

When Love and Hate Collide: An Examination of Heterosexual Intimate Partner Violence and Perceptions of Men's Violence Toward Women

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**When Love and Hate Collide: An Examination of Heterosexual Intimate
Partner Violence and Perceptions of Men's Violence Toward Women**

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) within heterosexual relationships is a major concern worldwide due to the extensive negative impact on victims, and broader societal costs in terms of associated public health and criminal justice system expenses. Despite the pervasiveness of IPV and the damage caused by it, substantial knowledge gaps remain in the literature. My thesis contributes to a better understanding of IPV via two main aims: (1) to add to the understanding of men's and women's IPV through the novel application of cognitive, social, and attitudinal constructs, and (2) to provide insights to the societal responses to the most severe and common form of IPV, men's violence toward women.

These aims target five knowledge gaps within the existing literature. First, despite rationalization (a cognitive defense that provides self-justification of undesirable thoughts, feelings, and behaviors), being a key variable within the relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) of obsessive relational intrusion (a form of aggression often expressed in IPV), it has been overlooked in the literature. Second, the association between IPV and important relationships outside of attachment (e.g., friends, family, colleagues) has been underexplored. Third, although the literature recognizes that women *can* perpetrate IPV, the focus has been on male perpetration, and it remains unclear if the factors that contribute to IPV perpetration are similar for men and women. Leading from the focus on men as perpetrators, the fourth knowledge gap is the literature's focus on men's gendered attitudes (such as sexism) toward women, with little exploration of women's gendered attitudes in relation to IPV perpetration. Fifth, and finally, preliminary evidence suggests sexism could be associated with societal responses to IPV, although this has not been well investigated, particularly in relation to the most severe form of IPV, men's violence toward women.

In this thesis, I explore these knowledge gaps in three empirical chapters. Study 1 (Chapter 4) presents research conducted with 379 participants (46% women) aged 18 – 72

years ($M = 34.4$, $SD = 9.6$) that assesses whether relational goal pursuit theory provides a more comprehensive account of obsessive relational intrusion when rationalization is included. A measure of rationalization is developed, and both men's and women's perpetration of obsessive relational intrusion is assessed. Results show that rationalization meaningfully contributes to relational goal pursuit theory and has the strongest association (of the relational goal pursuit variables) with obsessive relational intrusion. Thus, the findings of Study 1 add to the existing knowledge of obsessive relational intrusion behaviors for both men *and* women and establish the relevance of rationalization to such behavior.

Study 2 (Chapter 5) builds on the findings of Study 1 by applying rationalization within the context of a novel model of broader IPV perpetration. The model explains men's and women's IPV perpetration by positioning rationalization with negative cross-gender contact (i.e., negative interactions between men and women; contact theory; Allport, 1954) and gender-based attitudes (i.e., hostile sexism; Glick & Fisk, 1996, 1999). Three relevant cross-gender contact relationship contexts are identified (romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic relationships) with three separate measures developed to capture these conditions. The model is assessed using a sample of 886 adults (50.6% women) aged 18 – 77 ($M = 37.33$, $SD = 11.72$). In all three cross-gender contact conditions, findings show the model to be supported for men's and women's IPV, with hostile sexism and rationalization sequentially mediating the association between negative cross-gender contact and IPV perpetration. A major contribution of these findings is that rationalization is highlighted as relevant to a broad array of IPV behavior (beyond obsessive relational intrusion). Further, findings highlight an association between negative experiences with the “other” gender (through hostile sexism and rationalization) and IPV for both male and female perpetrators. From Study 2 (Chapter 5), it is clear the way men and women engage with and view each other in general society plays a role in IPV perpetration.

Chapter 6 (Study 3) then focuses on societal factors that might contribute to a culture of acceptance of the most common and severe form of IPV, men's violence toward women. Drawing on the findings of Study 2, it is proposed that men's and women's gendered attitudes (i.e., hostile and benevolent sexism) toward women have relevance beyond the perpetration of IPV, such that individuals with higher levels of sexism toward women will be less likely to think *men should be educated* to not be violent toward women and more likely to think that *women should be educated* to avoid men's violence. This premise is investigated drawing from 21,937 adults (62.6% women) aged 18 – 97 years ($M = 49.62$, $SD = 13.93$) who participated in Wave 8 of the *New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey*. Findings are nuanced. For the idea that *men should be educated* to reduce men's violence, those who endorse hostility toward women in breach of the status quo (i.e., higher hostile sexism) tend to disagree, whereas those who believe women to be in need of men's protection (i.e., higher benevolent sexism) are more likely to agree. In contrast, for the idea that *women should be educated* to avoid men's violence, those with higher levels of hostile sexism or benevolent sexism are more likely to agree. Interestingly, the pattern of results is similar for men's and women's responses. These findings are supportive of the notion that sexism could drive responses to men's violence toward women that overlook men's responsibility to abstain from violence and amplify women's responsibility to keep themselves safe.

