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Implicit Theories in Intimate Partner Violence Offenders

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Abstract Cognitive characteristics of intimate partner violence (IPV) offenders have received considerable attention recently. The implicit theories underlying these cognitions have yet to be evidenced using accounts of IPV males. In this study, interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyze interview transcripts of six IPV offenders currently serving a custodial sentence in a Scottish prison to identify potential implicit theories. Analyses resulted in the identification of 11 potential implicit theories of IPV: "violence is acceptable;" "grievance/revenge;" "need for control;" "real man;" "entitlement/women are objects;" "male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner;" "women are provoking;" "rejection/abandonment;" "women as supportive;" "external factors responsible;" and "nature of harm." The implicit theories are compared across other groups of offender and implications for offender interventions discussed.

Keywords Intimate partner violence offenders · Implicit theories · Interpretative phenomenological analysis · Schemas · Domestic violence

Implicit Theories in Intimate Partner Violence Offenders

Implicit theories held by offenders are offence-related schemas of their view of the world that support their specific type of offending behavior (Ward 2000). In recent years, the cognitive characteristics of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators have received considerable attention. Eckhardt and Dye (2000) described the need to investigate the means as to how a "maritally violent man arrives at a given cognition and how this cognitive process may relate to observable patterns of emotion and behavior" (p. 143). From the work of Eckhardt and colleagues in addition to that of Holtzworth-Munroe (2000), it seems that what differentiates maritally violent and non-violent men is not their general attitudes, bur rather their processing of cues in relationship conflict (i.e., their implicit theories).

While no theoretical perspectives of IPV have identified implicit theories present in IPV offenders, they can be predicted to a certain extent by drawing on the empirical literature (Collie et al. 2007; Holtzworth-Munroe 2000; Polaschek and Gannon 2004; Ward 2000). Defining implicit theories for IPV offenders would be beneficial in terms of intervention and treatment as specific cognitive distortions could be targeted. Distinct implicit theories that have been identified in sex offenders and ongoing work relating to violent offenders have increased our understanding of specific offending behaviors and led to the design and implementation of intervention programs targeting specific criminogenic needs that have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism (Collie et al. 2007; Polaschek and Gannon 2004; Ward 2000).

Theoretical perspectives, while offering an explanation as to why IPV occurs, do not adequately account for the cognition behind this specific type of offending behavior nor do they implicate the implicit theories involved. The Duluth model (Pence and Paymar 1993) is a conceptualization of feminist theory and has been a hugely influential intervention model used to address IPV, although it is based largely on victim data. The original Duluth model does not account for specific cognitions held by IPV offenders; however, its extreme feminist approach suggests that patriarchal beliefs

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relative to masculine entitlement would be present in the IPV offender and therefore are the primary target for intervention. The updated Duluth model recognizes the importance of individual differences, psychological concepts, and additional risk factors in addition to patriarchy and is therefore representative of a move toward a more comprehensive model of IPV (Duluth Model 2011). It should be noted, however, that the model does not account for specific cognitions underlying this group of offenders,

The Duluth model assumes that men adopt the role of abuser by succumbing to societal gender roles of male entitlement and that, having offended against their partner, minimize their behavior in addition to blaming external factors such as outside stressors, substance use, or the unreasonable behavior of their partner (Pence and Paymar 1993). Therefore, Duluth intervention programs target three core beliefs that are believed to be supportive of IPV offending behavior: rigid beliefs about men and women, need for control, and male entitlement. These three beliefs would therefore be representative of possible implicit theories present in the IPV offender.

A second influential theoretical perspective is that of the family violence/conflict resolution model (Cunningham et al. 1998). The family violence approach involves the identification of "relationship scripts" alongside attitudes supporting the use of violence as a means of communication and/or resolving conflict. Like the feminist perspective, the family violence approach asserts that blaming, minimizing, and denying would be used by perpetrators of IPV to minimize personal responsibility for the violence and are therefore potential implicit theories in IPV offenders.

Social learning theory (SLT) has been implicated in IPV research since its inception (Dutton 2008). SLT posits that aggression and violence are learned, typically through witnessing violence in the family of origin. While SLT theory is valuable in that it demonstrates how ideas and norms condoning and often supporting violence can be created, it offers no explanation as to the cognitions and affective reactions behind the violence that are undoubtedly part of the infrastructure of abuse (Dutton 2008). When considering SLT as a model for possible IPV implicit theories, it could be predicted that cognitions such as violence is normal and grievance/revenge (i.e., responding to a perceived slight by using violence) are potentially present in IPV offenders.

