

**Gaining a deeper insight into why women use  
physical violence towards a partner**

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## Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has significant social, economic and health consequences for the victims, their families and society as a whole. There is a need to understand the complex reasons for why IPV occurs in order to be able to intervene and prevent IPV from occurring. The purpose of the current study was to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and motives of women who engage in IPV, specifically physical violence. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to identify: a) the characteristics and background information of women who have used physical violence towards a partner; b) their motives; c) and whether motives differ from what is reported in the literature for males who have perpetrated IPV. This research found many women had backgrounds consisting of adverse experiences, parents who used substances, poor family relationships, poor mental health, and came from households characterised by family violence. Romantic relationships were characterised by dysfunctional communication, substance use by their partners and physical violence towards property. Defensive violence, wanting to stop their partners behaviour, retaliation, asserting dominance, and wanting to escape were all motivations reported by women in this study. Coercive control tactics are heavily reported in the literature for male perpetrators of IPV, however were not found in the current study. This research also provided a conceptual replication of the Event Process Model of Family Violence proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020). This research tested Stairmand's et al. (2020) model using a different population to the original study. Stairmand's et al. (2020) model assisted in outlining the complicated factors that contributed to engaging in IPV for women. However, the current study could not support the feed-back loop of counter-escalation proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020) which potentially is more fitting for chronic or severe IPV. Overall, this research will be influential in the direction of future IPV research using larger sample sizes. Additionally, this research may be used to inform treatment on risk and protective factors for engaging in IPV by intervention and prevention providers.

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## **Gaining a deeper insight into why women use physical violence towards a partner**

The perpetration of violence towards family members is an issue that is seen around the world, with women making up a bigger proportion of victims compared with other genders. Specifically, an estimated 30% of the female global population has experienced physical or sexual violence by a family member (World Health Organisation, 2021). Furthermore, 27% of the global population of women aged between 15-49 years report experiencing physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner (World Health Organisation, 2021).

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). From 2020 to 2021, there were 155,338 reports of family harm made to the New Zealand Police, comprising 16% of frontline jobs (New Zealand Police, 2021). Concerningly, this issue seems to be worsening, with family harm reports increasing by 60% since 2016 and are predicted to rise another 35% by 2025 (New Zealand Police, 2021). However, this issue is larger than what the statistics report as the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey found 67% of family harm incidents go unreported (Ministry of Justice, 2021). Furthermore, the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey reported in the past 12 months, there have been 241,000 family violence offenses and 180,000 of these were classified as intimate partner violence (IPV), 102,000 by current partners and 78,000 by previous partners (Ministry of Justice, 2021). These figures highlight that family violence offenses and more specifically IPV is a significant issue occurring in many of New Zealanders homes. In addition to the prevalence of family harm, the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey report the type of harm that was perpetrated. Making up the biggest proportion of offenses was physical violence with 97,000 reports. Followed by 80,000 reports of threats and harassment, 44,000 reports of sexual assault and 20,000 reports of property damage (Ministry

of Justice, 2021). Out of 88,000 victims who experienced family harm offences in this survey, 65,000 were female and 23,000 were male.

These statistics illustrate that a significant number of people experience harm at the hands of their family members and intimate partners. There is the need for increased attention on ways in which family harm can be prevented as it is detrimental to the victims and society as a whole. One way to prevent family harm can be by investigating what causes or motivates a person to harm their family members or intimate partners. Understanding the motivations of those who use violence towards their family members and intimate partners can assist and inform intervention and prevention strategies. Although first it is important to discuss what family violence is, the different types of family violence that have been identified and the impacts these can have. Following on from this it is important to then discuss theories that have been developed for why and how family violence occurs and lastly, the typologies that currently guide our understanding of what motivates people to engage in violence.

### **Defining Family Violence**

Research conducted in the area of family violence uses a wide range of terminology interchangeably, therefore defining family violence and related key concepts within New Zealand is necessary to ensure a consistent understanding of the topic. The New Zealand Domestic Violence Act (1995) defined violence as any act of violence towards another person in which the relationship is considered a domestic relationship. Under this Act, a domestic relationship refers to a spouse or partner, family member, someone who shares a household with another person or has a close personal relationship with another person. The New Zealand Domestic Violence Act (1995) has since been replaced by the New Zealand Family Violence Act (2018), which provides an updated definition of family violence that reflects the impacts controlling behaviours can have. The New Zealand Family Violence Act (2018) defines family

violence as any violent act that is inflicted towards another person within the family unit. Under this Act, 'family violence' encompasses many different forms of harm such as physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse, and incorporates a range of subtypes of family violence, including intimate partner violence (IPV), elder abuse, sibling abuse and child abuse.

The remainder of this thesis will focus in particular on IPV, defined as any physical, sexual, psychological, neglectful, financial or spiritual abuse that is perpetrated by a current or past intimate partner (Ministry of Social Development, 2002; Health Navigator New Zealand, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2021). The different forms of harmful IPV are explored in more detail in the following section.

### **Types of Intimate Partner Violence**

As mentioned above, IPV acts as an umbrella term for many different types or forms of abuse that may occur within intimate relationships. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified four most common types of IPV abuse (Smith et al., 2018). These were physical, sexual, psychological abuse and stalking due to the detrimental effects caused on health and mental health outcomes as well as future victimisation. Firstly, physical abuse can be defined as any act of physical violence towards another person that causes physical harm. Examples of behaviours or acts include, but are not limited to, hitting, punching, pushing, pinching, biting, choking, threatening with or without the use of weapons against another person, pulling hair and spitting (Smith et al., 2018). Secondly, sexual abuse can be defined as any sexual act towards another person that is not consensual. Examples of these behaviours or acts include, but are not limited to, forcing sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching that is not wanted or other sexual acts that the other person does not want to engage in (Smith et al., 2018). Psychological abuse can be defined as any act that harms the psychological well-being of

another person. Examples of behaviours or acts include, but are not limited to, constant criticism, threatening, blaming, monitoring, control and restricting someone from their social circle (Smith et al., 2018). Lastly, stalking can be defined as harassment or threatening behaviours by the perpetrator that cause fear and concern for the safety of the victim (Smith et al., 2018).

Advancements in family violence research have resulted in a deeper understanding of the types of abuse that can occur within intimate partnerships, resulting in further types of abuse being identified in the more recent literature: financial and spiritual abuse. Financial abuse can be defined as taking or using another person's money in a way that causes harm. Examples of behaviours or acts include, but are not limited to, taking the money of another person, threatening to take the money of another person, pressuring someone into paying and gathering debts in someone else's name (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2020). Furthermore, spiritual abuse can be defined as causing harm to someone's religion, beliefs or values. Examples of behaviours or acts include, but are not limited to, the belittling of family ancestry, traditions, cultures or ways of life. Spiritual abuse also includes stopping someone from expressing their beliefs or using beliefs or practices to justify abuse (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2020).

The relative prevalence of the different forms of IPV have differed over time. A new Zealand study investigated the changes on reported prevalence rates of IPV from 2003 until 2019 (Fanslow et al., 2021). Two surveys were administered to 2673 participants in 2003 and 935 participants in 2019. The data showed that there was an increase in controlling behaviours from 2003 (8.2%) to 2019 (13.4%) and economic abuse from 2003 (4.5%) to 2019 (8.9%). Interestingly, this study reported a decrease in the prevalence of psychological abuse from 2003 (8.4%) to 2019 (4.7%). No differences were reported for experiences of physical abuse from 2003 to 2019 with 30% reporting at least one experience of physical IPV and there was a small

decrease in sexual IPV from 2003 (16.9%) to 2019 (13.1%). These statistics show the different forms of IPV that are experienced in New Zealand with physical and sexual IPV as well as controlling behaviours reported at a higher frequency compared to other forms.

Past studies that have found males to more often be the primary perpetrator of family violence offences have recently come under criticism for using biased and low quality methodologies. For example, a meta-analysis found studies in the past have made comparisons between unequal groups of males and females, have not taken into consideration societies' political, moral and cultural views on gender equality, and have used surveys of limited psychometric strength (Esquivel-Santoveña & Dixon, 2012). It is argued that these methodological issues have resulted in inaccurate estimates of perpetration rates by gender, which has had detrimental effects on the overall progress of family violence research. Specifically, this meta-analysis reviewed the quality of 11 surveys measuring rates of family violence and found surveys that were higher quality showed more equal rates of family violence perpetration for males and females. Surveys with lower methodological quality showed higher rates of perpetration by males and higher rates of female victimisation. Furthermore, countries that have gender inequality, such as Uganda, reported higher rates of female victimisation while the United States of America showed rates of perpetration that were relatively similar for males and females. Methodological factors are important to keep in mind when trying to understand why IPV occurs and this is because methodological factors can heavily influence the results of research contributing to inaccurate findings.

### **Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence**

Intimate partner violence has significant social, economic and health consequences for the victim, their families and society as a whole. Those who experience IPV are at higher risk of experiencing suicidal ideation, injuries as a result of the violence, sexually transmitted

infections, and poorer mental health outcomes such as depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, eating disorders and sleep difficulties (World Health Organisation, 2021; Bernardi & Steyn, 2019). A recent meta-analysis systematically investigated the impact of IPV on a series of mental health outcomes across 58 studies (Lagdon et al., 2014). This meta-analysis found those who were victim to IPV experienced more adverse mental health difficulties post IPV such as depression (18 studies), anxiety (15 studies), and post-traumatic stress disorder (33 studies) compared to those who had not experienced IPV. Interestingly, this meta-analysis does not report effect sizes making it difficult to determine the significance of these effects. However, this meta-analysis found that the severity of IPV experienced paired with the amount of time exposed to IPV can increase adverse mental health experiences (Lagdon et al., 2014).

The impacts of IPV are also visible in health research. Women who have experienced IPV are more at risk of experiencing unwanted pregnancies, abortions, miscarriages, and complications when giving birth (World Health Organisation, 2021). This research has highlighted that women who have experienced IPV are at higher risk of negative pre and post-natal outcomes. Furthermore, another study has investigated the health effects of IPV by conducting a secondary analysis on data collected by the World Health Organisation (Potter et al., 2021). This study investigated the relationship between domestic violence and the health of women. This secondary analysis found suicide attempts were higher for those exposed to sexual, psychological or physical IPV (*OR*: 6.49, 95% *CI* 5.41-7.79) and the likelihood of spending time in hospital increased when exposed to physical (*OR*: 1.70, 95% *CI* 1.37-2.11) or sexual violence alone (*OR*: 1.53, 95% *CI* 1.18-1.98) (Potter et al., 2021). Not only do these results show that those who experienced IPV were at risk of experiencing poorer health outcomes, it also shows physical and sexual IPV produced higher odds of poor outcomes in comparison to psychological IPV (*OR*: 1.12 95% *CI* 0.91-1.38). Furthermore, those who experienced IPV have a higher risk of social and employment isolation which can have an

effect on income, participation in daily life, and the ability to care for oneself and dependants (Potter et al., 2021).

In addition to those directly impacted by IPV, family members living within a violent household are also at an increased risk of experiencing negative outcomes. Specifically, children may be at an increased risk of experiencing behavioural and emotional challenges as well as the intergenerational transmission of violence (i.e. going on to perpetrate violence themselves; World Health Organisation, 2021). A New Zealand longitudinal study investigated the effects of children witnessing violence in their home (Martin et al., 2006). This study reported that out of 962 children, 86 participants identified one to four incidences where physical violence was perpetrated between their parents and 95 participants reported there being five or more (Martin et al., 2006). While some children may experience one off occasions of violence in the home, this research shows that a number of children are experiencing numerous occasions of violence at home. Furthermore, this study reported children who had witnessed frequent physical violence between their parents were more likely to have experienced anxiety ( $n=29$ , 31.9%,  $p<.001$ ) and depression ( $n=28$ , 30.8%,  $p<.001$ ) by the time they reached 21 years of age compared to those who did not witness physical violence (anxiety  $n=113$ , 15.9%; depression  $n=98$ , 13.8%) between their parents. Interestingly, socio-economic status and the age of the participants parents were associated with patterns of violence indicating possible moderator variables. This research demonstrates that children are at risk of poor outcomes, such as the intergenerational transmission of violence, and wider effects, such as poor mental health in later life after being exposed to violence at home.

### **Theories of Intimate Partner Violence**

Due to the serious nature of IPV and the detrimental effects it has on victims and family members, many theorists have tried to explain why and how IPV occurs in order to prevent

IPV from occurring. Each theory posits a perspective that assists in growing the knowledge of how IPV occurs. Each perspective will be discussed below.

### *Feminist Theory*

Potentially the most widely-known theory of IPV is Feminist Theory. The feminist perspective takes into account the socio-cultural context in which violence occurs in order to understand how and why IPV occurs (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008). According to this theory, societies that adopt patriarchal beliefs, specifically male dominance over females, and identify gender roles within society have higher perpetration rates of men using violence towards women. Within this context, men use violence towards women to gain control and dominance over the relationship and the family system (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008). Conversely, when women use violence towards men, feminist theorists argue this is best understood as self-defence and retaliation (Burelomova et al., 2018; Dobash & Dobash, 1977). Critiques of Feminist Theory have argued that while Feminist Theory explains IPV for some victims it does not assist in explaining dynamics that are emotionally, racially, ethnically and religiously fuelled (Mills, 2003). Feminist Theory also does not assist in explaining IPV that occurs in same sex couples, bisexual relationships and transgendered people (Mills, 2003). Research has found the rates of IPV in lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships are higher when compared to heterosexual relationships (Messinger, 2011). Specifically, a study found 31.16% of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants reported physical IPV while 14.55% of heterosexual participants reported relationships characterised by physical IPV (Messinger, 2011). Aspects of Feminist Theory such as power and control may be present in lesbian, gay and bisexual couples however, the predominant argument of Feminist Theory based on male patriarchal violence is not a valid explanation in the case of same sex and bisexual relationships.

### *Power Theory*

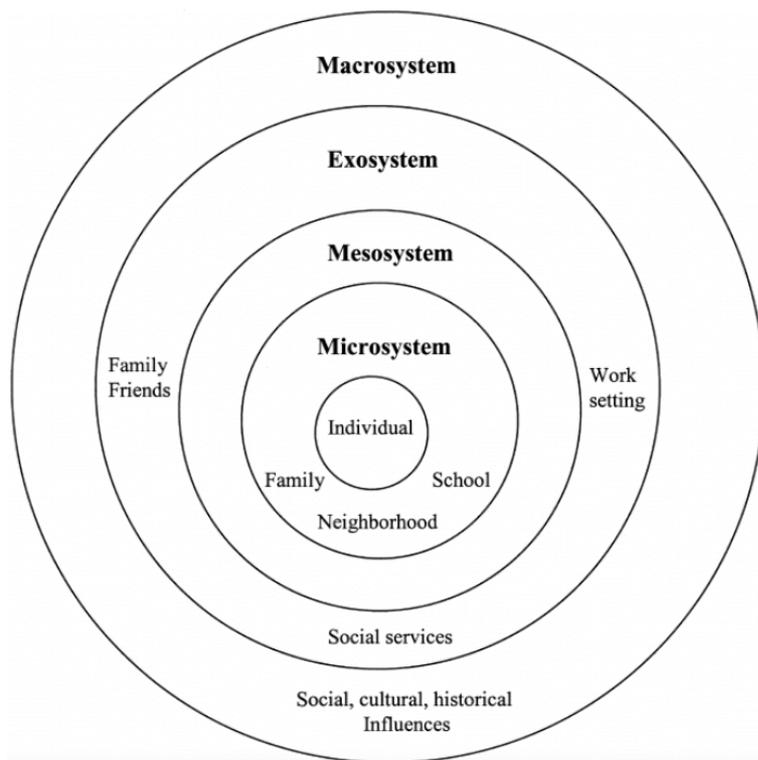
The next perspective is Power Theory which has feminist roots. Power theorists argue that not only does violence stem from societal factors but also from within the family structure. A combination of gender inequality, conflicts within the family, a social acceptance of perpetration and being victim to violence is hypothesised to interact, contributing to the development and the maintenance of IPV (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008; Straus, 1977). According to this theory, using violence to solve conflict is a behaviour that is learned from witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood, similar to Social Learning Theory that will be discussed next. These learned behaviours as well as tension within the family unit (such as power imbalances between partners and psycho-social stressors) are hypothesised to increase the use of violence within the family unit (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008; Straus, 1977). Potential psycho-social stressors could include financial obligations, health and mental health problems, employment stressors or the death of a loved one. A limitation to this theory is the notion that gender inequality within the family structure contributes to the development of IPV. Power Theory states that in patriarchal families males hold the power over women and children and as a result of this power the males in the family have more freedoms. These freedoms result in an increase in chance for risk taking behaviours due to a lack of supervision, whereas females are more closely monitored leaving limited chance for the development of delinquent behaviours (Hagan et al., 1987). Similarly, this aspect of the theory reflects Feminist Theory and does not account for how IPV occurs in gay, lesbian or bisexual relationships. This theory does not address other valid explanations that contribute to IPV perpetration, such as family home environments that are unhealthy and have pro-criminal attitudes.

### ***Social Learning Theory***

Another perspective explaining how IPV occurs is Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory states violence is learned via modelling throughout childhood and adolescence (although learning continues throughout an individual's life). Children who witness or experience violence by a family member or other influential figures can result in a child becoming tolerant to or accepting of violence, contributing to the intergenerational transmission of violence (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008; Bandura, 1973). The intergenerational transmission of violence stems from watching parents solve conflicts with violence in childhood. This behaviour is then observed and learned by the child who then goes on to use this technique as a means to solve future conflicts (Bell & Naugle, 2008). However, Social Learning Theory does not address behaviour that is impulsively driven. Social Learning Theory also does not explain behaviours that occur as a result of personality traits and temperament, such as disproportionate emotional responses to behaviour (Dutton, 1999).

### ***Ecological Systems Theory***

The next perspective was by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1981) who developed the Ecological Systems Theory. This theory states there are multiple levels to an environment that all interact and ultimately affect a child's development. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1981) divided a child's environment into five different systems that all effect development: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and the Chronosystem as illustrated in Figure 1. When using the Ecological Systems Theory to explain IPV, factors within each of the systems can be interpreted as risk and/or protective factors that influence positive or negative development (Little et al., 2002). The factors within each system can also be used to illustrate the complex upbringing individuals who engage in IPV have had.

**Figure 1***Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Diagram*

*Note.* From Psychosocial Development in Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges in the 21st Century Swanson, by D. P., Spencer, M. B., Harpalani, V., Dupree, D., noll, E., Ginzburg, S., & G., Seaton, (2003), *Development and Psychopathology*, 15(3), 743-771. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579403000361>

The Microsystem is a system that operates in close proximity to the child and therefore, is the most influential on child development. This system represents the relationship between the child and their family, health services, peers, siblings and school. Everything within this system has a bi-directional influence. What this means is that a child and their behaviour has an effect on other family members and their peers as well as other factors in this system. Factors within the system also work in reverse and therefore, can affect the child too. The Microsystem may consist of family violence which might put the child at risk of developing negative outcomes. However, other factors within the Microsystem that are positive can be protective and may result in reducing the negative impact of family violence.

The Mesosystem represents the interaction between the factors within the Microsystem. For example, if there is a negative relationship or negative interactions between a family and

the school their child goes to then as a result of this poor relationship this child may become isolated. Similarly, if a family has a negative relationship or negative interactions with health care providers then this could also result in a child becoming isolated from health care. However, if the factors within the Mesosystem are positive then this can result in stable support systems for the child and ultimately positive development.

The next system is the Exosystem and this represents other wider factors that indirectly effect the Microsystem. For example, family friends, government agencies, family workplaces, and social services. If interactions or perceptions about these wider influences are negative then this can have an effect on factors within the microsystem which in turn can have an effect on the child. For example, a family member may have had a negative interaction with someone from work resulting in this family member no longer going to work. Not going to work could contribute to financial stress and financial stress could contribute to tension between family members. Tension between family members could result in arguments and therefore, upset the household and the child. This example illustrates how wider influences can impact on the different systems. If these influences are negative, severe, and patterned then the likelihood of this impacting on a child's development increases.

The next system is the Macrosystem which represents the influence of social, cultural and historical factors, such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, poverty and wealth. This system represents the wider influences at a societal level. For example, the ethnicity of a child holds information as to how the child is able to function within a society. A minority group may have to overcome barriers as a result of living in a society that is predominately another ethnicity or culture adding stress to daily life.

Lastly, the Chronosystem. This system represents all environmental changes that influence development. The Ecological Systems Theory states that the Microsystem is the most influential on child development due to the immediate nature of the relationships. Therefore,

as family members exist in the Microsystem, they have an increased influence on the developmental pathway of a child. Arguably, this model is based on the main idea that if you have positive interactions then you will have positive outcomes. Furthermore, if an individual has negative interactions then they are likely to have negative outcomes. However, this model does not account for those individuals who have negative interactions but positive outcomes.