Overall, this is a novel series of studies that introduces important cognitive, social, and attitudinal constructs to the IPV field. The findings provide unique insights to IPV perpetration by both men and women and also extend these findings to responses to men's violence toward women. These findings have several important implications, including the potential of rationalization to be a focus in clinical IPV interventions, and the value of targeting men's *and* women's gendered attitudes in the campaign to improve public support for strategies to reduce men's violence toward women.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) _____ (Date) 13/06/2021

Jessica Brownhalls

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ALL PAPERS INCLUDED ARE CO-AUTHORED

Acknowledgement of Papers included in this Thesis

Included in this thesis are papers in *Chapters 5, 6 and 7* which are co-authored with other researchers. My contribution to each co-authored paper is outlined at the front of the relevant chapter. The bibliographic details for these papers including all authors, are:

Chapter 4: Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., & Barlow, F. K. (2019). Reintroducing Rationalization: A study of relational goal pursuit theory of intimate partner obsessive relational intrusion. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, (Advanced online publication),1-23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518822339>.

Chapter 5: Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., & Barlow, F. K. (2021 – under review). Once bitten twice shy: Hostile sexism and rationalization mediate the relationship between negative cross-gender contact and intimate partner violence for men and women. *Submitted to Psychology of Violence* 13/06/21.

Chapter 6: Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., Overall, N., Sibley, C. G., Radke, H. R. M., & Barlow, F. K. (2021). Make it safe at night or teach women to fight? Sexism predicts views on men’s and women’s responsibility to reduce men’s violence toward women. *Sex Roles*, 84, 183 - 195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01159-5>

All persons who contributed to the research in each paper qualified as authors.

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Fiona Kate Barlow (associate supervisor and co-author)

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL PROTOCOL

I confirm that ethical clearance was granted by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (GU Ref No: 2017/941). Further, research from this thesis was supported by Griffith University Postgraduate Research Scholarship. I confirm that the research was conducted in accordance with the approved protocols.

Signed _____ Date 13/06/2021

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Chapter 1: An Overview of the Thesis and the Problem at Hand

*Can't stop the hurt inside,
When love and hate collide*

-J Elliot & R. Savage, 1996-

Why Should We Research Intimate Partner Violence?

In the four months leading up to the submission of this thesis, three women were killed by an intimate partner (former or current) on the Gold Coast, Australia. The media reported on each case, and the public commentary was a resounding outcry of pain, frustration, and anger that such violence could happen. And yet it does. While no one of these deaths was more unjust than the others, the murder of 27-year-old Kelly Wilkinson on 20th April 2021 received particular public attention. It is alleged that Kelly, in the presence of her three children, was burned to death in her backyard by her former partner, and that Kelly sought police assistance almost daily in the lead up to her death (Smee, 2021). For the community, it is often difficult to understand how people living “next door” as neighbours, colleagues, and friends maintain the appearance of conventionality and yet are capable of violence (Scott et al., 2013). Perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) do not seem to always be obviously signposted as dangerous, and maybe do not view themselves as villains, but carry a concealed vault of risk factors that emerge violently, often to the surprise of those around them (Dobash et al., 2007). Many of them appear to walk amongst us with an act of innocence that seems to deceive the majority of people they encounter; perhaps also deceiving themselves with a series of rationalizations that disguise their true intentions.

During the past four months, in my community, there would also have been many incidents of non-lethal IPV that caused significant injury, distress, isolation and other forms of harm, *but* that were largely invisible to the public, were not covered by the media, and were not responded to by broader society. It seems as though society is outraged by IPV when it is ‘newsworthy’ (e.g., sensational, predictable, simplified; see Jewkes, 2015), and other times there is an implicit acceptance that IPV just happens in the background, sending an ambiguous message to perpetrators regarding whether they are to blame for their behavior or not. In this thesis, I hope to inform clinical, social, and political interventions to reduce this

form of violence. I aim to provide information that furthers our understanding of the internal processes that enable someone to perpetrate such behavior, as well as the processes that influence how we, as a society, respond to one of the most common and lethal forms of IPV, men's violence toward women.

Violence in intimate relationships is a longstanding and serious issue that results in the injury and deaths of many women, children, and (although less often) men (Brieding, 2014; Stöckl et al., 2013). This type of violence occurs globally and across a variety of socioeconomic and cultural settings, with the overwhelming majority of the burden being borne by women (WHO, 2012; Renzetti, 2009). Outcomes for victims of IPV include compromised mental and physical health (Black, 2011; Coker et al., 2002), social isolation, and loss of housing, employment, and economic resources (Abrams & Robinson, 2002; Renzetti et al., 2017). Further, the risk of IPV begins early in life with 20% of adolescents experiencing physical violence and 9% experiencing sexual violence in intimate relationships prior to 18 years of age (Wincentak et al., 2016). Amongst adult populations, IPV is even more common and is reported to occur in up to 38% of heterosexual relationships (Stöckl et al., 2013) and often co-occurs with child abuse and neglect within the family unit (Chan et al., 2021). However, it has been suggested that some forms of IPV are underreported and so are even more common. For example, when asked specifically about emotional abuse, 75% of women who have been in an intimate relationship report having experienced at least one act of this form of IPV (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). In addition to the detriment inflicted upon the victims, IPV also carries a high societal cost in terms of the funding required for prevention, intervention, legal and health support for those impacted (WHO, 2012). This economic burden is highlighted in the U.S. where the estimated lifetime cost to support approximately 43 million adult victims of IPV nears \$3.6 trillion (Peterson et al., 2018).