Early maltreatment may have the most detrimental lasting effect on a child's social information processing patterns; thus, physical abuse as a child, neglect, or insecure attachment may lead to abusive intimate relationships (Ehrensaft et al. 2003). Peer interactions in adolescence offer a chance to develop conflict resolution skills that will later be applied to intimate relationships. Hence, deviant peer groups provide support for attitudes condoning violence and antisocial behavior that may continue into adulthood, and in the case

of males, they may facilitate negative attitudes toward women and enhance the opinion that men are entitled to sex and should police their partners (Ehrensaft et al. 2003). Therefore, from a social information processing perspective of IPV, one would expect to find violence is normal/violence is acceptable and male sex drive is uncontrollable in addition to male entitlement among implicit theories of IPV offenders. Peer interactions may also assist development of notions as to what constitutes a "real man" and how a man should respond in a given set of circumstances as well as supporting the possible implicit theory of grievance/revenge by watching peers respond to provoking situations using violence.

Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson (1993) applied a social information processing model to IPV in order to determine whether this group have distinct social skills deficits and at what stage in development they occur. When investigating the social skills deficits in maritally violent men, they explored the attributions of maritally violent, maritally distressed nonviolent, and happily married nonviolent control groups. It was found that maritally violent men demonstrated more attachment/dependency issues in early life, exhibited a greater tendency to develop personality disorders, evidenced a greater degree of psychological distress, displayed more anger and hostility, and had more issues with substance misuse than nonviolent men. In terms of cognitions of IPV males, Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson's work would suggest attributing blame to partners and/or external factors such as alcohol/substance use would be likely in addition to rejection/abandonment due to insecure attachment. It is important to note, however, that Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson did not assess the effect cognitive arousal had on participants in their study. This is a factor that was deemed to be important by Eckhardt and Dye (2000), who noted that attribution is one area in which the differential processing of material by maritally violent and non-violent men may give access to latent cognitive content and illuminate how these differences affect behavior.

Gilchrist (2008) proposed ten IPV implicit theories extrapolating from clinical, theoretical, and empirical literature: *violence is acceptable, women are to blame/at fault, out of control, need for control/man in control, women are objects/ women are owned, entitlement respect, uncontrollable sexuality, real man, win or lose,* and *nature of harm*. As of yet, no research has investigated implicit theories from the perspective of the IPV perpetrators, by examining their own accounts of their background, relationship history, offending behavior history, and role ideology. The current research aims to explore IPV from the abusers perspective and propose implicit theories representative of their cognition. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) shall be used to explore, in detail, the participants lived experience (Smith 2004).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is widely used in the fields of health, clinical, and social psychology and is especially suited to researching "unexplored territory" where a theoretical pretext may be lacking (Reid et al. 2005). IPA was chosen to interpret the data in the current study in favor of more established qualitative methodological techniques as participants experiences are investigated from the "inside out" rather than the "outside in" (Charmaz 1995, p. 30–31), with the central concern being the subjective experience of the individual. There are a number of limitations with this approach, namely that due to the small sample size the results are not readily transferrable to the general IPV population. In addition, there are issues around subjectivity and reflexivity, that is, the subjective role of the researcher in the research process and the participant's perception of the researcher (Smith 2004; Smith and Osborn 2003). The subjective role of the researcher determines the methodology and analysis implemented and the themes extracted from the analysis. Additionally, the reflexivity principle means that the participant's perception of the researcher and their desire to be seen in a certain way, particularly while participating in research while undertaking a custodial sentence, may influence the respondents' answers to the semi-structured interview questions.

Method

Participants

Six male offenders serving a custodial sentence within a Scottish prison were interviewed for the study. Five of the participants were currently or had previously received a custodial sentence for domestic assault; the sixth was arrested twice for domestic assault but released on bail. The details of the participant's age and offence history are included in the Appendix.

The participants were recruited by means of opportunity sampling in discussion with former colleagues at the prison after receiving formal ethical approval from both the Scottish Prison Service and Glasgow Caledonian University Ethics Boards. One of the participants was highlighted as a potential candidate through his involvement with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (the responsible authority tasked with the management of registered sex offenders and violent and other types of sexual offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public), which led to colleagues passing his details onto the researcher. The remaining five participants were selected as possible candidates for psychological treatment groups running within the prison and so were highlighted to the researcher due to their domestic convictions. After approaching the participants, explaining the purpose of the research and what their involvement would entail, each participant agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were set up by former colleagues in the prison who escorted prisoners to and from the interview venue. The refusal rate for the study was zero.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted in interventions rooms within the prison allowing privacy for the interviewee whilst maintaining safety for both interviewer and interviewee. All six of the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis between the researcher and participant and were tape-recorded with the participant's permission. The length of each interview varied ranging from 34 min to 58 min. In accordance with IPA methodology, the interviews were semi-structured and non-prescriptive to allow the participant to reveal their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (Smith 2004). The interviews explored factors such as the participant's childhood and relationship with prominent attachment figures, details of current and previous intimate relationships such as expression of emotion and male and female roles, the participants offending behavior and when he first engaged in such behavior, the participants experience of aggression and external factors such as alcohol and/or drug use, and the participant's perception of an ideal intimate relationship. These questions were chosen so as to allow the participant to explore and convey their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in relation to male and female attachment figures, intimate relationships, male and female roles, and offending behavior. The tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed by the researcher. To ensure confidentiality, participants were numbered at random from 1–6.

