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Department of Family Studies & Gerontology

Exploring the Lived Experience of IPV in Bermuda

by

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) in Bermuda has received minimal recognition as a social problem in Bermuda. Limited academic research has been conducted. With increasing rates of IPV occurring in Bermuda, this illuminated the need for further exploration.

Familialism is a strongly subscribed cultural belief that reinforces the silence in Bermudian society. Therefore a single case study was conducted. This case study is about a black Bermudian woman who experienced IPV during her relationship with the father of her children.

Her narrative provides insight into a social problem that is obscured by cultural beliefs. She illustrated various elements of Bermudian culture that are intertwined and contribute to the perpetuation of IPV.

She was motivated by her commitment and dedication to her family to challenge cultural beliefs and access social support. A combination of both informal and formal social support enabled her to navigate through her IPV experience.

It is the hope that this case study will serve as the foundation for future research on IPV in Bermuda in order to attain a better understanding of the social issue, to create awareness about IPV and to develop comprehensive social policies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Intimate Partner violence (IPV) has plagued the island of Bermuda for years. Anna Skeeters was the second person murdered in Bermuda; her death was one of the most notable in the history of the island. It was also the first reported case of intimate partner violence (Clarke, 2003). Edward Skeeters married Anna in 1869. They lived in Sandy's Parish in a small, secluded cottage. Anna was a house wife while her husband supported the household. Their marriage was rocky and, their issues escalated into IPV. Anna decided to leave her husband because the abuse had gradually become worse but after three weeks she returned home (Bermuda Royal Gazette, 1879).

On October 20th 1878, Anna mysteriously went missing. Her husband appeared to be distraught and informed the authorities about his wife's disappearance. In his report, he claimed that she had taken all his money from a locked trunk and that some of her clothes were missing (Bermuda Royal Gazette, 1879). Foul play was suspected, and Mr. Skeeters was the prime suspect in the police investigation.

In their search for Anna they employed various methods. The police and members of the community scoured the island as well as the surrounding ocean. A creeper machine was used to scan the ocean floor. It knocked into an item but was unable to retrieve it because of its large mass. A diver submerged into the water. He discovered the rotting corpse of Anna Skeeters tied to a large boulder (Bermuda Royal Gazette, 1879). Edward Skeeters was subsequently charged with murder. He confessed to killing his wife and was hung.

Bermuda is a country where IPV is implicitly rampant. The Bermuda Police statistics from 1987-2003 note that 18 out of 21 women murdered in Bermuda were killed by their partners. Throughout that time frame, a total of 52 people were murdered. Women and children accounted for 29 of those deaths (Bermuda Police, 2003). They were victims of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault. The remaining 23 murders were drug and gang related. Unfortunately, based on the culture of the island, accurate information representing the number of women experiencing IPV is not available.

Inspector Clarke, a Bermudian police officer with a specialization in Domestic Violence declares that, on average, the police respond to 1,350 domestic related cases per year (Clarke, 2003). It is evident that IPV is extremely prevalent in Bermuda based on the limited statistics that exist. However, “Bermuda has no response at the national level for domestic violence and child abuse (Clarke, 2003).

IPV is disregarded on a societal level because of a common cultural practice. In Bermuda, “minding your own” business is a cultural norm. The former Executive Director of the Women’s Resource Centre (WRC) in Bermuda proclaims that when it comes to domestic violence, minding your own business could mean the end of a woman’s life (Harriot, 2007, as cited in Taylor, 2007).

Multiple cases of domestic violence have ended tragically in Bermuda. One of these high profile IPV cases will be described to assist in the comprehension of IPV in Bermuda. The incident occurred on January 5th 1995 in a government office building where a female receptionist worked. Her estranged husband was armed with a knife and a container full of sulfuric acid; he poured the acid on her and then proceeded to stab her several times, whilst office employees observed her brutal murder (Sinopoli, 1995). Police arrested the perpetrator,

and he was charged with the premeditated murder of his wife (Sinopoli, 1995). Premeditated murder was punishable by death in Bermuda. This was not achieved because of protests from international amnesty groups. Therefore, his sentence was commuted to life in prison (Deacon, 1995).

In analyzing the case, it was clear that the woman had utilized all the support services available on the island in order to leave the abusive relationship. She sought advice from the Centre Against Abuse (CAA), (formerly known as the Physical Abuse Centre) and relocated to a new home to distance herself from her husband. However, she was still vulnerable because he knew where she worked. Living in Bermuda presents challenges when attempting to escape an abuser because it is easy to locate people based on their daily routines. Research has shown that when a woman leaves an IPV relationship it is the most dangerous time (Gelles, 1997).

In 1995, there were no laws in place to protect people who were experiencing domestic abuse. The Domestic Violence Act came into effect in 1997 (Talbot, 2001). However, the Act has various loopholes that prevent the protection of women who need it the most. The act provides no protection for a woman unless she is physically assaulted by the perpetrator (Talbot, 2001). The only viable option for a woman is to create a report with the police that could be used in the future (Talbot, 2001).

While the creation of the Domestic Violence Act had little effect on the amount of IPV crimes being committed every year, one positive outcome from the Act was that it encouraged women to apply for restraining orders. One year after it was created, there was a 30% increase in restraining order requests against perpetrators of IPV (Finighan, 1998).

More information needs to be obtained in order to understand the current prevalence of IPV on the island. As a Bermudian, it is not uncommon to hear about IPV stories from different social circles. Although, the fact remains that IPV is still considered a social taboo despite its steadily increasing prevalence.

Research on Violence in Bermuda

A comprehensive search unveiled a deficiency in academic research about IPV in Bermuda. Academic research specifically focused on IPV in this country is nonexistent. There are three outdated academic studies published about the phenomenon in Bermuda. The first study was conducted by Manning in 1973, followed by Paul's study in 1983, and the most recent study was conducted by Oliver in 2000. This research will be reviewed as background justifying the need for the current study.

The central questions guiding this study are:

1. What influence does culture have on the perception of IPV in Bermuda?
2. What are the Black Bermudians' experiences with IPV in Bermuda?
3. How do cultural and social values influence the perpetuation of IPV in Bermuda?
4. What are the resources and social support available on the island to help those experiencing IPV?
5. How does the cultural perception of IPV influence an individual's willingness to seek help?

Investigating these questions requires an understanding of the present climate in Bermuda. An outbreak of gun violence has changed the dynamics of life for many residents, essentially disrupting harmony on the island.

Crime in Bermuda

Bermuda is well known for being a beautiful and serene tourist destination. Tourist advertisements with strategic word play describe Bermuda as another world. Immense effort is necessary to keep the social problems in the shadows; only exposing tourists to the beauty of the island. Residing on the island and vacationing in Bermuda are two different experiences. Similar to other countries in the world, the incidence of violent crimes is not uncommon in paradise. According to the Bermuda police service overall crime has reduced in Bermuda; however, there has been a phenomenal increase in violent crimes such as crimes against the community and crimes against the person. The 'crimes against the person' category is a combination of different types of crimes which include homicides, assaults and serious assaults. The statistics recorded in 2009 were the highest in five years for crimes against the person; the statistics increased by 6.2% since 2008 (Bermuda police, 2009).

Police statistics illustrated that homicides were the most predominant violent incidents in Bermuda during 2009. The United Nations Survey of Crime Trends for 2003 to 2004 indicated that Bermuda had a homicide rate of 1.1 per 100,000 people (Strangeways, 2010). Increasing violent crime rates in Bermuda have become comparable to major international jurisdictions during the past seven years. Bermuda's homicide rate in 2009 was five times greater than that of London and higher than New York. Based on an estimated population of 65,000, the increase in Bermudian homicides taking place has now reached 9.2 for every 100,000 people (Strangeways, 2010).

One of the contributing factors to the heightened violence rates is gun violence between rival gangs. In Bermuda, it is an offence to possess a gun (Firearms Act, 1973); guns utilized for illegal activities are smuggled onto the island via plane and boat. Access to illegal guns is

restricted to people who are affiliated with gangs and maintain the status of a high-ranking member. Additionally one must have substantial funds because the street value of a gun is extremely high. The continued circulation of illegal guns on the island is maintained through concealment. An immense amount of violence is taking place and due to the small proximity of the island; an incident that occurs in one parish can spread to another parish within an hour (Burchall, 1991). This reinforces the importance of examining the cultural context of the countries in which violent crimes occur to better understand how the violence impacts the community (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1966).

Statement of the Problem

An ample amount of gang violence in Bermuda is cause for concern because previous research has indicated that societies that have large amounts of violence are more likely to have elevated rates of IPV (Erchak & Rosenfeld, 1994 as cited in Arscott-Mills, 2001). As the Program Director of the Centre Against Abuse in Bermuda, Vickers has indicated that street violence is transferring into Bermudian homes as the muse for threats and acts of violence (Huish, 2009).

Statistics collected by the Centre Against Abuse (CAA) in 2007 illustrated that 1,249 women were abused. The number of women seeking assistance from the CAA in 2008 increased to 2,046. The increase in statistics is composed of women who accessed formal support services. However, numerous cases of IPV are not reported annually. The Bermuda police department's Domestic Violence liaison officer deals with approximately 150 IPV cases per month (Rutland, 2009).

IPV is often misrepresented statistically with labels such as domestic disputes and homicides in Bermudian police statistics. The lack of statistics combined with under reporting

from people who experience IPV creates a challenge when attempting to decipher the amount of IPV that occurs on the island. Dr. Regulus, an American gang expert, spoke at a Bermudian conference on violence; he indicated that the lack of detailed violence statistics prohibits any attempts to cease violent acts (Smith, 2009).

Solving a social problem requires the accurate documentation of the problem. By providing in depth, rich data about the experience of IPV, from the perspective of a Bermudian woman; this case study will provide a foundation for further research about IPV in Bermuda.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore:

1. The lived experience of IPV from the perspective of a Black Bermudian woman.
2. The role culture plays in her experience.
3. The resources and support available in helping a woman experiencing IPV in Bermuda

IPV is occurring at alarming rates in Bermuda; there are numerous women remaining silent about the abuse they are experiencing. Local newspapers publish IPV cases that have ended in tragedy; these articles often being the first time friends and family find out about the IPV that was happening behind closed doors. More tragedy will occur if IPV is not recognized as a serious social problem in Bermuda.

In order to provide an understanding of the lived experience of IPV from the perspective of a Bermudian woman, a single case study will be conducted using phenomenological in-depth interviews. The rich data from the interviews will be analyzed ensuring that the woman's firsthand experience is vividly captured by utilizing a constructivist approach.

Learning about the lived experience of IPV in Bermuda enhances comprehension of the meanings a woman attributes to her experience. Furthermore, the proposed study will be

documented evidence of an IPV experience; where readers can learn vicariously through the case from the “thick description” of the lived reality of IPV in Bermuda (Geertz as cited in Stake, 1994).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Bermuda is a small island in the Atlantic Ocean. The island is twenty-one square miles long and two miles wide; with a population of 62,059 (Census, 2000). As a British territory that is geographically close to the US, with historical roots stemming from the Caribbean; the Bermudian culture has enveloped a blend of all three countries' cultures. Bermuda is vastly understudied from an academic standpoint. The limited research that has been conducted is outdated.

Bermudian Academic Research

The most predominant academic social studies about Bermuda were conducted by Manning in 1973 and Paul in 1983. Many of the essential elements of Bermudian culture haven't changed from when these studies were conducted. These seminal studies provide rare information about Bermudian society.

The first ethnographic study carried out by Manning studied the Black clubs in Bermuda; his work focused on exploring the social context of Black Bermudian life surrounding the social clubs of men. The focus of the study was primarily on Black Bermudian males, although it does incorporate elements about Bermudian women and their roles in the lives of club members. The study captures multiple elements of Bermudian culture that are still significant today. Max Paul conducted the second pivotal study in 1983; the qualitative study is about Modern Black Bermudian families. It is a classic study that provides vital information about Bermudian family dynamics. These two studies served as an avenue of comprehension for the most recent academic study by Oliver in 2000.

Oliver (2000) conducted the latest research on Bermuda. The researcher explored violence in Bermuda from the perspectives of black Bermudian men who had been involved in violent lifestyles. This study is also a qualitative study that is filled with valuable social information that confirms the legitimacy and relevancy of Manning and Paul's research. Without these pivotal studies on Bermuda, this literature review would be immensely disadvantaged. All the studies provide essential data, from which a solid foundation can be established for research on IPV in Bermuda.

The literature review will address three areas related to the exploring the lived experience of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Bermuda. The first section will focus on IPV in Bermuda, the second section will focus on the social context of Bermuda and the last section will discuss social support. Studies from parallel cultures will also be explored in order to attain an in-depth understanding of domestic violence from an island perspective.

Cultural Similarities

Bermudian culture is a mosaic, blending a combination of cultures ranging from British roots, America's close geographical proximity, as well as elements from the Caribbean cultures where some blood lines originate. Based on a lack of academic literature on Bermuda several islands reflecting similar cultural characteristics were chosen to assist in reinforcing the illustration of domestic violence from an island perspective. Geographically Bermuda is closer to the United States than the Caribbean. However, the historical cultural influences have maintained strength.

Culture and Intimate Partner Violence

The sociological definition of culture incorporates, “beliefs, values, behaviors and physical objects that create a peoples’ way of life” (Mustapha, 2007 p. 72). Cultural values are incorporated in ways that people perceive and experience the world (Katisurirangan, Krishanan & Riger, 2004). Past research on intimate partner violence (IPV) has shown that women in abusive relationships perceive the IPV based on the culture that they live in (Cousineau & Rondeau, 2004).

The influence of cultural elements illustrates how non-individual factors contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence. Additionally, through their analysis of violence, Wolfgang & Ferracuti (1966) suggest that violent crimes “be viewed in terms of the cultural context from which they spring” (p. 150) reinforcing the necessity to inspect elements that contribute to the construction and maintenance of Bermudian culture.

Violence within a community can influence the perpetuation of domestic violence resulting in social violence becoming the norm (Arscott-Mills, 2001).

Intimate Partner Violence in Bermuda

The recent illumination of domestic violence in Bermuda is described as the silent shame (The Bermuda Sun, 2009). According to the Bermuda police statistics a quarter of violent crime in Bermuda is domestic (Rutland as cited in Dinneen & Kelly, 2009). The Chief Executive Director of the Women’s Resource Centre, believes domestic violence in Bermuda is an “endemic” (Williams, as cited in Dinneen & Kelly, 2009). Statistics produced by the Centre Against Abuse, Bermuda’s only shelter on the island, illustrate that 1,249 victims who were abused went to them for assistance in 2007. In 2008 the number of women that sought assistance

almost doubled; 2,046 victims of abuse sought help. The PAC believes that 2009 was extremely busy compared to previous years (Huish, 2009). Statistics provide numerical data, but the media delivers a grim reality about women who have been killed as a result of IPV.

Deadly intimate partner violence in Bermuda. Over the years there have been multiple cases of domestic violence. Members of the community are often unaware of these cases because the media does not feature them. Due to the heinous nature of these cases, the following three stories received an immense amount of media attention.

In the first case to be discussed, a Bermudian woman took out a protection order against her ex-partner after being abused by him in July 2002. She took refuge at the island's only physical abuse shelter for two days from August 5th to August 7th. Her ex-partner was extremely jealous and felt as though she was cheating on him. Therefore he would inspect her clothing, genitals and cell phone for any evidence of infidelity (Mayers, 2005). The staff at the shelter confirmed that the ex-partner was also stalking her. Allegedly the two had arranged to meet at a local gas station so that she could return his cell phone on August 9th 2002, regardless of the standing protection order. Witnesses contradicted this claim indicating that the defendant went to multiple locations looking for the woman before he discovered her at the gas station.

