as he psychologically prepared to take action. Nearly all offenders described the homicide as an instantaneous reaction – a loss of control over their emotions, compelling them to kill. Lastly, physical violence is described as an inconsistency in the men’s view of abuse toward their intimate partner. Men in both samples believed that physical violence against women was reprehensible and dishonorable. Yet, these men reported viewing violence to regain their honor and respect. The main difference between homicide offenders and those convicted of domestic violence was their view regarding the use of violence against their partner. Male homicide offenders viewed themselves as non-violent and believed it is shameful and not masculine.

Meanwhile, men convicted of domestic violence viewed it as a last resort and also consider themselves victims in the intimate relationship. The negative viewIPH offenders held regarding violence against women supports their report that their use of lethal violence was an instantaneous decision.

In Jurik and Winn's study (1990), intimate partner conflict was reported as the precipitating event leading to the homicide by 63% of male participants. Moreover, they found half of the homicides committed by men against women were preceded by involved a domestically violent altercation. Further, only 25% of these men's victims precipitated the violence, meaning the male homicide offender initiated the lethal violence in 75% of these cases.

In another example, Bourget and colleagues (2010) examined victim and perpetrator characteristics in homicides and homicide-suicides. The researchers found that 80% of the
victims were medically ill at the time of the homicide. Of these victims, 85% were current or common law spouses and 7% were the offenders’ daughters. Ninety-three percent of the homicides and homicide-suicides occurred in the victim’s home. The perpetrators and victims often shared residence often because the perpetrators were the victim’s medical caretakers. Bourget et al. (2010) believe that the perpetrators in their study were overwhelmed by the needs of their victim and that some participated in mercy killings and assisted suicides.

**Male and Female Homicide Offenders: Comparing Apples to Oranges**

Although current research on gender symmetry maintains that men and women are equally violent, studies on intimate partner homicide provide disparate findings. The proportion of studies conducted on male and female homicide offenders demonstrates the difference in the prevalence of homicides committed by each gender. This paucity in research on female homicide offenders does not provide researchers with enough information to formulate adequate comparisons. Again, from a feminist empiricism frame work, it can be argued that the low prevalence of IPH perpetrated by women has led researchers to overlook this population.

The gender symmetry debate becomes more complicated once IPH rates are taken into account. One can argue that the consensuses in the homicide literature is that men are overwhelmingly perpetrators rather than victims. Yet, among all the gender comparisons, IPH is often excluded from IPV gender symmetry discussions. To truly measure violence, all aspects of IPV should be taken into consideration, including the completed or attempted murder an intimate partner. To obtain a full scope of the types of acts committed by and against men and women in our communities, scholars should create models to explain the gender differences and similarities
in IPV. The current *one size fits all* approach to violence assessment appears to have created contention, rather than cohesion, within the literature.

**Summary**

The IPV literature is awash with contradictory results regarding the nature and scope of intimate partner violence. Addressing the discord within the literature begins by taking a critical look at the *one size fits all* approach to IPV assessment. Adopting or creating a universal measure of violence is beneficial to increasing our understanding of violence against men and women. Yet, such a measure is not without its limitations in capturing the breadth and depth of intimate partner violence.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to determine whether the results produced by the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996), a widely adopted IPV assessment, are measurement invariant. Evaluating for measurement invariance in results (i.e., data) produced by the CTS2 informs the current researcher whether contrasting gender differences and similarities will lead to reliable and accurate results. If measurement invariance holds, IPV gender comparisons will be valid and reliable. Conversely, if measurement invariance does not hold, gendered comparisons will be unreliable and invalid.
Chapter III: Method

This chapter includes a description of the methodology used in the present study. To reiterate, this individual project aims to further examine properties of data produced by using the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). Information is provided regarding the following aspects: the research design and procedure, the instrument, the data set used, and the data analysis. Each of these are described in further detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Participants