### ***Social Interactionist Approach to Aggression and Violence***

The next theory that was developed to explain why IPV occurs is The Social Interactionist Approach to Aggression and Violence by Felson and Tedeschi (1993). This theory is made up of four principles that provide a way of explaining why people use aggressive behaviour and violence. Principle One states that people use aggression and violence as a way of obtaining goals. For example, the goal of an IPV perpetrator may be to gain control over the other person in the relationship. Principle Two states that aggressive behaviour and the use of violence is viewed as a consequence of conflict within relationships. Aggression is also deemed a strategy employed to gain compliance or to punish. In the context of IPV, a perpetrator may use aggression and violence as a result of an argument in an attempt to harm or to gain compliance over the other persons behaviour. Principle Three states situational and interpersonal factors are important in understanding how aggression and violence is instigated. Examples to illustrate this is the persons own emotional regulation difficulties or drug and alcohol use. Lastly, Principle Four emphasises that those who use aggression and violence tend to have beliefs that aggression is acceptable therefore their values, justifications, assignment of blame, and views on justice are important in understanding the emergence of aggression and violence.

These theories highlight that there are many perspectives that all provide valid explanations of why and how IPV occurs. It is important to note that single factor explanations

and causes for IPV events are insubstantial (Heyman et al., 2021). As the theories point out, IPV is a complex interplay between many factors, such as learning by observation in childhood, societies position on gender inequality, power and control.

### **Typologies of Intimate Partner Violence**

Based on theory, many researchers have formed typologies of IPV. Typologies are formed when individuals are grouped together or categorised based on common characteristics (American Psychological Association, 2022). In the context of IPV individuals have been grouped together into categories based on their characteristics and reasons pertaining to their perpetration of IPV. Based on past research separate typologies have been formed for males and females as it is thought that the reasons for using violence and aggression is different for males and females (Johnson, 2008; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Swan & Snow 2002; Miller & Meloy, 2006). Typologies will be discussed separately for males and females as this assists in understanding the current perspectives of IPV perpetration.

#### ***Male Typologies***

Significant progress has been made in understanding the motivations and contexts in which family violence occurs. In particular, Johnson's (2008) typology of IPV offending has been influential in identifying common types of family violence that are associated with specific motivations and contexts in which violence occurs. Johnson (2008) used secondary data from a Pittsburgh study and the National Violence Against Women survey to develop these typologies. Originally in Southwestern Pennsylvania during the 1970's, the Pittsburgh study collected data from married or formally married women who had or had not experienced violence in their relationships (Johnson, 2008). The National Violence Against Women survey

originally collected data from individuals in the United States with the aim of examining several types (sexual assault, physical aggression, emotional abuse and stalking) of violent experiences towards women (Johnson, 2008). These data sets assisted Johnson (2008) in developing his typologies of IPV.

The first and most common type identified is Situational Couple Violence. This is where couples find themselves acting aggressively or violently towards one another due to the provoking situation they find themselves in. Johnson (2008) states this type of violence does not involve any attempt to gain coercive control over the relationship but is provoked because of tension, a behaviour, or an emotion. Usually this type of violence is one-off and the perpetrator experiences remorse immediately after the act and does not use violence again. However, the severity of the violence can vary from minor to serious and if the situation or argument is reoccurring then the violence can reoccur too.

The next type identified by Johnson (2008) is Intimate Terrorism (also known as Coercive Control). This is when one person is violent and controlling towards their partner or other family members in an attempt to gain power and control. This type of abuse is usually patterned and the perpetrator tends to use a range of coercive tactics to gain power and control. There may be aspects of economic abuse, isolation, emotional abuse, intimidation, coercion, threats, the minimisation of abuse, monitoring, physical abuse, and domination. These are all attempts to ensure the victim is powerless and not in control of their own life resulting in needing the perpetrator to survive. Victims of Intimate Terrorism tend to find themselves trapped in a relationship and suffer fear of what might happen to them if they were to try and leave the relationship.

The next type of violence identified by Johnson (2008) is Violent Resistance (also known as Self-Defence). Violent Resistance is when a person behaves aggressively in retaliation to violence, with the intention of protecting themselves rather than controlling the

other person. Violent Resistance is typically, but not always, perpetrated by the person on the receiving end of coercive controlling behaviours (Johnson, 2008).

The last type identified by Johnson (2008) is Mutual Violent Control. This occurs when both partners engage in violent behaviours towards each other with the goal of gaining or maintaining control over the other person in the relationship. Johnson (2008) states each person in the relationship can be identified as an intimate terrorist, with two people fighting for control.

Researchers have investigated the prevalence of Johnson's (2008) typologies. A recent study reported typologies for individuals incarcerated in Singapore and found Situational Couple Violence to be the most common type of IPV reported (Brown & Chew, 2018). The perpetration of Situational Couple Violence was reported by 53.3% of males and 62.3% of females; Mutual couple violence was reported by 17% of males and 20.0% of females; Intimate Terrorism was reported by 6.4% of males and 6.6% of females; Violent Resistance was 2.1% for males and 6.8% for females. These prevalence rates show that IPV occurred more prominently as a result of provoking situations rather than Mutual Couple Violence, Intimate Terrorism and Violent Resistance. These prevalence rates are in line with Johnson's (2008) predictions.

**IPV in the Context of Divorcing or Separating Couples.** Other researchers have investigated why individuals engage in IPV offending but within a different context. Johnson's (2008) typology was developed using a sample made up of married or formally married people who had or had not experienced IPV. However, Johnston and Campbell (1993) developed a typology of IPV using a specific sample of participants. This typology was developed in the context of divorcing or separating parents. This study used data from two separate studies involving divorcing parents undergoing custody and visitation disputes. The first sample included 80 divorcing couples and the second sample included 60 divorcing couples. The

qualitative data collected from participants was used to identify who the primary perpetrator was and then the perpetrator was assigned to one of five typologies that were developed. The first typology developed was Ongoing or Episodic Male Battering. This is similar to Intimate Terrorism by Johnson (2008) and is driven by a male's inability to tolerate frustration, problems with impulse control, perceived threat to their masculinity and patriarchal beliefs. The men in this sample minimised violent incidents and displayed stalking behaviour when separated from the victim. Men who displayed this type of violence were unable to cope with everyday stress which would normally turn into angry eruptions of physical abuse.

The next type identified is Female-Initiated Violence. Typically this type of violence occurs when the male partner was unable to provide or meet the needs of the female, which resulted in temper outbursts by the female. Under this typology the women holds the power over the man. The characteristics of men are typically passive, sometimes depressed and afraid of their partner.

The next typology is Male-Controlled Interactive Violence. This violence occurs when males are trying to gain compliance from their partner. This type of violence typically occurs when there is a disagreement between partners. The initiation of violence can be from either partner, however the male eventually takes physical control overpowering the women to gain compliance.

An additional type of violence identified within this typology was Separation and Post-Divorce Violence. Violence during a relationship was not present, however uncharacteristic acts of violence occur when separated and as a reaction to traumatic post-divorce events.

Psychotic and Paranoid Reactions was the final type of violence identified within this typology. This type was the least common and is characterised by disordered and distorted thinking surrounding danger. Typically there is a fear their ex-partner could exploit or harm them, which results in assaultive behaviour that is unpredictable.

This typology provides insight into the context of IPV within divorcing parents. There are similarities and differences when comparing these typologies to Johnson's (2008) typologies. As previously stated, Episodic Male Battering is similar to Johnson's (2008) Intimate Terrorism typology but so is Female-Initiated Violence and Male-Controlled Interactive Violence as they both involve power and control. Male-Controlled Interactive Violence was typically identified when there was a situation resulting in a disagreement between parents, similar to Situational Couple Violence identified by Johnson (2008). Interestingly, Johnson's (2008) typology did not extend to IPV events with psychotic or paranoid factors therefore, Psychotic and Paranoid Reactions identified by Johnston and Campbell (1993) provides insight into how paranoid and psychotic factors can result in the perpetration of IPV.

**Family Only, Dysphoric-Borderline Batterers and Generally Violent/Anti-social Batterers.** Other researchers have investigated why individuals engage in IPV. Different from Johnson (2008) and Johnson and Campbell (1993), this next typology was developed primarily by categorising based on severity and frequency (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). This typology was developed with the aim of understanding the causes and maintaining factors of violence within couples that are married. This typology proposes three sub-types of perpetrators of IPV. The first type is Family Only. Family Only perpetrators are less likely to use severe and frequent violence in comparison to the other two typologies to follow. They are less likely to use violence outside of the family home and engage in other forms of criminal behaviour. They tend to have difficulty with interpreting social cues and use IPV less frequently. However, when they do, they are usually apologetic immediately after, similar to Situational Couple Violence identified by Johnson (2008).

The next type is Dysphoric-Borderline Batterers. Dysphoric-Borderline Batterers tend to engage in IPV that is moderate to severe and occurs inside as well as, in some cases, outside of the home. The violence these perpetrators display tends to be more severe than Family Only perpetrators and they tend to display dysphoria or Borderline Personality Disorder characteristics. Dysphoric-Borderline Batterers have experiences of distress, emotional aggression, distrust in their partners resulting in jealousy, fear and outbursts of anger.

Lastly, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) identified Generally Violent and Anti-Social Batterers. This typology reflects perpetrators who engage in violence that is frequent and severe. Perpetrators engage in intra- and extra-familial harm as well as general criminal offending. The use of weapons and severe injuries are present and perpetrators are more likely to meet criteria for Anti-Social Personality Disorder, Psychopathy or Substance Use Disorder.

**Physiological Differences in IPV Perpetration.** Another typology of IPV perpetration has been proposed, however this typology was formed based on physiological differences in male perpetrators of violence (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Two typologies were identified. The first is Type 1 Batterers: Cobra. These perpetrators engage in severe violence and are usually emotionally abusive. Jacobson and Gottman (1998) observed a decrease in heart rate when episodes of verbal aggression occurred. The second typology is Type 2 Batterers: Pitbull. Unlike the Type 1 batterers, Jacobson and Gottman (1998) observed an increase in heart rate during an argument. These perpetrators were more likely to have jealous rages and had a fear of abandonment, which led them to restrict their partner's independence.

These typologies provide many perspectives of why IPV is perpetrated by males. They also provide a deeper understanding into the wide range of reasons, causes and motivations for engaging in IPV as well as the role personal, contextual, and situational factors have on the perpetration of IPV. Interestingly, Johnston and Campbell's (1993) typology was the only

perspective to identify females who initiated IPV. These females did engage in attempts to gain control and power over their partner. Interestingly, the male partners of the female perpetrators in this typology were described as passive, depressed and potentially afraid of their partner. This suggests males who are less dominant and powerful or in line with the patriarchal perspective are more likely to be victim to IPV by a female partner. However, this typology does highlight that there may be support for the perspective that societies with gender equality may have rates of perpetration that are more equal across genders. This highlights a gap for further research.

### *Female Typologies*

Due to a lack of research on the female population as well as methodological challenges in previous research, there is confusion surrounding why females commit family violence acts and whether the motives or mechanisms driving certain types of female violence are different or similar to males. It is important to understand whether the motives for females using physical IPV towards a partner are similar or different to the male population to ensure fair representation and a deeper understanding into how prevention and intervention factors can be addressed ensuring females and males are able to access the assistance they need. It has been argued in the past that the majority of family violence perpetrators are males (Dobash et al., 1992) and most existing family violence research has therefore largely focused on male perpetration against females. This could be because of feminist theories and research stating that patriarchal beliefs found in males are what motivate men to use violence in order to maintain control over females, while females use violence in retaliation or attempts to defend themselves or their family members from harm (Winstok et al., 2016; 2017). The way in which IPV is measured can also contribute to the skewed perception of male versus female perpetrated violence. For example, research that does not ask about both victimisation and perpetration to

both males and females runs the risk of missing information on how mutual perpetration occurs (Esquivel-Santoveña & Dixon, 2012). Furthermore, making conclusions about the causes of IPV perpetration using secondary data may result in inaccurate findings if the initial research aims and methodology were not gender inclusive. However, with this in mind research has been conducted that has attempted to understand the role of females in an IPV event.

**Victim, Aggressor, and Mixed Relationships.** Typologies have been identified for females who are victims and perpetrators in an IPV event. Swan and Snow (2002) conducted research that examined the role a female has in an IPV event in comparison to their male partners. Three key sub-types were reported: victim, aggressor, and mixed relationships. The first type, victim, refers to women who use violence to defend themselves, whether that is with or without coercive tactics, or is less or more severe than what has been perpetrated towards them. Thirty-four percent of participants fell into this typology. Aggressor refers to women who were more abusive compared to their partner. The violence perpetrated is physical in nature and coercive tactics were used in attempts to control. Twelve percent of participants fell into this typology. Lastly, mixed relationships refers to situations where one partner is controlling and the other is violent. Mixed-male coercive relationships and mixed-female coercive relationships were two sub-types identified under this typology. Mixed-male relationships refer to women who use severe forms of violence, however the male maintains control and is more coercive. Thirty-two percent of participants fell into this typology. Mixed-female relationships refer to women who are more coercive and in control, however men are more violent. Eighteen percent of participants fell into this typology. The victim typology is similar to Johnson's (2008) Violent Resistance (Self-Defence) typology. However, the Aggressor typology is similar to Intimate Terrorism by Johnson (2008) providing further evidence in support for the perspective that females can be primary perpetrators and use tactics

to control and gain power over their partner. The Mixed-relationships typology potentially shows how psychological abuse can play a role in physical IPV events suggesting that they go hand in hand in some cases.

**Generalised, Frustration, and Defensive IPV.** Furthermore, Miller and Meloy (2006) collected qualitative data from women who had taken part in a batterer treatment program. The purpose of collecting this data was to understand women's interpretations and perspectives of violent experiences. This research proposed three key typologies. The first category is generalised violent behaviour. Women in this group were violent in most contexts of their lives, however in the context of IPV these women were not attempting to gain control over their partners. The next category is frustration response behaviour. Women in this group were violent in response to violence or abuse by their partner. Typically the women in this group report past experiences of abuse. The last category is defensive behaviour. Women in this group use violence primarily as a means to defend themselves or protect their children. These typologies show that women who engage in IPV may have emotional regulation difficulties and past experiences of trauma. This highlights the importance of understanding and collecting data on significant events that happen early on in life and contextual factors that happen in the moment of the IPV event that could be emotionally triggering.

Together these typologies provide a basic understanding of why females engage in IPV, however there are many gaps in the literature that need attention in order to gain a deeper understanding. Contextual factors are heavily missed in these typologies. As Johnson (2008) identified, situational factors within the environment can result in a deeper understanding of why women use physical IPV. Factors such as socio-economic status, income, education, employment and stress at home are some of the factors that assist in understanding how IPV begins. The typologies identified for females are currently too broad and basic and there is a

need for a more female focused approach to research that delves deeper into the lives of females.

### **Reported Motives for IPV**

In order to accurately understand an IPV event, it is important to understand the definition of a motive. Stairmand et al. (2020) employ the definition of a motive as outlined by Fiske (2014) which states, motives are psychological processes that drive our behaviour when interacting with others as well as drive our emotions and cognitions. Similarly, the American Psychological Association (2020) defines a motive as a “physiological or psychological state of arousal that directs an organisms energies toward a goal”. Motives are important to understand when investigating IPV events as they provide detailed information as to why the act is occurring and what the goal of the IPV event is.

However, when investigating IPV motives past research has employed conflicting definitions which has resulted in different understandings of what a motive is. For example, a meta-analysis that included an analysis of 50 articles investigated themes of attributes for IPV perpetration and reported similar outcomes to the motives reported by Stairmand et al. (2020) and Bair-Merritt et al. (2010) (Neal & Edwards, 2017). Using the term “attributions”, which refers to “underlying psychological processes that impel people’s thinking, feelings, and behaviours” (Neal & Edwards, 2017, p.239), instead of the term motives highlights how conflicting terms and definitions used has confused this area of research. Common attributions reported by perpetrators were anger, retaliation, self-defence, the want for attention and control (Neal & Edwards, 2017). Interestingly, this meta-analysis also reported attributions from an IPV event from the victim’s perspective. Attributions were similar to the attributions identified by perpetrators with the addition of drugs and alcohol. This example of different terms used to

explain similar constructs highlights the importance of using consistent terms and definitions across studies to ensure the same construct is being measured.

Research investigating the motivations for perpetrating violence towards a partner has often reported motives differ by gender. For example, previous research has reported that the most common driver of violence for males is out of control anger, intimidation tactics or coercive control, and retaliation, whereas past research on female perpetrators has focused on self-defence as a primary driver of violence (Stairmand et al., 2020). Only recently has literature identified that in fact self-defence may be the driver for only a portion of female perpetrators, and that instead female motivations may be more similar to males' than previously suggested.

Supporting this more gender-neutral stance, a recent literature review was conducted with the aim of identifying why females commit family violence acts, which found the most common themes and motives of violent acts were anger, the want for attention, self-defence, retaliation and coercive control (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). More recent research on the female New Zealand prison population found that out of 16 offenders serving sentences for IPV, eight had motives that met the definition for Situational Couple Violence or Mutually Violent Combat, five had motives that met the definition of Separation Instigated Violence (which is where violent behaviour occurs after a relationship has ended), two had motives that meet the definition of Self-Defence and Violent Resistance, and one female had a motive that met the definition of Intimate Terrorism (Bevan et al., 2016). These findings provide evidence that some females engage in what was previously thought to be male only motives.

As research has progressed, an understanding of why females commit family violence acts has become unclear, with conflicting motives, definitions and conclusions being made depending on the methodologies employed. Conflicting methodologies and concepts used in past studies have resulted in IPV research not advancing our understanding of why people

commit family violence acts (Stairmand et al., 2020). For example, one prominent methodological issue is that past research has used self-report questionnaires that include a list of motives for participants to choose from i.e. a 'tick box' approach (Stairmand et al., 2020). This limits the information that can be gathered due to potential motives being missed off the list. Another methodological issue is that researchers in the past have asked participants to self-report past motives over a series of family violence acts. This limits the information that is received as it prevents examining whether a specific or particular motive results in a particular act or types of violence (Stairmand et al., 2020). Past research has also failed to clearly define what particular motives are and what the motive means to the participants (Stairmand et al., 2020). This is a significant limitation as different motives may have different meanings across participants. Determining what participants exactly mean when they use motivation terms is an aspect to be addressed as it will allow researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the motives for family violence perpetration.

As illustrated above research on the motives for females who use physical violence towards a partner is mixed. Many studies support the idea that due to patriarchal beliefs males use coercive controlling tactics to maintain power over females while females use physical violence in self-defence. Other studies have found that females do sometimes use physical violence as a way to gain control and compliance over males. However, methodological and conceptual definitions have resulted in the area of IPV research having significant limitations. Therefore, there is the need for structure and the use of formal models to ensure clarity in IPV research.