Given the highly negative impact IPV has at both the individual and societal level (Brieding, 2014; Campbell et al., 2002), this behavior has been the focus of considerable research attention for several decades and is the focus of this thesis. The existing research has made great advances in knowledge of the risk factors associated with IPV perpetration and victimization, and this knowledge has contributed to the development of interventions and policies against this form of violence. In line with such research and to improve the efficacy of IPV interventions, the overarching aims of this thesis are to (1) add to the existing body of work via the novel application of cognitive, social, and attitudinal constructs that contribute to the explanation of IPV, and (2) increase understanding of societal responses to violence against women, one of the most severe and common forms of IPV.

What is Known and What is Yet to be Determined about Intimate Partner Violence

There is an extensive body of research that investigates IPV, and such work informed this thesis. Prevailing IPV research has focused on individual characteristics of IPV perpetrators such as their capacity to regulate feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and their attachment style. For example, IPV perpetrator factors have been grouped together and explored within *relational goal pursuit theory* (Cupach et al., 2000). This theory suggests a specific suite of individual factors related to thoughts, emotions, and expectations of the self and others are associated with obsessive relational intrusion, a form of aggression commonly used in IPV. Through an evolutionary lens, IPV can be perceived to be an extreme mate retention strategy enforced over the other gender in an attempt to maximize reproduction opportunities (Burgess & Draper, 1989). Other research explores attachment theory in relation to IPV and suggests the quality and style of an individual's bond with their primary caregiver(s) (i.e., attachment) has an impact on later behavior within adult intimate relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988). Specifically, individuals with certain maladaptive attachment styles are suggested to be more likely to engage in IPV behavior in

comparison to securely (adaptively) attached individuals (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). From a theoretical perspective, other research suggests IPV behaviors emerge as an attempt by one person to manipulate power and control over another. For example, feminist theories view men's IPV toward women as a reflection of the power and authority afforded to men over women in a patriarchal society (Abrar et al., 2000). From this same perspective, women's IPV toward men, then, is viewed as retaliation against gender inequality (Dobash & Dobash, 2004).

Collectively, past research has made considerable advances to the understanding of IPV and those who enact this violence on others. However, several notable gaps remain. The first of these is that *rationalization*, despite being one of five core factors of relational goal pursuit theory, has not been empirically explored prior to the current thesis. Thus, there is a lack of evidence to support relational goal pursuit theory in its entirety, or rationalization specifically as a factor implicated in IPV. In Study 1 (Chapter 4) of the thesis, I aim to remedy this by empirically exploring rationalization within relational goal pursuit theory.

In addition, existing literature does not comprehensively explore social and relational experiences of IPV perpetrators beyond early attachment relationships. Thus, in Study 2 (Chapter 5), I apply contact theory (Allport, 1954), a social psychological theory of group interactions, to investigate the associations between gendered relationships outside of attachment (labelled cross-gender contact herein) and IPV.

Next, feminist works have suggested IPV is related to the power imbalance of gender inequality, leaving scope for further work to explore how gender-based attitudes such as sexism may also relate to IPV perpetration. To address this, Study 2 (Chapter 5) incorporates sexism in accounting for IPV perpetration and Study 3 (Chapter 6) explores sexism in relation to societal responses to the most lethal form of IPV, men's violence toward women.

Despite recognition within the literature and policy that IPV is a social issue, research in the field is also limited by its tendency to focus on perpetrator and victim factors, with little attention given to the societal factors that may perpetuate a culture of acceptance toward violence. In acknowledgement of this gap in the literature, Study 3 (Chapter 6) explores how sexism toward women relates to men's and women's responses to men's violence.

Finally, the majority of existing research focuses on male perpetrators and female victims of IPV and does not account for scenarios in which men are the victims of IPV and women the perpetrators. Consequently, knowledge around female perpetration of IPV is limited and there is little evidence to determine if the same factors contribute to IPV perpetration for both men and women. This limitation of the literature is addressed across all three studies in the current thesis. In Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5), perpetration of IPV by both men and women is explored. Then, in Study 3 (Chapter 6), both men's and women's sexism toward women is explored in relation to responses to men's violence toward women.

Thus, the current thesis addresses several gaps in the literature by applying three existing constructs (rationalization, cross-gender contact, sexism) to the IPV field in novel ways, and exploring them in the context of IPV committed by both men *and* women. Specifically, this thesis thoroughly explores rationalization and its role within relational goal pursuit theory, as well as with broader IPV behavior; introduces contact theory to explore gendered relationships beyond attachment in relation to IPV; and examines sexism as a factor that contributes to both IPV and societal responses to men's violence toward women.