The man punched and stabbed his ex-girlfriend to death outside of the gas station when he found her. People attempted to stop him, but he brandished the knife at anyone that approached him. He was convicted of murder in 2005. During the trial he made statements indicating that he was in love with his ex-girlfriend and would always love her, but his jealousy provoked him to stab her to death (Mayers, 2005).

Research indicates that the most dangerous part of an intimate partner violence relationship is when the woman leaves the relationship (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). The circumstances become even more perilous when living on an island that is only twenty-one square miles with one shelter. Leaving is not an option and remaining silent can be a strategic mechanism for survival or the prolonging of a fatal fight for some women.

The second serious case of IPV occurred on the morning of September 25th 2007; a woman arrived at her sister's dwelling to discover her lifeless body (Dale & Smith, 2007). As the case unraveled it became clear that this was the fatal result of domestic violence. According to the woman's roommate, her boyfriend arrived around 10 p.m. and had consumed alcohol prior to arriving. They went into her bedroom and closed the door behind them.

Her roommate heard moans and the words "stop it, stop it;" but he assumed it was the couple being intimate and increased the volume of the television to fade out the noise (Roberts, 2009). The boyfriend described the events that took place as an argument over accusations about his involvement with other women; he claimed that she slapped him, and in return he punched /pushed her resulting in her hitting the bedroom wall. Evidence from the pathologist indicated that pressure was applied to her neck and she had numerous bruises and facial insures consistent with being hit multiple times (Roberts, 2009). These injuries, combined with her pre-existing medical condition, resulted in her having difficulty breathing. Ultimately, the physical abuse from her boyfriend was seen as a contributing factor to her death, resulting in him being charged for manslaughter.

The couple was in a relationship for five years. She was subjected to physical abuse. Friends and family members were under the impression that the relationship was just

argumentative, not abusive (Roberts, 2009). On the other hand the woman's roommate confirmed that he was aware of the abuse that had transpired in the relationship (Roberts, 2009). It is not uncommon for families to be unaware of IPV in relationships because people strive to protect the honor of the family by keeping their personal business within the private sphere (Paul, 1983)

The last case is the most recent publicized incident of IPV; the events took place in July 2009. A twenty-three year old mother of two was found dead outside of a local flower shop located on the side of a main road. In attempt to go and get help, the woman ran bare-chested to a shop a few yards from her apartment. She was bleeding profusely and she collapsed in front of the shop keeper (Dale, 2009). With substantial wounds covering multiple places on her body, she succumbed to her injuries.

The father of her children, who she had been involved with for more than two years, was identified as the main suspect. Police conducted an island wide manhunt; he was found at a nearby park threatening to take his own life if the police didn't retreat. The man harmed himself by inflicting an injury to his throat; police as well as a friend and relative had to convince him to capitulate for an hour and a half. The details of this case have not yet been revealed because the case is still pending.

In the two cases discussed, both perpetrators had previous convictions of domestic violence and jealousy issues. These were two common elements from the cases that went to trial. Both of the men made claims that they didn't mean to kill the women because of their romantic connections with them. The strong desire to possess the woman they love but to kill her, reflects the premise that, "If I can't have her no one can" (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). The defendants

made various explanations as to why they murdered these women, from mental disorders to histories of family violence. There are a multitude of possible reasons for why these men murdered their lovers, but they are yet to be discovered.

The high profile cases provided some examples of IPV in Bermuda. It is essential for more information to be unearthed. Understanding IPV from a Bermudian perspective will enable service providers to assist more women and allow them to have a better understanding of their needs.

Definition of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence falls under the category of domestic violence in Bermuda. According to the Bermudian Domestic Violence Act, domestic violence is defined as “violence by one person against another person with whom that first-mentioned person is, or has been in a domestic relationship,” (1997). In the act, violence is defined as, “physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological abuse, threats or harassment,” (Domestic Violence Act, 1997). Examples of these types of abuse are physical violence (e.g. Hitting, beating, kicking, choking with or without an object), threatened physical or sexual assault with or without a weapon (eg. Threatening to hurt someone or threatening the use of a weapon to force someone to have sex) and sexual violence (e.g. Forcing sex when it is not desired) described by Arscott-Mills (2001). The Bermudian Domestic Violence Act only recognizes four types of abuse but IPV also includes emotional, economic and social abuse (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

Types of Abuse

There are different kinds of abuse experienced by women in Bermuda. Rutland, the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, has worked with women who have experienced emotional

abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse as well as financial abuse (as cited in Dinneen & Kelly, 2009). Constable Rutland indicates that through her experiences as the Domestic Liaison Officer in Bermuda she has become aware of the atrocious violence that is happening on the island every day; violence that the public is often unaware of or refuses to unveil (Dinneen & Kelly, 2009).

Street violence has been steadily rising in Bermuda. Vickers, the program director at the island's Centre Against Abuse has seen how street violence is having a direct influence in Bermudian homes. Street violence serves as the inspiration for copycat violence, fear tactics and threats in Bermudian family homes (Huish, 2009).

The Black Bermudian Family

The Family is a significant social institution in society. The socialization process occurs within the family. It is where children learn how to think and act according to the society they live in (Mustapha, 2007). Therefore examining the dynamics of the Black Bermudian family is important in understanding IPV.

A study of Black Bermudian families was conducted in Bermuda by Paul (1983). The objective of this study was to obtain information on Black Bermudian families because no research existed and, secondly, to discover if there was a relationship between the conjugal role segregation and the connectedness of the family's social network. Fifty-two families participated in in-depth interviews; 32 middle-class, 15 lower class and 5 upper class families. A questionnaire was completed by 59 children to find out more information about the socialization of children. In addition, Paul entered the field as a participant observer at various social functions such as weddings, church ceremonies, house parties, soccer games, cricket games and

social clubs. The ethnographic style of this study allows for a deeper understanding of an understudied population.

Paul discovered that extended families are predominant in Bermuda. The extended family is a combination of the nuclear family and blood relatives. Examples of blood relatives include grandparents, uncles and aunts. Family members often live in close proximity to the family homestead reinforcing tight kinship networks (Burchall, 1991). A prominent feature of Bermudian family that has remained constant over the years is the matrifocal structure.

In matrifocal families women are the “focus of relationships” (Smith, 1973 as cited in Barrow, 1996 p. 22). There are two levels of matrifocality: structural and functional. Structural matrifocality is defined by the absence or partial presence of the father and or husband. Matrifocality is further enhanced if the father is absent from the home because the mother has to take on the leadership role in the family (Smith, 1973 as cited in Barrow, 1996).

On the other hand, a functional matrifocal family occurs when the father is present in the home. Functional matrifocality can be coined in a Bermudian proverb, “the man is the head and the woman is the neck” (Paul, 1983 p. 85). This proverb is an illustration of how women carry out family duties and nurture the children while the man is the formal head of the household. Paul’s research reflects influential factors pertaining to Bermudian family life that contribute to intimate partner violence. This notion is reinforced by Gage & Hutchinson’s (2006) study.

Gage & Hutchinson (2006) found that women who were from communities with large numbers of matrifocal headed households were more prone to experiencing partner sexual abuse when compared to communities with smaller populations of matrifocal headed households. Additionally, the wife’s adherence to traditional gender norms; “the belief that a husband has the

right to beat his wife was the highest risk factor for intimate partner sexual abuse” (Gage & Hutchinson, 2006 p.21).

Testimony from the trial of Edward Skeeters reflected the traditional gender beliefs. Edward Skeeters’ father testified “I saw him knock her down once on my premises, and he said that she was his wife and he could treat her as he liked” (The Bermuda Royal Gazette, 1979). Past research supports the notion that the cultural conditions of one’s community can enhance or diminish risk factors for domestic abuse.

Matrifocality is a major root in Caribbean and Bermudian family structures. Researchers have illustrated how these types of family structures can encourage IPV; illuminating how matrifocality conflicts with the premise of patriarchy. By investigating the Black Bermudian male and female more closely, the interplay between the family system and social beliefs will become unraveled.

Gender

Black Bermudian women. In Bermuda it is common to see women juggling multiple roles that extend beyond the traditional gender role (Manning, 1973). Black Bermudian women are career women, wives, significant others and mothers (Paul, 1983). Most importantly women in Bermudian society are the matriarchs in the family and essential to the maintenance of kinship ties (Paul, 1983).

While black Bermudian women are “strong matriarchs, men were [and still are] dominant” in society (Musson, 1980 p. 30). It is a woman’s duty to maintain the family unit regardless of their circumstances; this belief falls within the boundaries of matrifocality. One of the participants from the Ellsberg, Pena, Herra, Lijstrand & Winkvist study shared how she was

told numerous times by family members and the police that, “He is the father of your children and it is your duty to put up with the abuse and keep your family together” (2000 p. 1606).

Culture creates the premise that it is the woman’s responsibility to keep the family together and if a woman leaves she will face shame and embarrassment because she didn’t live up to societal expectations. These cultural beliefs about family serve as barriers preventing women from leaving their abusive relationships.

Male dominance in relationships is a key theme that is spread throughout the IPV literature. Machismo accentuates all the differences between men and women and amplifies the “male moral, economic and social superiority over women” (Ellsberg et. al, 2000 p. 1606). Factors such as matrifocality and machismo intertwine to reinforce traditional gender roles that are filtered into romantic relationships. Men are the leaders and the women implement the decisions that are made in the relationship. Research has shown how the configuration of an IPV relationship reinforces the power dynamics between males and females.

Characteristics of the intimate partner violence courtship. Intimate partner violence is situated around societal factors but essentially it begins with the courtship process. Often, the signs of an abusive relationship can be confused with actions that fit the social script for romance. In the beginning the male showers the female with an immense amount of attention. He is interested in every element of her life; as a result this charm can be extremely alluring (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

Whilst within a courtship, society dictates that a man is supposed to have characteristics that reinforce his masculinity. He has to be macho, independent and unemotional. Once immersed in the relationship the man feels himself struggling between his desires to possess the

woman while maintaining his masculinity (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Amongst his fears are thoughts of the woman leaving him, or being unfaithful. This intensifies the anxiety he is experiencing.

The measure of a man's masculinity is influenced by the way he performs; therefore; to solve the problem, he draws from societal references that reinforce the idea that men have more power than women (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). When faced with a relationship situation that threatens his masculinity, he uses IPV as a harness to dominate his partner and to ease his apprehensions (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Although this is one of many perspectives on IPV, it is relevant to the Bermudian context. Evidence of this perspective was demonstrated by Oliver's research involving the Bermudian male focus group (2000).

IPV incidents can be instigated by other factors as well. Outbursts of IPV can be triggered by the man's desire to ensure that his command is maintained; a man's requirement for household services to be rendered, his desire or expectation for obedience from his wife, beliefs of ownership of his wife, and attempts by the wife to leave the relationship and jealousy (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly, 1992). All these elements contribute to the perpetuation of IPV but Bermudian research identified additional factors specific to Bermudian culture.

In the Bermudian family the male is the head of the household. It is his duty to attain economic resources and the woman's role as nurturer is to budget the financial resources (Smith, 1976 as cited in Barrow 1999). The black Bermudian males from Oliver's focus group discussed a situation where a man could be provoked to act out with violence towards their partner. One man illustrated an example where a man's status as a good provider was challenged in front of his mates, "What about [situations] when the baby's mother comes up and starts screaming at

you right in front of your boys. You can guarantee that somebody's going to get slapped" (Oliver, 2000 p.133). The public acknowledgement of his inability to provide is shameful and emasculating.

Furthermore, the challenging economic climate increases the possibility of frustrations being taken out on their partner. It impacts a man's ability to live up to the status of being a good provider (Oliver, 2000). Bermudian men perceived the actions of a man beating his partner as a way for him to gain control over her. Being in control of her through the action of beatings, eradicates his feelings of powerlessness in life (Oliver, 2000). Exploring the social construction of manhood in Bermuda will provide a better understanding of why black Bermudian men feel powerless in society.

Social Construction of Bermudian Manhood.

Oliver conducted a qualitative study about violence in Bermuda. The aim of the study was to explore the real life experience of men who had committed violent crimes in Bermuda. He also wanted to discover the reasons why black Bermudian men participated in violence. He carried out a focus group with eight male prisoners; after doing the first session the participants requested a second session to provide more information. The findings from the study provide information about the social construction of Bermudian manhood.

The construction of positive manhood was illustrated by Paul's research. Paul indicated that "positive manhood" was based on a man's capacity to economically maintain himself and his family even if that means working two or three jobs (1983). In concurrence, Oliver's focus group indicated that although Bermudian men worked extremely hard by having multiple jobs, the financial reward was meager (Oliver, 2000).

The driving force behind men's anger was "frustration" influenced by the realization of the massive space in between the haves and the have-nots (Oliver, 2000 p.126). The inmates felt as though any attempts to establish manhood in Bermuda via legitimate methods is encumbered by the Bermudian government (Oliver, 2000 p. 127).

Oliver concluded that the focus group participants were, "very sensitive to not living up to how conventional manhood is defined and manifested in Bermuda" (2000 p. 132). Bermudian men indicated that the economic situation in Bermuda caused them to become involved in crime. A focus group member stated, "I feel that unemployment is the big reason why a lot of people are into what they are into. Because without money, everybody knows that you get nothing on this island. And this island is one of the most expensive places to live and visit; without finances, you're going to get into crime" (Oliver, 2000 p. 128).

Cultural injections of American rap and Caribbean reggae established a foundation from which black males have drawn masculinity references (Oliver, 2000). Thus began "the glamorization of the drug dealer and the possession of material items [it] has gotten so out of control that now it is a badge of honor associated with falling into that particular stereotype" (Oliver, p. 138).

One participant illuminated how conformity was rampant in Bermuda by declaring, "if something is exciting and entices Bermudians, if one catches on they all catch on" (Oliver, 2000 p. 139). By performing masculine roles affiliated with danger, men are able to achieve a higher levels of respect because "everyone wants to be a big man; "So when they see big rope chains or jewelry or this and that everybody wants to be that" (Oliver, 2000 p. 138).

When attempting to describe a Bermudian, one inmate said, “you got so many Bermudians trying to be something else, I don’t even know what a Bermudian is” (Oliver, 2000 p. 138). Overall, men who are able to provide for their families in a non-traditional manner, complete the requirements of the provider. The black Bermudian male who has affiliated himself with the criminal lifestyle, plays a socially acceptable role in Bermudian street culture (Oliver, 2000). Men who perform these roles well receive positive public recognition for their status and the materialistic benefits that are attached to it.

Bermudians are very materialistic; this is deeply embedded in the culture. Bermudians take pride in being able to show off what they have, whether it is fancy clothes, jewelry, a woman or a car with expensive enhancements. A participant in Oliver’s focus group said, “Bermudians like materialistic things. We have been brought up; we have been raised that way. We want materialistic things like everybody else,” (Oliver, 2000 p. 139). Being able to have an item that someone else doesn’t have, and being able to publicly display that item enhances a man’s status in Bermudian society. Being recognized as a status symbol is a huge ego booster.

Positive social recognition within the island community is valued immensely. Men attempt to achieve reputations that fit within the norms of their culture. One of the main elements of being a Bermudian man is how well he is able to embody machismo.

Machismo and reputation. Wilson describes machismo as a member of an intricate ‘value system’ where machismo is enveloped by the wider notion of “honor” (2001, p. 340). Machismo is the performance of masculinity marked by several elements, his ability to fight and the number of his sexual conquests marked by the amount of children he has (Wilson, 2001). Similarly, Otterbein reports that on Andros Island in the Bahamas, to achieve “adult status a man

must have premarital as well as extramarital relations; if he doesn't then he will be called a 'sissy'" (1966 as cited in Wilson, 2001).