The present sample was a subsample of survey data collected during the International Dating Violence Study (IDVS; Straus et al., 2001-2006). The subsample was limited to samples collected within the United States to replicate the sample used to norm the instrument (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996). Respondents’ answers were grouped by violence experience (i.e., perpetration and victimization) and the type of violence described in each of the five factors (e.g., injury). The subsample included 1,288 men (31%) and 2,874 (69%) women. Participants’ ranged in age from 18 to 45 years of age, with an average of 23.11 years. The majority of participants (61.5%) reported being in a current relationship, while others endorsed a past relationship (38.3.5%), and not having been in a relationship lasting more than one month (.20%). These relationships were described as dating (81.9%), engaged (7.5%), married (9.5%), and cohabitating (1.1%). The majority of these participants reported living with their parents (21.4%), a roommate (31.1%), alone (12.3%), other (13.9%) while 21.3% of the sample reported living with their partner. Lastly, the sample was primarily heterosexual (97.1%), with only 2.9% of the sample identifying as gay or queer. Table 1 includes additional demographic information.
This specific data set was chosen due to the inclusion of samples from various communities within the United States. Additionally, the large sample size provides the necessary power to conduct the statistical analyses (see Chapter 5 for more information). Additionally, the IDVS is the most recent large-scale survey that uses the CTS2 to measure IPV across a variety of couples (e.g., dating and those in committed relationships). It is important to note that past studies evaluating the properties of the CTS2 have used small clinical subsamples (e.g., women in shelters). The current data set increases the generalizability of the study findings due to the use of a large non-clinical sample.

**Measure**

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996) was used in the IDVS to measure intimate partner violence. University students in psychology, sociology, criminology, and family studies were surveyed from 68 universities across 32 nations. The CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is a five-factor model of intimate partner violence. These five factors include: physical assault (PhA), psychological aggression (PA), injury (IN), sexual coercion (SC), and negotiation (NEG). These five factors describe both the perpetration and victimization of intimate partner violence. Past research on the CTS-2 has yielded mixed results on the reliability of the measure. Jones et al., (2002) replicated the five-factor structure of the CTS-2 and found moderate to excellent reliability (.62-.91) for the self-as victim items in an incarcerated female sample. Yet, they were unable to confirm the same five-factor structure for the self-as aggressor items in this study. Additionally, Straus (2004) found moderate to high reliability (.74-.89) in a sample of preliminary data from the IDVS.
Analyses

The current data set was analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. SEM is a family of statistical techniques used to examine the relationship between indicators and the latent variable of interest (Kline, 2010). The analyses were conducted in a three-step process. First, assumptions associated with Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) were examined. Second, two separate CFAs were run for both men and women. Lastly, the factor structure for men and women was analyzed for measurement invariance. These steps were taken to answer the research question: are the results produced by the CTS2 invariant across gender?

Assumption testing. First, the statistical assumptions underlying the model were tested. These assumptions relate not only to the model, but also to the data. Testing assumptions ensures that the interpretations derived from the model are valid and reliable (Kline, 1998). The following four assumptions were tested before conducting the confirmatory factor analysis: homoscedasticity, causal inference, exogeneity, and normality.

Kline (1998) describes homoscedasticity as the assumption that the error terms are normally distributed and that the model’s variances are uniform. This assumption is tested through a scatter plot – the pattern in the plot was analyzed to determine independence. A plot displaying homoscedasticity contains data that is evenly and randomly spread. Causal inference is the assumption that the indicators are caused by the latent variable (Hox & Bechger, 1998). This assumption was tested through the theory developed by Straus et al. (CTS2; 1996) in addition to the existing literature on IPV. The exogeneity assumption states that the direction in
which the indicators are affected by the latent variable is correctly specified by the model (Kline, 2010). Again, this assumption will be tested through the literature and theory under which the CTS2 was developed.

**Confirmatory factor analyses.** Two confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to test the five-factor model of violence under which the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) was developed. This model includes the latent IPV described by two factors, victimization and perpetration, both assessed through the following indicators: sexual coercion, physical assault, psychological aggression, negotiation, and injury. The answers provided to these questions were then analyzed through a CFA which forms groups of responses based on patterns within the data. Ideally, the distinct patterns confirm the proposed model by separating these responses based on the indicators. For example, the model proposed by Straus and colleagues (CTS2; 1996) would identify five clear patterns for injury, sexual coercion, physical assault, psychological aggression, and negotiation. Refer to figure 1 for an illustration of the CTS2 five-factor model.