Data Analysis

The transcriptions were analyzed using IPA (Smith and Osborn 2003). This involved the detailed analysis of each transcription to identify repeated issues and categorize these into master themes each with subsequent sub-themes within and across participant data. This involved the researcher repeatedly reading the first transcript to identify overarching themes relevant to the area of research. This process was then repeated with all transcripts to identify sub-themes emergent through all of the transcriptions. To increase validity, an independent researcher (a clinical psychologist familiar with IPA methodology) analyzed one of the transcripts to ensure that the process from raw data to superordinate themes could be followed (Smith 1996). Data will be communicated via a table of themes and subthemes in addition to use of specific quotes to highlight significant issues identified.

Results

A key superoordinate theme that emerged from the analysis was that of violence being a "normal" and socially acceptable response to be exhibited in certain situations (Table 1). The subtheme of "violence is acceptable" refers to violence being not only an acceptable but also an appropriate means of communication in social and interpersonal relationships. This was particularly pertinent when participants were exploring the onset of their violence history. The subtheme of "grievance/revenge" was evident among all participants and relates to participants' perception that it is appropriate to resolve issues or respond to perceived insults using violence.

The superordinate theme of "desire to remain in control" (Table 2) was more evident when exploring intimate relationships as opposed to violence in a general sense. The subtheme "need for control" related to participant's desire to retain control over their partner and their household, which they felt was their partner's duty. The subtheme of "real man" was representative of participant's perception that violence was necessary in order to demonstrate masculinity. The theme also demonstrated the perceived importance of masculinity and power as a basic need of a "real man." The subtheme of "entitlement/women are objects" is representative of participant's patriarchal view of society and, in particular, their intimate relationship. It reflects the view that participant's see their partner's as subservient to them and reinforces their role of "real man." The subtheme of "male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner" is representative of the view that males are uncontrollable sexual beings, and thus the participants felt the need to guard their partner's against advances from other men. It may also be representative of the desire to remain in control of a partner's sexually activity and fit with the "grievance/revenge" subtheme, namely that if a women is sexually involved with another man she "deserves" to be punished for insulting her partner.

Within the superordinate theme of women's role in violence (Table 3), the subtheme of "women are provoking" was evidenced by all participants and representative of the notion that woman are in some way responsible for the violence inflicted on them in their intimate relationship and so, in some way, the violence is out of the abusers control. The "rejection/abandonment" subtheme related to participant's perception of women having the ability to hurt men and in so doing should be treated with suspicion, thereby warranting violence to "put them into place" when necessary. The subtheme of "women as supportive" was a surprising emergence from the analysis as it seems to contradict the role of women as hurtful and deceitful. This theme seems to be representative of participants need for a woman in their lives and their desire to be with a woman who carries out her role correctly with no need to exert control using violence. It may also be representative of remorse with regard to previous violent actions.

Within the superordinate theme of diminishing personal responsibility (Table 4), the subtheme of "external factors responsible" is similar to the theme of "women are provoking" in that is suggests that the violence is out of the participant's control, that he was not to blame but rather external factors were responsible such as alcohol or drug misuse. Additionally there is the notion that external forces were responsible, which is echoed in the statement "I don't know how it happened the first time," again as if the violence was somehow out of the abusers control. The subtheme of "nature of harm" is representative of minimizing the severity of the violence by either denying the action was violent or stating that the type of action he engaged in was not as brutal as it could have been nor as brutal as what other men do.

Analysis

The 11 subthemes are representative of 11 potential implicit theories held by IPV offenders. The four superordinate

Table 1 Superordinate Theme 1: Violence is Normal

Participant number	Supporting participant extract
Subtheme 1: Violence is Acceptable	
Participant 1	I've been violent at every stage of my life. Everything I was doing when I was younger was violence.
Participant 2	If I feel something's wrong, I have to deal with it my way.
Participant 3	Anything went wrong I got battered, cause I knew I was getting it anyway I thought fuck it.
Participant 5	I'm not stupid and you know how to take certain folk.
Participant 6	Even fae a wee boy like fighting, everyone's been fighting with each other.
Subtheme 2: Grievance/Revenge	
Participant 1	Put one of ma pals in hospital years ago for calling me a prick.
Participant 2	Apparently he had been shot and obviously me and a few pals went driving about looking for this person.
Participant 3	I was never wrong.
Participant 4	I assaulted her, I hit her. This guy was on the phone all the time and I started getting jealous, I admit that.
Participant 6	If somebody brings violence to me and my family then that's the only way you can sort it out is through violence.