Historically, macho behavior was expected to be exhibited in the Black Club. The Black Club was created during the years of segregation after white Bermudians created exclusive clubs for themselves. It was a place where men and women congregated to socialize and participate in sports. Additionally, it was a social environment that provided a playground for men to practice and perfect their masculinity publically. Manning described club culture as a place where no stigma was placed on extramarital relationships. Men were "expected and often joked about both in the conversation of the audience and in the songs they relish" (Manning, 1973 p. 158).

Modern day Black Clubs are now called social clubs in Bermuda. Extramarital relationships that use to occur solely in the confines of the club occur more publicly, in a community that desires to be extremely conservative. DeSilva, a local Bermudian woman shared how her emotionally abusive husband had several extramarital affairs during their marriage (2010). When she was a few months pregnant with her third child, she was informed that her husband's girlfriend was also pregnant. This is not an uncommon occurrence in Bermuda. Men who have multiple families are celebrated in their ability to care for their children but also in their accomplishments as a "gallis", a male who illustrates sexual prowess and is able to conquer many women.

Reputation in Bermuda establishes social status on the island. Having a negative reputation can destroy a person's social experience because of the close knit island community. For example a male is often rewarded positively for being considered a gallis. On the other hand, women are not allowed to be sexually promiscuous. If a woman conducts herself in a

manner that is deemed socially unacceptable, it can reflect badly on her reputation and stain her family name (Paul, 1983 p.85). Double standards exist in Bermudian society when it comes to men and women. These double standards are deeply embedded in most elements of Bermudian culture and can strongly influence the perception of IPV.

Women's perception of IPV

In Caribbean societies, gender is structured around a power hierarchy, where women are subordinate to men (Clarke & Pargass, 2003). Torres reaffirms this notion indicating that abuse occurs because “cultural values, rules and practices” place men on a higher level than women (1991 as cited in Kasturirangan, Kirshan & Riger, 2004). Gender inequality is an element that is related to IPV, but a history of abuse also contributes to the prevalence of IPV.

As a young child, DeSilva witnessed her mother being physically abused by her stepfather on several occasions (2010). She later became involved in two abusive relationships herself. Research has shown that witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse increases the likelihood of future involvement in an IPV relationship (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Exploring women's family history illustrated that 11.5% of women had observed their father strike their mother as a child, and 15% were physically injured by family members (Gage, 2005).

Beliefs about domestic violence in Haiti are similar to Bermuda, where violence is becoming a norm. According to Rutland, “there's an attitude that domestic violence is acceptable” in the Bermudian community (Dinneen & Kelly, 2009).

Societal Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence

Past research has revealed that there are different tolerance levels for domestic violence based on cultural perceptions (Ellsberg et. al 2000, Vandello & Cohen 2003). Gage's study illustrated how violent behavior towards wives under certain circumstances is more acceptable based on the culture in which the IPV occurs (2005).

Griffith, Negy & Chadee (2006) investigated the perspectives of Trinidadians and Americans on Domestic violence and whether or not these individuals would be willing to mediate a domestic violence situation. Their research illustrated cultural differences; U.S. citizens were "less tolerant of domestic violence when compared to Trinidadians" (Griffith et. al, 2006 p. 772).

Nationality also played a significant factor on their willingness to intervene. The U.S. citizens and Trinidadians were both willing to intervene when the domestic violence was occurring with a family member. When assisting a neighbor or friend the U.S. citizens were more likely to intervene. The participants were asked why they wouldn't intervene, significantly more Trinidadians responded with its "none of my business" (p. 771) compared to the U.S. citizens. This response is reminiscent of familialism, a cultural value that helps to maintain the island etiquette (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

Cultural etiquette can be defined as the manners of a society or the codes by which community members are expected to conduct themselves. Bermuda prides itself in being a sophisticated and proper island; therefore these social manners have become cultural expectations.

Bermudian cultural etiquette. Cultural etiquette in Bermuda is evident in the cultural predisposition to refrain from intervening in an IPV situation (Griffith et. al 2006). The phrase “it’s none of our business” particularly applies. Geographically Bermuda is very small and as a result many people live in close proximity to their neighbors. A unique set of patterns and habits have been developed and executed by members of Bermudian society in order to maintain harmony on the island (Burchall, 1991).

Irrespective of the social problems that exist on the island, Bermudians live in a very tight knit community therefore “they do certain things in certain ways” because any Bermudian problem that arises “has the potential to physically reach our doorstep regardless of where we live within an hour” (Burchall, 1991 p.78). Every issue in Bermuda is juxtaposed against this experience of proximity. Bermudians have to act accordingly with a set of rules and a code of behavior that allows for the appearance of a civilized society on the surface. Islanders must uphold the social etiquette of “mutual confidences” because there are bound to be numerous social interactions in a variety of settings (Burchall, 1991 p. 78).

Cloud (1998) describes this civilized society as a “utopia” that is governed by cultural rules that maintain separation between the public and private spheres. The division between public and private spheres is very narrow because of the size of the island and the interwoven social networks. The Bermudian utopia preserves the tourist industry and the international business industry; thus creating a sense of security for the tourists and businesses. A politically motivated desire for a utopian Bermuda has trickled into the private sphere to ensure that the image of the family is not destroyed. Strongly tied to the public/private sphere ideology is familialism; beliefs that are deeply embedded in Bermudian culture.

Familialism. When referring to familialism in terms of the public and private sphere, the concept of “stranger danger” prevails. Ideally, in a Utopian atmosphere, the family is a safe haven, a place where people go to receive help; not one of the most violent social institutions in society (Gelles, 1997). The myth that the family is a safe haven creates a false sense of security as a result people don’t believe domestic violence is a reality because it is not supposed to happen in families (Gelles, 1997).

At its essence, familialism is described by Heller as “a set of rights and obligations pertaining to members of a given kin network” (1976 p. 423). When focusing on familialism in a Bermudian context, emphasis will be placed on the premise of “exclusiveness” (Heller, 1976). Exclusiveness is centered on familial relationships: a division between the social environment that projects the belief of we (kin members) and they (non kin members) (Heller, 1976). Bermudians are very protective of their family members; the belief that anything that occurs in the family should stay in the family is prevalent (Brice-Baker, 1994). To prevent private family matters from escaping into the community as gossip, people go to great lengths to avoid the embarrassment and shame (Paul, 1983).

Familialism is a cultural value that encourages social isolation in an IPV relationship. As a result of women trying to keep their business within the confines of the family, women are restricted inside the socially isolated environment an abusive partner often creates.

Social Isolation

As a method of domination, the abuser often socially isolates the woman so that she is forced to be dependent on him. He ensures that she has no contact with friends and family. Social isolation was identified as a theme in past Caribbean research. One woman shared her

experience, “He wanted me to have no part of my mother. At one time he told her, just recently, just 3 years ago, he told her, “I think you should stop coming to see [name omitted]” (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006 p. 746).

Domestic violence is often categorized as a “cultural, private, individual matter”, not a matter where government should be involved (Clarke & Pargass, 2003). A Bermudian “private matter” means that no one else except for the family should intervene. Research has shown that the willingness of women to seek help is related not only to how she thinks people will perceive her but also based on how she thinks people will respond to her respect for assistance (Coussineau & Rondeau, 2004).

Social Support

There are two types of social support: informal and formal. Formal support includes agencies such as the Women’s Resource Centre (WRC) as well as the Centre Against Abuse (CAA) in Bermuda, the Police, and the Government agencies. In contrast, informal support is any support that is provided by family, friends or co-workers. Social support has been shown to have a beneficial influence on women coping with domestic abuse (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006).

Formal support. In Bermuda there are two 24hour emergency hotlines that operate 365 days a year. Each of the local agencies operates their own hotline. The CAA hotline reports that it receives 350 calls every month (Dinneen & Kelly, 2009).

The Afro-Trinidadian women indicated that 70% of them sought formal support by going to psychologists, physicians, as well as calling local hotlines; these resources provided women with the opportunity to have someone to speak with and confide in (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006).

Counseling is beneficial to a woman attempting to escape an IPV relationship. However once she does leave, she will need a place to stay.

The high demand for emergency housing forces the agency to maintain a strict two week deadline. The women are assisted as much as possible but after their two week stay they will have to find an alternative residency as second stage housing is not available on the island. With the housing shortage and high rents on the island, this can create a very challenging situation for single women and women who have children.

As a result of the island being very small, women have to take extra measures to protect themselves. It is not hard for an abusive partner to locate women who have left an abusive relationship, especially if members of the community are unaware of the situation. This increases the likelihood of someone informing the abusive partner about their ex-girlfriends new location. To acquire protection, women often have to attain further assistance from the WRC as well as the police.

Every month approximately 30 new clients go to the WRC for assistance (Dinneen & Kelly, 2009). A few of the services provided by the WRC include counseling services and assistance with legal procedures. The police often have to be involved with legal procedures but they are infrequently called when it comes to an IPV incident.

Only 24% of Jamaican women called the police when it came to domestic assaults (Arscott-Mills, 2001). One participant explained that they did not think the police would assist them, 10% of the sample “feared for their safety if they reported the incident” and 8% “did not want to get the offender into trouble” (Arscott-Mills, 2001 p. 1292).

In another study, Afro-Trinidadian women who were hesitant to seek help from the police indicated that they didn't contact the police because the size of Trinidad and Tobago created a tight social network. Therefore the probability of the police being friends with the abusers is an increased risk. On the other hand, there were some women who attempted to prevent the abuser from being arrested after they contacted the police for assistance (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006).

Similarly Rutland presented Bermudian statistics that reflect a similar outcome after calling the police. Out of the 600 women abused or harassed every month, the police are only called 150 times and 80 percent of the time the women don't press charges against the abuser

Formal support is not always an option for women experiencing IPV. In some countries there are limited formal support resources available or women are unable to access the services. Additionally, women may not be aware of services that do exist. As a result, informal supports assume significance, as they can be a more viable option for women.

Informal support. Recently, a Bermudian woman wrote an autobiography about her life in Bermuda. She described her personal experience with domestic violence in Bermuda. She was involved in two abusive relationships. The first relationship was physically abusive, and the second was emotionally abusive (DeSilva, 2010). Throughout the relationships she acquired an immense amount of informal social support from family members and members of the church. DeSilva indicated that during those relationships she relied mostly on social support from her mother who directed her to the church; religion became a major facet in her life (2010).

Religion & spirituality. Religion is an important social institution in Bermuda. It is very strict and upholds the traditional family. Past research has shown that it is also a prominent feature in the lives of African American, Afro-Trinidadian and Jamaican women. When asked

who they preferred to go to for social support Jamaican women indicated that their first choice was a religious counsel (Arscott-Mills, 2001).

Some women seek solace from the abuse by using religion as an avenue of support. Religion can be seen as a reason to stay in an abusive relationship or as inspiration to leave a relationship (Hadeed & El Bassel, 2006 and Ellsberg et. al. 2000). Devout Nicaraguan women are expected to maintain the family no matter what the circumstances and to use prayer as a method to prevent further abuse (Ellsberg et. al., 2000).

Afro-Trinidadian women received advice from priests that reinforced the notion of traditional gender roles. The women found this advice assisted them in their time of need. Similarly, DeSilva believed that it was her responsibility to keep her family together regardless of the maltreatment she was receiving (2010). Reactions from friends and family can influence a woman's stay or leave decision. DeSilva was well aware that members of the community knew about the abuse she was receiving but it was her strong religious beliefs about the sanctity of marriage that encouraged her to stay with her husband (2010).

Reactions from friends and family. Social networks are intricately woven in Bermuda, consisting of friendship ties as well as kinship ties. Drawing reference from the social experiment, "small world problem;" Milgram indicates that two people may not directly know each other but might share two or more acquaintances thus linking the two people together (1969). The premise of six degrees of separation compliments the nature in which Bermudian social networks function however there is approximately one degree of separation between people in Bermuda.

This creates several challenges for women who are attempting to obtain social support. The likelihood of her reaching out for assistance and this information getting back to her abuser is likely. In Bermuda you never know who knows who or who's related to whom. The value of social networks for women in abusive relationships is an important element to take into consideration particularly because the tight fabric of social connections in Bermuda.

Three women in Hadeed & El-Bassel's study forfeited their mothers' guidance. There was one case where a woman's mother advised her daughter to remain silent and the violence would pass (2006). The participant, identified as woman 13, put herself in more danger by revealing this information to her mother. Woman 13 indicated that "[her mother] would talk to somebody on the road, one of her friends on the street and through the grapevine (Hadeed & El Bassel, 2006). Everybody knows everybody. It's a small country; small city and it will end up getting back to him" (Hadeed, & El Bassel, 2006, p.746). Her experience illustrates how trust is extremely important when it comes to informing family members about an abusive relationship.

An additional reason for withholding all the details about the abuse was influenced by a fear of being criticized for remaining with their abusive partner. Participants received emotional support from friends and family rather than advice or tangible support. The more times a woman separated from her abusive partner the less amount of emotional support they were likely to receive from family and friends (Goodkind, Gillum, Bybee & Sullivan, 2003).

In general family and friends were more likely to provide the women with a place to stay, or encourage them to access formal support services such as the judicial system via the police or lawyers as well as recommend a counselor or a therapist. Levendosky, Bogat, Theran,

Trotter, von Eye, & Davidon (2004) found that women who disclosed more often benefited from obtaining more practical and emotional support.

Whilst disclosing information about abuse, women were faced with many challenges: shame and embarrassment as well as receiving advice that was not positive. Lata & Goodman found that Haitian women experienced a double edged sword when it came to receiving support from family and friends. Haitian women went to family and friends for advice and this was a substitute for “traditional counselling services” but the advice they received from them was “complicated, at times implicitly supportive of violence” (2005, p. 1448). Ultimately the women indicated that they desired confirmation of their emotions from others without having to commit to doing anything (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006).

If women had a significant number of minor children they received fewer negative reactions from family and friends when disclosing about the domestic abuse. Under circumstances where family and friends were directly threatened by the abuser, their reaction to the woman was more negative. Negative reactions from family and friends were correlated with a lower quality of life for women.

The reactions of family and friends are important in solidifying or dismantling a woman’s stay or leave decision. Therefore it is essential to understand how the socio cultural variables impact a woman’s experience with IPV.

Summary

The research studies reviewed in this chapter indicated that culture intertwines with almost every facet of a woman’s experience with IPV. Culture significantly influences a person’s perception of IPV; whether that is the woman in an abusive relationship or the person she asks

for help. This was a dominant theme throughout the research and illustrates the need to achieve a greater understanding of the country's culture where IPV is being studied (Cousineau & Rondeau, 2004).

Additionally, researchers found that social support is a significant factor for women who are in abusive relationships and serves several purposes. The majority of women from the studies preferred the support of family and friends based on the collectivist nature of the cultures; in addition to religious and spiritual support. Social support was shown to be beneficial for women during and after the experience of IPV if the reactions of people they sought assistance from were perceived as positive.

Qualitative research that focuses on the experience of IPV through the socio cultural lens is necessary to determine the extent of its influence on the perpetuation of IPV in addition to discovering how it impacts the social support resources that women choose. The present study will contribute to the existing literature by studying IPV through the socio cultural lens based on the experience of a Bermudian woman who has survived IPV.