The model’s fit, for men and women, was then evaluated to determine how distinct these patterns are formed by the analyses. Problems with model fit arise when items do not load onto their intended indicator. An example of this problem would be found if an item intended to assess sexual coercion loaded onto negotiation. This occurrence would suggest that the specific item is not purely assessing sexual coercion; the way the question is worded may not portray the researcher’s query accurately

**Measurement invariance.** Measurement invariance testing was conducted in a sequence of steps. At each step, the two models are constrained to be equal; yet, the manner by which they
are constrained depends on the strength of the measurement invariance. At the configural level, the least strict of the steps, the models will not be constrained and the basic structure (i.e., the factor model) is the source of comparison. At the metric level the factor loading of similar indicators are set to equal while scalar level invariance testing includes these factor loadings and includes factor intercepts in its constraint for equality. Lastly, strict measurement invariance evaluates measurement invariance through setting the models’ error variances to be equal.

It is important to note that a measurement invariance analysis requires that the models are increasingly constrained until they no longer hold. This means that the model would not be subjected to additional constraints once it fails a step. The decision to add another constraint is made by evaluating the model’s properties through appropriate fit indices. Using several fit indices to assess model fit due is recommended due to their innate limitations (Kline, 2010). Consequently, a group of fit indices was chosen to evaluate model fit to overcome these limitations. To examine whether invariance across the nested models changes, additional fit indices were examined including change in chi-square ($\Delta \chi^2$) and change in CFI ($\Delta$CFI). Cheung and Rensvold (2002) recommended reporting change in CFI and suggest that differences at or less than 0.01 represent model fit that has not been degraded.

The chi-square ($\chi^2$) statistic, a goodness of fit index, was included in the analyses due to its utility in providing preliminary evidence for the model (Kline, 2010). That is to say, initial evidence against a model indicates that an in-depth examination of its fit is necessary. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was chosen because it creates confidence intervals to describe how well the initial model approximates the true model. This fit index
measures the model’s error of approximation while taking sample size into account. This index does not evaluate for perfect fit; instead it evaluates how well the data approximates the model fit. Using RMSEA with large samples is beneficial as it produces narrower and more precise confidence intervals (O-Rourke & Hatcher, 2013). RMSEA has acceptable range of .08 and lower; however, models at or less than .05 are considered to have good model fit. Lastly, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was chosen as it prefers the simplest model and is less sensitive to sample size. This index compares the proposed model to a null model in which all indicators are uncorrelated. This comparison is then used to determine how well the proposed model fit improves when compared to the null model. TLI values should be above .90 with values above .95 indicating good model fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was examined for incremental fit. Model fit for CFI is considered acceptable if the value is greater than 0.90 (Bentler, 1990).
Figure 1. The five-factor model of perpetration and victimization. This figure depicts the five-factors of violence under which the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) was developed. The five-factors are as follows: **INJ** (injury), **PhA** (physical assault), **SC** (sexual coercion), **PA** (psychological aggression), and **NEG** (negotiation).
### Table 1

**Demographic Information**

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Chapter Four: Results

In this section, the study results are interpreted and discussed. First, assumptions related to the model were tested to ensure that the interpretations made are valid and reliable. Multivariate normality was also examined as this assumption can influence model fit indices. Multivariate normality was inspected using Mahalanobis distance prior to conducting any confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). Mahalanobis distance is similar to the univariate standard deviation and can help to identify potential outliers and their influence on normality (Ullman, 2006). Plotting of the Mahalanobis distance for each data point did not reveal large deviations.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Table 2 contains information regarding the internal consistency within the factor structure of the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). The alpha coefficients depict the relationship between factors. Gender differences and similarities were found within the CTS2’s factor structure. Negotiation had high and comparable internal consistency for violence perpetration (female =.85; male=.83) and victimization (female =.83; male=.84) of across genders. The results reflected gender similarities within coefficients for injury and sexual coercion victimization.