Table 2 Superordinate Theme 2: Desire to Remain in Control

Participant Number	Supporting Participant Extract
Subtheme 1: Need for Control	
Participant 1	I was just trying to be a control freak then.
Participant 2	It's just a simple rule, I don't like my kids watching T.V.
Participant 3	If it wasn't ready exactly the way I wanted it or when I wanted it I took a maddy.
Participant 4	I would lose it with her cause she didn't care if there was music on with the kids next door.
Subtheme 2: Real Man	
Participant 1	I just wanted everything my ain way.
Participant 2	If I've gotta earn people's respect, I've gotta fight for it.
Participant 5	You need to try and calm her down.
Participant 6	You've got tae resort back to violence to get tae them.
Subtheme 3: Entitlement/Women are Objects	
Participant 2	One of my triggers is just I expect things to be done.
Participant 3	She was getting telt to make my dinner if I was working.
Participant 4	She should only have been with me.
Participant 6	I'd just lie there and do nothing then go out.
Subtheme 4: Male Sex Drive is Uncontrollable/Policing Partner	
Participant 1	I just didn't want her talking to him.
Participant 3	I know she's not doing any fucking thing.
Participant 4	Things like "your partner's messing around" stuff like that. I confronted her but she always denied it.
Participant 6	She wouldn't be out there fucking about.

themes aim to provide a descriptive and exploratory account of IPV from the perspective of the abuser. Frequently, sub-themes overlapped within and across superordinate themes, highlighting the specific subset of cognitions held by IPV offenders.

Violence is Normal

The theme "violence is normal" was evident not only in terms of intimate partner relationships; but also as a way of communicating participant's thoughts and feelings in

Table 3 Superordinate Theme 3: Women's Role in Violence

Participant number	Supporting participant extract
Subtheme 1: Women are Provoking	
Participant 1	If someone tells you not to be angry, makes you mare angry.
Participant 2	She knew exactly how to wind me up.
Participant 3	She was an absolute nutter.
Participant 4	The cheating made me more aggressive towards her.
Participant 5	She cannot just talk about something.
Participant 6	She's slapping me.
Subtheme 2: Rejection/Abandonment	
Participant 1	She left me for somebody when I was in the jail.
Participant 2	Didn't want nothing to do with me.
Participant 3	I used to get the blame of everything over my brother's.
Participant 4	I felt really hurt when I found out she'd been sleeping with someone else.
Participant 5	Ma maw left the house when I was 16.
Subtheme 3: Women as Supportive	
Participant 1	Then Tracey came up and everything was alright.
Participant 2	I don't think she failed in anyway.
Participant 3	This lady stood by me, she done everything for me.
Participant 6	She's my best wee pal.

Table 4 Superordinate Theme 4: Diminishing Personal Responsibility

Participant number	Supporting participant extract
Subtheme 1: External Factors Responsible	
Participant 1	I don't know how it happened the first time.
Participant 2	It got a hell of a lot worse when I was taking cocaine.
Participant 3	Drink and it's no really an excuse.
Participant 4	Then when I had a drink, that's when I would lose it.
Participant 5	When me and Cathy are ever arguing it's always down to drink.
Participant 6	When I'm using drugs I might be more nippy.
Subtheme 2: Nature of Harm	
Participant 1	A wisnae physically hitting her a just pushed her.
Participant 2	I pushed her out the way to get out and she smashed the side of her head.
Participant 4	I'm in here for something else, for hitting her, but I pushed her.
Participant 5	I wouldnae just be in a room and just attack a woman or start slapping her about or anything like that.
Participant 6	Wee scuffles but I've never punched her or kicked her.

addition to being a recurrent factor in their upbringing; for example:

> I threw a brick in a boys face, ended up breaking his eye socket and nose. Eh I got 6 months in a secure unit for that. I got out, same again, back into trouble, fell back in with my pals eh ended up going up the terraces… football. Eh, got into football violence at a young age. That was my world, the way I wanted to go. (Participant 2)

Participant 2's account of violence in a matter of fact manner demonstrates its static presence in his life from a young age. His involvement in football violence subsequent to receiving a custodial sentence for a violent offence highlights the impact peer interaction can elicit on attitudes toward using violence and the enjoyment that can be gained from it: *"that was my world"* shows that football violence encompassed every aspect of his life and gave him drive and ambition as to how he wanted to progress; however, this could be a subjective interpretation. Participant 2 looked back at the time fondly and later described how he not only enjoyed his participation in violence but it was a coping mechanism for him when his first partner left him with their child:

> It made my blood boil cause I knew for a fact I would never see my daughter again. It was one of the key factor's which lead to my football violence because I could take my frustrations out on somebody else instead of keeping it all bottled up because it could have got a lot worse than it did. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 here shows that violence was not only a normal aspect of his life but a way of venting his anger and communicating the thoughts and feelings he felt he could not discuss with anyone at the time. The use of the phrases *"blood boil"* and *"keeping it all bottled up"* invoke the

metaphorical image of Participant 2 feeling literally ready to explode or "go-off" and using physical violence as a means of detonating and communicating his emotions. The use of the word *"key"* when explaining his involvement in football violence subsequent to his partner's departure shows he felt it unlocked his pent up anger and that he sees violence not only as acceptable but as fundamental in his management of emotions.

Participant 2's involvement in football violence after his partner left him links into the grievance/revenge subtheme. He had to respond to the departure of his partner by any means he could; since he could not access his partner directly, he evoked his grievance using football violence to vent his anger and frustration showing that, to him, violence is a normal response to a perceived slight.