Providing additional academic research on Bermuda, the data from the study can be utilized as a basis for understanding IPV from a firsthand perspective, a vessel to educate people on the social problem that is the "silent shame" of the island and lastly a tool for future policy making on domestic violence.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The majority of the Caribbean studies explored in the literature review were quantitative; exposing a qualitative gap in the Caribbean literature on intimate partner violence (IPV). Recognition of the gap in the literature provided an educational foundation for the development of the theoretical framework and methods for the present study.

Cousineau & Rondeau emphasize the importance of studying IPV within the culture that it occurs (2004). Beliefs, values and behaviours are all elements that define culture (Mustapha, 2007). These elements are ways that people perceive and experience the world (Katisurirangan, Krishanan & Riger, 2004).

Constructivism and the Meaning of Violence in Bermuda

Constructivists believe that in order to understand the world of meaning one must interpret it (Schwandt, 1994). This belief stems from *verstehen*- understanding the outlook of the world from the perspective of the person involved in the event (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Schwandt argues that *verstehen* is the way that people construe the world (1994). Exploring the meaning of violence in Bermuda will present a rationale as to how people react to and understand violence and why they construct the meanings they hold.

The implications of the meaning of violence. Constructivism is established on the premise that humans produce actions that are purposeful, dynamic, deliberate, independent and objective (Guba, 1990). Social agents actively develop, analyze, and elucidate their

own behavior as well as the behavior of other social agents (Guba, 1990). Incidentally one person's violent act can result in the entire family being scrutinized and blamed for the issues.

Violence in Bermuda is like the plague. No one wants to be affiliated with the stigmas that are attached to it. It creates the division of people into "us" versus "them," the presumption that violence is normal in their house hold (Harriot, 2007 as cited in Taylor, 2007). When an event happens in life, there are multiple view points; for every person involved, meanings are constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reality is only truly understood from the view of the people who are involved in the situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The emic view is the insider's perspective; the objective of the researcher is to comprehend the insider's perspective of the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Capturing the emic view prevents the creation of researcher assumptions about the situation. Additionally the insider's perspective provides greater comprehension of the social phenomena by illustrating "the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 p. 110).

One of the main research questions for the present study focuses on how culture influences the experience of IPV in Bermuda. The purpose of constructivism is to understand the social phenomena from the perspective of those who live it (Guba, 1990). The roots of familialism are so deeply embedded in the Bermudian culture that a phenomenological, qualitative macro lens will provide a focused investigation of the experience of IPV in Bermuda.

Chapter 4: Methods

Qualitative researchers examine how people interpret the world and how people experience events in their lives (Willig, 2001). The purpose of qualitative research is to understand what it is like to experience events, what it means to go through them as well as how people negotiate these experiences (Willig, 2001). Social agents develop perspectives from their experiences and this makes their existence meaningful (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Phenomenology & Case Study Research

A comprehensive search resulted in limited information about IPV in Bermuda. The cultural values of familialism make it challenging to encourage people to volunteer information about their experiences with IPV. Therefore, it seems appropriate to initiate an understanding of the phenomenon using an in-depth account of one Bermudian woman's experience as a starting point and to consider how culture and gender as well as the intersection between the two are embodied in that experience. That is the purpose of this case study research.

Phenomenology is the exploration of social phenomena from an emic perspective; the insider's view of the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Emphasis is placed on the meanings social agents attribute to the phenomena (Stake, 1994). Similarly, case study research enables the researcher to collect rich data from the emic view. Yin indicates that a case study is designed for the comprehensive exploration of a social phenomenon, a real-life event (1984 as cited in Touliatos & Compton, 1988).

The phrase "being-in- the- world", originated from the phenomenological perspective (Schwandt, 1994), illustrates that social agents can only be comprehended within the context of the world they live (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Currently, there are no published studies investigating IPV in Bermuda. In such circumstances, it is appropriate to conduct revelatory studies, a form of case study research implemented when an investigator has access to an understudied social phenomenon (Yin, 2009).

Besides being revelatory, this case study research is intrinsic. The premise behind intrinsic case studies is to learn about an organization, group, event or a person (Hancock, & Algozzine, 2006). The intrinsic case study emphasizes how the case is significant within the world; a point strongly supported by the phenomenology research method (Stake, 1994). In order to ensure that the totality of the social phenomena was presented the researcher executed phenomenological reduction.

Phenomenological reduction. The presentation of the *entire* phenomena entails phenomenological reduction, an approach utilized in this study. Phenomenological reduction involves the description of thoughts and emotions that occur in the researcher's consciousness while researching the phenomena (Willig, 1998). Detailed descriptions of the environment are also included in the account generated through and by the research.

It was essential to ensure that the researcher was aware of herself as a Bermudian female researcher. The researcher wrote a reflexivity journal before and after the interviews to ensure that the totality of the experience presented was solely that of the participant. During the interviews, field notes were written; to provide the opportunity for immediate reactions to be recorded.

The production of meaning. Case study research provides a thorough examination of a real-life event. The role of the researcher as an interpreter means that the researcher contributes to the discovery of meanings as well as their validation (Stake, 1995). It is the responsibility of

the researcher to illuminate the connections that exist in the data so that the reader can develop their own generalizations from the data (Stake, 1995). The qualitative researcher incorporates relativity because decisions about knowledge are personal; therefore, researchers distinctively contribute to the case study (Stake, 1995). Additionally, readers may infer generalizations and create meanings within the context of their worlds whilst reading the case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 & Stake, 1995).

Naturalistic generalization. The focus of case study research is not generalization. Research obtained from the revelatory case study can be used didactically as an educational tool. The thick description provided in a case study assists readers in vicariously experiencing the event the participant experienced (Stake, 1994).

Naturalistic generalization is an analogous experience for the reader (Stake & Trumbull, 1982 as cited in Stake, 1994). Stake indicates how the readers are able to attach themselves to meanings within the case study and revive memories from their past experiences (1994). The reader comprehends the experience of the case study as though it were their own experience (Stake, 1994). A meaning becomes more powerful and long lasting for a person when they go through a repeated experience; through repetition, the meanings transform and become strengthened (Stake, 1994).

Procedure

Conducting case study research requires flexibility in the design. Understanding elements about the case within the case's world is crucial (Stake, 1994). Therefore, the design of "naturalistic inquiry cannot be given in advance; it must emerge, develop, unfold..." (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985 p. 225). Reasonable modifications were made as necessary. Any modifications were recorded as well as the implications these changes may have had on the results.

Reflexivity

In a case study, the researcher is the principal analyst as well as a data collector (Stake, 1995). Reflexivity is crucial because researchers are co-creators of the knowledge presented; it is the recognition that the researcher is a part of the world they study (Frank, 1997 as cited in Ahern, 1999). This premise is significant for the present study because the researcher is a native Bermudian female. Stake indicates that the interpretation of phenomena is influenced by the researcher's frame of mind, experience as well as the purpose of the researcher (1995).

Reflexivity creates equilibrium that allows the voice of the participant to be heard (Russell & Kelly, 2002). In addition, a reflexivity journal can be beneficial to maintaining awareness about the values and interests of the researcher as well as identifying how these values may influence the presentation of the research (Ahern, 1999).

The researcher partook in reflexivity by writing a journal. The journal will provide the reader with the opportunity to understand the experience of the researcher whilst conducting the case study research (Charmaz, 2006).

Site

The research was conducted between August and November 2011. The site for the study was the island of Bermuda. The island is twenty-one square miles long and two miles wide. The island is divided into nine parishes. The island is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with a population of approximately 65,000 (Census, 2000).

Sample

The participant for the case study was a Black Bermudian woman, above the age of eighteen, who resides in Bermuda. The woman experienced intimate partner violence by someone she considered a partner and the father of her children. The woman's relationship with this man ended more than one year prior to the beginning of the study.

Access and Sample Selection

Formal permission from the Centre Against Abuse was requested via an official letter. Prior communication transpired between the agency and researcher about the proposed study. Members of the agency staff agreed to assist in the process of recruiting potential participants. As gatekeepers, they informed suitable candidates about the case study research.

The participant for the case study was selected through purposive sampling; participants were recommended by a local agency in Bermuda that assists women and families who have experienced domestic abuse. The aim of the study was to select one woman to be the case study. Data saturation was determined based on how the data responded to the research questions through continual analysis of the data.

After the potential participant was chosen by the agency staff; the participant made contact with the researcher via telephone and email. During that time, the woman was informed in detail about the purpose of the study and interviews.

Interviews

Phenomenology and case study research methods often employ in-depth interviews to collect data. The researcher conducted two interviews; because the participant provided thick-

description during these interviews it was not necessary to conduct a third interview. The interview guides for this study were designed to stimulate the re-construction of a woman's experiences with IPV (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A semi structured interview encouraged the development of a holistic, distinctive, emic perspective to emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

During the in-depth interviews, the researcher presented open ended questions that allowed the participant to express her opinions and facts about the topic (Richards & Morse, 2007). The researcher posed questions with no bias in a pleasant, non-threatening tone (Yin, 2009). The researcher guided the interview without interrupting the participant's thought process (Richards & Morse, 2007). The researcher was an active listener who learned from the interviewee so that probes could be utilized if necessary (Richards & Morse, 2007).

An in-depth interview on the topic of IPV required a considerable amount of trust to be established between the researcher and the participant. Therefore, the researcher ensured that trust existed between the two. The participant had already established a trusting relationship with the CAA therefore the connection between the gatekeeper and the researcher established a foundation of trust for the participant. In addition, the environment where the interview took place was one where the participant felt comfortable and secure.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a significant element that develops between the researcher and the participant. Developing trust between the two was beneficial because the participant felt more comfortable and expressed herself more. The local agency served as the gatekeeper, initiating trust between the researcher and the participant. In addition, the participant and the researcher had gender in common as well as the experience of the Bermudian cultural world.

Sometimes when researchers enter the environment of the participant; the participant may act in ways that are not an accurate reflection of themselves by responding to questions with answers they think are correct, because of the desire to please the researcher (Erlandson et. al, 1993). There were various benefits to being a native Bermudian researcher. Although it was not possible to predict the participant's reaction and responses, sharing the Bermudian culture was perceived as a familiar element the participant has in common with the researcher; possibly increasing the comfort level of the interviewee. It also enabled the researcher to be more alert about potential distortions that may have arose during the research process.

The role of the native Bermudian researcher provided a mutual cultural knowledge between the researcher and the participant. This is different from that of a researcher who "goes native", becoming so entrenched in the research participants' culture they no longer maintain the role of the researcher (Erlandson et. al, 1993).

Interview procedure

Once permission was received from the participant, arrangements commenced to setup the first interview. The first interview was arranged at the convenience of the participant; further information and times for the upcoming interviews were arranged at the conclusion of the first interview. At the beginning of the study, the participant was presented with consent forms (Appendix B) and informed of her rights. The interview commenced after the participant granted her permission by signing the form. The participant was also given one of the signed forms.

The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews was to provide the woman with opportunities to discuss her lived IPV experience in Bermuda. There were two semi-structured

interviews, guided by open ended questions to reflect a conversationalist style. For each interview, an interview guide (Appendix C) was utilized.

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that the data was fully captured. Additionally hand written notes observing the participant's body language and pertinent information were recorded. The duration of the interviews stemmed from the method in which the participant told her story. The first interview was forty minutes and the second interview was twenty minutes.

Data Analysis

The audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher; the transcripts were 27 pages in length. The interview transcripts underwent an analysis process of iterative reading and re-reading to pull up all the themes (Charmaz, 2006).

MaxQDA software version 10 was used to analyze the data using the open coding, or a line-by-line technique useful when analyzing detailed data. Furthermore, this method of coding allowed the researcher to recognize significant statements, or identify issues that may arise; enabling the researcher to refocus for upcoming interviews (Charmaz, 2006).

After open coding was completed, the researcher performed axial coding. The purpose of axial coding is to piece data together after it has been separated by open coding (Charmaz, 2006). It is the development of connections between main categories to subcategories (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding enables the researcher to ask how the categories and subcategories are related, creating lucidity between the developing analyses (Charmaz, 2006).

An ethnographical approach from grounded theory known as memo writing was utilized to keep track of the researcher's thoughts (Charmaz, 2006). Memos were

recorded during each analysis session. They were focused on the progress of data analysis and themes that arose (Charmaz, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

This research study was reviewed by the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board; this process ensured that the study was of minimal risk to the participant. Participation in this case study was voluntary, the participant could withdraw at any time; informed consent was obtained from the participant.

Participation in this study did not impact access to services; emotional support was available for the participant. Throughout the interview the researcher observed the participants body language and social cues to determine her emotional status. During certain points in the interview the researcher had the opportunity to ask the participant how she was feeling. Additionally facilitators from the CAA were available in the event that any emotional support was needed. After each interview, a debriefing took place. The participant was provided with pamphlets and verbal information about formal support services on the island.

All identifying factors were removed from the transcripts to ensure confidentiality. Names of people and locations were replaced with pseudonyms. All electronic files were password protected; additionally paper files were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Immediately after the completion of the study audio recordings from the interviews were destroyed and any computer disks holding data were erased. Lastly, participants were provided with contact information for the researcher, thesis supervisor and, the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board; in the event that they had any questions or comments about the research.

Considerations

The Bermudian sample was chosen due to nonexistent academic literature on intimate partner violence in Bermuda. Familialism is deeply intertwined into Bermudian cultural etiquette. So it is challenging to obtain information about domestic violence.

Privacy is extremely valuable in an island community; therefore, in order to obtain participants, the researcher sought assistance from a local gatekeeper which was essential. Purposive sampling ensured that the participant was a suitable candidate for the case study; it also helped to foster the development of trust with the researcher. Trust was crucial because it acts as a buffer against familialism, allowing the participant to feel comfortable in expressing themselves.

Conclusion

Intimate Partner Violence is a serious social issue that is happening on the island of Bermuda and people need to be educated about this social problem. IPV has remained a “silent shame” in Bermuda for an extended period of time and at the expense of numerous lives. This research can empower women who have survived IPV or who are currently going through an IPV relationship.

Additionally, the research can be beneficial in understanding the firsthand experience of IPV. The knowledge from the case study can be utilized to assist in the further enhancement of social services or the development of new services.

Disregarding the existence of IPV on the island is not beneficial to anyone because it only amplifies the silence. Attaining knowledge about the social phenomena is the first step

towards solving the problem. The real narrative about IPV will remove the rose color lenses and expose a hidden reality; hopefully prompting a positive change for the future.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents the lived experience of IPV from the first hand perspective of a Black Bermudian woman. Strong cultural beliefs maintain a high level of etiquette on the island. As a result, social issues such as IPV have often been hidden from the public realm. In order to render her lived experience a revelatory, intrinsic case study was chosen. These types of case studies are utilized in order to explore topics that researchers have not been able to access before.

The sole participant of this case study is “Shana”. She was given a pseudonym to protect her anonymity. Additionally any family members or friends mentioned in her narrative have also been given pseudonyms. This was particularly significant due to the small community where there are only two degrees of separation amongst social networks. At the time of the interview, she was in her early thirties and a single mother of three. Shana had exited an IPV relationship that she had with the father of her two youngest children approximately two years ago.

She was willing to share her story because of what she had experienced; with the hopes of helping other women. Therefore it was essential to capture Shana’s voice to understand the meanings she attributed to her lived experience. During the analysis of the data, the constructivist lens assisted the researcher in the reconstruction of Shana’s lived experience. As a result, powerful themes emerged from Shana’s narrative, exposing a world concealed by Bermudian society.

The Early Stages of the Relationship

Shana was a single mother of one working at the hotel. At the time, she and her daughter were homeless; fortunately they were living with a friend. Shana met Jason at a local grocery store. He approached Shana and told her that he had seen her around. They exchanged

information and started speaking to one another on the phone. They became friends and their friendship evolved into a romantic relationship.