Gender differences were also found among factors within the CTS2. Specifically, the perpetration of injury and sexual coercion, items with lower internal consistency in women compared to men. Coefficients related to women’s victimization of physical and psychological aggression are much higher than that of men.

Although no exact cutoff exists, most researchers deem alpha coefficients between .70 and .95 as acceptable values (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Few factors met the more conservative
cut off (.70) which are negotiation and victimization perpetration (male and female), perpetration of physical assault (female), and physical assault victimization (male and female). Please refer to Table 2 for more information regarding the CTS2’s (Straus et al., 1996) factor structure.

Table 3 shows the factor means and standard deviations for each factor across violence type and gender. Overall, women reported higher rates of perpetrating negotiation, physical assault, and psychological aggression. These participants also reported higher rates of negotiation and psychological aggression victimization. Male participants reported higher rates of perpetrating sexual coercion, while their remaining scores were either lower or comparable to that of female participants. These findings suggest that men and women are reporting different experiences in the perpetration and victimization of violence. Table 3 contains more information regarding factor means and standard deviations for each factor.

The standardized regression weights depict the strength of the relationship between the latent variable and indicator(s). The results suggest that some indicators are more relevant for one gender than the other. For example, perpetration of negotiation was stronger for women (.45); yet, appears to be almost irrelevant for men (.01). Other beta weights were high yet depicted gender differences. The relationship between the latent variable and physical assault and injury victimization was higher in women (.94 and .72, respectively) than men (.88 and .66, respectively). Conversely, stronger relationships were found in the perpetration of physical assault (.85) and injury (.67). Whereas the relationship between IPV perpetration of psychological aggression (.85) and negotiation (.45) were much stronger in the female sample. More information regarding the standardized regression weights is found in Table 4.
Table 2

*Factor Structure of the CTS2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perpetration</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assault</td>
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<td>.43</td>
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Table 3

*Factor Means and Standard Deviations*

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</thead>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perpetration</strong></td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Gender differences found in the original and modified models will first be described. Then the original models’ fit will be evaluated based on the chosen fit indices. Later, the modifications made to each model (i.e., male and female) and the new values for the chosen fit indices will be detailed.

**Female.** Female participants’ responses were used to conduct confirmatory factor analyses to assess the factor structure. The responses from the perpetration and victimization indicators were loaded as a single construct, intimate partner violence (IPV). The chosen fit indices, TLI, CFI, RMSEA, and $\chi^2$ are depicted in Table 5 for male and female participants. The original female model factor loadings revealed poor model fit. These regression weights ranged from .15 to .94 for victimization and from .31 to .85 in the perpetration items. The indices further corroborated the poor fit, and are as follows: $\chi^2 (35) = 15,516.97, p < .001$, RMSEA = .40, CFI = .26; and TLI = .05. Additional information regarding the model’s regression weights can be found in Table 5.
Table 5

**Comparison of Fit Indices Across Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>15,517</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31</td>
<td>12,362</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5,994</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The model was modified through evaluating the modification indices, the literature, and theory. Model fit was improved by separating IPV into two latent constructs, victimization and perpetration, and allowing these latent constructs to correlate. The appropriate error terms were allowed to correlate based on the magnitude of improvement and the IPV literature. Modifications were made to the victimization latent variable. More specifically, the error terms for both sexual coercion and psychological aggression now correlate with negotiation and sexual coercion and psychological aggression also correlate with one another. Meanwhile, the perpetration latent variable required the correlation of the negotiation and psychological aggression error terms. These correlations add paths to the model based on the chosen theory and literature. Paths are added as the indicators to which the error terms belong are believed to measure an unknown construct. It would, for example, be illogical to add a path between injury and psychological aggression as these two indicators are not related. The injury scale only contains questions regarding the consequences of physical aggression. Meaning, psychological aggression (i.e., non-physical violence) cannot directly result in physical injuries. Simply stated, psychological aggression and injury are not directly related, therefore adding a path between the two indicators would not improve model fit. Conversely, the literature (e.g., Miller & Melloy, 2006) would support for a path to be created between injury and physical assault if the magnitude of the modification were sufficient.