In addition to representing violence as an appropriate response to an apparent insult in any contextual situation, Participant 4 evidences the grievance/revenge subtheme in an intimate partner setting:

> I didn't touch her that night. I assaulted her, I hit her. This guy was on the phone all the time and I started getting jealous, I admit that. I hurt her and then I was standing for rape then all of a sudden evidence come out and it's not my DNA, she has been sleeping with someone else. And then that was it, I couldn't get away with it I had to plead guilty for something so I plead guilty for indecent assault, that's why I'm in here. (Participant 4)

Participant 4 is describing a situation in which he was charged with domestic assault and indecent assault of his partner. He responded to his partner's interaction with another male by re-establishing his power and control, not only by assaulting his partner but by indecently assaulting her to regain his sexual entitlement over her. The admission of

jealousy on his part demonstrates that he believed violence toward his partner is an acceptable response to the perceived injustice of his partner engaging with another male. He felt he was made to look foolish and powerless due to his partner's actions, and so he felt he had to revenge his grievance by regaining the "winner" position and exerting his power over his partner both physically and sexually.

Participant 4, although serving a custodial sentence for indecent and domestic assault, was originally charged with rape for which he maintains his innocence. This claim of innocence is reinforced by the use of the phrase *"I didn't touch her that night,"* which he states preceding his admission of physically assaulting his partner that evening. Therefore, Participant 4 does not view hitting his partner as an inappropriate response given certain circumstances, and his claims that he did not touch her are in reference to the rape of his partner and not the physical assault. In this instance, the subtheme of "grievance/revenge" coincides with that of "sex drive is uncontrollable," in that Participant 4 believed he needed to police his partner in order to warn off the sexual advances of other men. The policing of his partner resulted in him indecently assaulting her to deter her from future interactions with men but also to regain his control over her. The "grievance/revenge" theme and the desire to maintain the "winner's" position if lost therefore intersects with the "desire to remain in control" master theme, particularly the "need for control" and "entitlement" subthemes. The above extract also evidences the "real man" subtheme, which infers that IPV males have very specific conceptualized ideas as to how a man should respond in certain situations. Consequently, Participant 4 felt he had to use violence in response to his partner's disobedience in order to reclaim control of the situation.

Desire to Remain in Control

Unlike the master theme "violence is normal," which may be present in non-intimate violent offenders, the master theme of "desire to remain in control" may be exclusive to IPV offenders. This is not to say they will only be violent within their intimate relationships, but it may explain why they feel violence is necessary to maintain control over their partner and remain in charge at home. For example:

> *You would say this is chauvinistic but I went to work so she made the tea, so that's chauvinistic. She was getting telt to make my dinner when I was working. If it wasn't ready exactly the way I wanted it or when I wanted it I took a maddy. I couldnae understand. She's at the bingo, she's going to the bingo but she should look after me.* (Participant 3)

This extract shows that Participant 3 believes women are objects who are there to serve and satisfy men in anyway

their partner deems necessary, which is consistent with the subtheme "entitlement/women are objects." Participant 3 exerted his need for control over his partner by taking *"a maddy,"* presumably exerting physical aggression and violence toward his partner in order to ensure she performed as he expected. When she does not perform her role as he expects, he simply cannot understand why this would be the case and again reinforces his entitlement by stating *"but she should look after me."* His genuine astonishment at his partner's rebellion by going to the bingo is supportive of the theme of rejection/abandonment in which males feel neglected by their partners when they demonstrate independence and do not perform their expected female role, leading to violence to curb the female's revolt. Finally, his desire to remain in control and his view of women as subservient to men is highlighted by his claim to the female researcher *"you would say this is chauvinistic,"* emphasizing his belief that men must be respected and treated well regardless of women's views. The account of the event to the female researcher reveals Participant 3's pride in recounting the way he exerted his control over his partner and is consistent with the "real man" subtheme: that a man must perform in a certain way under certain circumstances, as illustrated by his angry response to his dinner not being prepared or being prepared to a less than perfect standard.

As the above extract demonstrates, the subthemes within the master theme "desire to remain in control" often overlapped with each other. This was the case for many of the subthemes throughout the analysis.

Women's Role in Violence

The role of women in IPV from the perspective of the abuser was diverse. The subtheme of "women as provoking" was a prevailing theme evidenced by each participant. For example:

> *She knew exactly how to wind me up, she knew what buttons to press. In the past, all she had to do was say one thing or do one thing and it was just, phew, away with it and now, obviously I speak to her, I have to speak to her to speak to the kids but I've spoken to the kids once in 4 months, 3 months, and every time I phone, no answer. The phone just goes straight to answer phone so obviously I'm a bit niggled with that but I sit there and think "not worth it," not worth winding yourself up over.* (Participant 2)

This extract shows that Participant 2 believed he was antagonized by his partner and that his response was out of his own control due to her provocation. The use of the metaphors *"wind me up"* and *"buttons to press"* suggests that he believed his partner was manipulating him in a premeditated, deliberate way inducing a violent response. The

belief that his partner was manipulating him by "winding him up" will lead to a need for him to re-establish the power balance and regain control of his partner, therefore, linking to the "need for control" subtheme.