Summary of Thesis Chapters

This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapters 1 through 3 provide a general introduction to the thesis, the topic and relevant theories, and the research aims and strategies. This chapter (Chapter 1) is a preamble to the thesis, with Chapter 2 then dedicated to

discussing IPV in detail. Chapter 2 begins by thoroughly defining IPV, with a focus on the subtypes of relevance to the thesis: IPV as physical, sexual and psychological abuse; obsessive relational intrusion; and men's violence toward women. Following this, Chapter 2 details the prevalence of IPV and the impact it has, before closing by detailing the aspect of IPV that is explored within each of the empirical chapters. Chapter 3 introduces and describes the theoretical underpinnings that informed this thesis, and the gaps filled through the novel application of theories across the three empirical chapters. The chapter begins with an overview of evolutionary perspectives of IPV, which have links to relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000). The chapter then details relational goal pursuit theory and rationalization, one of the core constructs that is investigated in Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5). Next, contributions to IPV literature by attachment theory are explored, and contact theory (Allport, 1954) is introduced as a means of extending this literature to understand how relationships beyond early attachment figures might relate to IPV, as is investigated in Study 2 (Chapter 5). Finally, I discuss the valuable input of feminist theories in understanding IPV to date and provide an overview of how feminist perspectives inform the current thesis' application of sexism to better understand both the perpetration of IPV (Study 2, Chapter 5), as well as broader society's responses to men's violence toward women (Study 3, Chapter 6).

Chapter 4 (Study 1), Chapter 5 (Study 2), and Chapter 6 (Study 3) are the empirical chapters and include the three studies of the thesis. All three studies have been submitted for publication: Study 1 and Study 3 have been published and Study 2 is under review. Information relating to the publications is included at the beginning of the relevant chapter. The relevant ethical approval details are included within the method section of each paper. Each study addresses specific aspects of IPV and specific gaps in the literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of IPV. The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 7,

contains an overall discussion of this research project. This chapter summarises the key findings of the studies herein and discusses these findings in the context of broader literature and clinical, social, and policy implications. The strengths and limitations of this research are discussed, and suggested future directions for the field addressed. To close the thesis, this chapter ends with an overview of the conclusions drawn from this body of work.

Before continuing, it is important to note there are some restrictions in my research. There are specific IPV behaviors (e.g., financial abuse, gaslighting, coercive control) that cause harm and suffering (McPhail et al., 2007; Stark & Hester, 2019) that are not explicitly addressed within this thesis. Such behaviors need investigation but lie beyond the scope of the thesis. Further, this thesis focuses on IPV within heterosexual couples, but there are other populations that are severely and negatively impacted by IPV. By no means is IPV specific to romantic relationships between men and women. To the contrary, IPV also occurs in gender and sexuality diverse populations and there is an essential need for research to support prevention and intervention for these populations as well (Bermea et al., 2021; Messinger, 2019; Wasarhaley et al., 2015). The current research serves only as a first step to exploring the possible merit of novel constructs in accounting for IPV, and it is certain that further steps with more diverse populations are needed. Additionally, throughout this thesis, I use the terms “men” and “women” to refer specifically to cisgender men and cisgender women (i.e., those whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth). While recognizing and respecting that gender is by no means binary, I have used the labels “men” and “women” for reader ease as the focus of the current research is on IPV within heterosexual relationships between cisgender men and women. Finally, I use the term “victim” in this thesis in reference to people targeted by IPV. The terms “victim”, “target”, “survivor”, and “victim-survivor” are found within IPV literature, and there is ongoing discussion regarding how each term reflects perceptions of agency, vulnerability, and culpability (Dunn, 2005; Renzetti, 1999;

Thompson, 2000). I have used the term “victim” in my thesis for simplicity and consistency with the majority of the literature drawn upon in this work. I do so with the recognition and respect that some may prefer a different term.

Again, the three studies within this thesis provide a starting point for this line of research. It is simply beyond the capacity of the current work to include thorough focus on diverse populations in a way that would do them justice. I encourage and support future works to further explore specific IPV behaviors, and to do so within more diverse populations. So, having described the format of the thesis chapters and addressed the specific (and perhaps narrow, in terms of diversity) focus of this research, I move to the goal of Chapter 2: to thoroughly define and describe IPV and the specific forms of IPV I investigate herein.

Chapter 2: An Insight to Intimate Partner Violence

*My name is Luka
I live on the second floor
I live upstairs from you
Yes, I think you've seen me before*

*If you hear something late at night
Some kind of trouble, some kind of fight
Just don't ask me what it was
Just don't ask me what it was
Just don't ask me what it was*

*I think it's because I'm clumsy
I try not to talk too loud
Maybe it's because I'm crazy
I try not to act too proud*

*They only hit until you cry
And after that you don't ask why
You just don't argue anymore
You just don't argue anymore
You just don't argue anymore*

*Yes I think I'm okay
I walked into the door again
If you ask that's what I'll say
And it's not your business anyway*

*I guess I'd like to be alone
With nothing broken, nothing thrown
Just don't ask me how I am
Just don't ask me how I am
Just don't ask me how I am*

*My name is Luka
I live on the second floor
I live upstairs from you
Yes I think you've seen me before*