Shana and Jason were together for three months when she got pregnant. During her fifth month of pregnancy, she and her daughter moved into Jason's house. Shana expressed that moving in with Jason "was a little different because, you know, I, as [sic] I said I already had a child, so that created a bit of confusion, but it wasn't a real issue." Four months after moving in with Jason, she gave birth to their son. About fourteen months later she delivered their daughter. Jason was a first time parent; on the other hand, Shana had some experience from raising her eldest daughter from a prior relationship.

According to Shana, "being young parents placed a lot of stress on the relationship." Shana remained remarkably optimistic. The first year of the relationship was depicted positively; Shana declared, "everything went really well." She said, "we were like de [sic] best of friends, got along really great." As time passed Shana noticed some characteristics about her partner that were different from when they first started dating.

Things Started To Change

As the relationship progressed Jason's behavior towards Shana began to change. She recognized that there were double standards in their relationship. Shana did not attend the local club scene on a regular basis. When she did go out or wanted to, this created issues in their relationship.

Jason's reaction to her wanting to go out was extremely negative. Jason would ask her, "Why would you wanna go [sic] out? You know you have a baby." He would try to use guilt to discourage her from leaving the house and the children. Jason's responses followed a pattern.

Shana professed “it seemed like every time I wanted to do something for myself; it was a problem; but of course, you know as men they can do what, as they please [sic] come and go and you know it’s okay.”

Shana admitted that she “didn’t really pay that any mind, because it wasn’t a big deal.” However, Shana’s perspective started to change. She became more cognizant about the size of the double standard that existed in their relationship.

As Shana’s desire to become more independent took precedence in her life, this resulted in a momentous change in the dynamics of the relationship. She wanted to enhance herself and further her education so she went back to school to do a law course. She said that Jason asked her, “Why do I wanna [sic] go back to school?” She reflected on her experience with Jason and responded by saying, “wait a minute, why is it okay for you to have dreams and goals but because I want to pursue mine, all of a sudden it’s a problem, you know. So, um that was something that rose. And I’m saying wait a minute why, like what is going on this guy is kinda [sic] controlling my life to a certain degree.”

The state of the relationship was spiraling downward Shana proclaimed:

Things started to gradually get worse with de [sic] children, um, [sic] my lack of finances and me wanting to better myself, you know that led to arguments. Me wanting to just, you know have a little peace or a little time to myself, that always became a problem because, I mean I was working at de [sic] time but when I’ll come home I’ll still have to do like house chores, de [sic] cooking, cleaning, everything for my children and he was doing nothing. You know what I mean? But I guess he felt because I’m living in his house, I’m indebted to him to a certain degree, you know.

In their relationship, Shana had an immense amount of responsibilities. The imbalance of duties eventually caused a strain in their relationship. Shana was no longer able to separate herself from the sphere of family and home. Jason ensured that she had a strong connection to those elements. On the other hand, Jason being the main financial provider enabled him to be away from the family home on a regular basis and escape all household duties. The relationship between Jason and Shana illustrated elements of an abusive relationship.

Intimate Partner Violence. During the first interview, Shana recalled various events that occurred throughout the relationship that were illustrative of different types of abuse. The types of abuse ranged from social isolation, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse and physical abuse. One of the earliest forms of abuse that she experienced was social isolation and control.

In this little box. In some circumstances, different forms of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are difficult to recognize. Elements of abuse slowly emerged in Shana and Jason's relationship. Jason's actions soon escalated into more predominant forms of control. One of the earliest incidences of abuse that surfaced in their relationship was social isolation.

Shana and Jason's relationship reflected traditional Bermudian gender roles. Shana was the nurturer in their relationship; she tended to the household duties and was responsible for rearing the children. Over the years, Bermudian gender roles have evolved to accommodate the increasing cost of living. On the island, a large number of women work to support their families. Shana also took on this role by working at a local hotel.

Shana was responsible for the household maintenance. Jason spent a considerable amount of effort to provide numerous chores for her to do around the house. As a result, Shana

felt that her life was being controlled by her partner and that she was socially isolated. She said that she felt as though she was “in this little box.”

To escape the confines of the house, Shana would go and visit her girl friends to relax. However, Jason began questioning her about her outings.

She indicated that:

Every time I would go, he'd be like oh well where are you going and why you [sic] going there? There is stuff that needs to be done in the house or these clothes need to be washed. Like there was always something to do [clapping hands] as to where [sic] you know within the house I just felt so guilty because there's always something to be done. Like if not [sic], he would create stuff to be done, like coming home, just dropping his clothes anywhere, just crazy stuff. So when I started keeping up on top of that. Saturdays was my day, to where [sic] I use to do my housework and what not and by lunchtime I'd take a drive with the children. I would go to the park, do stuff. I'm really into my children.

The inquiries that Jason made developed into actions. His goal was to defer Shana from being able to go out. Jason was able to manipulate certain situations because he knew Shana's routine with the children on the weekends. When Shana overcame some of the obstacles he strategized, Jason altered his methods.

Shana explained that:

Once the housework was done I would just take the car and go *wherever!* And just do stuff together. So, *that* became a problem because he started like, de first [sic] Saturday I

would go there and he would take the key. So I'll call him up and I'm saying de car is parked out in de yard [sic], you know my routine with the children. What's going on? Why are you taking the key? [He would say] Oh it's my car and I'm sure you can find something to do around the house, this and that.

Jason was domineering in the relationship and constantly reminded Shana of her position within it. Jason strategically carried out specific actions that he knew would upset Shana. It was pertinent to him that Shana remain at home with the children. When she was able to manage the increased household chores, he prohibited her from using the car by making sure she did not have access to the key.

During the relationship, different types of abuse began to emerge. Some of the abuse was more subtle than others. Shana was naive to what was going on in their relationship. On one occasion, Shana became aware of information about her partner through a conversation with one of his relatives. This information motivated her to query Jason's actions leading to an eventful night.

It began the night I questioned him. Shana was working at the hotel and making a limited income. She particularly felt as though it was crucial for her to "carry [her] weight to a certain degree" in the relationship. Therefore, she decided to increase her income by seeking a part time job. Shana went to one of Jason's relatives who owned a local restaurant inquiring about part time employment. His relative inquired, "Why you looking for part time employment? You know this man owns his house and you know what, like, why would you need to? We are under the impression that he is spoiling you." Shana was surprised and enraged by the

information she was given about her partner and the perception of the relationship that he provided for his family.

Discovering that her partner had lied about owning his home was extremely upsetting for Shana. Particularly because Jason gave her the impression that he was paying rent. As a result, she was financially contributing to the rent.

Shana exclaimed:

I sat back and I was like, how can this man be so selfish? He has me believing that his paying rent and taking this money from me to go towards so called rent. My little pay cheque, and I'm saying, I don't know. It really hurt me it really made me question like, does this man really love me? Or is it about the money? I just looked at him in a different way; you know what I mean? His *so* [sic] *selfish*! You mean to tell me, he can have me believing that he is paying rent and he is not. And taking my little bit of money, I was putting out money towards the so called rent, always making sure groceries were provided in the house, and almost everything. Formula, everything I was buying for the children. So I was really hurt by that.

Shana was distraught because she was stretching her finances to the maximum. Jason was aware of her financial position, but misled her to believe that rent was due for the house every month. Jason was enforcing financial abuse by ensuring that Shana was utilizing her finances on the house and the children; leaving her with limited funds. After speaking with Jason's relative, Shana questioned the integrity of her partner as well as their relationship.

The confrontation. After finding out Jason had misled her about paying rent for the house, Shana decided to ask him. For Shana, that night was the beginning of an insurmountable

plight with IPV. When Shana confronted Jason an argument ensued. In that moment, Shana realized “another side of him came out.” Jason said to her, “You don’t come from nothing anyway, so what’s the big deal?”

Jason disregarded Shana’s concerns and was unapologetic in his delivery. Instead of communicating with her about the issue he proceeded to chastise her about her upbringing. Shana indicated that she “Felt so betrayed, you know. So you know from there things started to get really ugly, because of course my trust was burnt. I’m saying, this man can burn me like that, you know; take the little that I have.”

Jason’s response to Shana was unsympathetic; it took her by surprise. The conversation that Shana had with his family member unraveled a web of deceit that Jason had created. After that incident, the tension in the relationship escalated. Shana found herself at home with the children more often than not. However, Shana became more aware and outspoken about certain issues she had about the relationship.

Feeling lonely in the relationship. Throughout the week, Jason’s daily routine would consist of him leaving home to visit his brothers and sisters. Therefore, Shana spent time at home with the children and doing household chores.

Shana expressed how she felt about the situation:

I didn’t really pay it any mind but I’m saying, here I am with this man and I have two chil-, three children in total, I have two children but I’m just here cooking and cleaning like some house maid slash slave. And his not really talking to me or even acknowledging me at the end of the day. So I started to become you know, [sic] hurt and lonely, that las--, you know that went on for months and months.

Analyzing her situation, Shana felt as though Jason's behavior was creating distance in the relationship, their family but especially her because she felt isolated from her friends and family. Her frustrations increased; Shana decided that she needed to confront Jason about his behavior.

She proclaimed:

I approached him and I said, look what is going on? Like you're not giving me any time, like what's de deal? [sic] I'm basically like a robot, you don't talk to me, you know, you don... The only time you do wanna kinda [sic] brush up on me is some hour in the morning when you're coming and bothering me for sex. So I started to just feel so alone. I asked myself, "how is it that I'm in a relationship but I feel so alone?" You know, this man is doing *whatever* he wants and here I am you know, thinking, here I am with these children, I'm a young mother. It's so much that I want to do, I can't do it. I feel like I have no family and I'm just basically alone. To a certain degree, he isolated me from my family because I was always stuck in the house; my free time was Saturdays that I wanted [sic] to go and enjoy myself. He started taking the key, withholding the car.

Jason's freedom to come and go as he pleased was a constant reminder of Shana's attachment to the home. Shana felt neglected because Jason was out a lot and placed no effort in nurturing their relationship; he spent no time with Shana. Shana suspected that Jason may have been involved with another woman because of the way he was acting.

Suspicious of infidelity. Rumors coupled with the extreme loneliness that Shana felt within the relationship, reinforced suspicions of infidelity. As a result of living in a small community Shana had heard rumors about Jason. She said, "You know how Bermuda is, ya

hearing things.” Jason’s behavior warranted suspicions and eventually Shana confronted him about the state of their relationship.

She said:

So it just got worse and worse. So when I questioned, I ended up questioning him, to say, come on now, obviously ya seeing [sic] somebody else, you know. Just let me know and we can make arrangements for me to go my own way. So when I approached him with that, you know, that became a problem, you know what I mean? Is, we [sic] started to argue all the time and then a lot of times with the cell phone issues, girls calling de cell phone [sic], I’ll answer. You know you go through the motions when you really love a man because you’re so hurt...

The relationship between Jason and Shana was one sided. Shana prepared herself to leave. However, her feelings for Jason were strong. So she endured the trials and tribulations that arose in the relationship. In the interview, she expressed how she felt during the time. She said, “you know you’re in denial and you cannot believe that this man who so called love you [sic] and who you love, and bore children for is doing this to you.”

The Cycle of Abuse

Regardless of the fact that Jason was mistreating Shana, her feelings often trumped various thoughts she had developed about leaving him. How Jason consistently changed his behavior and the pattern followed the cycle of abuse.

The first violent episode. The tension in the relationship continued to increase especially because of the outside women and infidelity. Shana said, “We were arguing twenty four-seven,

twenty-four seven and then it started to get physical.” Shana recalled that the first time they had a physical altercation resulted from an incident where she was talking to another woman on Jason’s phone.

Shana asked the other woman what her relationship status was with Jason. The woman told her that he was only assisting Shana. Jason told the woman that they were not romantically involved, and he was just helping her out because she had nowhere to live and was the mother of his two children.

Shana reflected on the experience:

You know you replay everything back in your mind and you know, you think of the late nights, you, ya like okay his not really [sic] bothering me, not really talking to me and clearly another woman would see, Oh well maybe what his saying [sic] is not true cause his here [sic] nights with me. So anyway, I was talking to her and um, she was nasty and that became a heated argument and um [sic], he walked in, on it or whatever. And I was like you know, who is this?! What is going on?! And so he snatched his phone from me so I guess he must have left his phone, I had had it and um, so he snatched de phone [sic] and he’s like Why did she call you? And I’m like, why did she call you? As if I was the outside person and from there, out of my anger I *punched* him in his face and from there it became an altercation. You know, he slammed me into the wall and we were, we were scrapping, you know what I mean. And um, you know from there he dragged me by my, took me by my ears [sic]. Cause his a big guy [sic]. Right, gripped me, you know dragged me out of the house. He told me I was worthless, I was nothing, told me stay away from him, all this stuff and um he just basically like get out [sic].

Reaching her breaking point Shana lashed out in anger towards Jason. He responded with physical blows and verbal abuse that overpowered her. Shana was devastated both emotionally and physically; the altercation provided her with the strength to leave Jason. Shana often thought about leaving Jason. There were certain elements that made her think about leaving Jason; however none stood out more than after the physical fight she had with him.

The Stay or Leave Decision

It was extremely difficult for Shana to make the decision to stay with Jason or to leave him; particularly because she had two children with him. After the fight with Jason, she expressed her thoughts.

She said:

So I was just laying there on the ground, crying, just trying to really digest it all cause you know, but it's just certain situations that happen for something to go off in your mind, in your mind, and it just clicks [snaps fingers], like wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, you know I'm raising up daughters, I, I really need to get myself together.

Shana and Jason separated for a few months, and Christmas was fast approaching. She missed her children. Jason tried to get her back by apologizing profusely for his actions. She said, "of course he was calling me, blowing up my phone with all the, I'm sorrys, [sic] I realize this and that [sic]." Jason made her decision quite difficult; she was torn between leaving, keeping the family together and "doing the right thing." Shana said:

You know that you were once with this man, loved, being in love with him and what not, we forgive, you know. I'm trying to do the right thing; I'm like okay, Lord Help me. I'm not really Christian but I'm religious, I serve God. I, you know, I don't attend a church but based on the stuff that I've been through in my life I know there is a God you know [sic]. So tryna [sic] do what I thought was de right [sic] thing, I moved back.

Shana missed her children and decided to return to her family during that time. She indicated that the first three months, the relationship was okay; however, "it just went right back into the nastiness, me being in the house all day, you know him withholding the car key." Shana indicated that the status of the relationship changed:

It just went right back, if not this time, worse. The disrespect and what not got worse, um which lead to more arguments again, you know what I mean. The altercations got physical; it started to get really bad again.

Jason desperately sought to get Shana back into a relationship with him; once she accepted, he maintained the honeymoon phase. However, the honeymoon phase was short lived because his behavior regressed back to abusive behavior. Being that they had three children in the home, it was pertinent to consider the effect of the relationship on them.

There was an increasing amount of abuse in the household. When asked about the children's exposure to the abuse, Shana indicated that she attempted to prevent them from viewing those events. She said that the children had witnessed arguments; however, the youngest children did not witness the physical abuse. On one occasion, her eldest daughter witnessed an incident that became physical.

She stated:

Me myself, just growing up and seeing different things, I always try to be civil you know, around my children but they have witnessed, you know the arguments, the name calling; which is even worse than, you know, them viewing [sic] the physical and what have you but not much.

Shana's family was a significant element in her life. She attempted to shield her children from the abuse that was taking place in the home.

Seeking answers about Jason's behavior Shana went to speak with Jason's mother. She felt as though they had a confidential conversation. However, Jason's mother went and spoke to Jason and revealed to him everything that Shana had told her. Speaking to Jason's mother resulted in detrimental consequences, the relationship between Jason and Shana went "downhill." The amount of physical abuse declined but the emotional abuse that Jason inflicted increased.