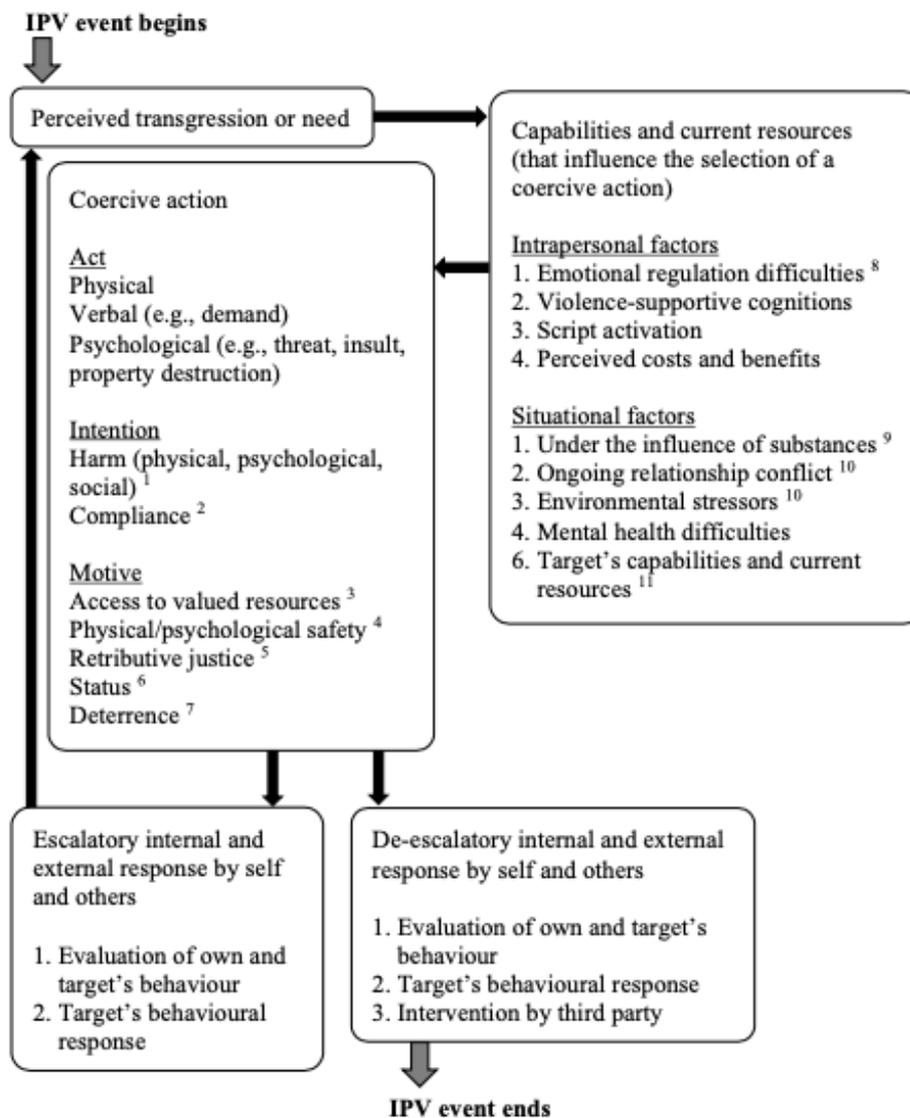
### **Framework for Understanding Intimate Partner Violence**

As IPV research has progressed, theories, typologies and motives have assisted in the understanding of why individuals engage in IPV, however the variety of perspectives has

resulted in conceptual complexity within the area of IPV research. With this in mind there is a need for a structure or formal modelling to bring conceptual clarity to the understanding of the causes of IPV. A conceptual framework in which past limitations are addressed by separating and clearly defining motives/drivers and contextual factors in order to understand why and what mechanisms are driving the dynamic nature of family violence acts has been proposed based on semi-structured interviews of family violence perpetrators completing community based treatment programmes (Stairmand et al., 2020). The Family Violence Event Process Model (FVEPM) proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020) can be split into four sections as seen in Figure 2. Stairmand et al. (2020) theorise that an IPV event begins with the perpetrator making an evaluation that the other person's behaviour is unacceptable or is in violation of the perpetrator's values, beliefs, moral or goals and requires a response. The next section states the perpetrator then selects a way to respond to this unwanted behaviour that is within their capabilities and current resources. Intrapersonal factors and situational factors that may influence this response are outlined in Figure 2. The coercive action that is selected can be split into three components: act, intention and motive. Act refers to the physical, verbal or psychological response. Intention refers to whether the perpetrator is attempting to harm or gain compliance over the other person. Motive refers to the perpetrator's desire to effect change in the other person in order to achieve a goal. The last section states that internal and external responses escalate or de-escalate an IPV event. IPV events can be fast in duration if the perpetrator's goal is satisfied. However, if the perpetrator's goal is not satisfied then counter-escalation can occur. Counter-escalation is when a perpetrator reselects multiple acts to engage in that increase in severity and results in a prolonged event. This is referred to as a feedback-loop. Initially the evaluation of behaviour is based on internal reasoning and then the escalation or de-escalation of violence is based on external responses by the other person or third parties.

**Figure 2.**

*Conceptual framework for IPV motives proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020)*



This framework provides a way for IPV events to be broken down into sections that ensures all elements such as behavioural, motivational, contextual and cognitive factors are taken into consideration. This model provides a means for understanding the dynamic nature of IPV events that are structured and provides an attempt for consistency when analysing why individuals engage in IPV events. This model is useful as it allows for family violence perpetration to be researched from the perpetrators perspective irrespective of gender.

However, this model places emphasis on perceived evaluations and does not account for IPV events that are internally driven.

### **Current Study**

Existing IPV research, including Johnson's (2008) typological research, has focused on male perpetration against females. This is due to past theorists stating that patriarchal beliefs found in males are what motivate men to use violence in order to maintain control over females, while females use violence to reduce a male's ability to gain control over the relationship (Winstok et al., 2016; 2017). Additionally, past studies that have found males to more often be the primary perpetrator of IPV offences have recently come under criticism for using biased and low quality methodologies. These methodological issues have resulted in inaccurate estimates of perpetration rates by gender, which has had detrimental effects on the overall progress of family violence research. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and motives of women who use physical violence towards an intimate partner. This study specifically focused on the perpetration of physical violence as there is a significant amount of nuanced details that need focus. There was the risk of losing these details if more than one type (i.e. sexual abuse) of IPV was included. Therefore, this study used qualitative semi-structured interviews to identify:

- a) The characteristics and background information of women who have used physical violence towards a partner.
- b) The motives for women who have committed an act of physical violence towards a partner.
- c) The extent to which the identified motives differ from those reported for the male perpetrator population in the literature.

Although this study was largely exploratory, it was hypothesised that coercive control tactics and mutual or bidirectional violence would be commonly reported by women, and to a greater extent than self-defence, resulting in similar motives to what has been reported for the male population.

Additionally, this study provided a conceptual replication of the framework proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020), exploring factors captured by the framework (e.g., motives, background factors) but using a different population to that used in the original development of the framework (Stairmand et al., 2019). Originally the FVEPM was developed using family violence perpetrators completing community based treatment programmes. This study will test the FVEPM using participants from the community irrespective of whether they have completed treatment or not. This conceptual replication will be useful as it allows the theoretical underpinnings of a framework to be tested for generalisability across different populations.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were eight women who had used physical violence towards a partner in the past. Women were eligible to take part in this study if they were over 18 years of age, could speak English, and reported using physical violence against a previous partner for any reason. Individuals identifying as men were excluded from participating. All participants were currently residing in New Zealand.

Participants were identified through community-based treatment organisations and providers for family violence offenders across the country ( $n = 3$ ) as well as via an advertisement poster displayed at a university campus ( $n = 1$ ) and advertisements displayed on social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Reddit ( $n = 4$ ). As seen in Table 1, three participants identified as Pākehā, with the remaining participants identifying as Cook

Island/Scottish, Māori, Indian, South African, or Fijian Indian/Māori. Table 1 shows participants were relatively evenly distributed across age groups. Two participants did not disclose their specific age, however they indicated they were over 18 years of age. Project sample size recommendations by Terry et al. (2017) state 6-15 interviews are appropriate for a Masters project. This project originally aimed to collect data from 20 participants however, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic recruitment was hindered.

This project was reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, HEC Ref: HEC 2021/56.

**Table 1**

*Sample Characteristics*

<b>Age</b>	>18	25-30	30-35	<40	Total
<i>n</i> (%)	2 (25%)	2(25%)	2(25%)	2(25%)	8
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
Pakeha	1		2		3(37.5%)
Cook Island/Scottish				1	1(12.5%)
Maori				1	1(12.5%)
Indian	1				1(12.5%)
South African		1			1(12.5%)
Fijian Indian/Maori		1			1(12.5%)

**Interview Process**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants either face-to-face, over the phone, or over Zoom, depending on the preferences of the participants. Semi-structured interviews make use of open-ended questions that are informed by theory as well as the aims

of the study, in order to direct the conversation of the interview in a way that is suited to the study (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Willig & Stainton Rogers, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were the preferred method for collecting information as they are an effective method for collecting open-ended sensitive information. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to disclose personal information that is important to them while also allowing the researchers to have an overall structure to ensure the information gathered stays relevant to the research. Due to the exploratory nature of this study it was important that researchers had areas of information that needed to be collected (home life, sibling relationships, community involvement and relationship background) however, it was important researchers did not have any leading questions that introduced researcher bias to the questions asked. Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate way in which the data should be collected as semi-structured interviews allow for detailed contextual story-based information to be collected in a way in which no data can be missed. Other tools such as the use of self-report questionnaires run the risk of important areas getting missed. Semi-structured interviews require the interviewer and the interviewee to establish a level of trust and rapport in order for the interview to flow freely, therefore a significant amount of time was spent at the start of the interview building this rapport prior to asking the planned questions (Galletta & Cross, 2013).

Guided by the framework developed by Stairmand et al. (2019), planned questions for the interviews were split into four topic areas: background/history of participant, build-up to the use of physical violence (the 'event'), experiences during the event, and experiences after the event (see Appendix A for full interview guide). Participants were asked to think back to a time where they perpetrated physical violence towards a partner. Participants were asked questions in order to identify their motives for committing the violent act, why they made the decision to commit the violent act, what environmental and contextual factors were present that increased the likelihood of perpetration, and what might have stopped them from

engaging in the violent act. Additionally, participants were asked about adverse childhood experiences. Broad open-ended questions were used when collecting background information to start the conversation and make the participant feel comfortable talking. For this phase of the interview the researchers were interested in gathering information about positive and negative influential experiences growing up. For example, “Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?”, “Can you please tell me what life was like growing up for you?”

After information was gathered about the participant’s background, the next phase involved gaining information about a time that the participant could recall using violence against a partner. Participants were free to recall any event they wanted. The rationale behind giving the participants the choice regarding which event to talk about was to ensure the events recalled were as representative of the general population as possible. It was believed that if the researchers specified which event to recall this would limit the information gathered to a specific type of IPV event. If the researchers asked participants to recall the most memorable IPV event this may have resulted in IPV events that are high in severity skewing the data. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of this research, the researchers believed that giving the participants control over what IPV event they discussed would assist in building rapport, easing the participants nerves, and in turn result in participants feeling comfortable and in control of the information they disclose. Creating a safe environment that was not re-traumatising for the participant was at the forefront of this decision. Participants were provided with some time to remember the event, and were then asked questions about what their relationship with their partner was like, as well as the build-up to the event. The purpose of this phase of the interview was to collect information related to what the participants relationship was like with their partner at the beginning of the relationship. Examples of questions asked were “Tell me a little bit about what your relationship was like at the beginning” and “What was happening for you in the days leading up to the event?”.

The next phase of the interviews involved gathering information on the event itself. The purpose of this phase of the interview was to collect information regarding thoughts, feelings and perceived motivations for behaviour during the event. Examples of questions asked were “How did the event begin?” and “Why do you think you used violence?”. The last phase of the interview focussed on gaining information regarding the immediate aftermath of the event. For this phase of the interview the researchers were interested in gathering information related to the implications of using physical violence and how this impacted on the participants life after the event as well as concluding comments. An example of the questions used is “What happened immediately after the event ended?”.

If answers to questions were unclear or left out information being sought, probing and clarification statements were used to draw out more specific information. Participants were also asked about whether they had displayed similar patterns of physical violence towards a partner in the past as well as whether they felt their childhood had an influence on the IPV event. Participants were given the chance to summarise and make any final statements after each section of the interview to ensure they had the chance to state everything they wished to.

## **Procedure**

Recruitment for the study involved several different strategies to maximise participant numbers within the time constraints of Masters’ research. Advertisements were posted on a variety of social media platforms, including Reddit, Facebook, and Instagram as well as on noticeboards on campus at a university in December 2021 (Appendix E). Advertisements contained brief information on what the study was about, who could take part, and a contact email address for people to register their interest in taking part. Individuals who expressed an interest in participating were then sent a full information sheet (Appendix B) before confirming their participation.

Family violence agencies/organisations across New Zealand were also approached asking if they would be able to assist in recruiting for this study. Agencies were sent an information sheet (Appendix C) containing information on the aims of this research, why this research was being conducted and how they could assist. Agencies who agreed to assist with this research were then asked to pass on the full information sheet to their clients to read and decide whether they would like to take part or not. Clients who were interested in participating then reached out directly to the research team.

At this point, those who wished to take part in the study were booked in for an interview. Interviews were offered face to face, over Zoom or over the phone. Zoom and phone interviews were offered to ensure data collection could continue while New Zealand had a lock down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and as an option for participants who may have been uncomfortable in a face-to-face setting. Interviewers verbally went through the information sheet with participants at the start of each interview to provide another opportunity for participants to ask questions, prior to obtaining written and verbal consent.

This study used semi-structured interviews (up to 90 minutes) to obtain the required data. Participants were asked to go into substantial detail about their thoughts, feelings, motives and the context in which the physical violence occurred, although they were able to refuse answering certain questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so. During the interviews, participants were also able to signal they would like a break at any time and they were able to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. Participants were also able to ask for the audio recording to be turned off at any time. No participants opted to stop the interview early or withdraw from the study. At the end of each interview all participants were given a list of support services that were available to assist them if they found they would like to seek support. This study used audio recording software Otter.ai 2022 to

record the interviews. Recordings were used to ensure the accurate transcribing of data. Transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 12 software which was used for coding purposes.

### **Planned Data Analysis**

This study used an exploratory, retrospective, qualitative research design, and the data were analysed by way of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a tool used for the analysis of qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017). This design was considered the most appropriate for this study as there is limited knowledge on why women use physical violence towards their partners. Qualitative research is best suited to areas of research that are exploratory in nature, where there has been little research done and where there is emphasis on contextual components (Barker & Pistrang, 2021) as these factors play a vital role in understanding how and why IPV events occur at an individual level.

The thematic analysis for the current study was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process. The first step was to become familiar with the data. This required listening back to recordings and reading transcripts numerous times. The next step was to generate initial codes after becoming familiar with the data. The next step was to code the data. This involved identifying relevant areas within the data set and attaching meaningful labels. There are two types of ways in which data can be coded (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willig & Stainton Rogers, 2017). The first is by way of inductive analysis. This is when the analysis is primarily based on the content of the data. The second is by way of deductive analysis. This is when the data is analysed through the lens of pre-existing theories. This study used inductive analysis or bottom-up analysis to analyze the data. The inductive approach was selected due to the exploratory nature of this study. This research aimed to produce findings that represent IPV at the present time without influence from pre-existing theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The next step was theme development. Codes were reviewed and grouped together to identify key

areas/themes. Once themes were reviewed, defined and named, the next step involved another researcher who assisted with double coding all eight transcripts; inter-rater reliability was assessed as part of this process. The researchers compared their coding and discussed any differences. Once agreement between coders were made the last step was to write the results of this study.

## **Results**

Data for this research were collected from eight women who reported using physical violence towards a partner in the past. The purpose of collecting these data was to identify the characteristics, background information and the motivations of women who have used physical violence towards a partner. From the data, eighteen overarching themes were identified. Each theme will be discussed below.

Characteristic and background information was collected from each participant to establish a level of understanding about what life was like for each participant up until the point of the IPV event they wished to disclose. After reviewing the data collected, five themes were identified and grouped under an overarching umbrella named 'Characteristic and Background Information'. These results addressed the first aim of the study: to understand and identify the characteristics and background information of women who have used physical violence towards a partner.

- Theme One: Adverse Experiences
- Theme Two: Home Life
- Theme Three: Personal Factors
- Theme Four: School Life
- Theme Five: Relationship Background

This research also sought to identify the motivations for the use of physical violence towards a partner by women. Participants were asked questions around the goals they were trying to achieve by using violence, as well as their thoughts and feelings during the IPV event. Five broad themes for the motivations of using physical violence were found and are discussed further below.

- Theme Six: Asserting Dominance
- Theme Seven: Defensive Violence
- Theme Eight: Retaliation
- Theme Nine: Wanting to Stop Partner's Behaviour
- Theme Ten: Wanting to Escape

In addition to participants' motivations for using physical violence, facilitators of physical violence were also identified from participant responses. Facilitators of physical violence can be defined as factors that make the decision to use physical violence towards a partner easier for the participant i.e. factors that remove internal or external barriers to engaging in violence. Facilitators of violence can sometimes be confused with motivations for violence, however this research distinguishes between the two in order to establish clarity and depth in understanding (Fiske, 2014; Stairmand et al., 2020). Facilitators of physical violence assisted the participant in achieving their desired outcome or goal (i.e. their motivation for violence). Eight broad themes under facilitators of violence were identified in the current study, and will be discussed further below.

- Theme Eleven: Contributing Attitudes
- Theme Twelve: Heightened Emotions
- Theme Thirteen: Evaluation of Negative Behaviour
- Theme Fourteen: Mutual Physical Violence

- Theme Fifteen: Psychological Abuse
- Theme Sixteen: Relationship Distrust
- Theme Seventeen: Lack of Communication and Resources
- Theme Eighteen: Inhibiting Factors that Reduce Physical IPV

### **Characteristics and Background Information**

The information collected on characteristic and background information was separated into five overarching themes (Adverse Experiences, Home Life, Personal Factors, School Life, and Relationship Background), some of which comprised multiple sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes are discussed in further detail below.

#### ***Theme One: Adverse Experiences***

A total of six participants reported at least one adverse experience from their childhood. Table 2 shows the different types of adverse experiences reported, as well as the number of participants who reported the experience. Half the participants reported experiencing the death of a family member ( $n=4$ ) and/or growing up with parents who were separated ( $n=4$ ). Other adverse experiences reported were being adopted/whāngai as a child ( $n=1$ ), experiences of childhood sexual abuse ( $n=2$ ), spending extended periods of time away from a primary parental figure ( $n=1$ ), and having a parent in prison ( $n=1$ ). Being adopted/whāngai may be considered an adverse experience, however it should be noted that this participant reported a positive experience with being adopted/whāngai and a difficult relationship with her birth parents.

*Participant Three “Yeah, I felt loved and connected and actually, man, I must be a little bit more special because they chose to pick me. So, yeah that was my take on it.”*

As Table 2 shows, Participant One (P1) and P5 reported a significant number of adverse experiences which had serious impacts of their lives. As a result of the trauma experienced, P1 and P5 stated their mental wellbeing suffered, specifically, P1 who reported a range of mental health difficulties that will be discussed later. This highlights that women who engage in IPV may come from backgrounds characterised by severe trauma. Participant One (P1) and P5 blocked out memories of their childhood due to the sexual abuse they had experienced. This shows that women who engage in IPV may have been exposed to a range of traumatic events growing up and the impact of having experienced adversity can contribute to poor mental health outcomes.

*Participant One "That's when things started to sort of fall into place, about the sexual abuse. When I had him [son]. My psychologist said because he was such a big baby and the pressure and the feelings of someone being on top of you sort of triggered the event [postpartum depression]. I started having a lot of flashbacks, remembering a lot of smells. It wasn't until later that I had realised I had just blocked everything out. I can switch. I don't do that a lot anymore, but I can do it just like that [clicks fingers]. I'm probably here but I'm not my mind is switched off and obviously that was a coping mechanism when I was going through the sexual abuse so it's just something that I've had to work through with her [Psychologist] [...] But coming from trauma I think it stays with you. It doesn't really matter how much work you do there is always that trauma base for me anyway. I think if I hadn't been brought up like that it could have been totally different. I've been in a dark place, I mean I was in and out of [location] with clinical depression, suicidal ideation, I've tried to hang myself so many times you wouldn't even believe it. But it was all from trauma and from sexual abuse. [...] Not that it has to affect you in your everyday life, but there's no getting away from it. That will never go. I think*

*in the past I used to try and put it in a box and put it away. But that never really worked for me,”*

*Participant Five “Well my childhood was actually pretty shit. My mum wasn't very good. She didn't treat me very nicely and I had no dad. I don't really actually remember heaps of it. When I was really young, I was sexually abused by my mum's husband at the time. I think I was like two but I was in counselling for it. [...] I got told my dad was the person that sexually assaulted me and then he killed himself when I was young. So I always thought that he [mum's husband] was my dad until I was about eight. And then Mum told me no actually this person is your dad. And that person didn't really want anything to do with me. [...] But honestly my childhood, I don't even really remember most of it because I've tried to block it out [...] I think my childhood definitely had an effect on all my relationships because I don't trust nobody. It's real hard for me to trust someone.”*

**Table 2**

*Adverse Childhood Experiences Reported by Participants*

Adverse Experiences	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Adopted/whāngai			x					
Childhood sexual abuse	x				x			
Death in the family	x	x	x		x			
Extended periods of time away for a family member	x							
Parent in jail					x			
Separated parents	x				x	x	x	

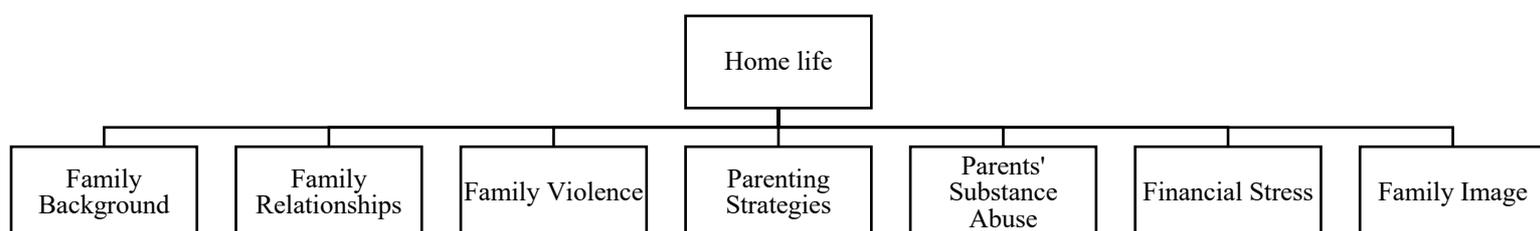
*Note.* P = participant

### *Theme Two: Home Life*

The second major theme that participants spoke about in terms of their background and upbringing were factors related to what their home environment and relationships with other family members were like. Figure 3 illustrates the different sub-themes that were identified.