*If you hear something late at night
Some kind of trouble, some kind of fight
Just don't ask me what it was
Just don't ask me what it was
Just don't ask me what it was*

*They only hit until you cry
And after that you don't ask why
You just don't argue anymore
You just don't argue anymore
You just don't argue anymore*

-Suzanne Vega, 1987-

Preamble

I begin this chapter by discussing the prevalence and impact of IPV, to highlight the pervasive and destructive nature of this type of violence. I then thoroughly define IPV with reference to my research, before moving on to describe the approach adopted by the empirical chapters to investigate IPV. Of note, IPV can include a suite of behaviors that co-occur or a single behavior that occurs once or repeatedly. In line with this understanding of IPV, this thesis explores a different aspect of IPV within each of the three studies. For clarity, I first provide an overarching definition of IPV, before describing subtypes of IPV addressed within the studies (i.e., obsessive relational intrusion; physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; men's violence toward women). Specifically, Study 1 (Chapter 4) investigates obsessive relational intrusion, a form of behavior used with high prevalence in IPV. Study 2 (Chapter 5) explores a broader perspective of IPV behaviors, conceptualised as encompassing physical, sexual, and psychological violence. In the final study, Study 3 (Chapter 6), the focus turns to the most severe and common form of IPV – men's violence against women.

Intimate Partner Violence: Who Does it, How Often, and Who Suffers?

Violence inflicted by an intimate partner is far more common than violence between strangers or acquaintances. Estimates suggest that 12% of women are targeted with sexual violence and 17% with physical violence by strangers and acquaintances during their lifetime, but 39% will experience sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). Some forms of IPV are even more common, with estimates suggesting that up to 75% of people will experience at least one event of unwanted romantic pursuit (e.g., persistent phone calls) in their lifetime (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000). This risk of this seems to be quite high for young adults. For example, unwanted romantic pursuit is reported to occur frequently among university students, with between 5% and 40% of college students reporting being targeted (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Further, despite public

awareness campaigns and the criminalization of IPV and stalking (severe unwanted pursuit and harassment that is highly threatening; Spitzberg et al., 2014) within intimate relationships, the prevalence of some forms of IPV appears to be *increasing*. Over a 10-year period (1988-1998), recorded IPV cases that met the legal threshold for stalking in the U.S. increased from 1.2 million to over 3 million (Baum et al., 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This could, in part, be due to increased reporting due to awareness and reduced tolerance of IPV, but, irrespective of the reason, the increase is concerning.

In general, IPV is detrimental to victims and can impact various domains of their lives. In terms of mental health, targeted persons experience sustained negative effects ranging from annoyance to high distress (Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Up to 82% of victims report modifying their daily plans to avoid their aggressor (Westrup et al., 1999), while 53% report reduced attendance to university or work (Hall, 1998). Victims also suffer compromised mental health. Research suggests 83% of people who experience unwanted romantic pursuit IPV experience panic attacks and increased anxiety, 74% experience sleep disturbance, 24% experience suicidal thoughts, 48% have appetite disturbance, 55% suffer flashbacks, and close to 40% meet the clinical criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Pathé & Mullen, 1997). Post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression rates are also far higher among women who have been targeted by men's violence in comparison to those who have not (Ayre et al., 2016). In addition, victims of sexual and physical assault are at a greater risk for suicide attempts (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). These negative mental health effects often persist long after the actual abuse has subsided (Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

In addition to the psychological distress, there is also a direct threat to physical safety for IPV victims. In severe IPV cases that meet the threshold for stalking, at least 50% of pursuers explicitly threaten physical violence (Meloy, 1998) and approximately 25 – 35% are

actually physically violent toward their partner (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). This violence is most frequently directed toward the victim, followed by the victim's property (e.g., home, car), or a third party (e.g., victim's friends, family, pets; Meloy, 1998). Of relevance, violent threats are *more* likely to be acted upon when the pursuer is a former or current intimate partner, when compared to stalking behavior perpetrated by an acquaintance or stranger (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Such threats likely contribute to the tendency for victims to relocate to escape their perpetrator, which is reported to occur in up to 11% of IPV stalking cases (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Victims of IPV are also more likely to consistently miss days at work, which can have an impact on their ability to retain employment, an effect that is amplified when the abuse is recent (Riger & Staggs, 2004). Thus, IPV can impact a victim's way of life (i.e., everyday routines) and can have deleterious effects on their physical and psychological wellbeing that are sustained long after the actual IPV ceases.

Given the detriment to victims of IPV, there is a high need for interventions that reduce this type of violence. Adding to this need, former or current intimate partners are less likely than strangers or acquaintances to be *convicted* of violent offences (Sheridan et al, 2001). Research suggests violence by a former or current intimate partner is perceived by police officers (unless specifically trained in IPV) and the general public to be *less* dangerous than similar behavior enacted by a stranger (Scott et al., 2013). This belief is inconsistent with the increased risk of violence posed by intimate partners, detailed above. Furthermore, violence at the hands of an intimate partner likely causes additional distress for the victim, relative to offences by a stranger, as partners have intricate knowledge of the victim's habits, life patterns, and vulnerabilities (Abrams & Robinson, 2002; Melton, 2007a). Thus, the potential for more personal and intimate negative impact is amplified when the perpetrator is a current or former intimate partner.