In addition to the "need for control" subtheme, the "women as provoking" subtheme links to "external factors responsible," which is not specific to female aggravation but implies that IPV offender's often believe their behavior to be out of their control and mitigated by external factors. This is highlighted in the above extract by the phrase *"away with it,"* insinuating that his behavior was uncontrollable and again demonstrates the overlap between emergent subthemes.

The subtheme of "rejection/abandonment" was evidenced by all the participants and refers to feeling neglected or discarded by significant other's in their life, often leading them to respond using violence. Participant 1 frequently referred to feeling neglected by his mother after she stood by his step-father, who sexually abused him as a child:

> *Angry, mare resentful because I think your weans should come first, know what I mean... she knows it should have been that way. She comes to visit and aw that but I think a lot of it eh it's done through guilt, know what I mean?* (Participant 1)

Participant 1's admission that he feels anger toward his mother due to her rejection of her son in favor of her husband demonstrates that anger can emerge from feelings of neglect and abandonment. The statement *"weans should come first"* illustrates that Participant 1 would put his own children first and begrudges his mother for not doing the same. His view that children should come first followed by *"know what I mean"* suggests Participant 1 believes this is a commonly held opinion and that his mother made a decision that would typically be ostracized by society, causing him to feel more anger and resentment toward her for rejecting him. Participant 1's anger toward his mother for rejecting him manifested itself as emotional abuse in an intimate relationship:

> *Slag her maw aw the time. Don't know why, her maw was probably better than ma maw but. Slag her boy cause he used to bad mouth me, but he's just looking after his maw, he didn't want anybody being with his maw so it wasnae just me. Easy things, just things I knew would get onto her, anything I knew that would annoy her I'd dae it or probably say it. I didnae mean it but, at the time, I would be thriving on it cause I knew I was getting the reaction I wanted.*

In the case of Participant 1, being rejected by his mother was a contributing factor to holding attitudinal beliefs that women are deceitful and not to be trusted, which later revealed itself as emotional abuse that he inflicted on his partner. The fact that he focused his abuse on his partner's mother and son shows his jealously of their relationship, which he obviously compares with his own maternal affiliation: *"her maw was probably better than ma maw,"* leading him to take his anger and resentment out on his partner. Not only is he jealous of her supportive maternal relationships, both as a daughter and mother, but also because he believes woman are not to be trusted; thus, he used physical and emotional abuse to punish her for being deceitful and to maintain control over her. The use of the phrase *"wasnae just me"* again hints at the theme of rejection/abandonment, as Participant 1 justifies the fact his partner's son bad-mouthed him by stating he would do that regardless of who she was with. This shows Participant 1's desire to feel a sense of belonging and feel wanted in response to his mother's rejection.

The subtheme of "women as supportive" is connected to "rejection/abandonment" as participants often expressed surprise when females stood by them and supported them after being rejected or let down on numerous occasions previously:

> *I've been married twice before, I thought it was just another stupid fucking thing but it's no, right, I've found out it's no. She is very, very essential in my life. She's essential and since I've met her I've no done anything wrong. She's really looked after me and I need to look after her, she deserves it hen, at least she deserves that. A lot of people have said to her "he's in prison again, get rid of him" but naw, she has stood by me and for that I'll never forget that, I'll never ever forget that.* (Participant 3)

Participant 3's description of his current partner shows he appreciates the supportive role she has played in his life and that he is surprised that she has stood by him while he was in prison. Participant 3 claims not to have been violent toward his current partner, only his previous partner for which he received a custodial sentence, therefore suggesting that Participant 3 believes women should perform a supportive and subservient role and when this is performed adequately violence is not necessary to remain in control. The above quote is in stark contrast to the way in which he described his desire to remain in control with his previous partner, which resulted in him taking "a maddy" when he felt she did not perform her role correctly.

Diminishing Personal Responsibility

The master theme of diminishing personal responsibility was evident in all participants and refers to blaming external factors on the use of violence, such as substance use, and minimizing the severity of the violence and/or justifying their actions by suggesting the abuse they administered

was not as severe as other types of violence. In the case of Participant 5, it refers to the denial of the wife batterer label:

It got me angry aw that, as I says I don't like that, seeing a guy lay into a woman, do you know what I mean? That's what's coming across as if I'm like that and I'm not, do you know what I mean? (Participant 5)

Participant 5 expresses his contempt at being labeled a domestic violence offender, which is reinforced by asking *"know what I mean?"* in quick succession, highlighting his desire for the researcher to not consider him a wife batterer. Stating that he "doesn't like that" conforms to a societal norm to emphasize not only his dissociation from IPV offenders but his disdain for them. This disdain is supported later in the interview:

See if I had to walk into a house or down the street and see a guy laying into a woman, I'd be the first at it, do you know what I mean? This angers me. I've said that to her. She regrets that because she knows it was her fault, right and you could ask her herself and she'll tell ye she regrets it. Because see if I was somebody like that I've nay doubt and she has nay doubt that if I lost the heed completely with her it would be bad and she would be in a bad way, you know what I mean. But she knows that, she knows I hate that, see that domestic violence, do you know what I mean, to your partner, that's what gets me angry. (Participant 5)

Here, Participant 5 went beyond expressing contempt for IPV offenders to dissociate himself from them by stating he would intervene if he ever witnessed a man hitting a women to convey how far removed he believes he is from the wife batterer label. Again, this is reinforced by the use of *"know what I mean?"* which is used to gain assurance from the researcher that he is not portrayed as a "guy who would lay into a woman."

Discussion

The 11 potential implicit theories of IPV identified as a result of this analysis are representative of schemas in IPV offenders distinct from generally violent offenders, sexual offenders, and rape offenders. Although similarities exist across others offender groups, as discussed in detail below, the current findings of potential distinct IPV implicit theories has implications for treatment targets in this offender group.

The implicit theories identified in the current study greatly overlap with the 10 implicit theories suggested by Gilchrist (2008) that were derived from clinical, theoretical, and empirical literature and are therefore supported by theoretical perspectives of IPV such as the social information procession model of IPV, social learning theory, and the feministic and family violence approach. The "win or lose," "out of control," and "women are at fault/to blame" implicit theories suggested by Gilchrist are respectively indicative of the "grievance/revenge," "external factors responsible," and "women are provoking" themes proposed by the current study. The remaining implicit theories identified correspond to those previously suggested by Gilchrist apart from two additional implicit theories that shall be discussed further.

The implicit theories identified in the current research may be related to those found in other offending groups. For example, "violence is normal" and "real man" correspond to "violence is normal" and "capable man" implicit theories identified in violent offenders (Collie et al. 2007). Additionally, "entitlement" corresponds to "entitlement" in rapists as well as "women are provoking" being likely to be representative of "women are dangerous" also in the rapist sample (Polaschek and Gannon 2004). In spite of similarities with other offending behavior groups, implicit theories such as "abandonment/rejection," "need for control," and "male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner" are likely to be specific to IPV, although this is not conclusive from the current research. In accordance with Eckhardt and Dye (2000), it seems the implicit theories that may be distinct to IPV offenders are representative of the way these offenders process cues in relationship conflict rather than general attitudes. Therefore, the way in which IPV offenders process cues in relationship conflict is a potential target for intervention.

Two implicit theories identified in the current research that were in addition to the original theories proposed by Gilchrist were "rejection/abandonment" and "women as supportive," both under the master theme of "women's role in violence." The contradiction in these subthemes is a finding inconsistent with other literature related to cognition in IPV offenders. The theme of "women as provoking" is in accordance with Polaschek and Gannon's (2004) literature on rapists and Gilchrist's (2008) proposal on implicit theories in IPV offenders based on relevant literature. Therefore, an appropriate treatment target in IPV offenders may be the way in which these offenders process the actions of their partners.

The implicit theory of "rejection/abandonment" is consistent with IPV literature on attachment theory, which states that disruption or poor care-giving in early life may result in hostile relationship expectations in addition to social information processing deficits (Ehrensaft et al. 2003). Such fearful attachment at a young age leads to an increased dependency on intimate partners due to feelings of rejection and abandonment, and abusive males' violent outbursts may be seen as a form of protest behavior directed at the attachment figure and precipitated by perceived threats of rejection and abandonment by their partner (Corvo et al. 2008).
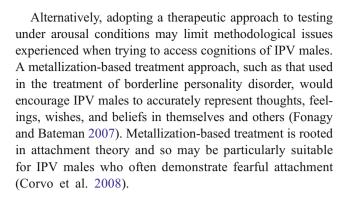
Fearful attachment may also be representative of a lack of trust in women or viewing them as deceitful and therefore linked to the implicit theories of "women as provoking" and "policing partner." The notion of increased dependency on partner's in IPV men is supported by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994). When comparing maritally violent and non-violent men on five types of conflict it was found that in situations involving the wife's rejection of the husband, violent men offered less competent responses than the non-violent group.

The implicit theory of "women as supportive" is not consistent with theories rationalizing IPV cognition but would be expected to be evident in nonviolent males (Holtzworth-Munroe 1992). In the current study, participants often noted their current or ex-partner's role as supportive; however, this may be due to them accessing cognitive processing under non-aroused conditions (Eckhardt and Dye 2000). Future research would benefit from accessing cognitions of maritally violent men when experiencing a relationship conflict. Although there are greater potential methodological issues when accessing IPV offenders cognition during marital conflicts, there is a greater chance of accessing accurate cognitions representative of implicit theories.