**Figure 3**

*Tree Diagram Displaying Sub-Themes Identified Under Theme Two: Home Life*



There were many similarities across participants, including common reports of parents who used substances, family violence and financial stress. Table 3 illustrates which participants experienced each sub-theme. Further discussion of these sub-themes is provided below.

**Table 3**

*Participant's Reports of Influential Home Life Factors*

Home life sub-themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Family violence	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Parents' substance use	x	x	x				x	x
Financial stress	x	x	x			x	x	x
Family image				x				x

*Note.* P = participant

**Parents' Substance Use.** Parents' that abused substances was a common theme extracted from the data. A total of five participants reported that a parent or caregiver abused substances in their home growing up; while most of these participants reported frequent parental use of alcohol, two participants spoke about drug use within the home.

Of the participants who spoke about drug use within the home, one described her mother as a drug addict who was involved in both consuming and selling drugs out of the family home. The presence of drugs was typical and occurred often for this participant. The second participant reported that her father was addicted to methamphetamine. This shows that serious forms of drug use occurred in the homes of women in this study. Drug use was not found to directly impact on participant's lives, however parental drug use did result in a disengaged parent for one participant and a tense home environment at times for both participants due to the effects of withdrawal.

*Participant One "My mum was a drug addict, so she was a pill taker, a pill popper. She dealt drugs and sold them and everything. You know, growing up that was just normal."*

*Participant Two "He [dad] is addicted to meth. We didn't realise what it was at the time but I was kind of walking on eggshells at home."*

Not only was drug use characteristic of participants' home life but alcohol use was too. Three participants reported having a parent who consumed a significant amount of alcohol while they were growing up. Two out of the three participants described their fathers as alcoholics. The relationship between alcohol use and the use of violence perpetrated by participant's parents differed; one participant stated her father was violent when under the influence of alcohol, while other participant stated her father drank but was not violent when under the influence. The last participant described her father as a heavy drinker and said that

he used alcohol as a way of dealing with his past trauma. She also described her father as “quite scary” when he was drinking. This shows that some women who have engaged in IPV have witnessed unhealthy, and at times violent, coping strategies by their parents. Interestingly, only male parental figures were identified as heavy consumers of alcohol highlighting that this might be a potential strategy for managing their emotions and an area for future research.

*Participant Four “My dad was quite violent towards my mum. Dad was an alcoholic back then.”*

*Participant Eight “They [parents] both had their own separate traumas, as we all do, but they weren't managing theirs. He [father] managed his through drinking”.*

**Family Violence.** Another major finding extracted from the data was the presence of family violence. Seven participants reported there being some form of family violence at home. Family violence occurred between a range of family members, including between parents/caregivers, siblings and parents, siblings and the participants’, and the participants and a parent. Common types of family violence were physical violence ( $n=4$ ), sexual abuse ( $n=2$ ), verbal abuse/arguments ( $n=4$ ), psychological abuse ( $n=4$ ) and destruction of property ( $n=2$ ). All seven participants reported that, at times, a combination of the different types of violence were experienced indicating that violence could be severe at times. The experience of frequent family violence resulted in the normalisation of violence within the family environment for some. The following quotes show that physical fighting and verbal abuse were common occurrences in the homes of participants while they were growing up. The first quote highlights how extreme the violence could be and how the normalisation of family violence occurred resulting in the need for specialist intervention later in life.

*Participant One* “There was a lot of physical violence from my half-brothers to me, so if they felt I was naughty they would beat me up. It was just a lot of violence, and also witnessing that from my stepfather to my mother. There was heaps of violence there. Yeah, he raped my mother on the kitchen table, and I was only little, I don't even know how old I was. I didn't even know what it was until I worked through it with my psychologists. So there was a lot of abuse. Yeah, so we just grew up with it and that was just almost normal, you know what I mean. Obviously it sounds a bit wacky but it was sort of almost normal until I got older, of course. But by that stage some of the traits still came with me of the trauma that I had been exposed to.”

*Participant Three* “In my whāngai whanau I grew up with violence. I remember seeing my mum and dad fighting. I do remember that as a young child.”

**Parenting Strategies.** Another influential factor in the lives of women in this study were the different styles of parenting they experienced. Seven participants commented on how the impact of parenting styles effected their childhood. Two participants reported their parents were very strict. For one participant this meant she was kept isolated from experiencing the things her friends could, while the other participant described her mother as strong-willed and strict in her decision making. This suggests that for some of the women in the sample, parenting that was based on authority.

*Participant Two* “So they [parents] were both really, really strict and I didn't have a lot of opportunities to go out or do a lot of the things my friends were.”

*Participant Three* “My mother was very strong. She was very strict.”

Experience of a negative parenting style was reported by another participant. This parenting style was perceived negatively due to an absence of care, controlling behaviours, and punishment from her parent. This participant noticed her parent would treat her differently compared to her sibling and stated their relationship was characterised by constant arguments. This lack of a nurturing parenting style meant that this participant had a greater sense of independence and a need to care for themselves.

*Participant Five “She [mother] was just always nasty to me compared to my sister. I think I might have been the to-hard child. I think she [mother] just gave up caring and I moved out of home when I was 15 or something and was quite independent since then. But I've always never really got on with my mum.”*

Similarly, another participant reported experiences of negative parenting, however this was due to disengagement. This participant reported her parent was not present and did not interact with the family.

*Participant Six “When I was much younger and living with my biological dad, like I didn't really notice him that much. He sort of just did his own thing. Watched TV, went golfing. I don't feel like he spoke to my mum much aside from arguing about finances.”*

Whilst parenting styles were perceived negatively by some participants others had experienced a more positive style of parenting. One participant reported their parents were very over-protective but also nurturing. This participant said that her parents would constantly monitor where she was to ensure she was not making any negative decisions. This participant believed this was because she was an only child and her parents wanted the best for her, however she also recognised that as part of her culture, her decision-

making can reflect positively and negatively on her family's place within the community. Therefore, she was able to understand why her parents monitored her movements and used an over-protective parenting strategy. At times over-protective parenting was overwhelming and impinged on her autonomy.

*Participant Four* "It was nurturing, but when something is over-protective, it suffocates you."

A positive experience of co-parenting was reported by one participant. This had a positive impact on the memories she had of her parents working together to raise her and also provided her with a sense of support from both parents. The positive impacts co-parenting had on this participant's childhood was a parenting strategy she wanted to use with her own children.

*Participant Three* "My dad would come and stay with us in the holidays. He'd drive to [location] and he'd stay a night or two and then I'd drive back with him to [location]. And all that time my mum had another partner, so I saw co-parenting."

Strong attachments to one parent were reported by two participants. These strong relationships occurred with female parental figures rather than male parental figures and this was because male parental figures had behaved in negative ways towards the participants. This shows that even though women in this study may have had a negative relationship with one parent, a strong attachment to another could be quite protective.

*Participant Seven* "I had a secure attachment with my mum. Dad parented us when my mum had to work in the evenings [...] I probably feel like as an adult reflecting now, I didn't want to upset him so if he was talking on the phone and I started

*talking to him as a child he would just go ahhh get away kind of thing. Yeah he'd have an outburst."*

Overall parenting styles differed across participants. Some were perceived negatively while some were perceived positively. Negative parenting was characterised by strict, disengaged, overprotective parenting based on authority while positive parenting was characterised by effective co-parenting and a strong attachment to at least one parent. Positive experiences of parenting styles could have been a protective factor and assisted in reducing the impact of other difficulties faced by women in this study.

**Family Relationships.** Family relationships was another influential factor that participants spoke about in relation to their home lives. Six participants stated they had positive relationships with parental figures. These relationships were described as positive due to the love, warmth, and acceptance they received. As stated above, two out of the six participants described being closer to their mothers than their fathers.

*Participant One "Mum loved us, like when dad was away. Mum was good. She was quite happy because she didn't have the stress of him. She would cook when she could. But a lot of the time she was in bed. She'd have the curtains pulled so you'd know if she wasn't in a good space or whatever. So it was loving from Mum. But Mum and Dad used to fight so it wasn't loving there."*

Family relationships were also described negatively by three participants. These participants described their relationships with male parental figures in a negative way as a result of the effects of substance abuse. Substance use resulted in unpredictable emotions by father figures. Participants did not know how male parental figures were

going to react to them day-to-day, suggesting the presence of emotional abuse in the homes of women in this study. Unpredictable emotions resulted in tense home environments.

*Participant Eight* “After then his [dad] drinking increased, and he became quite scary when he was drinking. He would self soothe I guess. [...] We were walking on eggshells all the time.”

Furthermore, one participant described a poor, distrustful and unreliable relationship with her mum. From the participants perspective, this fragmented relationship contributed to the generalisation of distrust across relationships in later life.

*Participant Five* “I don't trust nobody. It's real hard for me to trust someone.

*Question:* “When you say you don't trust people, is it because you don't trust your mum?”

*Participant Five* “I think so. I think it's because I was never really showed love.”

Not only did participants report poor relationships with family members but also with step family. Five participants described poor relationships with step family due to aggressive interactions characterised by dysfunctional communication and verbal aggression. These interactions also contributed to a sense of tension within the family home. In the specific case of P7, these interactions resulted in a sense of personal emotional maturity.

*Participant Seven:* “He [step dad] got angry at me once, lost the plot because I didn't help doing the dishes. I'd leave notes for my mother on the beach sometimes and she'd leave notes for me. He [step dad] left a note for me once saying put the f\*\*ing dirty dishes in the dishwasher. We would never communicate like that in my

*family. I came home from work and I confronted him and I asked him to stay in the room to talk to me because he kept walking away swearing. I felt like I was the adult in that conversation.”*

Sibling relationships were identified as influential for participants. Three participants stated they were not close with their siblings due to differing personalities and favouritism from parents, while one participant said there was a significant amount of sibling rivalry, however they both understood they were each other's safety net. Sibling rivalry could be considered relatively common in families, however the support given to each other could be considered a protective factor reducing the impacts of other dysfunctional family relationships.

*Participant Two “My sister and I fought a little. I wore her clothes and wanted to hang out with her and her friends and obviously she was older. So you know, we had kind of a little bit of a rivalry. But I think a mutual understanding we were kind of each other's safety net.”*

Similarly, extended family support was identified as a protective factor reducing the impacts of other dysfunctional family relationships. In particular, one participant had a significant amount of support from extended family growing up which provided an escape and a break from being around others in her family that she did not get along with. This shows that extended family members provided a sense of stability to the participant during childhood.

*Participant Five “My Nana, she's always been my person that I've always gone to. Like when I was younger, I think I'd always just run away to Nana and Granddad's house. I've always had my Nana as my safe person, you know what I mean?”*

An interesting finding was that many women felt they had to take on the role of being the parent during their childhood. The switching of roles within the family contributed to tension and issues within relationships for some participants. Three participants stated they had to take on the role of the parent due to their parents being unable to care for the children. Participants were forced to run the house as a result of their parents mental illness and un-resolved trauma. At times participants had to do the cooking, cleaning, and looking after their siblings and parent/s, while their parent/s were preoccupied with their own wellbeing.

*Participant Eight “He [sibling] always saw me as quite matriarchal. Because I was helping out so much at home, didn’t really have a choice. And Mum was very reliant on me as well.”*

*Participant One “But a lot of the time she [mum] was in bed, like she’d have the curtains pulled so you’d know if she wasn’t in a good space or whatever [...] I did pretty well at school, never tried. But then I had to stay home with mum because mum had mental illness as well so she didn’t function like a mother would. So she would spend a lot of time in bed, so I would stay home, do the housework, cook the meals. So, even though I wanted to go to school, she wanted me at home to look after her. So that’s a lot of my school life, was looking after her.”*

Overall participants experienced a range of family relationships. Positive relationships were characterised by love and warmth while negative relationships were as a result of having a parent with poor mental health, a parent using substances, arguments, verbal abuse, and aggressive interactions. Wider family relationships with step family were also considered negative, whereas relationships with siblings and other

extended family members provided protective layers reducing the impact of other negative family relationships for women in this study.

**Financial Stress.** Another sub-theme extracted from the data was that home life was characterised by financial stress for many participants. Many participants did not have a lot of money growing up. In fact, 75% ( $n=6$ ) of participants stated they only had enough money for the basics in life, such as food and clothes, which contributed to tension and stress within the family home.

*Participant Two “Money things did change, but we always had food on the table. We had times where there was a lot of baked beans on toast type meals and those kinds of things. But we always had food and we always had a roof over our head. We didn't have flash stuff. Mum would kind of make our clothes.”*

*Participant Six “I don't feel like he [father] spoke to my mum much aside from arguing about finances.”*

**Family Image.** Societies perception of how successful families were contributed to women having to put forward an image portraying the opposite of the reality they were experiencing. Two participants reported that upholding a positive family image was of importance, even though behind closed doors there was a negative home atmosphere. For one participant this was driven by cultural factors which impacted on other home life factors like parenting strategies, as illustrated above. However, for another participant upholding a positive family image was driven by the community the family lived in. There was a lot of judgement within the community this participant lived in and to avoid judgement the family felt they had to look like they had everything together, when in

reality this was not the case. Upholding a positive family image put these families under pressure which resulted in the family ignoring issues that needed to be addressed to improve the home atmosphere.

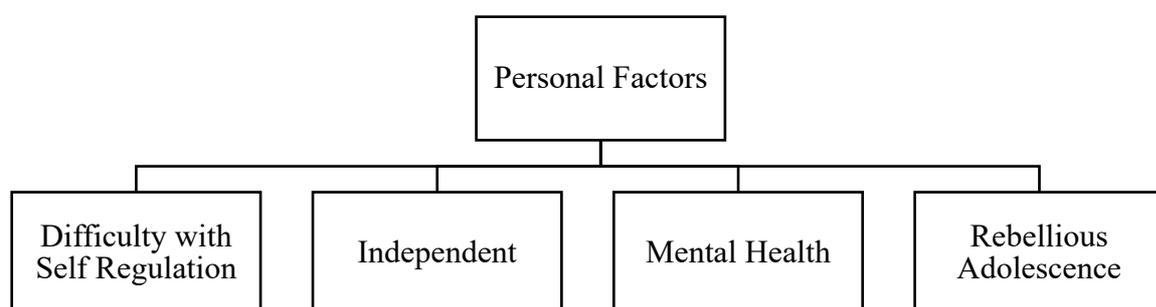
*Participant Eight: “You look like a million bucks, but things are falling apart. Your house is on fire inside. So it was very much keeping up appearances to kind of look normal. Especially going to a very middle class school and having to fit in with all the families, nosy gossipy stay-at-home mums. Yeah, it was very hidden.”*

### ***Theme Three: Personal factors***

The third major theme that participants spoke about in terms of their background and upbringing were factors related to their personality and temperament. Personal factors participants disclosed fit within four broad sub-themes as illustrated in Figure 4: difficulties with self-regulation, an independent personality, mental health difficulties, and a rebellious adolescence. Findings related to these separate sub-themes are discussed below.

#### **Figure 4**

*Tree Diagram Displaying Sub-Themes Identified Under Theme Three: Personal Factors*



**Self-Regulation.** Difficulties with self-regulation was a common personal factor extracted from the data. Three participants identified that they had difficulties with self-

regulation which could be linked to their childhood. In particular, participants believed self-regulation problems related to feelings of anxiety and tension in childhood. This was because they were constantly feeling like they did not know how their parents were going to react to them. Not knowing whether their parents were happy or angry with them affected their ability to develop effective self-regulation. This in turn could have impacted their ability to regulate their emotions in adulthood, resulting in uncontrollable outbursts of emotions at times, specifically anger for P5.

*Participant Two “I know that I’m quite short-tempered and mum says it comes from dad and dad says it comes from mum. I know that I have certain anxieties with things. I feel like that’s probably quite long-stemmed from when I was younger. So I think it’s more just kind of being on edge all the time and quite tense, not knowing what was going to be happening and if we were going to get yelled at or spanked or anything like that.”*

*Participant Five “I do definitely get angry. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I do throw s\*\*t. I do still get really angry and I have tried to fix that. Normally I would just walk away but I’ve always had this anger problem, I do get really angry.”*

**Independent Personality.** Another common personal factor identified within the data was that many participants had independent personalities. Three participants described themselves as independent. One participant described themselves as being independent in terms of making decisions for their own life. This participant reported her parents were over-protective and would closely monitor her, however she described herself as independent later in life as she felt more than capable of making her own life decisions due to the scaffolding her parents provided her with. This participant also

demonstrated effective independent problem solving skills. Specifically, this participant felt she was able to find effective solutions to difficulties she had faced. This shows that having over-protective parents potentially resulted in a secure base for this participant to navigate the world.

*Participant Four* “Firstly, they [parents] know if I have made my mind up, I have made my mind up. [...] When I am all by myself, I'm doing good in my life. There's been nothing wrong in at least the last four years. They [parents] haven't seen anything wrong in my life. If there is trouble in my life, I literally find a plan B and take that route and come out of it. So all these things made them [parents] feel that I'm ok, I am grown up enough to make a commitment to a relationship and stick to that [...] I can fix my problems in my life.”

Another participant became independent as a result of isolation from friendships and parents. Parents leaving for work trips and leaving the children at home resulted in this participant spending a lot of time at home looking after herself. This participant reported having one close friend that was her cousin but she did not have many friends outside of that. Her one close friend may have been a protective factor from further isolation, however this participant described enjoying having time on her own. Even though this participant felt isolated, this isolation also had positive impacts on her life. For example, she described being able to look after herself from a young age due to the cooking and cleaning skills she had no choice but to learn.

*Participant Six* “I was always sort of a loner I guess. You know, I had my best friend which was my cousin but outside of that, I wasn't super close with a lot of people. I became quite independent. When I was around about 12, 13. My mum would have a lot of work trips that she had to go on outside the country, so she'd

*leave me home alone for usually just a night or two or maybe a bit longer. But I became very used to being by myself.”*

The third participant described herself as living and completing life experiences independently. This participant described working hard to be able to financially support herself and enjoy life experiences. However, focusing on developing a successful life may have taken priority at the expense of forming meaningful relationships with others. This highlights forming a meaningful relationship is of importance to the participant and having an independent personality may act as a barrier to forming such relationships.

*Participant Eight “Yeah, I’m very independent. I’ve travelled. I’ve got everything I want in life. I’ve worked my butt off for it. But I am still single.”*

**Mental Health.** Difficulties with mental health was another common personal factors for women in this study. Five participants reported difficulties with their mental health. Table 4 illustrates the particular area of mental health these participants had difficulties with. Out of the five participants with mental health difficulties, the most common difficulties reported were depression, low self-esteem and blocking out memories to do with the trauma experienced as a child. One participant had severe experiences with poor mental health, specifically in seven different areas.

Participants reported that their mental health difficulties affected their ability to be happy and therefore, many received psychologist and counselling support from professionals. Some mental health difficulties (including blocking out memories) were based on the trauma the participant experienced as a child. Blocking out memories was specifically attributed to the sexual abuse participants experienced as mentioned previously.

**Table 4***Participants' Reported Mental Health Difficulties*

Mental Health Difficulty	P1	P2	P3	P5	P8
Flash Backs	x				
Blocked Out Memories to do with Trauma	x			x	
Post-Natal Depression	x				
Psychosis	x				
Low Self-Esteem	x	x			
Suicidal Ideation	x				
Suicidal Attempt	x				
Anxiety		x			
Depression		x	x	x	
PTSD					x

*Note.* P = participant

**Rebellious Adolescence.** Women in this study had teenage years characterised by rebellious behaviour. Specifically, half of the participants stated they had a rebellious adolescence. This was attributed to strict parenting for some, controlling parenting for another, and modelling from parents and peers for the rest. Strict parenting and hearing the word 'no' increased one participant's desire to engage in an act. Witnessing risk taking behaviour by siblings also contributed to this participants rebellious adolescence. Having an older sister who was engaging in activities, such as smoking and drinking, increased the desire for one participant to take part.

*Participant Two* "So they [parents] were both really, really strict and I didn't have a lot of opportunities to go out or do a lot of the things my friends were doing, so I

*ended up just kind of doing that stuff anyway. Getting into a lot of trouble for it. Started smoking and drinking I think around 13.”*

Another participant stated her parent/s liked to have control, however due to a lack of respect for her parent/s this participant would rebel. This resulted in a fragile relationship between the participant and her parent as well as the formation of anti-social friendships.