Modifications to the model led to some improvement; yet, fit remained poor: \( \chi^2 (31) = 12,361.80, p = .001; \) CFI = .41, TLI = .14, and RMSEA = .37. Figure 2 depicts the modified female model and the error terms that were allowed to correlate to improve fit. The figure also includes the new standardized regression weights after model modification.
Figure 2. Modified Female Model. This figure depicts modifications made to the female model to improve fit.
Male. A second set of analyses were conducted using male participant data. The results from the initial CFA revealed poor model fit. The factor loadings in the victimization items ranged from .05 to .88 and from .01 to .85 in the perpetration questions. The fit indices further supported a poor model fit: $\chi^2 (35) = 5,994.07, p = <.001; \text{CFI} = .34, \text{TLI} = .15,$ and $\text{RMSEA} = .36.$

This model was also modified to improve its fit by allowing the error terms to correlate with one another (see figure 3). To improve the model’s fit, the error terms for negotiation were allowed to correlate with psychological aggression among the victim indicators. The error terms for negotiation were also allowed to correlate with those of psychological aggression and sexual coercion among the perpetration indicators. These modifications did not significantly improve model fit: $\chi^2 (32) = 5,629.51, p = <.001; \text{CFI} = .38, \text{TLI} = .13,$ and $\text{RMSEA} = .37.$
Figure 3: Modified Male Model. This figure depicts the modifications made to the male model to improve fit.
Measurement Invariance

If measurement invariance holds across genders, the results of the CTS2 can be used to make valid and reliable comparisons regarding the participants’ reports of IPV victimization and perpetration. Measurement invariance testing requires that the models undergo progressively stricter restrictions. The original model (Figure 1) was used in this analysis to compare the patterns created by the male and female data.

The first, and most basic, restriction is configural invariance, used to evaluate the overall structure of the model. This analysis requires the models to have the same pattern of parameters, free and fixed, across groups. This process can be likened to placing the models one atop the other. Comparing the model’s structure without forcing them to equal one another. In essence, this analysis requires that the models maintain the same relationships (factor-indicator) and the same number of indicators within the factors. Configural invariance is found when the models, upon comparison, have the same number of indicators to describe each factor (i.e., victimization and perpetration). Conversely, if, for example, perpetration is best described by four indicators in the female group and by five for males, configural invariance would not hold.

After forcing the male and female data to have the same factor structure, configural invariance was not found. Fit indices revealed poor model fit at this initial level (CFI = .40, TLI = .18, and RMSEA = .26). These results indicate that the model under examination does not fit the data for male and female perpetrators and victims of IPV. The models may not fit the data because separate constructs are being measured in each gender. Consequently, comparing scores between groups is a fruitless endeavor as it is analogous to comparing apples to oranges.
Chapter V: Discussion

The Battered Women’s Movement created many opportunities for clinicians and researchers alike to identify factors placing women at risk for IPV victimization. Decades later, the focus shifted from violence against women to violence against men by women. Scholars within the literature are unable to agree regarding the rates, motives, and consequences of female perpetrated violence. IPV researchers focus on debating gender symmetry and not on identifying the source(s) of the conflicting results.

This study examined whether the CTS2, a popular IPV assessment, produced measurement invariant results across gender. Data from a national sample was used to test the CTS2’s theoretical model across genders through CFA. Data produced by this instrument was also tested for measurement invariance. Results suggest the CTS2 is measurement variant.

Study findings were unable to confirm the CTS2’s original model (Straus et al., 1996) for neither violence type nor gender. These results add to the literature by providing an argument against the one size fits all approach to violence assessment. Findings highlight the need for gender-specific measures of violence to understand the true nature of IPV as experienced and perpetrated by men and women.

The current study failed to support the five-factor model of violence underpinning the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). This finding held across gender and violence types, indicating that the sole use of this assessment will not suffice to understand the complexity involved in partner violence. It may be beneficial to modify this assessment, or to add questions within surveys to gather the necessary contextual information. For example, researchers can include questions
regarding the frequency that each partner initiates IPV. Surveys can also include questions regarding the motive, or purpose, for using violence (e.g., retaliation). Other questions can assess psychological injury (e.g., depression), the result of physical violence (e.g., unable to attend work), and other consequences of partner violence.