In recognition of the prevalence and severe impact that IPV has on victims, this thesis is dedicated to specifically exploring this topic to provide new insights. A high percentage of IPV literature relies on victims being able to identify the exact behaviors enacted by the perpetrator, and report on their own subjective experience of fear in order to categorize the behavior (e.g., Sheridan & Grant, 2007). However, this approach has been criticised as some people targeted by IPV may well have an *absence* of fear but do experience other negative affective and physical consequences of the behavior (Dietz & Martin, 2007). In addition, thresholds for fear appear to be gendered, potentially impacting on who reports experiencing IPV (e.g., Davis & Frieze, 2000; Dennison, 2007; Tjaden, Thoennes & Allison, 2000). For example, Owens (2016) found men to be less likely to feel and/or report the subjective experience of fear within a sample of gender representative stalking victims. Of those who reported subjective fear in response to being targeted, 90% were female (10% male). Here we see that relying on the victim's subjective experience of fear is not a reliable means of accurately capturing perpetrator behavior. To combat this measurement issue, the current thesis adopts the approach of relying on *perpetrator* self-reported IPV behavior. While this could result in underreporting of some behaviors due to impression management, it carries the benefit of seeking information about covert IPV strategies (e.g., surveillance) directly from the perpetrator – the only people who would know if and how often the behavior occurred. In doing so, the studies herein are adding to a body of literature that provides more realistic representations of IPV prevalence. As mentioned, different aspects of IPV are explored across the three empirical chapters. IPV and the subtypes of interest in this thesis are defined in the next section.

Intimate Partner Violence: What is it?

IPV as Physical, Sexual, and Psychological Violence

A range of behaviors fall under the IPV umbrella term. Broadly speaking, IPV is any actual or threatened physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse between current or former intimate partners, including either an incident or pattern of assault and/or coercive behavior used against a partner without their consent (Krug et al., 2002).

Physical violence refers to any behavior that results in physical harm via the use of unlawful force, and includes minor and serious assault, as well as deprivation of liberty, manslaughter and homicide (EIGE, 2017). Specific behaviors within this cluster of IPV include striking/slapping/hitting/punching, shoving/pushing, striking with or throwing an object at the person, kicking, dragging, choking, burning, and threatening with, or actually having a weapon (Hunt, 2018; WHO, 2013).

Sexual violence can be broadly defined as any non-consensual sexual act by means of coercion or force (EIGE, 2017). More specifically, sexual violence includes unwanted or forced sexual behavior, as well as pressure and coercion to engage in sexual behavior. This includes unwanted sexual advances or touching (harassment), being forced or pressured to watch or engage in pornography, pressure to engage in sexual acts, sexual coercion, sexual assault, and rape (Hunt, 2018).

Finally, psychological violence is any behavior that causes psychological harm to the partner (EIGE, 2017). This includes belittling, humiliating, or intimidating a partner, as well as coercive tactics, stalking, and financial control (Hunt, 2018; Niolon, 2017). Of note, there has been contention surrounding the term “psychological violence” and whether such behaviors meet criteria for violence (Winstok & Sowan-Basheer, 2015), with similar behaviors referred to within the literature as psychological aggression (Straus, 1979), psychological abuse (Basile & Hall, 2011; O’Leary, 1999), and psychological violence

(Dokkedahl et al., 2019). Violence can be considered a behavior that is intentional, unwanted, not essential for survival, and harmful (Hamby 2017). I would argue that acts of psychological violence in the context of IPV align with each of these criteria. For example, intimidating a partner is a deliberate act by a perpetrator (intentional), against a victim (unwanted), where there is no threat to the perpetrator's survival (non-essential), and can cause psychological injury to the victim (harmful). Further, much of the literature and leading research bodies (e.g., World Health Organization, European Institute of Gender Equality) has adopted the term "psychological violence". Thus, in this thesis I use the expression "psychological violence" with recognition that further work is likely required to clarify the terminology.

While psychological abuse is the most common form of IPV, it has been, historically, more difficult to define due to the covert nature and internal effects on the victim (Dokkedahl et al., 2019; Follingstad, 2009). Recently, efforts have been increased to refine the definition of such behavior to better support the criminalization of non-physical IPV (Walklate & Fitzgibbon, 2019). While psychological IPV is sometimes defined distinctly from coercive control, the two are often combined under one banner (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). In line with the latter and for the purposes of this thesis, psychological IPV is herein conceptualized as incorporating all aspects of psychological abuse inclusive of coercive control. That is, psychological IPV is defined as both the psychological aspects (i.e., the use of insults, belittling, humiliation, defamation, intimidation [including destroying property], threats of harm) and the behaviors recognized as coercive control (i.e., surveillance, isolation or threats to isolate from social/family supports, restricting access to financial resources, education, employment, health care; WHO, 2012). Of note, and discussed next in this section, obsessive relational intrusion refers to a suite of aggressive behavior associated with IPV that can include behaviors from some or all of these categories of IPV (i.e., physical, sexual, and

psychological abuse). Obsessive relational intrusion, however, refers to repetition of such behavior with the intent to initiate or increase intimacy (although via maladaptive means).