*Participant Five “She's (mother) quite controlling and quite OCD with cleaning and stuff. I think because I didn't listen, I didn't give a f\*\*k what she [mother] said. I don't think she liked that. So she would always try and punish me and stuff.”*

Lastly, one participant described watching her mother stick up for herself and make a stand against males. This modelling contributed to the participant learning this type of communication was acceptable when communicating with males, which resulted in little concern for the feelings of males in her later life.

*Participant Eight “So I did become quite rebellious. Having seen mum stick up for herself as well towards men from quite a young age, I could be quite abrasive towards males and challenging.”*

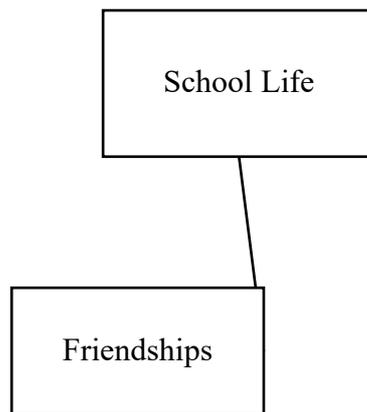
Going through a rebellious adolescence is considered relatively normal development, however in the case of the participant engaging in smoking and drinking at a young age with older friends and in the case of the participant who did not respect her parents' decision-making, a rebellious adolescence may have contributed to further harm as a result of being exposed to the anti-social attitudes of those they were associating themselves with.

### ***Theme Four: School Life***

The fourth major theme that participants spoke about in terms of their background and upbringing were factors related to their school experience and friendships (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Tree Diagram Displaying Sub-Theme Identified Under Theme Four: School Life*



Seventy-five percent ( $n=6$ ) of participants reported they had good experiences at primary and intermediate school. Good experiences were characterised by positive relationships with teachers and friends. One out of the six participants that reported good experiences stated they never tried with academic work, but enjoyed being present at school, especially for the social side. Another participant that reported a positive experience at school went on to complete higher education.

*Participant Three "Loved school. Yeah. school was good. I really enjoyed school."*

*Participant Four "I had a master's in [country]. Now I am completing my PhD and I'm expecting to finish in a couple months."*

Two participants reported leaving school early due to not engaging with the curriculum and one participant reported that she was asked to leave high school due to her rebellious behaviour. Rebellious behaviours included anti-social attitudes, leaving school early, not showing up to school, and negative relationships with teachers. Participant Five disengaged from school and the experience of a significant adverse life event may have contributed to her disengagement.

*Participant Five “I remember primary and intermediate school was awesome because I had lots of friends. I always hung out with my friends. I did heaps of sports. In high school, I think from when my mum went to jail that’s when I didn’t give a s\*\*t anymore, I never tried. Yeah, I pretty much got asked to leave high school. I think it was the friends that I made at high school as well. I did hang out with the bad crowd. So that didn’t help either because I’d bunk school all the time. I finished NCEA level 1.*

A total of three participants reported negative experiences at school. One participant reported a poor experience, however once her family relocated and friendships were made at the new school her enjoyment increased. This illustrates the important role peers could have in the lives of these women and how they could act as positive protective factors. Another participant reported poor experiences at high school specifically due to the adjustment of becoming a teenager, and the last participant stated her poor experience was due to the inability to gel with the curriculum and experiences of bullying. This highlights school experiences that are positive could be protective while negative experiences could contribute to an increased risk of isolation from support and education.

*Participant Eight: “So I did get bullied quite a bit at school just for being slightly odd. But I mean, so many of the other kids were too.”*

**Friendships.** Similarities and differences were identified across participant friendships. Three participants described having a number of satisfying friendships at school and two participants engaged in extra-circular activities that they enjoyed. These participants could be described as more social and extraverted when it came to meeting people in comparison to the other participants.

Three participants stated they had difficulties forming friendships at school. One participant mentioned this was because they were independent and enjoyed their own company. As stated above, another participant mentioned friendships improved when their family relocated, and the last participant had difficulties fitting in and was bullied. Interestingly, one participant who reported a number of friendships stated her friendships started becoming anti-social at a similar time to when her mother was incarcerated. Having positive friendships were described as life changing for one participant as she felt a sense of belonging, while for others a lack of friendships could have contributed to low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.

*Participant Seven “My first primary school experience wasn't as positive. I was there until eight or nine and I found it difficult to make friends [...] But once I changed schools to the country school it was much different. I ended up living next to someone my age. We became best friends. I had a really good group of friends, they were kind, we went out on trips over the summer holidays together. It was really satisfying and probably life changing for me.”*

*Participant Five “I think it was the friends that I made at high school as well. I did hang out with the bad crowd. So, that didn't help either because I'd bunk school the time.”*

### ***Theme Five: Relationship Background***

The fifth major theme that participants spoke about were factors related to their relationships. As shown in Figure 6, six broad sub-themes were identified across participants in relation to relationship backgrounds.

**Figure 6**

*Tree Diagram Displaying Sub-Themes Identified Under Theme Five: Relationship Background*

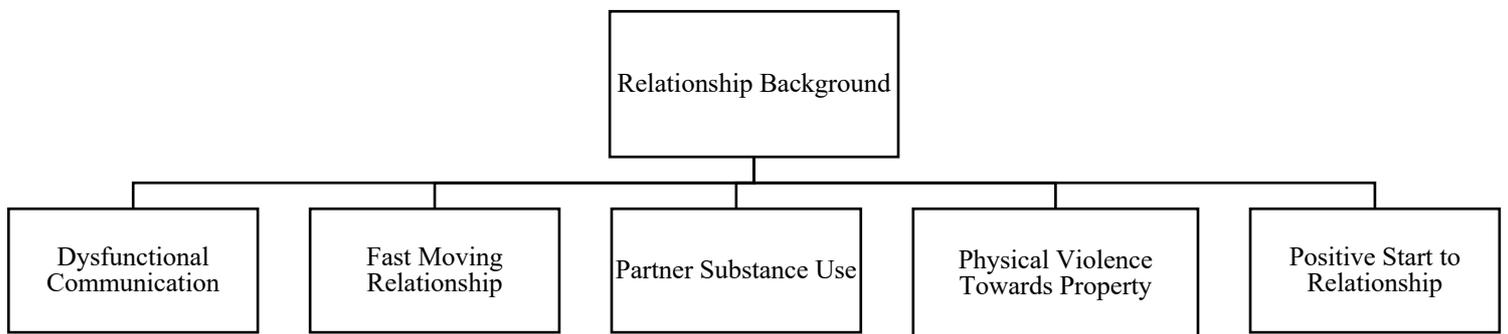


Table 5 shows dysfunctional communication occurred in the majority of relationships ( $n=6$ ), followed by the substance use by the partner ( $n=4$ ) and physical violence towards property ( $n=4$ ).

**Table 5**

*Factors that Characterise the Relationship Between Participant and Partner).*

Relationship characteristics	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Dysfunctional communication	x	x		x	x	x		x
Fast moving relationship		x				x		
Partner substance use	x	x	x		x			
Physical violence towards property	x	x			x	x		

*Note.* P = participant

**Dysfunctional Communication.** Six participants that had relationships characterised by dysfunctional communication reported a range of maladaptive communication techniques. Communication techniques used included yelling, blaming, manipulation, gaslighting, shouting and verbal abuse. One participant reported they had to be careful not to argue too much due to the repercussions they might face from their partner. These communications strategies were unhelpful and had negative impacts on the participants' wellbeing. The impacts of dysfunctional communication could have resulted in a risk of harm for one participant from her partner, while others experienced gaslighting, and manipulation. Verbal abuse, such as swearing, was common across all participants. This suggests women who used engage in physical IPV may come from relationships characterised by dysfunctional communication.

*Participant One* "I used to do a lot of swearing. I remember swearing when we were having arguments but then if I argued too much then it would make him more angry. So I had to be careful of that too, because it could inflame the whole situation and then I could be in for something, you know what I mean, so I knew when to stop pushing."

*Participant Two* "Every time I'd bring something up. It was like I was being crazy or I was paranoid or you know those kinds of things. I'd say something or a concern of how I was feeling and he'd kind of put it back on me and then I'd feel bad and then the conversation would stop."

*Participant Four* "Most of my fights were like abusive words."

**Fast moving relationship.** The women in this study fell into serious relationships quickly. Two participants described their relationships as moving fast. There were reports of moving into the same house with partners to fast and falling in love quickly. Participants reported that this led to them being unable to identify “red flags” such as jealousy, law breaking behaviour and substance use. Due to the excitement of the new relationship, participants mentioned these red flags were not of concern at the time but became apparent and the centre of arguments as time passed and the honeymoon period wore off.

*Participant Two “We moved in together really quick. Where he was staying wasn't a super healthy environment.”*

*Participant Six “We just sort of talked and got to know each other for a while and eventually decided to become official. It was quite a fast relationship. I think he said that he loved me a month in and then he moved in with me a couple months after that maybe.”*

**Partner Substance Use.** Substance use featured in many relationships. Fifty percent of participants reported their partner used substances. All four participants stated that their partner consumed a significant amount of alcohol, while one participant reported their partner consumed both alcohol and marijuana.

*Participant One “He was just going out more on the booze and drugging. He was a bit of druggy. He used marijuana and stuff.”*

The partners of participants were under the influence of substances more often than not, which created friction within relationships. Participants would find that the substance use would be at the centre of arguments contributing to relationship stress.

*Participant Three* “He was an alcoholic and then we had a child together, and he went cold turkey, which was amazing. And then we had another child so we were raising these children, he was sober, life was good. I thought, just your normal run of the mill. Then something was happening, I don't know. Little things would happen and I thought he's drinking again. I don't know but he used to always just say 'you're crazy, it's all in your head. What are you on about?' Even though I remember a couple of times I would say have you been to the pub?, I can smell it. He would say no, no it's all in your head.”

**Physical Violence Towards Property.** Many participants reported relationships characterised by experiences of physical violence towards property. In fact half of the participants reported their partner had damaged property. Intriguingly, all participants mentioned physical violence towards property occurred as a response driven by an outburst of emotion, including frustration and anger.

The physical violence towards property varied in severity from angrily picking objects up, to the use of weapons. Physical violence towards property could be considered psychological abuse. This had negative impacts on the participants as it caused fear and was perceived as the partners way of gaining control over the participants emotionally.

*Participant One* “We had an upstairs flat, and he used to get really frustrated with me. I don't know why, but he had a machete where we were living up on the hill, and he had a knife, and something happened. I don't know what triggered him, but he stabbed the knife in the wall.”

*Participant Two “So he butchered my car one time when he was drunk.”*

*Participant Five “He got angry and smashed my phone.”*

*Participant Six “He dented the roof in the place where we lived previously, because he really angrily picked up a chair.”*

**Positive Start to Relationship.** Over half ( $n=6$ ) of participants stated their relationship was positive in the beginning, however as time passed the relationship shifted into a negative space due to the honeymoon period wearing off. Initially, relationships were characterised by friendliness, love, and going out to do fun activities, however as the relationships progressed participants found arguments started and in some cases arguments escalated into violence. As stated above, many participants stated jealousy, law breaking behaviour, dysfunctional communication and their partner’s substance use was at the centre of arguments. Participants opposed the excessive use of alcohol and drugs, which ultimately had significant negative impacts on relationships.

*Participant One “I meet this guy [partner], he used to come to the house. He was [ethnicity], very talkative, very friendly, just very gentle and calm [...] Things started to change a bit. He [partner] was just going out more on the booze, drugging . He was a bit of druggy. He used marijuana and stuff. And I sort of had high hopes for myself. I wanted to do something good with my life.”*

*Participant Five “We went on dates and stuff like that. But obviously there was red flags from the start, but I didn't see it. The first date we went on I had to pick him [partner] up because he lost his license for drunk driving. I didn't see that as*

*anything. But yeah he lost his licence for a while but it [relationship] was real good at the start, really in love. We hung out together all the time [...] It was probably three or four months into our relationship. I think that's when things took a turn because I think he might have been a bit depressed. He gained weight and was drinking a lot and the arguments started. We'd just argue, I don't even know over what, but there would just be constant arguments, because he'd be drunk. He'd be a bit aggressive. I don't take that kind of stuff so I'd try to smash him back."*

Overall, many characteristics and background factors were extracted from the data in this research. Women in this study came from backgrounds characterised by adverse experiences, such as death in the family and separated parents. Participants who reported a higher frequency of adverse experiences also reported a higher number of difficulties in later life. Home life for the participants in this study was characterised by family violence, financial stress and parents who used substances, such as alcohol and methamphetamine. Parenting styles and relationships within the family were found to be both positively and negatively experienced while sibling relationships, relationships with extended family members, a positive school experience and positive friendships were found to be perceived as protective factors. A range of influential personal factors were extracted from the data which included participants difficulties with self-regulation and mental health. Further to this, some participants had independent personalities and some participants reported teenage years characterised by rebellious behaviour. Lastly, relationships were predominantly reported as positive to begin with even though relationships moved at a fast pace. However, relationships were later characterised by dysfunctional communication, partner's substance use, and episodes of physical violence towards property.

## Motivations for Physical Violence

Data were collected on the motivations for why the participants used physical violence towards their partners. Table 6 shows five motivations were extracted from the data, however in some cases more than one motivation was reported by a single participant.

**Table 6**

*Motivations Identified for Using Physical Violence Towards a Partner*

Motivations	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Asserting dominance							x	
Defensive violence	x				x			
Retaliation		x						x
Wanted to stop partners behaviour			x	x	x		x	
Wanting to escape						x		

*Notes:* P=Participant

### ***Theme Six: Asserting Dominance***

A motivation identified by one participant for using physical violence towards her partner was that she wanted to actively assert dominance over her partner as a result of an inflammatory joke. This violence was situationally provoked and as a result this participant wanted to be viewed by her partner as a dominant women. This participant used physical violence in a context that started off as playful, however hints of malice were involved.

*Participant Seven* “We had been talking, I can't remember what triggered it. But I remember going to slap him. It was a little bit playful but also it was a little bit

*spiteful. There was definitely spite in it. It wasn't just playful. He looked at me and I remember him slapping me back."*

This participant also suggested that she used violence as a way of challenging gender social norms. She knew she should not physically harm someone, however was interested in seeing what the outcome would be if she did. This act of violence could be categorised as experimental and was viewed by the participant as a rebellious moment in time that ultimately tested the participant and her partner's boundaries.

*Participant Seven "When I was sitting on him and hit him, that would have been more about, I guess, objectively asserting my dominance. I guess I was trying to be the dominant one [...] I think we were both challenging social norms a little bit I guess. I was trying to be an assertive female and he was challenging the norm."*

### ***Theme Seven: Defensive Violence***

The next motivation for using physical violence towards a partner identified by one participant was that she did not want to be scared anymore. This participant describes being tired of feeling scared and used violence to make a stand in the hopes the patterned physical violence perpetrated towards her would stop. On the day this participant used physical violence, her partner had entered her home and grabbed her aggressively.

*Participant One "He grabbed me by the throat and got me like that and pushed me right up against the door. I don't even know, he was dribbling, spitting at me, and I don't know, something just inside me went just like that [snaps fingers]. So I grabbed him and I pushed him, and I tried to scratch him as much as I could and I pushed him. I had a soft ball bat behind my door. So I got the softball bat and held it up. I swore and carried on like a crazy woman. Don't f\*\*ing do this, I'm going*

*to f\*\*king do that. He just looked at me and I don't think he believed that it was me holding this bat. Then he just sort of like freaked and ran into his car.”*

This participant described a life characterised by being victim to physical abuse from her partner, which lasted for a significant amount of time. This participant felt she had dealt with experiencing physical violence for so long she was no longer able to cope and had reached breaking point. She felt if she did not make a stand, she may have to continue living being scared and being victim to physical violence. This IPV event illustrates violence used in self-defence.

*Participant One “I suppose for me it felt like it was almost the last resort. I didn't have anything else I could do. I couldn't keep going like this, that's what I felt like and I had to make a stand, whether it worked or not I just felt rage. It was a real rage, it wasn't just angry. It was rage of all the times that he had hurt me, he had abused me. It just sort of came to a head. I felt that I had just kept taking the violence, you know, and that was like almost like a statement [...] I was always scared, I didn't want to be scared anymore, you know, I didn't. I just lived in fear. I had to go and check on all the doors and the windows and it was just a really horrible way to live.”*

### ***Theme Eight: Retaliation***

The next motivation for using physical violence towards a partner was retaliation. Two participants describe retaliation as the reason for using physical violence, however one was retaliation due to accusations made by the participants partner and the second was retaliation due to humiliating remarks made by the participants partner. Both of these participants wanted to retaliate because of the negative internal experience caused by their partner. These

participants were wanting to hurt the feelings of their partner in return for the feelings of hurt they were experiencing as a result of accusations and humiliating remarks.

One participant had concerns her partner was being unfaithful and when confronting her partner about this, he denied it and used manipulation techniques, such as gaslighting, to shift the blame. This resulted in an heated argument and ultimately physical violence perpetrated by the participant as a result of hurt feelings.

*Participant Two: "We shared a phone and he had been texting other girls. So it was kind of in the space of like, you cheated on me and he just denying it. Full blown. It was just an argument but he turned it around on me and said I was being paranoid and then tried to accuse me of being the one that was cheating. I think at that stage I just couldn't believe it. For it to be turned around on me when I hadn't done anything. So I remember that happening and then I'm not even sure how long the conversation went on for, but I remember I was just holding my bowl and I just threw it at him [...] Just to have known what he had done and for him to not only deny it but to accuse me of something when I'd been nothing but faithful. I was just so angry."*

The second participant reported using violence in retaliation to a humiliating remark made by her partner. The context of this IPV event was emotionally-fuelled and both the participant and her partner had consumed alcohol at a party, which potentially exacerbated heightened emotions. Peer influence and embarrassment may have also exacerbated the situation contributing to the perpetration of IPV.

*Participant Eight "So interestingly, the relationship where I was violent I punched my boyfriend in the stomach, and he actually wasn't my boyfriend at the time. We'd been together for near on two years and had broken up. It was a month after we'd*

*broken up and I turned up to a very large party, and many of whom were who I thought were our friends. But of course, they'd taken sides. It was really silly in hindsight and we'd all had far too much to drink and it escalated really quickly. I ended up getting really upset and punching him. He'd been a wee s\*\*t. He was being really cheeky. He was exacerbating the situation. [...] I can't remember specifically what he said but he made a really inflammatory remark in front of his friends."*

### ***Theme Nine: Wanting to Stop Partner's Behaviour***

The next motivation for the use of physical violence towards a partner reported by four participants was that they wanted their partners to stop a behaviour. The behaviours deemed unacceptable and that participants wanted to stop ranged across participants. One participant used physical violence in order to stop her ex-partner from engaging in baiting behaviours (laughing) and consuming alcohol. This participant was under significant stress as a result of her and her children being forced out of their living arrangements. This participant allowed her ex-partner to reside with her and her children as she wanted her children to have their father close and present in their lives. On the day this participant used physical violence, her ex-partner was drinking alcohol and laughing at her while she was trying to pack up their belongings and find a new home to live in. The laughing triggered this participant, resulting in the participant becoming frustrated and striking her ex-partner. In this case, the participant used physical violence in order to stop her ex-partner's laughing.

*Participant Three "He wakes up, he's still drunk, and he's just laughing at me. Honestly, just all the stress, anxiety. I've got to be out of this house by two o'clock this afternoon and your flat is still not done. You're laughing at me, we're homeless, I had nowhere to go."*

The next participant wanted to stop the physical assaults she was experiencing made by her partner, however she also wanted to cause harm back. This participant had caught her partner being unfaithful after viewing text messages on his phone. When she confronted her partner who had also consumed a significant amount of alcohol, their argument escalated and her partner began to physically assault her. This participant then used physical violence to both intentionally cause harm to her partner, and to stop her partner from using physical violence towards her. Ultimately the violence stopped when she made the decision to escalate her perpetration of violence by using a weapon. No other women used a weapon that caused direct harm to their partner. This IPV event illustrates the extreme lengths some women may go to in order to stop a partner's behaviour. Not only was this participant wanting to stop her partners behaviour and cause harm to him but she was also using violence in self-defence.

*Participant Five "I found messages of him cheating on me. Then I rung the girl and she admitted everything. So that's what our argument was about. So, I got angry, he got angry, he started coming at me and trying to assault me and I was doing what I wanted to get him back. I pushed him like down on the couch to try get him away from me. And then I just grabbed the closest thing that I could find, which was the knife and I just chucked it because I wanted him to like know that I was serious. I was also trying to protect my unborn child. I had bruises and stuff on my face. And I just chucked it and it stuck right in his forehead."*

The next participant wanted her partner to stop controlling her movements, specifically, to stop physically holding the participant in one place. This IPV event occurred as a result of outside family pressure, judgement and attitudes about whether the participant and her partner were a good match. This judgement had occurred for a long period of time causing stress and tension within the relationship. In an heated argument the participants partner held her

shoulders in an attempt to hold her in one place. The participant wanted her partner to stop holding her down which resulted in the perpetration of IPV by the participant.