In terms of feminist theory, this has implications when considering the role of society in endorsing beliefs of male entitlement and power, as these beliefs have not yet been explored at a cognitively implicit level. IPV theory would benefit from this approach. Recent interventions based on feminist theory have sought to challenge IPV by aiming to restructure cognitive content and attitudinal biases that, as of yet, have not been obtained under aroused conditions (Langlands et al. 2009).

Future studies investigating the cognition of IPV offenders could test for the presence of the 11 implicit theories proposed in the current study by administering implicit tasks under aroused conditions. This could be achieved by asking maritally violent and nonviolent men to think aloud during audiotapes depicting imaginal conflicts with their wives, thus accessing the automatic cognitive process (Eckhardt and Dye 2000).

A second suggestion would be to exhibit a series of videotapes depicting couples in conflict to IPV and nonviolent males and ask them to verbalize their reactions to the situations immediately afterwards (Holtzworth-Munroe 1992). Specific cognitions may be investigated in this way by showing videos depicting distinct implicit theories. For example "male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner" could be tested out by showing a video depicting a male trying to dance with a female while her partner looks on or testing for the implicit theory "rejection/abandonment" by showing a video in which a female expresses to her partner the desire to go out with her friends for the evening.

Alternatively, adopting a therapeutic approach to testing under arousal conditions may limit methodological issues experienced when trying to access cognitions of IPV males. A metallization-based treatment approach, such as that used in the treatment of borderline personality disorder, would encourage IPV males to accurately represent thoughts, feelings, wishes, and beliefs in themselves and others (Fonagy and Bateman 2007). Metallization-based treatment is rooted in attachment theory and so may be particularly suitable for IPV males who often demonstrate fearful attachment (Corvo et al. 2008).

Limitations of Current Study

Limitations of the current study included the issues of the subjectivity and reflexivity principle, that is, the role of the researcher in the research process (Smith 2004). To increase validity, an independent researcher familiar with IPA methodology analyzed one of the transcripts in order to ensure the same themes, and therefore implicit theories, were evident. As with all qualitative methods there are issues with subjectivity, in this case the researcher's previous awareness of potential implicit theories may have influenced the analysis of transcripts, hence why an independent researcher was necessary. Reflexivity may have been especially problematic in this group due to their status as serving a current custodial sentence, as they may have been keen to portray themselves in a positive light. Future research into IPV implicit theories should be conducted under aroused conditions to minimize such issues.

A further methodological issue of conducting research in a forensic setting is that of the demand factor, which may be more pronounced in this setting due to attitudes toward authority. Finally, the female researcher may have affected reflexivity as participants may have minimized or emphasized their negative attitudes towards female accordingly. Again, future research investigating implicit theories should be performed under aroused conditions to overcome concerns relating to reflexivity.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

The current research has identified 11 potential implicit theories present in IPV offenders. The implicit theories reported here bare a striking similarity to those suggested by Gilchrist (2008) based on clinical, theoretical, and empirical literature and are therefore supported by theoretical models of IPV. Two additional implicit theories were also identified. "Rejection/abandonment" relates to IPV literature on attachment theory and "women as supportive" has not been previously noted in IPV literature but may be a consequence of testing under non-aroused conditions.

Alternatively the implicit theory "women as supportive" may be linked to the implicit theory of male entitlement and a woman's role to serve and satisfy men.

The implicit theories proposed in the current research correspond to some of those found in sexual and violent offenders; however, "abandonment/rejection," "need for control," and "male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner" are likely to be exclusive to IPV offenders and so are not represented in other offender groups.

Future research investigating implicit theories in IPV offenders would benefit from exploration of the similarities and differences among maritally violent, maritally dissatisfied, and maritally satisfied groups. This would increase our understanding of interactions between implicit theories and determine the relative importance of different cognitions in exhibiting violence toward a partner. Further development of implicit theory research would have implications for interventions and treatments allowing specific cognitions to be targeted.

Appendix A

Age and Offence History of Participants

Participant 1: Age 32

- 4 Domestic Assault convictions
- 9 Theft convictions
- 1 Breach of the Peace conviction

Participant 2: Age 27

- 1 Assault to Severe Injury conviction
- 1 Permanent Disfigurement and Endangerment of Life conviction (against his partner)
- 2 Domestic Assault convictions
- 11 Assault convictions

Participant 3: Age 63

- 1 Assault to Severe Injury and Endangerment of Life conviction (against his partner)
- 1 Sodomy conviction (against his partner)
- 2 Lewd & Libidinous convictions (against relatives of ex-wife)
- 2 Theft convictions
- 3 Fraud convictions
- Thought to have additional previous convictions recorded in England but inaccessible to Scottish authorities.

Participant 4: Age 38

- 1 Indecent Assault conviction
- 1 Domestic Assault conviction

Participant 5: Age 36

- 1 Assault to injury conviction (against his partner)
- 1 Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937s12 (1) and 1 Road Traffic Act 1988 section 5 (1)(a) – both related to him taking his partner's car with their son inside while under the influence of alcohol

Participant 6: Age 27

- 2 domestic assault charges (released on bail)
- Numerous other offences relate to drug charges

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