Revealing personal information about herself to her partner, Shana was unaware that it would later be used against her. During arguments, Jason would ensure that Shana would be the main topic. Shana said, "Um, me, not knowing my father [and] me having self-esteem issues" would always be a predominant theme in the arguments. Shana stated:

When you love a man and trust a man, you know, sometimes you bare your soul to them and you know because I loved and trusted him, I shared everything I, that I had been through in my life, you know what I mean [sic].

Shana experienced different events in her life that had an everlasting impact on her. As a result she did not disclose these personal events with everyone. When Jason betrayed her trust and used information about her past it took an emotional toll on Shana.

Shana reflected how she was feeling when Jason relished in discussing her past:

Going through different changes, being molested from when I was a four year old child, you know being raped, being through different forms of abuse and then the stuff that I had been through with men from young, which too [sic] had really damaged, you know [sic] my self esteem. And I shared this stuff with him, so during a lot of the arguments he would raise those issues to make me feel like it was something that I'm doing wrong. Like I would never be able to, um, understand [sic] what a man needs and wants or I would never be good enough. Just basically any and everything he could say to me to kinda [sic] hurt me, you know, to make me feel like you know I wasn't a good person to... Anything he could say to devalue me, to check myself.

The experiences that Shana endured are not uncommon for women who are involved in IPV relationships. Past research shows that witnessing or experiencing forms of abuse as a child increases the probability of becoming involved in an IPV relationship in the future (Gage, 2005). Shana acknowledges how these events during her childhood affected her self-esteem. Jason manipulated his knowledge to cause further emotional trauma.

Shana was not stagnant in the relationship. Her eldest daughter motivated her to read literature on abusive relationships and develop a better understanding of the dynamics of IPV relationships. In hindsight Shana admits that she is now aware that all the abuse she was enduring at the hands of Jason was a projection of his own insecurities.

Throughout the relationship, Shana was constantly faced with the challenge of making the decision to stay or leave the IPV relationship. She was battling the desire to ensure that her family was safe and provided for. Additionally, she wanted to prevent further abuse from occurring in the relationship. She indicated that there were significant reasons why she was hesitant to leave the relationship without a plan in place.

She declared:

Now I know that it was his issues, his guilt, his stuff that he was pouring onto me, but I didn't understand it back then because you know, ya young, ya in love, [sic] you know [sic]. I felt like I really had nowhere else to go. This man has a big supportive family, his financial; he has the financial means, so, like basically it just felt like I was in this *little box* you know [sic]. Like I couldn't escape and I'm like okay, maybe I'm doing the right thing, you know because my children and what have you and I endured it. The physical stuff, but the emotional abuse, it just got worse and worse. The emptiness coming home and just doing chores and him withholding de car [sic] and you know me not really being able to go out and live my life and do things with friends, it just its like my space became more and more limited.

Being confined to the house increasingly became an issue for Shana especially when it meant she had to cancel plans that she made with her friends. Consequently Shana began confiding in her close friends about what was happening in her relationship with Jason. This was the first time she reached out for social support during the relationship.

Social support was a significant factor throughout Shana's IPV experience. The following section illustrates the way that Shana navigated the social support options available on the island.

Social Support

Informal support was one of the main forms of support that Shana accessed during her relationship. Shana was able to access a variety of informal support options from her social network. Her social network consisted of friends, family, acquaintances and co-workers.

Friends and family. Research from the Caribbean has shown that family is a significant facet of informal support but in some circumstances women are reluctant to inform their relatives about their IPV relationships because of shame and embarrassment as well as fear of receiving negative advice (Latta & Goodman, 2005).

Similarly, Shana shied away from disclosing information about the abusive relationship to her family; she stated:

I wanna say at the time I was pretty much, um withdrawn [sic]. I didn't really want to share what I was going through, um with; you know [sic] my family and um [sic] I stayed pretty much to myself.

Shana's aunt and uncle raised her. At the age of thirteen, her aunt passed away, leaving her Uncle as her sole living parental figure. When it came to her relationship, Shana preferred to keep information about her relationship concealed from her Uncle. She felt as though her Uncle had "old school" beliefs about a woman's role in a relationship. She expressed that he "come[s] from a generation where women are pretty much; you know what I mean, [are] told what to do, and you know supposed to be in the house barefoot, pregnant, cooking, cleaning."

Her Uncle voiced concern about Shana when he inquired about how she was doing. Shana recalled that there were, "certain little things he would um say to me like, Oh you don't

look yourself, everything okay” She never told him about what was taking place in her relationship and reassured her uncle that she was okay. Although Shana preferred not to speak to her family about what was going on, she did seek counsel from her friends and a few women who were in the church.

Reactions from friends. The reactions from Shana’s friends were positive, and they provided her with emotional support in the form of counsel. Shana said that her close friends were immensely supportive and provided her with advice and encouraged her to leave her partner. Most of their advice incorporated religious encouragement. Stepping out on faith was a significant theme that resonated from the advice that her friends provided.

Shana’s friends told her, “look you just have to you know [sic], step out on a limb, step out on faith; get out do what you have to do, you’re a good person you deserve better.” According to Shana, “they were very positive; it was definitely a lot of support from my close friends.”

The support Shana received continued throughout the duration of her relationship. Shana recalled that her girlfriends would tell her, “you know what you have to do, its time, don’t wait until your dead, you are not going to be good to anyone else let alone your children if you don’t get yourself together.” Over the duration of the relationship, the advice her friends provided gradually became more purposeful. They were consistent in encouraging her to leave the abusive relationship.

Eventually Shana left the relationship. After an explosive verbal and physical altercation, Shana’s boyfriend kicked her out of the house. It was during this time that her friend Dylan provided her with tangible support and emotional support.

During the separation, she left her two youngest children with their father and sent her oldest daughter to live with her father. Shana went to stay with her friend Dylan for a short time frame. She explained how she felt during that time:

Emotions are all wide open and the first person that comes along; you know for anybody like be it male or female; you're gonna [sic] be drawn to em [sic]. Cause you need that comfort, you need that support and um with him, he was *such* a nice person, so comforting, and you know he was there for me. Because you know sometimes emotions get involved and when you look you're in a relationship with this person. And I, And I had to kinda *stop that* [sic] before you know it went too far type thing.

She felt that Dylan showed her “that there are people out here that will treat you so much *better*.”

Shana said:

I stayed with him for a short period and it was, it was a different experience, you know. This man was *kind, considerate*, just I don't know, I say to myself I'm dealing with that and I dunno [sic] it was just an eye opener to show me that there are people out here that will treat you so much better, you don't deserve this and I felt so obligated to stay in that relationship because of my children.

Shana admitted that Dylan was extremely disappointed when she left. However, she felt more comfortable staying with a female friend. The friends that Shana stayed with were very supportive and provided Shana with both emotional and tangible support. Shana stayed with her friends for a few months; when Christmas approached, Shana returned to her partner because being away from her children was unbearable.

Turn a blind eye. Shana explained that during the relationship “there were a lot of good days,” but at one point, she confronted her boyfriend’s mother about his behavior. She asked his mother, “What is going on? Like clearly your son has some underlying issues, you know, and woman to woman, I wanna [sic] confront you and just find out exactly what is going on? Or did anything happen to him?”

Unfortunately, she did not respond the way that Shana had anticipated. She defended her son when Shana inquired about his abusive behavior. In his defense, his mother explained how there was an issue regarding the identity of Jason’s father.

Jason’s mother had stepped outside of her marriage. As a result, there was a question pertaining to the paternity of Jason. She did not elaborate any further. However, she felt as though this may have caused Jason to have some issues.

Shana’s decision to reach out to Jason’s mother was detrimental. She said that it “back fired, because of course she, you know, discussed everything with her son; so from there it was just downhill.” The physical abuse decreased, but the emotional abuse increased tremendously after Jason knew that Shana had spoken to his mother.

In the second interview, Shana reflected on her conversation with Jason’s mother. Shana felt as though if anyone could provide her with answers about Jason’s behavior it would be his mother.

Shana stated:

I’m pretty sure he is very much like his father, so she understands what I was going through but she just turned a blind eye to it, to a certain degree. And that’s what a lot of women do, turn a blind eye and condone their son’s behavior.

Unfortunately, as the abuse increased Shana became more distant from her family and friends. She internalized the emotional abuse that Jason was inflicting on her. Emotionally exhausted from the stressful situation with diminished self-esteem, Shana sought religious counsel for solace.

Religion and spirituality. Religion was one of the most salient elements of social support that Shana received. Her faith in God was powerful and resonated throughout her experience. Whilst faced with the stay or leave decision Shana spoke to God.

She said:

I'm like okay, Lord Help me. I'm not really Christian, but I'm religious, I serve God. I, you know, I don't attend a church but based on the stuff that I've been through in my life I know there is a God you know [sic].

Her faith was further supported by select people that she spoke to about her IPV relationship. Shana's religious beliefs were a positive resource from which she drew strength. Her faith enabled her to navigate through decisions that she had to make during her relationship.

God will work it out. Shana asked some older women for advice regarding what she should do about her IPV relationship. She explained that the older women from the church were "pretty much like, oh God will work it out." When it came to whether or not she should stay in the relationship or leave, one of the older women "to a certain degree was almost like, stay and deal with it and it will work itself out." Furthermore, some older women in her family also told her to "think of the children" whilst encouraging her to remain in the abusive relationship.

Women from her family and women from the church provided religious encouragement as well as emphasis on family values. Shana felt, “really sort of deterred me when it came to seeking advice from people that are in the church or what have you [sic];” as a result of the type of advice that the older women were providing her with.

God doesn't want this for you. Family was a pillar of strength for Shana, and she continuously made reference to her children throughout the interviews. She often referenced them as a source of inspiration when her relationship with Jason was turbulent. Throughout the relationship, her eldest daughter, Chantal, from a previous relationship was cognizant of the impact the IPV relationship had on her mother.

Chantal provided her mother with supportive advice that stemmed from a religious foundation. Chantal exclaimed, “Mama, you know this is not you and you deserve better.” “You’re beautiful and you know, God doesn’t want this for you.” Shana indicated that it was her daughter’s words of encouragement that gave her the strength to “really check” herself.

Shana responded positively to her daughter’s comments by:

Praying a bit more, reading, reading a lot of self-help books, reading a lot of books on um abusive relationships and stuff like that, just all that I could to make sure that you know what, *it's not me*. Yes, I have my issues but this is not me, this is not my fault. I don't deserve for anybody to treat me this way because they have more money, or because they have family support, or you know. And I'm just like you know what, I really have to start valuing myself as a woman and as a mother because, you know I can be somewhat of a passive person and just take whatever people issue me, you know what I mean. But I said to myself I'm raising up daughters and a son, I cannot let my lif..., I couldn't picture my

daughters coming to me and saying I've endured this or I've had to go through this. I wanna go crazy on somebody [sic]. You Know.

Shana's daughter motivated her to change the way she was thinking about her situation. This was a critical revelation that pointed Shana into a positive direction.

Immersed deeply in the relationship there were a number of factors that had to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, she was receiving different types of advice that often contradicted making her deliberation more difficult. Shana's decision would impact her life, as well as the lives of her children; leaving her emotionally drained.

I've Got to do Something.

The weight of her relationship placed Shana under an immense amount of stress. The culmination of stress from her partner, job, and children weighed heavily on Shana. She admitted to having suicidal thoughts because she felt "so alone and so empty."

To maintain a level of normality in her life Shana continued to go to work. One day at work, all the emotions she was feeling came to a head and Shana broke down. She said, "I sat down and I just start bawling. I dunno it was like everything in me, I don't know I just started bawling my eyes out." One of her work colleagues consoled her and then took her to the manager. Shana professed "I just really felt like I was having some type of mental break down. I'm like oh my gosh I've got to do something, I feel like I'm gonna go crazy."

Shana's manager spoke to her and arranged for her to go to the Women's Resource Centre (WRC). Shana's manager was able to convince her to get formal support from an agency on the island. This was the start of Shana's exit from the abusive relationship.

There is help. Shana accessed formal support after being in an abusive relationship with Jason for an extended period of time. Shana was devising a plan to leave the abusive relationship and she indicated that it was important for her to have her affairs in order prior to leaving.

She stated:

I continued to just endure, endure but I had a plan. I was like you know what I don't have nothing, [sic] I have nowhere to go but, but I have to get some sort of plan in place because I have to get out of this because if not I'm gonna [sic] go crazy.

All the concerns that Shana had about leaving the relationship were addressed by the agencies that she accessed for social support. The agencies removed the barricades that she felt were prohibiting her from leaving Jason. Overall the assistance from the local agencies was fundamental in Shana's escape from the IPV relationship.

Bermudian agencies. There are two agencies on the island that assist women who are experiencing Intimate Partner Violence. One of the agencies is the Women's Resource Centre (WRC) which in Shana's case acted as a referral service. Shana's boss contacted them on behalf of Shana. The WRC staff spoke to her and assessed her case. They decided that they would collect her children and start the process of her leaving. From there they referred her to the Centre Against Abuse (CAA).

Everything happened so fast. Shana spoke to the WRC and explained her situation to them. She was uncertain about what type of services she needed, but she did know that she needed assistance. She expressed to her manager how she was feeling.

She said:

I was like look, I don't know if I need some sort of counseling or what have you but I'm really starting to feel like nothing. I just feel like you know, I don't have anybody and I just feel like I'm ready to give up you know. I love my children you know, [sic] and I just feel like I'm in a state of confusion; but, I, I think I need some type of help like I need somebody to talk to. Like what can I do? I want better for myself [sic].

Shana's manager reacted immediately and contacted one of the local agencies on the island. She made arrangements for Shana to receive the help that she needed. The WRC spoke to Shana and they collected her children and referred her to the CAA formerly known as the Physical Abuse Centre (PAC).

Centre Against Abuse.

The Centre Against Abuse (CAA), operates the island's only safe house for women and children who have experienced abuse. Shana arrived and went through the in-take process.

She explained how she felt:

I was ashamed, you know [sic]. I was so embarrassed. I'm like Oh gracious, I'm like well am I supposed to be here? Because I'm not really being physically abused or what have you. So I spoke to them, and um told them [sic] my situation and what have you, again it was two ladies. They were very polite and um, [sic] as I was talking to, they stopped me and was like, [sic] everything that your saying, even though it's not physical, *emotional is just as bad*, you know, and it's taken its toll on you. And they just were talking to me and

I just you know, kinda just broke down [sic] and I explained to them what I was going through.

Shana experienced a variety of emotions while she was going through the intake process. Although she was embarrassed and ashamed, Shana also expressed that she was afraid. She was afraid of actually leaving Jason and what would happen when she left; in addition to fearing his retaliation. She stated, “Ya afraid, you know [sic]. Like who do I go to for help, his just gonna come there [sic] and take the children, you know. My mind was going, I was, I was really afraid.” Fearing the unknown overwhelmed Shana especially because leaving Jason presented numerous uncertainties.

Living in a small community presented additional factors that concerned Shana because she was fearful of becoming homeless. Throughout the interviews, Shana emphasized the importance of stability; she wanted her children to have a home to reside in and a supportive family. Lastly, Shana was concerned about the possibility of Jason attempting to take the children away from her. The CAA addressed her concerns; they informed her that the location she would be safe and that Jason would not be able to come there.

The island’s only shelter is located in an undisclosed location in order to protect the women and children that seek refuge there. Extreme measures are taken in order to prevent the location of the shelter from being exposed in the community. Shana described the experience of being transported to the shelter.