*Participant Four* “When he applies pressure, I know I won’t win with him. But I get so aggressive like a cat that I start literally scratching him bad everywhere [...] I don’t like someone to apply pressure on me to make me listen.”

The last participant wanted her partner to stop shaking his leg. This act of physical IPV can be considered rapid and occurring without any warning signs. This participant lashed out at her partner because they were both trying to fall asleep and he was shaking his leg. This IPV event was sudden and abrupt. This motivation for using physical violence illustrates how difficulties with self-regulation can contribute to outbursts of violence.

*Participant Seven* “Total lack of control. Stop shaking I need to go to sleep, stop shaking your leg.”

Overall, the behaviours in which participants wanted their partners to stop ranged. Behaviours such as the perpetration of physical violence by a partner illustrated a context characterised by a higher risk of physical harm to the participant, whereas baiting behaviours illustrate a context characterised by emotional harm. Other behaviours such as wanting a partner to stop controlling movements illustrated how frustration can result in IPV perpetration by women and lastly, behaviours that are considered annoying, such as shaking a leg, show how difficulties with self-regulation can contribute to outbursts of violence.

### ***Theme Ten: Wanting to Escape***

The last motivation for the use of physical violence towards a partner reported by one participant was the want and need to escape her partner's presence. This participant and her partner were arguing due to jealousy within the relationship. The participant's partner tried to block her from being able to leave, which resulted in her using physical violence to get away from her partner as she wanted to have some space to calm down and clear her thoughts. Similar to the participant who used physical violence as a result of her partner restricting her movements, this participant did not like having her movements restricted either.

*Participant Six "I just wanted to find some space to think and calm down and not argue."*

### **Facilitators of Physical Violence**

Participants were asked questions about what they were feeling and what triggered their use of physical violence towards a partner. Participants' answers resulted in the identification of key factors that facilitated the use of physical violence and, in turn, assisted participants in gaining their desired outcome or motive. Facilitators of physical violence identified were contributing attitudes, heightened emotions, evaluations of negative behaviour, mutual physical violence, psychological abuse, distrust, and a lack of communication and resources. These are discussed below.

### ***Theme Eleven: Contributing Attitudes***

Contributing attitudes were identified as a theme that facilitated the use of physical violence for 50% of participants. These attitudes varied in their sources and forms (as discussed below), however they all represented a pre-existing schema of beliefs or values that ultimately reduced internal and/or external barriers for the use of violence within the relationship.

The first contributing attitude identified was family members' attitudes and viewpoints on how relationships should be and who the participant should be with. This was experienced by one participant. She described there being different communities within her culture, and forming a relationship with someone who is not from the same community (even though they share the same culture) can result in family members not accepting the relationship. As such, this participant felt that she was not accepted by her partner's family due to belonging to a different community. This perceived lack of acceptance added significant strain to her relationship with her partner, and became the focal point of arguments within her relationship, which escalated over time and eventually resulted in the use of violence.

*Participant Four "My partner's family are still not quite comfortable or accepting of the relationship because we don't share the same language. That's the primary reason against it. The cultural things, festivals, and clothing. Cultural norms are a little fine-tuned for different communities within [country]. So they are not quite comfortable with how I will gel. [...] When his parents came to know about the relationship, he was forced to move out [...] There was still some affection and love there. He said he's sorry but can't do much right now but he didn't want to leave me which resulted in an verbal argument [...] I don't like someone to apply pressure on me to make me listen [...] I got so aggressive like a cat and I started scratching him bad everywhere."*

Anti-social peer attitudes were also identified as facilitators of violence by one participant. This participant described hanging out with peers with anti-social, pro-criminal attitudes. This participant also stated her mother was sent to prison. Being surrounded by influential people with anti-social or pro-criminal attitudes may have had an impact on the participant's attitudes about the use of violence as a successful strategy for problem solving,

however this was not explicitly stated. This provides insight into how this participant may have formed the belief that using violence as a way to solve problems is acceptable.

*Participant Five “I did hang out with the bad crowd. So, that didn't help [...] I guess like I hung out with all the gangster people.”*

The next contributing attitude that facilitated physical violence was the normalisation of using physical violence seen in movies as a means to solve problems and as a result of being exposed to violence at home during childhood. Watching movies that glamorised the use of physical violence for one participant was identified as being influential and potentially contributed to her IPV perpetration. Even though she knew violence was not appropriate, she decided to use it so she could see what the outcome would be and if it was similar to what happens in movies.

*Participant Six “It felt normalized because as a teenager you witness it in movies and it was little bit dramatic.”*

Exposure to violence at home during childhood also contributed to the normalisation of violence and ultimately the IPV events for seven participants.

*Participant Eight: “The boys [siblings] and I would scrap. We would have horrific physical fights. Because we just thought it was normal for people to scrap.”*

*Participant One: “There was a lot of abuse. We just grew up with it and that was just almost normal. You know what I mean, obviously it sounds a bit wacky but it was almost normal until I got older.”*

Interestingly, one participant identified her own moral compass as being the reason why she *stopped* using physical violence. This participant stated she pushed and scratched her partner, however her own moral compass stopped her from going further. This participant stated that deep down she does not like to do anything wrong. For example, this participant explained she will always cross the road at the crossing and she would never park somewhere you are not allowed to park. This shows that although prevailing attitudes can facilitate violence, they can also be protective factors in some instances where these attitudes are prosocial.

*Participant One “Even after everything that I'd been through as a kid and seeing violence, there is still that moral compass for me that wouldn't allow me to hit him. I don't know why. I don't know what stopped me, but there was definitely something that did stop me because I easily could have hit him with that bat, but there was still something there to stop me from doing that.”*

### ***Theme Twelve: Heightened Emotions***

The next facilitating factor that appeared to contribute to the use of physical violence by participants was heightened emotions. Table 7 displays the range of emotions participants were feeling in the moment of each IPV event.

A total of seven participants reported they felt rage and uncontrollable anger at the time of physical violence, which was the most common emotional response reported. The second most common emotional response was feelings of sadness and being upset ( $n=4$ ). Three participants reported feeling fed up and described feeling like something inside of them “snapped” in the moment.

Furthermore, all participants reported feeling more than one type of emotion in the moment of the IPV event. The maximum amount of emotions felt in the moment of an IPV

event were seven, while the minimum was two. This highlights that participants were often feeling a mixture of emotions while being under significant stress at the time of the IPV event. These emotional responses appeared to facilitate the use of physical violence by lowering internal barriers against this behaviour.

*Participant Three “I think I was just so pent up and there was so much pent up rage, frustration, stress, anger, all of those emotions, and it was like, how do I release it out of my body.”*

**Table 7**

*Emotional Responses Identified by Participants*

Emotional responses	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Build up	x	x						
Snaps/burst	x			x		x		
Lost control	x			x				
Fear	x				x			
Rage/out of control anger	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Shock		x						
Fed up	x	x			x			
Worn down		x						
At breaking point	x	x						
Frustration			x			x		
Stress			x					
Upset					x	x	x	x
Unmanageable						x		

*Note.* P = participant

### ***Theme Thirteen: Evaluation of Negative Behaviour***

The next factor that facilitated the use of physical violence was the evaluation of a partners behaviour as being negative by the participant. A total of six participants perceived their partners behaviours as unwanted and unacceptable. The range of behaviours that were negatively evaluated included accusations, a partner not stepping up and meeting the participant's needs in stressful situations, a partner questioning participant's capabilities, alcohol and drug consumption, and inflammatory comments. These negative behaviours were perceived as unacceptable by participants. These negative evaluations were used by the participants to validate and motivate the use of physical violence towards their partner.

*Participant Three: "I brought my family around to help me finish packing. He had done nothing. I went through into his room and it was a pigsty! He was pissed and half passed out on his bed. I had to clean it. Scrubbing it, it was just absolutely terrible. The morning of moving he wakes up still drunk, and he's just laughing at me. All the stress, anxiety, I've got to be out of this house by two o'clock this afternoon and his room is still not done. He's laughing at me, we're homeless, I had nowhere to go [...] I lost it and it felt so good to smack him."*

*Participant Eight: "He made a really inflammatory remark in front of his friends [...] I ended up getting really upset and punching him. He'd been a wee s\*\*t, he was being really cheeky. He was exacerbating the situation."*

### ***Theme Fourteen: Mutual Physical Violence***

The next factor that facilitated the use of physical violence by participants was mutual violence. Fifty percent of participants reported the occurrence of mutual physical violence at the time of the IPV event. As illustrated in the quotes below, the contexts in which the mutual

physical violence occurred differed for each IPV event, however for two participants the fact that their partner was physically aggressive towards them first validated and reinforced their decision to use violence in return. As demonstrated earlier, this violence can be considered self-defence against physical harm. The other two participants used physical violence first, which potentially validated and reinforced their partner's decision to use physical aggression in return. One participant described family attitudes and opinions contributed to her use of violence towards her partner, however she mentioned she in fact had used a similar pattern of violence at another point in time. This participant described hitting and scratching her partner in which her partner retaliated with physical violence as a result of frustration.

*Participant Four "Obviously if I keep on hitting him at one point he will also slap me back and he did once."*

The other participant that described using engaging first used physical violence to escape a situation she was in which resulted in the use of physical violence by her partner towards her. This situation shows that because the participant used physical violence, her partner felt valid in using physical violence back.

*Participant Six "I like pushed him and slapped him to try and get him out of the way so that I could go."*

*Question: "Do you remember what happened afterwards?"*

*Participant Six "Afterwards, he slapped me back which made me very upset. So I started crying and I went to the other side of the apartment to get away from him. He was yelling at me saying what am I expecting? Of course if I slap him he's going to slap me back. And then we basically argued for hours and hours with him trying every possible way to manipulate me to get over it."*

### ***Theme Fifteen: Psychological Abuse***

The next factor that facilitated the use of physical violence by the participants was the experience of psychological abuse perpetrated by their partner. Fifty percent of participants reported experiences of psychological abuse over the course of their relationship, prior to their use of physical violence. Some participants ( $n=2$ ) reported receiving insults from their partner which had detrimental effects on their self-esteem. These insults occurred during arguments, which were common occurrences for these participants.

*Participant One* “He'd [partner] say, “You're ugly and you're fat, nobody would even want you. And two kids with different fathers, you're just nothing but a wh\*\*e.” This would go on for a long time so it was sort of almost ingrained in me, that this is what you are and you'll only ever be this.”

*Participant Six* “We basically argued for hours and hours with him trying every possible way to manipulate me to get over it, I guess. Flitting between saying, “You're a wh\*\*e, you're disgusting, f\*\*k you, I hate you.” And then being like, “I just love you to pieces. I just want us to be together and be happy”, blah, blah, blah.”

Not only did participants experience verbal insults but two other participants ( $n=2$ ) report their partners used to gaslight them as a manipulation technique. This would occur when the participants would question their partner due to distrust in the relationships. This resulted in building frustration for the participants and feelings of confusion that impacted their psychological wellbeing. The experience of psychological abuse contributed to the building tension, frustration, and emotion within the relationships which facilitated the use of physical violence.

*Question: "You mentioned that he gaslighted you quite a lot. Had you ever felt that sort of anger towards him before when he tried to do the same thing?"*

*Participant Two "It was done so well that I believed it so when he'd say it's just me and I'm just being paranoid, I'd think oh okay maybe I am. So it was kind of more guilt or those kind of feelings towards myself. It wasn't really much anger towards him, might be bits of it, but it either got shut down or put back on me so it really messed with my head quite a bit. . I remember that day. I think by that stage I was so over it. Because there was so much that had led up to it."*

### ***Theme Sixteen: Relationship Distrust***

Another factor identified that facilitated the use of physical violence was the presence of distrust within the relationship. Fifty percent ( $n=4$ ) of participants identified relationship distrust due to unfaithful behaviours (i.e. cheating). Accusations of being unfaithful were at the centre of most arguments for these participants. Participants felt as though they could not trust their partners and these arguments facilitated an hostile environment for violence to occur.

*Participant Five "I found messages of him like cheating on me. From that night then obviously I rung the girl. And yeah, she like admitted everything. So that's what our argument was about."*

Two additional participants reported distrust within the relationship. One participant had distrust that her partner had abstained from consuming alcohol (as promised), whilst another participant reported their partner had distrust in them and would blame the participant for things they had not done, such as being unfaithful in the relationship.

*Participant Three* “He used to always just say, “You're crazy, it's all in your head. What are you on about?” Even though I remember a couple of times I would say, “Have you been to the pub? I can smell it.” “No, no, it's all in your head.”[...] The morning of the event he wakes up drunk, and he's just laughing at me. All the stress, anxiety, I've got to be out of this house by two o'clock this afternoon and your room is still not done. You're laughing at me, we're homeless, I had nowhere to go. At the end of it I lost it.”

*Participant Four* “I haven't done that. You're just blaming me unnecessarily. You don't have any grounds to say those things. I'm not going to take that because I haven't done it.”

### ***Theme Seventeen: Lack of Communication and Resources***

A lack of communication and resources were factors identified as facilitating the use of physical violence. Interestingly, two participants stated their immature communication style contributed to the use of violence, however after the IPV event they learned that they needed to develop more effective listen skills, they needed to learn to talk to each other in a calmer manner and they had to work on being more open and transparent with their each other. This suggests emotional immaturity and poor communication could have facilitated disagreements and resulted in the escalation of arguments.

*Participant Four* “In his [partner] past and in his relationship he mentioned that when he tried to be open and transparent about everything he got judged about the way he was so he started becoming more like a robot. Now he's quite open about who is with me.”

*Participant Six* “We're both very emotionally mature now and communicate really effectively.”

Another participant identified that she had no other tools or prosocial resources to use other than violence. Violence was her only option if she wanted the violence that was perpetrated towards her to stop. In this case, even though this participant had the belief that violence was not the answer, the context she found herself in was more powerful overruling her beliefs. The lack of resources and knowledge regarding how to respond could be considered a facilitator of violence.

*Participant One* “Violence against violence is not really the answer [...] I can see why things happen. You know I'm not blind to that but obviously now I would deal with it totally different, but back in the day I didn't have the tools to be able to not do that.”

### ***Theme Eighteen: Inhibiting Factors that Reduce Physical IPV***

Inhibiting factors reducing the escalation of physical violence were extracted from the data. De-escalating factors identified were the participants ability to find space away after the IPV event and participants reactions were found to reduce the escalation of physical violence. Even though children were not physically present during IPV events in the current study, they still played a role in the de-escalation of violence.

**De-escalating Factors.** Fifty percent of participants identified factors they believed resulted in the de-escalation of violence on the day of the IPV event. One participant stated their partner left immediately after the violence occurred, which resulted in the end of the IPV event. Another participant described getting upset and finding space away from her partner.

Intriguingly, two participants reported the shocked reaction of their partners in relation to the participant's use of violence resulted in no further physical violence occurring. One participant explained that her partner's shocked reaction de-escalated his perpetration of violence because her retaliating with violence was a different response to what he would usually expect from her. He had gotten away with physically harming the participant for a long period of time, but when she made a stand he was caught off guard and left the premises.

*Participant One "He just looked at me and I don't think he believed that it was me holding this bat. And then he just sort of freaked and ran into his car."*

The second participant described seeing a look of shock on her partner's face after she physically hurt him. This shock reaction resulted in immediate feelings of remorse as she could not believe she had made the decision to use violence. This shows the impact that reactions in the moment can have on the de-escalation or escalation of IPV events.

*Question: "What do you think de-escalated the violence in that moment?"*

*Participant Six "His shock."*

**Prioritising children.** No children were present during any of the IPV events described by the participants, however one participant stated if her child was present at the time of the IPV event she probably would have left the situation and it would not have occurred. This shows that existing commitments to children or other dependants in the household can act as a protective factor for women removing themselves from high-risk situations.

*Participant Five "I think I would have just picked him up and left. So he didn't have to hear the arguing."*

Interestingly, one participant emphasised wanting to give her children the best possible life with two parents who are present in their life, no matter the past the participant and her ex-partner had shared. This participant wanted to provide a better life for her children that was not characterised by separated parents and she was upset at the thought of potentially having let them down. This commitment to co-parenting resulted in the participant staying connected to her ex-partner and therefore, in an unhealthy relationship. In this case, beliefs about the need to co-parent in situations that pose risk to the well-being of the parents can facilitate the use of violence.

*Participant Three “And to be homeless, to be a grown woman and homeless with three children to feel like a failure, you know, it's like letting my kids down. I took this man in. Not for me, didn't help me in the slightest, but to be that better parent and to have the best for my children.”*

### **Inter-Rater Reliability Test**

Inter-rater reliability checks were conducted to establish the agreement of coding between two researchers. Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ) is a statistic used to measure agreement between researchers. A Cohen's kappa coefficient ( $\kappa$ ) that is 0.80 or greater indicates a good level of coding agreement (Terry et al., 2017). A Cohen's kappa coefficient ( $\kappa$ ) less than 0.80 indicates potentially meaningful differences between coders.

Table 8 displays Cohen's kappa coefficient for all individual themes (including sub-themes) identified in this research, as well as an overall Cohen's kappa coefficient. The weakest Cohen's kappa coefficient was for the sub-theme heightened emotions ( $\kappa=0.89$ ) and family violence ( $\kappa=0.89$ ). However, these coefficients are greater than 0.80 therefore they indicate a good level of agreement. The total Kappa coefficient ( $\kappa$ ) was 0.96, indicating a very good level of overall agreement between coders.

**Table 8***Inter-Rater Reliability Test of Agreeableness Between Coders*

Theme	$\kappa$
<b>Adverse Experiences</b>	
Adopted or whāngai	0.98
Childhood sexual abuse	0.96
Death in the family	0.92
Extended periods of time away for a family member	1.00
Parent in jail	1.00
Separated parents	0.95
<b>Home Life</b>	
Family relationships	0.92
Family violence	0.89
Parenting strategies	0.93
Parents substance abuse	0.93
<b>Personal Factors</b>	
Difficulty with self-regulation	0.94
Independent personality	0.96
Mental health difficulties	0.92
Rebellious adolescence	0.98
School life	0.91
<b>Relationship Background</b>	
Dysfunctional communication	0.95
Fast moving relationship	1.00

Partner substance use	0.95
Physical violence towards property	0.98
Positive start to relationship	0.95
<b>Motivations</b>	
Asserting dominance	1.00
Defensive violence	0.98
Retaliation	0.99
Wanted to stop partners behaviour	0.93
Wanting to escape	1.00
<b>Facilitators of Violence</b>	
Contributing attitudes	0.96
Heightened emotions	0.89
Evaluation of negative behaviour	0.98
Mutual physical violence	0.97
Psychological abuse	0.94
Relationship distrust	0.92
Lack of communication and resources	1.00
Inhibiting factors	0.95
Children	0.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.96</b>

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## Discussion

This research used semi-structured interviews to understand how childhood, relationship, and individual factors may facilitate or motivate women's use of physical violence towards their partner or ex-partner. This research collected a variety of information relating to the upbringing of women and the characteristics of their relationships that play a role in understanding why they used physical violence towards a partner. Complex home lives were characterised by adverse experiences, such as abuse, violence, and poor family relationships. This finding highlights the importance in understanding IPV events as not just a one off occasion but as a whole life time of factors which can contribute to one IPV event.

A range of background information was extracted from this research, in which similarities and differences in upbringing were found across participants. Over half of participants reported, parents who used substances, poor relationships with family or step family, their own difficulties with mental health, rebellious teenage years, and a parent/s with mental health difficulties. This indicates women who engage in IPV have experienced and have had to overcome many challenging circumstances throughout their lives.

A hostile home environment and dysfunctional relationships have been proposed as risk factors for criminal offending. A General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning Theory of Criminal Conduct (GPCSL) was proposed (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). This theory explains that psychological, social and biological factors can influence and maintain criminal behaviour. This theory proposed eight main risk factors that can contribute to and maintain criminal behaviour. These risk factors are a criminal history, pro-criminal attitudes, pro-criminal associates, an antisocial personality pattern, family/marital factors, school/work, substance abuse, and leisure/recreation. The family/marital risk factor identified in the GPCSL states that poor relationships within the family unit and dysfunctional marital relationships can contribute to and maintain criminal behaviour. Therefore, from this perspective the finding of a hostile

home environment and dysfunctional relationships within the current study are risk factors that may be contributing to criminal behaviour, specifically the perpetration of IPV by women. Bonta and Andrews (2017) state that negative experiences, such as family violence, can increase the risk of engaging in criminal behaviour. The current study can lend support to this statement as family violence was a common occurrence for women who engaged in IPV. The current study has highlighted adverse experiences, poor relationships with family members, and poor relationships with romantic partners may have been contributing factors for the use of physical IPV by participants.