Obsessive Relational Intrusion

As previously noted, Study 1 (Chapter 4) focuses on a specific form of aggression expressed in IPV (obsessive relational intrusion) and a common theoretical explanation of it (relational goal pursuit theory). This theory is then explored in relation to broader IPV perpetration in Study 2 (Chapter 5). The term obsessive relational intrusion refers to the full spectrum of unwanted pursuit behaviors in which the pursuer desires an intimate relationship with an unwilling person, often referred to as the “target” (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). The National Violence Against Women Study (NVAWS; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) provides evidence of the link between physical violence and obsessive relational intrusion, finding that 81% of perpetrators who engaged in obsessive relational intrusion with a current or ex intimate partner also physically assaulted their victim, and 31% sexually assaulted their victim. Thus, this is a common mechanism of IPV that includes a suite of repeated and unwanted pursuit behaviors, enacted by a person who desires greater intimacy with the targeted person (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998).

Obsessive relational intrusion behaviors fall on a continuum ranging from conduct that is legal, although likely annoying (e.g., unwanted telephone calls), through to persistent, malicious, unwanted stalking behaviors that intentionally elicit high levels of fear for the victim (Ogilvie, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). At the severe end of the spectrum, obsessive relational intrusion that meets the legal threshold for stalking in the general population ranges from 2% to 13% for males and 8% to 32% for females (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). While stalking is encompassed on the obsessive relational intrusion spectrum, the two terms differ. Stalking is considered to cross an arbitrary threshold necessary to discern legal from illegal behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000), whereas obsessive

relational intrusion incorporates a range of antisocial and unwanted behaviors that can be both legal and illegal (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998). Furthermore, stalking behavior can have a broad array of motives (e.g., profit: stalking a person to rob them; coercion: stalking an acquaintance to intimidate them) where obsessive relational intrusion refers specifically to unwanted pursuit behavior where increased intimacy is desired by the pursuer. The study of obsessive relational intrusion therefore allows for exploration of the full spectrum of unwanted pursuit behaviors that are motivated by increased intimacy.

Obsessive relational intrusion has been categorized into eight behavioral clusters (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). *Hyperintimacy* refers to exaggerated courtship behavior that is disproportionate and inappropriate to the context of the relationship, such as making proclamations of love after only a brief period of dating. Contact with the targeted person is broken down into two clusters: *interactional contact*, in which the pursuer is in the physical vicinity of the victim and makes attempts to interact (e.g., involving oneself in the target's conversations), and *mediated contact*, in which the pursuer attempts to interact with the victim via some variation of media (e.g., online messages, phone calls). *Surveillance* includes behavior that is intended to monitor the victim in the absence of interaction (e.g., driving by the target's house or work). Behaviors that are categorized as *intrusion* include any action by the perpetrator that invades the victim's symbolic or physical space (e.g., showing up at the victim's work, breaking into the victim's home). *Harassment and intimidation* includes behaviors such as spreading rumors to persons of relevance in the victim's life (e.g., employer) and making official complaints such as obtaining a restraining order against the victim. *Coercive threats* include both veiled warnings and overt threats to the victim's personal safety, as well as the safety of friends, family, pets, and property. Finally, *coercive violence* includes sexual and physical acts such as forcefully kissing or touching the victim (or attempting to do so), or physically hurting him/her. Obsessive

relational intrusion is therefore understood as specific and separate clusters of IPV behavior occurring in a repeated fashion in an attempt to increase intimacy.

Consistent with earlier comments regarding gender and IPV, the majority of empirical literature suggests women are predominantly targeted with unwanted pursuit and men are predominantly pursuers (e.g., Bjerregaard, 2000; Sisco & Figueredo, 2008; Spitzberg et al., 2010; Williams & Frieze, 2005). However, self-report accounts of obsessive relational intrusion perpetration suggest men and women might actually be equally represented as targets (e.g., Brewster, 2000; Davis et al., 2000) with women perceiving the unwanted pursuit as more threatening and men reporting unwanted pursuit of longer duration (Spitzberg et al., 2010). Justification for the focus on males as pursuers within the literature centres around reports that females, in comparison to males, tend to report higher levels of distress and more negative outcomes when targeted (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000). For example, females (compared to males) targeted by stalking in IPV are more likely to seek counselling, lose work productivity, and sustain injury requiring medical attention and hospitalisation than are men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Consistent with this, research suggests men perceive unwanted pursuit behaviors as less serious in comparison to women, particularly when such behavior is enacted by a current or former intimate partner (e.g., Dennison & Thompson, 2000, 2002, 2005; Hodell et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2004). Notwithstanding these justifications, given the possibility that obsessive relational intrusion (and likely IPV more broadly) is problematic across gender, and to provide clarity within the literature, in the current thesis I study both men and women as perpetrators of obsessive relational intrusion and IPV.