The results from the current study contrast with findings from Calvete et al. (2007) on a sample of Spanish women. More specifically, Calvete et al. confirmed good model fit, similar to Lucente et al. (2001) with an incarcerated female sample. It is important to note, however, that Lucente et al. (2001) failed to report the values of fit indices. Alternatively, Calvete et al. included the values of fit indices used, yet the interpretation of model fit is considered lenient by literature standards (e.g., Browne & Cudek, 1993) and do not represent good model fit.

The current study findings also revealed that the negotiation indicator held the weakest loading across all models. This finding suggests that indicator-related questions do not accurately assess the target indicator. In stark contrast to the current study, Calvete et al. (2007) revealed that Negotiation was a robust scale (i.e., loadings ≥ .50) within their study. It may be hypothesized that Spaniard women are more likely to use negotiation tactics compared to US women who were sampled in the current study. An additional consideration is that the current study used data from university students, a group that is less likely to report the experience or perpetration of violence. The younger age of these participants makes it more likely that they have little to moderate dating or relationship experience.

A 10-factor model of violence was used in the current study by allowing the perpetration and victimization latent variables to correlate. This modification was made because researchers
(Bachman, 1998; Dasgupta, 1999; Stuart et al., 2006) have found that IPV perpetrators are highly likely to be past or current victims of partner violence. Model modifications are supported by findings from a study conducted by Calvete et al. (2007). They reported that model fit improved when the same variables in their study were allowed to correlate.

The current study also found differences in the strength of the corresponding factor loadings. For women, psychological aggression perpetration (.85) held the highest loading. Similarly, physical assault perpetration (.85) was the highest loading for men. Studies support these findings as women report high rates of psychological aggression perpetration (e.g., Harned, 2001) and men high rates of physical assault perpetration (e.g., Busch & Rosenberg, 2004).

Limitations

This study used a national data set which creates limitations inherent in its use. The first limitation is that the current researcher cannot guarantee that these data were collected in a satisfactorily manner. Satisfactory data collection involves using standardized methods to reduce the likelihood of creating confound variables.

Another limitation is the lack of information regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants. Consequently, it could not be determined whether cultural differences and similarities existed within the data. The incorporation of additional demographic questions regarding the participants’ racial and cultural identity, religious affiliation, physical ability, acculturation status, and other variables could have identified within and between group differences. The addition of these variables in the study could have provided additional information regarding IPV within cultural minority groups.
A final consideration is the validity of the violence reported by the participants in the data set. The nature of the instrument relies on self-report data, which is problematic because it lends itself to accidental, or purposeful, under or over reporting of violence. Specifically, the use of retrospective data increases the likelihood of inaccurate reporting. The directions included within the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) state that the participant is to report violence up to a year before the assessment date. The participant may not fully recall every aspect of violence he or she experienced. Additionally, sensitive and private topics, such as IPV, can create shame in participants leading them to report lower levels of IPV perpetration of victimization. For example, a male participant may not want a male researcher to judge him for being victimized by his female partner. Conversely, a female perpetrator may feel guilty or ashamed by her behavior and not accurately report her violence towards her male partner.

The current study is the first to conduct a measurement invariance analysis of the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) using a large national data set. It is also the first study to conduct a structural equation modeling (SEM) evaluation of this instrument with rigorous research standards. Although prior studies have evaluated the CTS2 using SEM (i.e., Calvete et al., 2007), the standards for determining model fit are liberal, at best. For example, Calvete et al. reported that their RMSEA values, ranging from .085 to .10 and indicated adequate model fit. However, according to Browne and Cudeck (1993), these values more accurately reflect mediocre model fit. Using these lenient guidelines to interpret fit indices proves to be a disservice to the literature. These guidelines create further contention in the literature regarding the appropriate use of the CTS2.
Recommendations for Future Research

This study also supports revisiting the use of the CTS2 as an umbrella assessment of violence. The current author does not argue against the use of this assessment, rather it is the one size fits all approach to IPV assessment that is in question. As previously noted, Straus (2007) encourages researchers to use the CTS2 in conjunction with theories of violence. It appears that Straus is encouraging researchers to adapt the instrument to meet their needs. Modifying the CTS2 to include questions regarding context and motive may lead to more cohesion in the literature. Future researchers should use their chosen theory of violence to guide the use of this assessment.