Interestingly, positive experiences at school were reported for the majority of women in the current study. School provided time away from home and allowed the participants to form positive interactions with teachers and friends. A meta-analysis identified risk and protective factors for adolescences who have perpetrated IPV (Vagi et al., 2013). This study found positive attachments to school was a protective factor and reduced the risk of adolescent IPV. In the current study, a positive school experience may have assisted in reducing the impact of other negative factors in participants lives such as, broken relationships, negative parenting and tension within the home environment. School experiences that were negative for women in this study were due to a lack of friendships. This finding highlights that positive peer relationships could be protective as well. However, for some women in this study the absence of friendships resulted in isolation and withdrawal from school.

As mentioned above, family violence occurred at home for many women in this study. Previous research states that living within a violent household can result in an increased risk of behavioural and emotional challenges (World Health Organisation, 2021). To support this finding, a study investigated the effects of witnessing IPV between parents and found that there was an increased risk that the individual witnessing violence could face behavioural challenges resulting in the perpetration of IPV (Vagi et al., 2013). Therefore, the women in the current

study may have had a higher chance of engaging in IPV as a result of witnessing family violence as a child. The effects of family violence on participants growing up may have contributed to emotional challenges too. Self-regulation difficulties were experienced in adulthood by women in the current study which may have facilitated the use of IPV. Research has found that children who witness patterned IPV between their parents or experience abuse directly are at risk of chronic activation of their HPA axis (Siegel, 2013). The HPA axis is involved in regulating cortisol (stress hormone) however, those who are exposed to stressful situations are at risk of disruptions to the HPA axis which can result in an inability to tolerate and/or manage emotional states. Difficulties with self-regulation may have been a result of the intense stress women were put under as a child when exposed to family violence and other childhood adversities, such as sexual abuse and the death of a loved one. In line with Social Learning Theory, these findings suggest that the use of physical violence to solve conflicts may have been learned in childhood through modelling (Bandura, 1973) and self-regulation difficulties may have been a result of experiencing intense stress (Siegel, 2013).

Participants report home life was characterised by a range of parenting styles. Some parents were described as strict, controlling and disengaged while others were positive and nurturing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) stated that experiencing poor parenting as well as poor relationships with family members as a child are risk factors for IPV. Previous research has also suggested that those who are victim to IPV are at risk of experiencing poorer outcomes, such as the inability to care for oneself and dependents (Potter et al., 2021). This finding is in line with the results from the current study as some participants had to take on parental duties due to their parents difficulties with mental health and trauma. These findings suggest experiences of poor parenting can contribute to the risk of engaging in IPV in later life.

In the current study, many families women came from struggled financially and this would be the cause of many argument between parents. A systematic meta-analysis was conducted investigating the risk factors for IPV on an sample recruited from the United States (Capaldi et al., 2012). This research found financial stress to be a strong predictor of IPV. In line with this finding, financial stress may have contributed to the use of IPV by parents and therefore, witnessed by women in the current study.

Interestingly, this research may have identified protective factors, such as positive school experiences, friendships, support from extended family and sibling relationships. These protective factors may have assisted the participants in being resilient to other adverse experiences growing up and therefore, reducing the risk of other poorer outcomes, such as social and employment isolation (Potter et al., 2021; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Relationships were characterised by dysfunctional communication, substance use by a partner, and physical violence towards property in the current study. Previous research has reported the effects substance use had on IPV (Gilchrist et al., 2019). From the victims perspective, patterned IPV was influenced by their partners being under the influence of substances as well as when their partners were experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Perpetrators also stated being under the influence of substances and the experience of withdrawal symptoms, such as frustration and irritability, had a causal relationship with IPV perpetration (Gilchrist et al., 2019). Interestingly, this was not the case for women in the current study. Only one participant reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of physical violence and this participant stated alcohol consumption exacerbated the event. No other participant reported being under the influence or withdrawing from substances at the time of physical violence. However, women in this study found their partners substance use was at the

centre of many arguments indicating that behaviours or actions women do not agree with may contribute to their use of physical IPV.

### **Motivations for physical violence**

This research sought to understand the motivations behind why women used physical violence towards a partner. Five motivations were identified: defensive violence, wanting to stop their partners behaviour, retaliation, asserting dominance, and wanting to escape. Interestingly, some participants described more than one motive. One of these participants reported wanting to stop their partner's behaviour while also using violence to retaliate against their partner. Another participant wanted to stop their partner's behaviour while also asserting dominance over their partner. This shows that more than one motive can drive a single IPV event. This finding is important as it highlights how a possible hierarchy of motivations can occur during an IPV event. This finding is important for treatment providers as it illustrates the complex layers to an IPV event that need to be understood for successful treatment and prevention work.

Previous research has identified motivations for why males and females use physical violence towards their partners. These motivation-based typologies have generally been based on gender roles within the relationship. Johnson's (2008) work in identifying typologies as to why IPV occurs has been influential in understanding these complicated events. Interestingly, parts of Johnson's (2008) typological research can be used to explain why violence occurred in the relationships of the participants in the current research. One participant from the present study described using physical violence because her and her family were about to become homeless and her ex-partner was being uncooperative and was laughing at her. This participant found herself acting aggressively due to the provoking situation she found herself in and she made an evaluation that her ex-partner's laughing was not acceptable. Another participant

described using violence in order to get space away from their partner whilst another described using violence in retaliation to the accusations her partner was making about her loyalty to the relationship. These decision to use physical violence were situationally provoked. The use of physical violence for these participant's was a one off occasion. There was no attempt at coercive control in these instances and the physical violence was an attempt primarily to stop the behaviour partners were exhibiting. These IPV events are characterised by what Johnson (2008) identifies as Situational Couple Violence. Johnson stated that Situational Couple Violence usually results in the perpetrator of physical violence experiencing remorse after the event. However, one participant did not experience remorse post event. Instead she stated "it felt good."

Two participants describe using violence because their partner was using physical violence towards them. These participants describe using physical violence to protect themselves. This IPV event is characterised by what Johnson (2008) identified as Violent Resistance. The Violent Resistance typology is a form of self-defence and states people engage in physical violence as a way of protecting themselves against the violence they are facing. However, one participant who falls into the Violent Resistance typology also meets the criteria for Johnson's (2008) Mutual Violent Control typology as she wanted to cause harm and also gain control. Because this participant wanted to gain control over her partner, Mutual Violent Control might be a better fit. This indicates that motives for IPV events can be complex and have multiple layers as to why they occur, also providing support for the notion that multiple motives can occur in at once.

Further typologies were developed specifically for the context of separating or divorcing couples (Johnson & Campbell, 1993). One participant stated when she was in a relationship with her ex-partner there was not any physical violence, however a traumatic separation and an emotionally-filled party resulted in an uncharacteristic outburst. This is

similar to what Johnson and Campbell (1993) identified as Separation and Post-Divorce Violence.

Interestingly, the motivations for using physical violence towards a partner identified in the current study were unable to be explained entirely by existing typologies. One participant was subjected to an inflammatory comment by her partner in which she used violence as a response to assert her dominance, however this was met with instant remorse. This participant was not trying to gain control over her partner and therefore, this motivation does not fit the Intimate Terrorism typology identified by Johnson (2008). This motivation for using physical violence does not fit within explanations given by previous research, however may be attributed a rebellious moment in time with an attempt at challenging patriarchy.

### **Facilitators of Violence**

Interestingly a meta-analysis investigating the motives of IPV perpetration in the past identified anger as a motive for using physical violence towards a partner in 16 studies (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). This meta-analysis also found two studies reported an emotional release as a motive for using physical IPV by women. In line with the definition of a motive (Fiske, 2014), this research argues that anger is an emotional response that facilitates or drives the likelihood of the use of physical violence and it is not the sole motivation for using physical violence. This research found emotional responses to be a factor that facilitated the use of physical violence and these responses ranged from out of control anger, to sadness, shock, frustration and stress. Other facilitators of violence identified were contributing attitudes, evaluation of negative behaviours, mutual physical violence, psychological abuse, distrust and a lack of communication and resources. These factors were not considered motives as they were not goals participants were trying to obtain but factors that were experienced by participants and exacerbated the use of physical violence. Contributing attitudes, negatively

evaluated behaviours and distrust all contributed to building a backlog of relationship stress in the current study. Stairmand's et al. (2019) findings state that relationships stress can be managed using violence. This backlog of experienced abuse and accumulating stress may have therefore, facilitated the use of physical violence by women in the current study.

### **Conceptual replication of Stairmand's et al. (2020) model**

A conceptual framework in which past limitations were addressed by separating and clearly defining motives/drivers and contextual factors in order to understand why and what mechanisms are driving the dynamic nature of family violence acts was proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020). The current study sought to validate whether the FVEPM assists in better understanding the nature of IPV events within the context of the data collected. The FVEPM states that an IPV event begins with a perceived transgression or need identified by one person in the relationship (perpetrator). The perceived transgression is usually deemed unacceptable and warrants action. Arguably, all participant in the current study made an evaluation that their partner's behaviour was acceptable and warranted a reaction, however for two participants it could also be argued that their perceptions of the unacceptability of their partner's behaviour was contextually and internally driven. One of these participants reported that being in the context of a party exacerbated the situation she was in. Therefore, it could be argued that not being in this exacerbating and emotionally-driven situation may have produced a different result for her. Another participant used physical violence as a way of escaping the situation she was facing. Arguably, she deemed the things her partner was saying to her as unacceptable, however her act of physical violence was internally driven and this is because it was driven by her own needs and desire to get away.

After a person in the relationship has identified a perceived transgression or need, an act (physical, verbal, psychological) is selected that is within the person's capabilities and

current resources. The current study recruited women who had used physical violence towards a partner, however acts that were verbal and psychological in nature were also reported throughout the IPV events. The FVEPM states that the act that is selected is due to the current capabilities and resources of the person. Capabilities and resources are split into two groups. The first is intrapersonal factors which includes, emotional regulation difficulties, violence supportive cognitions, script activation and the perceived cost and benefits. The second group is situational factors which includes being under the influence of substances, ongoing relationship conflict, environmental stressors, mental health difficulties and the capabilities and current resources for the person on the receiving end of the act. Three participants reported difficulties with self-regulation throughout their life, while all participants reported overwhelming emotions during the IPV event. These emotions may have facilitated the use of physical violence, in line with the FVEPM. All participants except for one were brought up with some form of family violence (verbal, physical or sexual) in the family home. Witnessing family violence resulted in some participants developing violence supportive cognitions as they believed violence was normal and the way to deal with conflict. Script activation is another factor that contributes to IPV events. Script activation can be split into three different types. *Acting on auto-pilot*- an act that is automatic, *unconscious cognitive processes*- describing a feeling such as, my mind went blank and *dissociative symptoms*- observing yourself from outside of your body and having flashbacks. There was no evidence to suggest script activation was present for any of the participants in the current study. Participants did not describe acting on auto pilot or experiencing dissociative symptoms at the time of the act. Nor did they state that they were not thinking at the time of the IPV event. Stairmand et al. (2020) developed the FVEPM on participants who were completing community-based family violence perpetrator programs and who were mandated to complete treatment as a result of a community-based sentence, protection order, or on completion following a prison sentence (Stairmand et al.,

2019). Based on this sample, script activation may be a factor in more extreme IPV. Furthermore, participants were not explicitly asked about if they engaged in a cost and benefit analysis. Participants explained their motivations for why they used physical violence however, did not provide information on whether they thought about the pro's and con's at the time of the IPV event.

Stairmand's et al. (2020) FVEPM proposes that situational factors also influence the selection of coercive action. One participant reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of using physical violence. However, four participants reported their partners were using substances which contributed to feelings of anger and frustration in the participant. Substance use had been at the centre of many arguments for these participants therefore, their partner's consumption of substances on the day of the IPV event exacerbated this situation. There were many environmental stressors reported with the most common being dysfunctional communication and a tense environment. Two participants report on going or building conflict within their relationship and this contributed to the IPV event. Lastly, four participants reported difficulties with mental health at the time. As such, the current study supports the suggestion that situational factors heavily influenced the decision to use physical violence for participants, with the predominant influential factor being environmental stressors, such as dysfunctional communication. The current study supports that interpersonal and situation factors influence the selection of a coercive act and are vital in understanding how the rest of the IPV event will play out. The current study found support for all situational factors proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020). The current study found support for the influence of interpersonal factors, such as emotional regulation difficulties and violence-supportive cognitions, however perceived costs and benefits analysis were not reported and similarly script activation was not found in participants. Interpersonal factors, such as script activation, may be a factor more commonly visible in severe IPV.

Stairmand et al. (2020) stress that intentions and motivations related to an IPV event should be analysed separately, as they measure two different aspects of an IPV event. In the current study, participants reported intentions of harm and compliance. Two participants report a mixture of wanting to cause harm to their partners and gain compliance over them whereas six participants reported solely wanting to gain compliance over their partner.

*Participant Three* “I lost and it felt so good to smack him [...], I'm not a violent person, but f\*\*k it felt good, and I don't regret it at all.”

*Participant Five* “So like, I got angry, he got angry, you know, he started coming at me and, you know, trying to assault me and I was, you know, doing what I wanted to get him like do it back.”

This research did not find any participant who wanted to solely cause harm to their partner. However, this research did find that people experienced the intention to cause harm and gain compliance at the same time.

*Participant Seven* “And then when I kicked him in bed in the past, that's me being like I'm asleep, and I'm really not good at self-regulating when I'm really tired, part of my brains asleep and I want him to stop and I'm angry and it's probably pure rage.”

*Participant One* “I had just lost it. And to be honest that actually ended the violence from him to me. After that, he never laid another finger on me. I just wish I'd done it sooner, but you know.”

Under Stairmand's et al. (2020) FVEPM, motivations for using a coercive action fall into five themes developed from previous research: access to valued resources, physical or psychological safety, retributive justice, status, and deterrence. Within the current study, some participants met the definition for one motive while others met the definitions for multiple motives. All participants met the definition of at least one motive in the FVEPM. This suggests that the model has developed motives that are able to be applied and replicated with the current research. Five participants fit within the motive of access to valued resources defined as wanting to get something, or to have your partner leave you alone. Two participants fit within the motive of physical or psychological safety defined as wanting to protect self or wanting to escape. Five participants fit within the motive of retributive justice defined as wanting to teach your partner a lesson, to punish, or to get back at your partner. Four participants fit within the motive of status defined as wanting to show your partner who is boss, to feel powerful or in control. Lastly, three participants fit within the motive of deterrence defined as wanting to let your partner know they cannot get away with mistreatment.

The last part of the model states that IPV events escalate or de-escalate based on external and internal responses by self and others. IPV events will escalate based on an evaluation of the perpetrators own behaviour and the response of the other person. Similarly, IPV events will de-escalate based on an evaluation of the perpetrators own behaviour and the other persons behavioural response. IPV events can also de-escalate when there is intervention by a third party. If the evaluation of the other person's behavioural response is not ideal or well received then this can result in the escalation of violence resulting in a feedback loop. A feedback loop results in the re-selection of a coercive action that is within current capabilities and resources, however the intention and motive can change at this point. There was no evidence that participants engaged in

a feedback loop of violence therefore, this part of the model could not be validated. However, the current study found that shock reactions and leaving the situation contributed to the de-escalation of violence.

*Participant One “He just looked at me and I don't think he believed that it was me holding this bat. And then he just sort of like freaked and ran into his car. ”*

*Question: What do you think decreased the likelihood of the violence escalating in that moment?*

*Participant Seven “His shock, him slapping me back and my shock and his shock in doing that to me, both of us being like, what is this?”*

Overall Stairmand's et al. (2020) FVEPM assists in understanding the dynamic nature of IPV events. However, the current research found participants only engaged in one act of physical violence towards their partner during an IPV event with no escalating factors resulting in the continuation of the IPV event. Potentially Stairmand's et al. (2020) FVEPM assists in outlining the complicated factors that contribute to engaging in chronic or severe physical violence, however the current study's findings do not support the feedback loop proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020). The reason for the differences in findings between Stairmand et al. (2020) model and the current study's findings could be largely due to the sample of participants. All participants in the current study apart from one had not been criminally convicted or charged as a result of perpetrating IPV, whereas Stairmand's et al. (2019) participants were completing treatment as a result of a community-based sentences, conditions on protection orders, or on completion following a prison sentence indicating more severe IPV offending.

Overall Stairmand's et al. (2020) model assists in gaining a better understanding of the nature of IPV events and is a good fit for the data gathered in the current study. Stairmand's et al. (2020) model was able to separate and clearly identify the many factors that cause an IPV event. A strength to Stairmand's et al (2020) model is that it can be applied to a variety of IPV events that range from events that occur as a one off or events that are patterned are reoccurring. Future research should keep in mind Stairmand's et al. (2020) model was developed using participants who had been charged with perpetrating IPV which may mean potentially more severe IPV that is patterned and therefore, all interpersonal and situational factors may not be identified in all cases of IPV.

### **The Role of Gender**

This research sought to determine whether motivations for the use of physical violence towards a partner differ for men and women or whether motivations are gender specific. The current study found women used physical violence due to being scared, to stop their partner behaviours, as a result of accusations, baiting behaviours and mutual violence. As stated previously, research in the past has suggested that men use physical violence in attempts to maintain power over their partner and the family, while women use violence in self-defence (Dobash et al., 1992; Winstok et al., 2016, 2017). More recent research has identified that in fact this may not necessarily be the case. Research has found that women have used physical violence in the past due to anger, the want for attention from their partner, in retaliation, in attempts to engage in coercive control and in self-defence (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010; Neal & Edwards, 2017). Interestingly, coercive control tactics have previously been deemed a tactic used by only men in feminist research, (Burelomova et al., 2018; Bell & Naugle, 2008) however current research shows that in fact some women have used coercive tactics towards their partners. The current study did not find any participants that reported coercive tactics and

therefore, cannot support past research in their conclusions that women use physical violence as a way of controlling their partners. Instead the present research found that mutual violence occurred for fifty percent of the participants. Out of 50% of participants who engaged in mutual violence, one participant stated they wanted to harm their partner while the others stated they predominately wanted to use physical violence as an attempt to stop their partners violent behaviour. The current study also found women used physical violence in retaliation to behaviours their partners were exhibiting supporting the findings of previous research (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010; Neal & Edwards 2017). This research therefore has found mutual violence to be common in IPV events where women use physical violence, however the predominate motives were to use physical violence to stop their partners behaviour and in retaliation to their partners behaviour. The FVEPM by Stairmand et al. (2019) was developed so it could explain IPV perpetrated by both males and females. Stairmand et al. (2019) reported there were no categories within the FVEPM that were experienced by only males or only females supporting the gender neutral stance that types and motives for IPV perpetration can apply to both genders. However, Stairmand et al. (2019) did find women in their sample were more likely than males to experience IPV victimisation that was severe and chronic in nature.

### **Implications and Limitations**

Overall, the design of this study allows for an in-depth, holistic understanding of why women have used physical violence against a partner. This research is beneficial as it allows analysis into how contextual factors can contribute to physical violence. Employing interviews to collect the data enables an understanding of IPV behaviour from the perspective of the perpetrator which is important information for designing prevention and intervention programmes that are beneficial to the needs of women who have perpetrated physical violence.

A range of similarities across participants were identified particularly with regards to what life was like growing up for participants, however there were also many differences that were reported. Due to the nuanced and complex contexts in which IPV occurred for participants, this qualitative research was able to take into account the nuanced contextual information that is crucial in determining the motivations of those engaging in physical IPV.

The overall findings of the current study suggest that perpetration of IPV by women is heavily influenced by situational factors and their partners behaviour. Relationships that are characterised by high stress paired with behaviours by partners that are evaluated negatively by women create environments for IPV perpetration to occur. Childhood factors such as adverse experiences, poor parenting, and witnessing or experiencing family violence as a child are all characteristics experienced by women in the current study who used physical violence towards a partner. In order to understand why women engage in physical IPV this research highlights there is a need to understand the complex upbringings women may have come from. The knowledge gathered on background and childhood factors can provide insight into why women engage in IPV. This research also identified a range of emotional-regulation difficulties that facilitated the use of physical IPV by women. Previous research has identified emotions as the reasons for engaging in IPV, however the current study found emotions drove IPV perpetration by women and these emotions were not the reason why women engaged in IPV violence. IPV perpetration is goal directed behaviour and emotions facilitated the successfulness of obtaining a desired goal. This finding increases our understanding of why women engage in IPV perpetration by defining and separating factors that contribute to IPV.

A successful element to this research was that it was able to recruit a general community sample whereas, previous research has focused on prison or severe IPV samples (Stairmand et al., 2019; Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). A ceiling effect can occur when a high proportion of participants are reporting the most severe forms of IPV. This study provides an understanding

of IPV perpetration that is more representative of the general community and ensures that the understanding of IPV perpetration represents a variety of IPV events reducing the overall risk of a ceiling effect.