So from there I didn’t really have any clothes or *anything*. Um, but from there [sic] we went. They picked up my older daughter and we went. We went to the Centre Against Abuse. Um, I was still very timid but de ladies; de ladies [sic], the workers there, really

nice. Um, there were [sic] a few girls there who you know were welcoming. It, it, I can say it was, [sighs] I can't explain it, it was such a *relief*. It was such a, a burden, I, I just felt like a burden had been lifted and I'm saying you know [sic], there is *help*. I didn't know, I wou- I'm like I would have came [sic] to these people a long time ago. You know before I felt like I was actually gonna have [sic] some sort of mental break down or what have you. But um, you know they give you a warm bed and a roof...and food, you know what I mean? And my children were secure so that's all that mattered to me.

There are a number of people on the island that are unaware about the agencies that offer support for women who are experiencing IPV. Shana indicated that she would sought assistance from the CAA earlier in her relationship had she been aware of the services that they provide.

Soul searching. The maximum length stay at the shelter is two weeks; however, in special circumstances a woman's stay can be extended. Shana and her children stayed at the shelter for three months. During her time at the shelter she was able to do some soul searching. She was able to do activities with her children, catch the bus and ferry and do a lot of reading.

She stated:

They also had like [sic] counselors and women that come and talk to you about what they've been through. So it really, really made me feel at ease, I, I [sic] gained some lifelong friends thru staying there; and, and [sic] you know um, [sic] they teach you to value yourself, you know. Show you signs of abuse and, um [sic] I, I still felt this slight feeling like, I don't think I'm supposed to be here because I'm not being physically abused, like are they sure? But emotional is just as bad and can do a lot of damage, you

know. But like I said, I don't want to say that I enjoyed my time there, but it was what was needed and I really needed that in my life and they helped me tremendously.

With the assistance of the CAA counselors, Shana learned about abuse and that emotional abuse was equally as detrimental as physical abuse. Most importantly she was able to take time out for herself and her children without having to deal with the stress of an IPV relationship with Jason.

Transitions: I had had enough. While at the shelter, arrangements were made for Jason to have visitation. She explained that the arrangements were made through a third party which was Jason's mother. Jason was quite resistant to the idea of not having full custody of his children and threatened to take custody away from Shana. He threatened to get a lawyer in order to proceed to court. Shana said, "Thank God all of that was you know resolved because they couldn't prove that I was an unfit mother; or anything of that nature, you know [sic]."

Jason was in communication with Shana during her three month stay at the shelter. She explained "it's so hard to cut off all de contact. Especially when ya, ya know; [he] speak[s] to the children and what not. So you know we had conversation and what not."

During their conversations Shana stated:

I heard all the um sorrys all the boo hoos [sic]. And I, I just heard it but I didn't really, didn't really pay it any mind because I had reached that point in my life where I had had enough and I told him, you know. He needs to get some sorta help too [sic]. To basically sort his issues out and I was like you know that person that you knew, I am not she anymore. You know. And um, certain things I won't tolerate. Even with the way you speak to me, you know. So he, you know, changed up his attitude [sic] and what not from there.

After Leaving the Shelter

After leaving the shelter, Shana was able to find a place to live with assistance from a local agency. She also successfully completed the course that she wanted to study; all while maintaining two jobs. As a result, she was able to ascertain a job in that field. Overall, Shana was stronger than when she arrived at the shelter. The CAA provided Shana with the opportunity to become independent and restored her confidence.

I left you for a reason. The present state of the relationship with Jason is a civil relationship. The relationship never reverted back to a romantic relationship after she left the shelter.

She stated:

I'm still, you know staying on my own with the children and I don't know if he sought the help that he needed to see; but right now I mean we're not together. We haven't been in the past two years but um, we get along great, you know. We have a civilliz- you know, a civil relationship.

They maintained a civil relationship in order raise their two children. Additionally she maintained a relationship with Jason's family. She expressed that it was essential for her to keep the relationship on a civil level.

Shana described the barriers she has placed on the relationship. She made sure Jason understood that the relationship would never return to the romantic/abusive state that she escaped from.

She indicated:

I go to like his family dinners and stuff like that, but sex or intimacy? [sic] No. And that is definitely the key, because like sometimes when you. It, it creates a door way and an opening as to where they think they can slide right back in. No, no and that is something that my message to you, to say that enough was enough. I left you, you know. I left you for a reason. And you were willing to break me, you know. And by me having sex with him what not, [sic] would basically condone your behavior. I'm not saying yes to that type of behavior. I'm not saying what you done to me was okay [sic], because it wasn't. By me having sex with him, would initiate that and, and I dunno, men have a different way of thinking; but for the past two years I refused to have sex with him. Um, [sic] I want to say just, in recent months, you know we've been able to just sort of spend time together *around* the children, just doing general things. Like going to the park and doing different things like that. But um, [sic] I even, during the cup, like over cup match period I even, you know, had slept at his residence with the children, but, *nothing*, nothing you know. I stand firm on that, you know.

By maintaining a strong stance on keeping the relationship civil; Shana has successfully managed to keep the relationship positive for their children as well as for her.

Shana declared:

I said listen, I love you, I'll always love you and I respect you, you know he was my children's father, he is a great father but its only so far I would go, you know. So um, I'm very, we get along great...[sic] as friends or what have you. We raise

the children equally and um, you know I just wanna say that, like really stepping out on faith [sic], cause I had nothing, nowhere to go.

Shana possessed an immense amount of strength and will power to ensure that Jason understood the new terms of the redeveloped relationship. She constantly had to reinforce her principles and expectations of the relationship. Shana pays homage to “stepping out on faith” in enabling her to escape from the IPV relationship.

Stepping out on faith. Stepping out on faith was a predominant theme throughout the interviews. It represented the motivation that Shana derived from her faith. She indicated that she had three children, but she did not have a place to go or money. There were factors that she may have thought of as a deterrent however, Shana stepped out on faith.

She said:

It's the best thing, leaving was the *best* thing I could have done for myself, you know [sic]. Still got a long ways to go as far as different issues, self-esteem issues and what not but you know, um [sic] for myself and, and other women who have just come through far worse because I got the opportunity to meet women who were being *beaten* to a pulp, you know daily; who had almost lost their lives and I'm like you know, leaving was the best thing we could have done. It saved our lives, you know and the lives of our children. So, I think just, just stepping out, stepping out on faith is the best thing that you can do, do for yourself. You know, as a woman and, and as a mother, its learning how to love and value yourself; so that you know that um, [background noise] [sigh], it's, it's so much [sic] that we endure as women but you know, I don't know, for some...I know what it took for me but for some people it may take a little more. But I just feel like, don't get so

wrapped up in a man and loving a man that you forget about loving yourself and you *lose yourself* in the process. So I just, I don't know, for women that are in these relationships, I, I invite them to look outside of their, outside of their selves; especially if they have children, you know. Think of your children, if your raising up daughters or sons, you know. You don't want them to, to be raised up thinking that this type of behavior is okay and then too, a lot of times you will find that the children will devalue you and disrespect you and degrade you as well because it's a learned behavior...from the father, that's what they see. But, I just, I don't know; you have to really, really love yourself. Put yourself, put God first and love, and learn to respect and love yourself no matter what you've been through, you know [sic]. No matter how, because there have been times in my life where I have hit rock bottom but you can always pick yourself up and, and just move forward, you know [sic]. Move forward. And I know that I'm a liv-, living testimony of lifting yourself up and, and just stepping out on faith. When you have nothing and no one, you can do it, but it's a choice, you know. It's a choice and I'm glad I made that choice to leave.

Conclusion

Throughout her social support experience, Shana took elements of advice from every social support option that was available to her. Unfortunately, not all of her experiences were positive, and this resulted in detrimental side effects for Shana. Therefore she was more selective about who she revealed information about her relationship to.

Shana navigated through the positive and negative social support experiences. These experiences allowed her to develop her own ideas about her relationship with Jason.

Additionally she was able to formulate strategies on how to cope with the different types of advice and opinions that she received.

Overall she was able to thread information together from various sources that would benefit her as well as her family in the best way possible. It was an emotional journey but connecting with the CAA was one of the best social support options because they provided Shana with the tools and resources that she needed to escape from the abusive relationship. In addition to ensuring that she was able to be independent and support her family.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The exploration of IPV from the perspective of a black Bermudian woman emerged from an increasing amount of brutal cases of IPV on the island and a lack of research on IPV in Bermuda. A limited definition of domestic violence was available from the Bermudian legal system. It was intriguing to discover that the findings fit within the definition of Wife abuse that was adapted by Duffy & Momirov. Duffy & Momirov (1997) indicate that wife abuse as a “pattern of violence- physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, economic and social. These are intentionally inflicted on a female intimate partner in the course of ongoing dating, common law or marital relationship or after one or both partners have ended the relationship (p. 28). Shana was subjected to social isolation, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse and physical abuse.

The interpretation of Shana’s experience stemmed from what was happening and the revelations that evolved from those events. Shana went through a series of stages during her lived experience of IPV. At first Shana had to come to terms with the relationship she had with Jason and recognize that there was a problem. The second stage was how Shana determined what needed to be done to protect her children as well as herself. The last stage was when she decided to take action that would alter the course of her life and the lives of her children.

This discussion will highlight how Shana, a black Bermudian woman experienced IPV and the meanings she produced. Constructivism was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study because it was important to capture the meaning of the lived experience of IPV from a firsthand perspective. Constructivism is firmly rooted in *verstehen*; a method of comprehending the world from the person who is involved in the event (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through

listening to Shana's experience, it was possible to gain insight into her world. There are four intricately woven themes that resonate throughout Shana's narrative; culture, familialism, social support and spirituality.

Culture

Bermudian Culture is intertwined in the interactions that make up Shana's lived experience. The findings from this study illuminate how cultural values and social norms are active when it comes to the perception of IPV. One of the major socialization hubs of Bermudian culture is the social institution of family. The family unit in Bermudian culture has many functions; primarily it establishes the boundaries and expectations of Bermudian life.

In Shana's narrative, family was realized as a significant element in her life. Her experiences being raised by her aunt and uncle illustrate the tight kinship ties that exist in Bermuda. Research by Paul found that extended families are very predominant in Bermuda (1983).

Shana shared her family background and spoke about her biological father but indicated that she did not know a lot about him. The loss of her mother figure as a teenager and the absence of her father in her life were emotionally traumatizing. In understanding Shana's commitment to her family with Jason, it became clear that the motivation behind it stemmed from her experiences with her own upbringing.

Throughout her relationship with Jason, Shana faced pressure to keep the family together because she was a woman. Brice-Baker indicated that stereotypes about black women affiliate them with being the "glue" that holds the family together; therefore the success or failure of the family is her responsibility (1994). A woman must keep the family together within the confines

of her role as a nurturer; enabling the man to be the leader of the family. This premise is known as matrifocality a prevalent feature in Bermudian culture.

Matrifocality. Shana's experience in the relationship she had with Jason fit within the definition of a functional matrifocal structured family. Where the father is present, and he is the leader of the family (Smith, 1973 as cited in Barrow, 1996). The findings support research conducted on Bermudian families that highlighted matrifocality as a dominant family structure in Bermuda (Paul, 1983).

Shana's relationship involved Traditional gender roles. Shana was the nurturer and Jason was the provider and leader of the family. In the literature reviewed, Gage & Hutchinson found that women from predominantly matrifocal cultures adhere to traditional gender norms; therefore increasing the likelihood of abuse based on the belief system that the man has the right to beat his wife (2006). This premise supports Oliver's research; a Bermudian man in Oliver's focus group expressed that if a woman challenges a man's reputation to provide for his family in public then the consequences would result in physical abuse (Oliver, 2000). The findings from this study adhere to the dynamics of a culture that is saturated in matrifocality, but they also illuminate the importance of positive manhood.

Positive Manhood. Paul's research illustrated that Black Bermudian men define "positive manhood" identities based on one's financial ability to take care of himself and his family (1983). Jason owned a house and financially provided for his family. In Bermuda, owning a home is a significant achievement because of the high cost of living. According to societal standards, Jason would be deemed as a successful positive male. From the outside, it appeared as

though Jason and Shana had a typical romantic relationship, but the reality of the situation was quite the opposite.

Shana was working and often spending most of her pay check to help provide for the household as well, but other people were not aware of this; particularly his family members who were under the impression that Shana was spoiled by Jason. The findings suggest that perceptions of relationships in Bermuda are founded on external appearances that fit within the design of the matrifocal structure. In the public sphere, Jason represented the image of positive manhood.

Bermudian has an uneven gender ratio. There are more women than men so the dating scene is limited. The amount of males that ascribe to the “positive manhood” identity is watered down even more. With the combination of the low ratio of men to women, positive manhood/masculinity and matrifocality there are a variety of factors that encourage premarital and extramarital affairs.

Infidelity. The literature reviewed on Bermudian culture illustrated that masculinity is often demonstrated by premarital and extramarital affairs (Manning, 1973). A practice that was hidden from the public eye is now being practiced more openly (DeSilva, 2010).

Shana suspected infidelity because Jason spent a lot of time away from her and the children. Once her suspicions were confirmed Shana became aware of how easy it was for Jason to conduct his affair. Particularly when Jason had told one woman that he was just “helping out” the mother of his children and that they weren’t in a relationship.

Jason received positive attention from other women because of his embodiment of the positive male role. He was creating an image that showed other women that he was able to take

care of his family as well as others. Most women are socialized to look for a potential partner that is going to take care of them. So they can have a lifestyle that reflects Bermudian social norms. Therefore, Jason's exhibition was highly attractive to other women.

She had essentially cracked his "image" of being an ideal man in the eyes of the other woman. Jason and Shana were both angry as a result, a physical altercation ensued. This situation reflects elements of Oliver's study; where the focus group emphasizes how IPV can stem from embarrassment, anger or shame (2000). Additionally the act of violence is utilized to overpower the woman and reaffirm his dominance and control in the relationship (Oliver, 2000; Arscott-Mills, 2001).

Matrifocality is a multifaceted function in Bermudian culture that people interpret differently. Although, it attempts to create a blueprint of what the Bermudian families should be like; the rhetoric that is set blurs boundaries enabling wide interpretations of what is considered normal.

In Bermuda, people do not want others to know their personal business therefore, people do not talk about what is happening in their households. As a result, social problems fester within the confines of the family and in some circumstances they are normalized. One of the reasons people do not share their personal business is because of a strong cultural belief known as familialism.

Familialism

Familialism is a powerful belief that is perpetuated in Bermudian society. It is the belief that, what happens in the family stays in the family. Shana subscribed to the familial belief system. She was restricted by it because it forced her to evaluate every decision and move that

she thought about making. Additionally she carefully considered whom she could talk to about her IPV relationship.

Evidence of Shana's beliefs was reflected in some of her decisions about reaching out for social support. Shana indicated that one of the reasons she did not want to inform her uncle about what was going on in the relationship was because of his "old school beliefs" about family; where the woman is cooking and cleaning, and the man is the financial provider. Although he is a family member Shana did not seek help from her uncle because of his beliefs about relationships, creating uncertainty about how he would respond to her request for assistance.

The elements of fear and shame reinforce famililalism to prevent people from blending information from the private sphere into the public sphere. Researchers found that Trinidadian women in their study were reluctant to seek formal social support because of shame, a fear that their identity might be exposed and a fear that their abusive partner might retaliate (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006). As a result, people from familial cultures depend on informal support when faced with a dilemma (Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel, & Baig-Amin, 2003).