Researchers who used the CTS2 in past studies should evaluate the properties of their data to determine how well it fits with its model. Conducting CFAs and measurement invariance tests on this data will provide additional information regarding gender differences and similarities within these studies. Consequently, a new field of research may emerge that focuses on ways to adapt the CTS2 to meet researchers' needs rather than on its controversial use. This paradigm shift may create cohesion in the IPV literature – uniting rather than dividing researchers.

Cohesion within the IPV literature can provide essential information regarding the gender differences and similarities found in men and women’s experiences with IPV. This information can be used to guide the creation of treatment programs and psychological interventions specific to each gender. Consequently, treatment programs created for battered women may not be appropriate to treat a male victim of violence and vice versa. The creation of appropriate programs and intervention ensures that the limited resources received by non-profit programs
(i.e., domestic violence shelters) are not wasted on ineffective treatments. On a larger scale, the interventions and treatments created through the use of this data can improve, if not save, the lives of many children, women, and men.

Another recommendation is to focus on assessing violence within underrepresented populations. The assessment and understanding of intimate partner violence must extend past the standards set by previous studies. To illustrate, many studies include participants from the LGBT community, but in small numbers. Studies examining IPV in specific populations should create further understanding regarding the experience of underrepresented groups. In fact, little is known regarding the victimization of transgender men and women. Yet, this population is rarely surveyed in studies of violence; participation is limited to one or two individuals. Similarly, racial minorities are also underrepresented in studies of violence and are often a small percentage of the sample surveyed. The intersection of being a person of color and a victim, or perpetrator, of violence, must be further understood to create and provide culturally sensitive and appropriate treatment modalities. Using the same umbrella approach to the treatment and assessment of violence ignores the needs and difficulties experienced by people from non-dominant cultural groups.

Lastly, future studies should incorporate principles of feminist empiricism to increase the validity and reliability of the research findings in the literature. Adopting more rigorous research practices allows scholars to make valid and reliable comparisons of IPV across genders. Adopting these practices includes the integration of feminist principles in every step of the scientific method. Feminist empiricism can be used to guide the development of research questions and hypotheses, methodology, and the interpretation of the study’s findings.
Conclusion

The CTS and CTS2 have provided violence researchers with a universal instrument to quantify intimate partner violence. The widespread use of these violence assessments affords the opportunity to make within and between group comparisons. The information gathered from IPV assessments is also used to monitor, address, and prevent instances of intimate partner violence. IPV assessments are a valuable addition to the literature as their use is essential to understanding various aspects of partner violence (e.g., risk factors). The CTS and CTS2 also provide researchers with a strong framework to modify and adapt for their studies. Researchers and clinicians can easily include or omit questions to meet the needs of their study.

Conversely, measuring violence from a one-size-fits-all approach is problematic when data reveals that two distinct constructs are being measured. The comparisons made with measurement variant data are not valid or reliable and further add to the contradictory findings. Another limitation to the widespread use of umbrella assessments of violence reduces the acts under study to only those included in the assessment. That is to say, researchers limit their understanding of violence by only examining the behaviors listed in the assessments. Therefore, other forms of abuse such as stalking or abusing pets to create fear in a partner, are excluded from these studies. The aforementioned acts are strong risk factors for the perpetration of lethal or near lethal violence. Therefore, adding the aforementioned acts when assessing IPV provides valuable information regarding an individual’s likelihood of experiencing, or perpetrating, lethal violence.

In conclusion, the IPV literature would benefit from adopting more rigorous standards in developing, implementing, and interpreting the results of research studies. Using an umbrella, or
one-size-fits-all approach to measuring partner violence has only created conflicting findings. Adopting principles of feminist empiricism to IPV research would serve the literature by providing a framework by which to set higher standards of scholarly research.
References