There are a number of limitations to this study that need to be addressed. The first is that this study used retrospective reports of factors pertaining to an IPV event. This study did not specify a timeframe in which participants IPV events had to fall into leaving the participant open to choose an event they wanted to provide information on. This is a limitation as participants may have had poor or inaccurate recall of the IPV event. Timeframes were purposefully not specified as this study is exploratory in design and the researchers wanted to capture a range of IPV events to ensure the broadest representation of violence. Therefore, some participants may have chosen the most recent, the most severe, or their most memorable IPV event.

Similarly, semi-structured interviews run the risk of introducing bias to the data. The women in this study may want to portray themselves in a more positive light or might provide answers that are more prosocial and what they believe the most favourable answer is (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). These biases are something to be aware of when conducting and analysing qualitative data. Future research should consider more anonymous forms of data collection to validate the information disclosed by perpetrators.

Furthermore, qualitative data analysis, specifically, thematic analysis relies on the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data. This means the researcher's interpretation of the data may be influenced by personal biases. To reduce the risk of this occurring, data in this study was coded by two researchers and tested for inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability assesses whether two or more researchers agree in the way that they have identified themes within the data and that the definitions of each theme are applied consistently. This research produced an overall Kappa co-efficient of 0.96 signalling a good level of agreement between

coders. However, this test only measures that the researchers agree of the application of the definitions proposed. It does not measure that the definitions are valid or are a good representation of the constructs being measured.

Another limitation to this study was the small sample size. This study recruited eight participants which falls within the recommendations by Terry et al. (2017), however recruiting more participants would have resulted in a deeper understanding of the motives for women who use physical violence towards a partner. A greater number of participants would also have assisted in being more confident about the identification of themes. A greater number of participants may have also assisted in providing a more in-depth validation of the framework proposed by Stairmand et al. (2020). Eight participants limits the generalisability of the findings, however this research has provided an incremental contribution to the literature base, which future research can build off.

## **Applications**

The current study sought to understand why women engage in IPV and what factors contribute to IPV perpetration. This research found home, personal and relationship factors were influential in participants lives and potential areas for treatment, intervention, and prevention. Participants reported home environments characterised by poor relationships with parents, family violence, parents abuse of substances, and adverse experiences such as childhood sexual abuse, the death of a family member and separated parents. Further focus could be placed on promoting positive family home environments that will decrease the likelihood of children living in stressful home conditions. An example of this could be by promoting positive parent child-relationships. Education for parents on the impacts of modelling, effective parenting and skills based programmes that promote a secure and loving home environments could be protective in decreasing the risk of women engaging in IPV.

In addition, the current study found personal factors, such as difficulties with self-regulation and poor mental health due to adverse experiences to be characteristic of women who used physical violence towards their partners. These findings highlight the need for trauma-informed approaches when treating women who have engaged in physical IPV. Trauma-informed approaches that are based on safety, trustworthiness empowerment and collaboration would be beneficial to women who have engaged in IPV as the current study found some participants had been victims of family violence and of IPV for a significant amount of time before making the decision to use physical IPV towards their partners themselves.

The findings from the current study identified protective factors, such as a positive school experience. Some participants reported a positive school experience was an influential part of their life due to the connections they made with friends and teachers. The importance of a positive school experiences can be life changing as one participant pointed out. This protective factor is important as it highlights that positive relationships with teachers and fulfilling friendships can provide a break from stressful home environments and therefore, reduce the impacts of other risk factors, such as family violence. This finding is useful as it highlights the importance of training teachers relationship building skills in order to be able to successfully engage with children who come from backgrounds characterised by difficulty.

Lastly, the findings from the current study identified a range of motives (defensive violence, stop partners behaviour, retaliation, asserting dominance, and wanting to escape) and facilitators of violence (contributing attitudes, heightened emotions, evaluation of negative behaviours, mutual physical violence, psychological abuse, distrust, and a lack of communication and resources). This research separated motivations and facilitators of violence to assist in developing conceptual clarity to the area of IPV research. These findings highlight two key areas (motivations and facilitators) that require targeting in treatment. These findings

allow treatment providers to evaluate their current treatment programmes to ensure not only motives of IPV perpetration are being targeted but also facilitators of violence.

### **Future research**

This research has highlighted the importance of ensuring that research methods chosen for investigating family violence take into account the nuanced and complex contextual factors that provide a deeper understanding of these events. If these details are not accounted for then incorrect conclusions may be formed and the accuracy of the results may leave room for criticism.

Qualitative research focuses on the individual and the context surrounding an IPV event. By the identification of themes, this research has established a foundation for future research to build on with larger sample sizes. Larger samples sizes would assist in the generalisability of findings for women who use physical IPV. Future research may involve using a quantitative design in order to investigate the predictive strength of home, personal and relationships factors on IPV perpetration. Quantitative research may assist in finding casual relationships between these factors resulting in a deeper understanding into the influence background factors have on IPV perpetration. A report was written on the implications related to sample size for quantitative medical research (Biau et al., 2008). This report stated correct planning that takes into consideration, an appropriate significance level, the ability to detect differences between groups if an experimental design is used, and effect sizes are all factors that should be considered when planning quantitative research. These factors will assist in recruiting an adequate sample size which will assist in gaining enough power to detect significant differences that are meaningful.

This research was unable to identify women who used coercive control tactics, however a larger sample size may be able to investigate and identify whether this motive is used by

women. However, this research has assisted in producing a foundation for future research in the area of motivations of IPV by separating out motives from contextual factors. This research has provided a starting point for future research to build on.

Furthermore, future research is needed to determine whether more than one motive can occur at the same time or if motives are ranked in terms of a hierarchy identifying primary and secondary motives.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this research identified a substantial amount of background and contextual information that impacts IPV events as well as the motivations for engaging in physical violence for women. This research was able to provide evidence to suggest motives for engaging in IPV are non-gender specific, however this research was unable to provide evidence to support that women use coercive control tactics during IPV event. Motivations and facilitators of violence were separated in the current study which has contributed to conceptual clarity and a deeper understanding into the factors that influence an IPV event. This research was able to successfully provide a conceptual replication of the IPV model developed by Stairmand et al. (2020), however was unable to support the feedback loop of escalating IPV potentially due to the general community sample that was recruited as part of this study. This research will be influential in the direction of future quantitative research and additionally, this research may be utilised in the area of intervention and prevention of IPV for women. The findings from the current study are influential for intervention and prevention work, specifically work to do with creating positive family home environments and trauma-informed approaches. Trauma-informed approaches that provide safety and empowerment are important due to many women not only perpetrating IPV but are also victim to IPV. Work to intervene

and prevent IPV will have a wide range of benefits for society and the lives of women and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview Guide

##### Karakia/prayer

- Would you like to open with a karakia/prayer?
  - Yes. Give participant the option to conduct this – otherwise interviewers will say a karakia/prayer.

##### Introduction

- Interviewers introduce themselves
- Introduce the research
  - What/why/how.
- Explain what will happen during the interview process
  - General information/the event – before, during, after.

##### Information sheet/ consent form

- Ensure participant has read information sheet.
- Answer questions/clarify information
- Recap confidentiality
  - Immediate risk to someone then we may have to tell someone, but you will be told if this is a process we need to follow.
  - Recap Audio Recording
- Participant to then read and sign consent form.

##### Audio-recorder

- Make participants aware audio recording now begins.

##### Section 1: Participant characteristics

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Age/ Employment/ Education/ Ethnicity/ Children

##### Section 2: Background information

Tell me about what life was like for you growing up.

- Relationship with parents/siblings/other family members.
- Family health problems.
- How you were disciplined/rewarded
- School
- Upbring compared to others
- Violence in the family
- Community (violence/ alcohol/ drugs/ impoverished/ neighbourhood/ opportunities)

What was home life like for you?

- High conflict
- Love

- Stress
- Support

### Section 3: Relationship background information

We are now going to ask some questions about the last time that you used physical violence against a partner, such as pushing, slapping, or hitting. This could have been a time when you used physical violence to defend yourself.

\*Give participant time to think about this event\*

What was the name of your partner who this involved?

Tell me about your relationship with [ X ]. What was the relationship like at the start?

- Changes over time
- Relationship rules
- Communication
- Arguments
- Management of conflict

### Section 4: Before the event

We're now going to move to the event itself. Tell me about what happened in the days leading up to the event.

- Routines
- Was there anything happening during this time that was making you stressed/angry/upset?
- Can you tell me about the day the event occurred? What were you doing that day?
  - o Were you or [ X ] using alcohol or drugs during or leading up to the event?

### Section 5: The event

- How did the event begin?
  - o If an argument: topic of argument/who initiated/was it a reoccurring argument?
- Can you tell me about how you were feeling during this moment?
- Can you tell me about what you were thinking during this moment?
  - o When the violence was happening, did you think of what the consequences may be for you or your partner?
- Why do you think you used violence?
  - o What was the outcome you were seeking?
  - o Did this change at any point?
  - o At the time, did you think of other ways to achieve your goal, other than violence?
- Was anyone else present during the act?
  - o What impact did this have on your decision to use violence?
  - o Did others intervene?
- How long did the violence last?
- Why do you think the violence ended?

- Were you or [ X ] injured as a result of the act?

### Section 6: After the physical violence event

What happened afterwards?

- Did you and [ X ] keep arguing after the act?
- Leave the location/ space from your partner/ thoughts/ feelings/ police/ other agencies/ consequences.

Reflecting on the whole event itself...

- What do you think increased the likelihood of you using violence that day?
- What do you think decreased the likelihood of you using violence that day?
- Have you ever used physical violence against a partner before this time?  
If yes: was this time similar to what happened other times that you have used violence?

### Section 7: Wrap up

Is there anything else you would like to discuss with us or add that you think will be useful for us to understand?

- Summarise and thank participant for their participation.
- De-brief with participant
  - How are you feeling after talking about your experience?
  - Tell participant about a list of services you have put together should they need support.
- Ask participant what supermarket they would like a kōhā from to save thank you.
- Remind participant of the researchers next steps.

\*Close interview with karakia/prayer if interview opened with one\*

## Appendix B

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### **Gaining a deeper insight into why women commit violent acts against their partner.**

Tēnā koe. Kō tēnei he mihi mahana ki a koe

My name is Sarah Telfar and I am a Master of Science student from the University of Canterbury. I am completing a piece of research under the supervision of Dr Jacinta Cording, Dr Seth Harty and Dr Sonja Macfarlane. Thank you for your interest in this research project. Please read this information sheet before deciding whether or not you would like to take part in this study.

#### **Why are we doing this research?**

We are doing this research to find out why women use physical violence with their partners (for example, hitting or pushing their partner). A lot of other studies have looked at why men use physical violence towards their partners, however there is not a lot of research on why women use physical violence. We are interested in speaking to women who have used violence against their partner for all different reasons, including for self-defence. We also want to speak with women whether or not the violence was reported to Police or other government agencies.

#### **What would happen if you agree to take part in this study?**

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to meet and have a chat with two people from the research team (me, Sarah Telfar, and Jacinta Cording). This meeting could take up to an hour and a half and you are more than welcome to bring a support person with you if you would like. Your participation in this study will be confidential and therefore no one apart from the researching team will be aware of your participation.

During the meeting, we will talk with you about the last time that you remember using physical violence towards a partner. We will ask you questions about what happened, like what happened earlier that day, why you used physical violence, and what happened afterwards. We will also ask you questions about whether other stuff happened to you in your life or when you were a child that might have made you more or less likely to use violence against a partner.

This meeting will be held at a place where you feel comfortable. This could be somewhere like a private room in a café or restaurant, a private room at the library, in an office at the University of Canterbury, or at a room in the building of the organisation/service who gave you this information sheet. This meeting can also take place over Zoom. Just let us know what you would prefer.

If it's okay with you, we would like to audio record our conversation. The recording helps to make sure that the notes we write up are correct. Recording is completely voluntary – it's up to you.

To say thank you for taking part in our study, we would like to offer you a \$45.00 supermarket voucher. If you decide to stop the interview early, you will still be given the voucher.

### **Do I have to take part?**

You can choose to take part in this research or not. You can ask us any question you want about the research before you decide if you want to take part. If you decide that you do not want to take part, this will not change your current or future relationship with the person or organisation that told you about this study – they will not treat you differently because you decided not to take part in the study. Your decision to take part in the research or not will also not affect any relationships you have with other organisations like WINZ, the Police or the Department of Corrections.

If you choose to take part but then change your mind, just contact us to let us know this is what you want to do. Any information you have given to us will be deleted/destroyed if possible, unless you say that we can keep what is already collected. We will start looking through the information we have collected from all the people we spoke with in November. After this date, your information will be mixed up with theirs and we won't be able to remove your information from the study any more.

### **Are there any risks or benefits to taking part in the study?**

This research will provide important information about why women use violence against their partners. We will use this information to improve services and help that is given to these women.

We understand that discussing this topic can be really hard and might make people upset. If this happens for you, you will be able to stop the conversation at any point and you do not need to tell us why. You will also be able to have breaks at any time during the conversation, and you do not have to answer a question if you do not want to. If you do not want to answer a question, we will simply move on to the next one. You can also ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If you do find our conversation upsetting, we will stop the interview immediately and together we will find the way to best support you. We will give all people we speak with a list of services that you may find helpful and we can help you get you in contact with the support you need.

If you tell us during the interview that you or the people around you are at immediate risk of serious harm, then we will need to tell someone who will be able to help stop this from happening – this will probably be the service provider or other organisations who told you about this study. We will tell you if this is a process we need to follow. The purpose of this is to protect you and your family or whānau from further harm.

### **What happens after the interview?**

Your participation in this study is confidential. This means your identity will remain anonymous to everyone apart from the researchers named at the top of this sheet, and one other person who will be helping us transcribe (write down) what you said in our meeting; we haven't hired this person yet, but they will likely be another Masters or PhD student from the University of Canterbury. This person must sign a confidentiality agreement which is a contract where they agree that they will protect your privacy and not share any information about you or what you said in your interview.

The audio recording of your interview will be transcribed (written down) and then it will be analysed. If you want to see a copy of the notes from our conversation, let us know during the meeting and we will talk about the best way to send you a copy. Once we send you a copy, you

will have two weeks to tell us if you want anything changed in your notes. After that, you can do what you want with the notes.

All information you give us will be stored on the University of Canterbury secure server and will be password protected. Only the research team named at the top of this sheet will have access to this information. The files that we store the information in will not have your name on them, and we will remove your name from all the conversation notes. This information will be kept for 10 years and then destroyed.

### **What is the end result?**

The information collected will be used in my (Sarah's) Master of Science thesis. A thesis is a public report and will be available through the UCLibrary. Your information might also be used for other reports, articles or presentations. We will never use information that identifies you in the thesis, reports or presentations. We might use quotes from our conversation (i.e. the words that you used), but we will change all the names of people or places. If you would like, we can send you a summary of the findings from this research in early March 2022.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)). HEC Ref: HEC 2021/56

### **Who can I contact?**

- If you have any questions at any point in time you can contact myself or Dr Jacinta Cording for further information.
- If you would like to participate in this study then please pass your contact details onto the person who told you about this study and they will pass your details onto us. Alternatively, you can contact me directly to register your interest.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our study.

### **Our contact information:**

#### **Sarah Telfar**

Email: [sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) **or**  
[ste52@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:ste52@uclive.ac.nz)

#### **Dr Jacinta Cording (Supervisor)**

Email: [jacinta.cording@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:jacinta.cording@canterbury.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 3 369 0723

#### **Dr Seth Harty (Co-Supervisor)**

Email: [seth.harty@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:seth.harty@canterbury.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 3 369 2633

#### **Dr Sonja Macfarlane (Cultural Advisor)**

Email: [sonja.macfarlane@education.govt.nz](mailto:sonja.macfarlane@education.govt.nz)  
Phone: +64 7 850 8986

## Appendix C

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR ORGANISATIONS

#### **Gaining a deeper insight into why women commit violent acts against their partner.**

Tēnā koe. Kō tēnei he mihi mahana ki a koe

My name is Sarah Telfar and I am a Master of Science student from the University of Canterbury. I am going to be completing a piece of research under the supervision of Dr Jacinta Cording, Dr Seth Harty and Dr Sonja Macfarlane. Thank you for your interest in this research project. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee HEC Ref: HEC 2021/56

The purpose of this research is to better understand why women commit physical violence toward their partners. Research in the past has focused on reasons why men commit violent acts towards their partners, however there is not a lot of research on why women commit these acts.

We are looking to identify and interview 20-30 women who have committed physical violence (i.e. when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force) towards a partner, and we are hoping you may be able to assist with identifying potential participants. This study is not limited to cases where women are the primary aggressor in the relationship; we are also interested in speaking with women who may have used violence in self-defence, for instance. Additionally, the violence may or may not have been reported to Police or other government agencies.

#### **What is required of participants?**

Participants who agree to participate will take part in an interview that will take up to 90 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded (with the consent of participants) and participants will be asked to think back to the most recent time they committed physical violence towards a partner. Participants will be asked questions about the specific event (including what happened before, during and after the event) and we will also ask questions about information in their life that they think have increased and/or decreased the likelihood of committing a violent act towards a partner (e.g., childhood experiences, mental health issues).

#### **What are we asking of you?**

If you agree to assist us with this research and you know of any women who meet the criteria and might be interested in participating in this study, we ask that you speak to potential participants about the study and pass on our participant information sheet. If potential participants give you permission to pass on their contact details to us, then we will contact them to answer any questions they may have and to arrange a time for an interview. Alternatively, the information sheet contains our contact details so people who would like to participate can contact us if they are interested.

If you agree to assist us, this research will be independent of your organisation and the content of the interviews will not be disclosed to you.

**What are we offering participants?**

After the interview process, we will offer each participant a kōhā - \$45.00 supermarket voucher to thank them for taking part in our study. If participants decide to stop the interview early, then they will still receive this voucher.

**What are we offering you?**

If you agree to assist us, to show our appreciation to you, we will offer your organisation a presentation once the study is complete outlining major findings and how they may influence your organisation, as well as what the results mean for prevention and treatment. The presentation will be ready in early March 2022.

Thank you for your interest in this research. Please let me (Sarah) know if you are interested in assisting with this research.

If you agree to assist with this research, please have potential participants contact me (Sarah) for more information about this study or to sign up.

**Sarah Telfar**

Email: [sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or  
[ste52@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:ste52@uclive.ac.nz)

If you have any questions at any point in time you can contact:

**Dr Jacinta Cording (Primary supervisor)**

Email: [jacinta.cording@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:jacinta.cording@canterbury.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 3 369 0723

**Sarah Telfar**

Email: [sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:sarah.telfar@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or  
[ste52@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:ste52@uclive.ac.nz)

**Dr Seth Harty (Co-Supervisor)**

Email: [seth.harty@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:seth.harty@canterbury.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 3 369 2633

**Dr Sonja MacFarlane (Cultural Advisor)**

Email: [sonja.macfarlane@education.govt.nz](mailto:sonja.macfarlane@education.govt.nz)  
Phone: +64 7 850 8986

## Appendix D

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

#### **Gaining a deeper insight into why women commit violent acts against their partner.**

- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided unless I state otherwise.
- I understand I have until November 2021 to withdraw from the study if I want.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researchers (unless I disclose someone is at immediate risk of serious harm) and that any published or reported results will not identify me.
- I understand that a person will be hired to assist with this research and they will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in secure facilities and in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after ten years.
- I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.
- I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- I understand that I can contact the research team at any point if I have any questions and I have been given their contact information.
- If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz))

I would like to receive a copy of my transcribed interview. Yes / No

Please send to:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like a summary of the results of the project once complete. Yes / No

Please send to:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return the completed consent form to Sarah Telfar*

*Participant code:* \_\_\_\_\_

# PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

You are invited to take part in a research project investigating **why women use physical violence towards a partner**. We are interested in speaking to women who have used physical violence against a partner for all different reasons, including self defence. We also want to speak with women whether or not the violence was reported to Police or other government agencies.

**To say thank you, each participant will be gifted a \$45 supermarket voucher**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee HEC Ref: HEC 2021/56

## Criteria:

- Women
- English speaking
- 18 years of age and over
- Have used physical violence towards a partner

## If you agree to take part you will be asked to:

- Have a chat with two people from the research team.
- Talk about the last time you remember using physical violence towards a partner.
- Can take up to 90 minutes.

## If you are interested please email:

Sarah  
[ste52@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:ste52@uclive.ac.nz)

**Please note:** If you tell us during the interview that you or the people around you are at immediate risk of serious harm, then we will need to tell someone who will be able to help stop this from happening. We will tell you if this is a process we need to follow. The purpose of this is to protect you and your family or whānau from further harm.