Social support is crucial for women experiencing IPV. Nonetheless, familialism is a cultural challenge that was highlighted in the literature reviewed. Researchers discovered that familialism is double sided because it acts as a barrier that prevents people from interfering in other people's business (Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006).

The findings of the present study are similar to, Yoshioka et. al's study. Researchers discovered that familialism encourages a person to put their family on a higher level than their personal well-being and desires (2003). Shana emphasized on numerous occasions how important her children are to her. Her experience as a mother can be comprehended through her

actions to protect and provide for them. There were implications for staying with Jason, but Shana's primary objective was to ensure that her children were cared for.

When it comes to social support, women are restricted by the social values and norms of their culture when disclosing about IPV and whom they inform about the IPV (Yoshioka, et. al., 2003). Shana experienced numerous trials and tribulations while in an abusive relationship with Jason because of the barrier of silence that is maintained by familialism. Once she broke through the barrier she was able to navigate the available social support options.

Social Support

Seeking Guidance. According to Hadeed & El-Bassel, social support assists in buffering the negative impact of domestic violence (2006). Shana received both positive and negative responses from people who she sought social support from. She told her close friends about the abuse, and they provided her with advice and two of them offered her a place to stay. This study supports prior research that illustrated that friends provide positive advice and tangible support (Goodkind et. al., 2003).

On the other hand, older women from the church as well as older women from her family provided Shana with advice to remain in the relationship for the sake of the children, and that God would work it out. The response from older people is congruent with past research by Griffith et. al. The researchers found that older people were more likely to tolerate IPV compared to younger generations based on their more traditional gender values (Griffith et. al., 2006).

Shana felt that the advice she received was confusing. It made her question the type of advice the church would give her if she sought counsel. Latta & Goodman found that Haitian women considered their religious community like a family; they argued that the advice women

received from the religious community was both supportive and hindering because of the social norms that it encouraged (2005). The Haitian women were encouraged to practice familialism as well as told to let God take care of the IPV they were experiencing (Latta & Goodman 2005).

Shana was already emotionally drained from the IPV relationship. The negative responses from the older group of friends and family impacted Shana because she was more upset about her predicament after receiving their advice. The findings from the present study support past literature that reported women being left in a quandary because they felt worse about their circumstances after seeking social support (Goodkind et. al., 2003).

Past research found that women often seek help from their family network, and this includes the family of the abuser (Yoshioka, et. al., 2003), Similarly, Shana reached out to Jason's mother for help. Shana's experience in seeking help from older friends and family was unconstructive, but no one was more detrimental than Jason's mother.

Research conducted by Hadeed & El-Bassel illustrated that whether or not the advice was positive or negative, the women in their study were reluctant to discuss their personal affairs with their mothers and in-laws; because of a lack of trust and concerns about confidentiality (2006). In contrast to past research, Shana displayed that she trusted Jason's mother by speaking with her; however, her trust was betrayed.

Jason's mother went to him and told him about the conversation that Shana had with her. This may have been an act of familialism to protect her son and prevent anyone from outside the family from finding out about the IPV. Protecting her son meant that she had to turn a blind eye to his behavior. Furthermore, Shana believed that his mother had also been a victim of IPV, and as a result, she was in no position to offer beneficial advice to her. Levendosky et. al's study

discovered that people within the social network who experienced violence themselves were less likely to be able to provide psychological resources (2004). This may have been one of the reasons she turned a blind eye to Jason's behavior and informed him about the conversation she had with Shana. Even though Jason's mother conducted an act that was reminiscent of familialism; it was clear that it was a cultural belief that both Shana and his mother had in common, and that was to protect their children.

Leaving Him. The need to protect her children was one of Shana's main focal points throughout her narrative. She carefully contemplated her escape from the IPV relationship. Although her greatest fear was not being able to support herself and the children once she left. Shana's concerns were similar to the women in a study conducted by Ellsberg et. al. Researchers found that women who did leave their husbands chanced facing economic challenges in being able to provide for themselves (Ellsberg et. al., 2000).

Living in Bermuda created the question as to whether or not Jason would be able to find Shana and the children. In addition to how he might retaliate if he found out where they were. This made leaving Jason difficult. Shana wanted to ensure that she had a plan so that she could successfully leave Jason.

Within Shana's social network, people had varying levels of power: the power to motivate change and the power to create change. Shana's daughter was one of the most important people when it came to providing informal social support. Shana's daughter motivated her mother to take steps to change her perspective.

Shana often put her children before herself. Ironically, the same reason that Shana endured her abusive partner is the reason that she left him. When her eldest daughter spoke to

her, she said “God doesn’t want this for you;” Shana was freed from the pressure of societal values to stay in the abusive relationship. Coinciding with the results from the present study researchers found that women were encouraged to stay in the relationship regardless of the abuse because their partner was the father of their children (Ellsberg et. al., 2000).

Shana’s manager was another person who had the power to motivate change in Shana’s life. She connected Shana to the agencies on the island so that she could receive help. Shana was unaware of the agencies and clearly stated that if she had known about them before she would have left Jason much earlier. The findings from this study suggest that it is not easy to escape an IPV relationship in Bermuda without the assistance of a formal support agency.

Shana was able to learn from every experience. Additionally her experiences provided her with an alternative outlook. Shana was able to make significant decisions by exposing herself to a variety of different types of advice. One of the most consequential decisions she made was “stepping out on faith.”

Spirituality

Spirituality was a major theme that resonated throughout Shana’s narrative. Spirituality provided her with the strength she needed to endure an abusive relationship as well as the strength to leave her partner.

Shana’s faith was not what she considered a traditional form of faith because she did not attend church; however she believed in God. Shana prayed and spoke to older women from the church for religious counsel. Similarly, researchers found that religion provided a variety of coping methods for women in their study; such as “prayer, spiritual songs, friendships in their

church community and talking to their parish priest or receiving counseling at their place of worship” (Hadeed & El-Basel, 2006 p.750).

Shana’s belief in God enabled her to have the courage to stand up for herself. Especially during times when she felt as though there was no hope. Stepping out on faith was a phrase that Shana used to describe the risks she had to take in order to navigate through her experience. This study supports the findings from past research in that it found spirituality and social support to be significant elements in Shana’s life (Fowler & Hill 2004).

Spirituality was her foundation where she could seek solace when other forms of social support created conflict in her life. It was her individual interpretation of spirituality that enabled her to challenge cultural beliefs and pursue independence.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that there was only one participant, reducing generalizability. The major deficit in research on IPV in Bermuda made this case study essential. The single case study can be utilized as the foundation for future research on IPV in Bermuda.

Bermuda is predominantly black so the focus of the study centered on a Black Bermudian woman. However, it would be beneficial to research the impact of IPV on women from other races that reside in Bermuda; in order to discover any differences or similarities.

The other limitation is that this study examined a woman who had accessed formal social support. Perhaps women who do not seek formal support have different viewpoints; these experiences may impact their willingness to seek formal social support. Future research on

women who access different types of social support is needed to attain a better understanding of the impact of social support on the island.

Finally, it would be valuable to obtain an understanding of the impact of an IPV relationship on the children. More research is needed to understand the experience of growing up in Bermuda while being exposed to an IPV relationship and how that affects one's romantic relationships.

Future Research

The findings from this case study research were exploratory. Therefore, it will be important to duplicate the findings by conducting a study with a larger number of participants with more diverse backgrounds pertaining to age and race. Women's willingness to seek help may differ based on factors of age and race. Studying a more diverse group of women will assist in understanding the different needs women have; and how they can be addressed by the enhancement of social programs.

Another area of research that should be examined is the perception of abuse from the Bermudian male's perspective. Research in the area exists, however it would be beneficial to have a more extensive study conducted that focuses solely on the male's perception and experience with IPV.

Conclusively research on IPV in Bermuda should continue to focus on the major cultural beliefs such as familialism and matrifocality. Perhaps examining the perceptions of members of the community about their willingness to help people experiencing IPV; would create information that could be utilized to encourage people to offer positive social support. It is essential to discover techniques to motivate Bermudian people to be more willing to offer

positive social support. As a result, this information would have a huge impact on women seeking social support because they would be received more positively.

Conclusion

The current case study is significant because it provides insight into a social problem that has not been researched before. The study provides important information that assists in uncovering some of the cultural influences that perpetuate IPV in Bermuda.

The findings have shown that people are socialized to define themselves within the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Matrifocality contributes to this belief and reinforces the necessity to conform to the social norms on the island. These beliefs translate into the way relationships are practiced in Bermudian society. Therefore, recognizing an IPV relationship is difficult if that relationship closely fits the mold set by society. In hindsight, Shana expressed that when it comes to relationships “there are certain things you are unaware of unless you have experienced it before.” This suggests the need for more education on IPV within the culture that it exists (Cousineau & Rondeau, 2004).

Throughout Shana’s narrative, there were various traces of cultural beliefs that influenced her actions. Sacrificing her own safety and enduring abuse was an illustration of the adoration she had for her family as well as a reflection of familialism. Familialism created a challenging predicament when it came to accessing social support. There were three types of social support that Shana accessed that were the least judgmental of all her social support experiences; her manager who connected her to formal support, the CAA and her spirituality. Throughout the entire experience, her spirituality was present, and she called upon it during her times of need. Her spirituality enabled her to surpass the cultural beliefs and values that had restricted her to the

confines of an abusive relationship. Shana demonstrated a greater sense of self-worth because she was able to change things in her life as well as her children's lives. As a result, she was more willing to help other women experiencing IPV in Bermuda by telling her story.

In summary, the findings reinforce the purpose of the study to explore: the lived experience of IPV from the perspective of a Black Bermudian woman; the role culture plays in her experience and the resources and support available in helping a woman experiencing IPV in Bermuda. The findings from this study demonstrate the important role that cultural beliefs play in a woman's life. As a result, the social issue of IPV is much more complex than it appears. The social support agencies for IPV should increase awareness about the support options they provide to ensure that women have access to these services. Additionally future social policies should take the complexity of IPV into consideration when creating new policies to protect people who are experiencing IPV. Creating more awareness about IPV on the island can be achieved by enhancing partnerships between the government, police and agencies such as the CAA (Centre Against Abuse) and the WRC (Women's Resource Centre). Overall community awareness would be extremely beneficial in reducing the prevalence of IPV in Bermuda because it will help in altering cultural perceptions.

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Appendix A

Letter Requesting Permission from the Local Agency

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Ashleigh Lowe and I am a Graduate student in the Family Studies and Gerontology Program at Mount Saint Vincent University.

I am writing to request your permission to access participants from your clientele for research that I am conducting. The research study that I am doing is exploring how culture influences a Bermudian woman's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) experience.

The purpose of this study is to explore how culture influences a Black Bermudian woman's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and social support experience. Your assistance is required in the recruitment of a participant for the study.

The participant of the case study will participate in a series of face to face interviews to share her perspective on IPV. Strict procedures are in place to protect the identity of the participant. Everything that is discussed in the interview will remain confidential. All electronic files will be password protected. No personally identifying information from the interviews will be disclosed.

Although there is no anticipated harm or risk affiliated with participation in this study the topic may cause distressing feelings for the participant. As the gatekeeper your agency will be recommended as a contact in the event that the participant feels the need to get assistance.

Participation in research is voluntary. The participant is free to decline participation in this study, or withdraw from it at any point. The PAC as gatekeeper can withdraw from assisting in the recruitment of participants at any time.

Thank you for your permission and assistance with this study. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Date: _____

Signature of Agency Representative: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Interviews

Intimate Partner violence in Bermuda: The purpose of this study is to explore how culture influences a Bermudian woman's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and social support experience. You have been selected to participate in a case study to share your perspective; based on your experience with Intimate Partner Violence in Bermuda.

If you decide to participate you will be interviewed several times over the duration of three weeks. The times and dates of the interviews will be scheduled between the researcher and yourself. The interviews will be audio taped; you have the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or be audio taped at any time.

Strict procedures are in place to protect your identity. Everything that is discussed in the interview will remain confidential. All electronic files will be password protected. No personally identifying information from the interviews will be disclosed to the PAC staff. All information will remain confidential and your participation or non-participation will in no way affect the services you receive as a client of the Centre Against Abuse (CAA).

There will be no cost for you to participate in this study. At your own request, I will provide you with a copy of the completed study at no cost. There will be no payment available for your participation in this study; however I believe that the study will allow you to tell your story and in doing so, help other women who may be experiencing IPV as well.

Although there is no anticipated harm or risk affiliated with participation in this study the topic may cause distressing feelings. Participation in research is voluntary. You are free to decline participation in this study, or withdraw from it at any point. If you decide to withdraw from participating in the study the audiotapes of the interview will be erased and the transcripts will be shredded. Your decision as to whether or not you participate will have no influence on quality of services you receive from the PAC, nor will your participation or nonparticipation influence future interactions between yourself and PAC staff.

Should you require any professional assistance because of participating in these interviews, you are encouraged to contact The Centre Against Abuse where you can receive a variety of counseling services. You can contact them at 38 Mount Hill Pembroke, HM09, Telephone: 292-4366, or the 24 Hour Hotline: 2978278. Or you can contact the Women's Resource Centre that provides counseling services at 58 Reid St. Hamilton HM12, Telephone: 295-3882 or the Crisis Hotline: 295-7273.

Thank you for your consent and assistance with this study. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Interviewers Signature: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Interview #1:

Background Information Questions:

- (a) What is your marital status? What level of education did you complete? Occupation?

Relationship History with Ex-Partner

The core themes will be probed for in addition to the questions.

Core Themes: (a) Culture (b) Masculinity/Machismo (c) Gender roles in the relationship

I'm interested in hearing about your relationship with your ex-partner, starting back as early as you can remember.

During the interview the researcher will listen for and possibly probe for information about:

1. The commencement of the relationship- What was the dating process like? What was the pace of the relationship? How did you feel about the relationship at the time?
2. What were the dynamics of the relationship? What role did you play in the relationship? What role did he play in the relationship?
(a) Probes for- Social isolation/Control
3. Describe how you think a man should treat a woman.
4. Based on your life experience describe what you think is a good example of a healthy romantic relationship

Intimate Partner Violence

Core Themes: (a) Social Isolation/Control (b) Woman's perception of IPV

1. Describe how the abuse started and what types of abuse you experienced?
2. When the violence started and what were your reactions to the violence?
3. What did you think about his violent actions towards you?
4. How did your ex-partner respond to your reactions to the abuse?
5. How did you feel about the relationship after the abuse started?
6. What types of relationships did you have before you were with your ex-partner? How would you classify these relationships in comparison to this one?

Conclusion of the Relationship

1. How did your relationship end?
2. What did you feel your options were when the relationship was ending?

3. What factors did you have to take into consideration when leaving the relationship?
4. Did you feel like you had any support from friends or family?
5. What did they think about the relationship?
6. What triggered you to leave?

Debriefing: Summary of the discussion. Describe how the interview could have been better.

Interview # 2: Social Support

Core themes: (a) Informal Support (b) Formal Support (c) Bermudian Cultural Etiquette

(d) Familialism (e) Societal Acceptance

Describe your experience with social support on the island

1. Did you tell anyone that you were being abused? Why or Why not?
2. How did they respond to you? How did their response make you feel?

Debriefing: Summary of the discussion. Describe how the interview could have been better.

Interview # 3: Reflections on the experience

During the last interview you discussed (last topic discussed); can you reflect back on your experiences and tell me how you feel about them?

(This interview will be the opportunity to ask questions that need further verification. Recalling past conversations will help to probe the participant to reflect.)

1. If you were to give advice to a woman going through IPV what would you tell them?
2. How did you feel about the responses you received from people you sought assistance from?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience?

Debriefing: Describe how meeting to talk about this has been helpful or not? Describe how this interview could have been better?