Men's Violence Toward Women

The final study of the series (Study 3, Chapter 6), however, focuses specifically on men's violence toward women. There is good reason for this. While some research suggests

men and women equally perpetrate IPV (e.g., Straus, 2009), a large amount of literature supports women to be most commonly the victims and men the perpetrators of IPV (Pacilli et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018). This is not to say that women are not violent toward men in intimate relationships, as evident by the aforementioned research that suggests men and women might equally perpetrate obsessive relational intrusion. However, violence against women is most likely to be at the hands of an intimate partner (former or current), where men are more likely to experience violence enacted by strangers or acquaintances (Heise & Marenco, 2002). Further, men's IPV toward women is more pervasive, results in more severe injury (psychological and physical) and is more likely to result in the woman's death in comparison to when women enact IPV toward men (Dobash & Dobash, 2003).

When physical assault occurs in IPV contexts, it tends to be more often and more extreme toward women: 41.5% of women physically assaulted by their male partner were injured during the most recent assault, where 19.9% of men were injured by the most recent physical assault by their female partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Men's violence toward women is one of the greatest threats to a woman's life: 40 – 70% of murdered women are killed by a current or former partner, and many of these women had previously engaged with support services or legal action to no avail (WHO, 2012). It is important to recognize that not *all* incidents of men's violence toward women are IPV, but most are. A woman is most at risk of assault by a current or former intimate partner (Heise & Marenco, 2002). When IPV occurs, a *woman* is most likely to be the victim (Renzetti et al., 2018). Thus, the vast majority of men's violence toward women is IPV, and the most severe IPV is men's violence toward women.

As I discussed earlier, some research has suggested the gender differences reported in perpetration rates of IPV could reflect men's underreporting of victimization. Here, it is important to note that this is in reference to *rates* of perpetration only, and not severity.

There are many reasons men might not report being the victim of female perpetrated IPV (e.g., less severe injury/less fear of the perpetrator; help seeking by men perceived to traverse traditional gender norms re masculinity), and this can certainly have an impact on the measurement and conceptualization of IPV in the literature (Archer, 2000; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2009) identifies that research relying on crime statistics and support agency data (e.g., the National Crime Victimization Survey, Rennison, 2002; National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) consistently reports higher male than female IPV perpetration rates. However, research relying on behavioral measures in which participants are required to self-report their own and their partner's behaviors (e.g., the Conflict Tactics Scale Revised, CTS2; Straus et al., 1996), generally reports comparable rates of IPV between the genders (e.g., Archer, 2000; Straus, 2004). While it might be that some men do not officially report being the victims of IPV, it is undeniably men's IPV toward women that is most dangerous.

Concerningly, men's violence against women can occur across the lifespan and begins quite early. A staggering 25% of male college students self-identified that they had knowingly forced a woman to engage in a sex act to which she did not consent (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015). This data suggests, from an early age, there is a sense of entitlement or, at a minimum, a perception that it is acceptable for men to use force over women. Evidently, men's violence toward women has a profound and pervasive impact and there is a great need for research, such as this thesis, to support large scale interventions that can assist in reducing this lethal form of violence. As noted earlier, responses to men's violence toward women forms the focus of my final study (Chapter 6). However, in keeping with this thesis' intention to provide insights to both men and women, I explore sexist attitudes toward women and the responses of *both* men and women to men's violence toward women. In

doing so, a comprehensive overview is formed within the thesis of how men and women engage in, and respond to, IPV.

The Exploration of Intimate Partner Violence within the Thesis

Having outlined the prevalence and impact of IPV, and specifically defined the aspects of IPV explored in this thesis, I will now describe, in brief, how each study investigates the topic.

In Study 1 (Chapter 4) the focus is on the perpetration of unwanted pursuit behaviors commonly known as obsessive relational intrusion. I begin by focusing here as this form of aggression is one of the most common behaviors in IPV and is reported to be perpetrated by both genders. Further, the purpose of Study 1 is to explore a theory of obsessive relational intrusion (relational goal pursuit theory; Cupach et al., 2000) with the intention of extending some elements of the theory (i.e., rationalization) to IPV behavior more broadly in Study 2 (Chapter 5).

Thus, in Study 2 (Chapter 5), the definition of IPV is expanded to the perpetration of a broader range of IPV behaviors across physical, sexual, and psychological violence. In doing so, I investigate the perpetration of a more diverse array of the behaviors that fall under the IPV label. Further, in Study 2, rationalization (a concept of relational goal pursuit theory) is included in a novel model of IPV along with cross-gender contact (contact theory; Allport, 1954) and sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999). This study more thoroughly explores factors that potentially contribute to a perpetrator's pathway to IPV.

In the final study, Study 3 (Chapter 6), the focus is explicitly on men's violence toward women. Given men's violence against women remains the most common and most lethal form of IPV, it is critical that this be prioritized within intervention and policy development. Thus, drawing from the findings of the two earlier studies, Study 3 (Chapter 6) adopts an applied approach by assessing men's violence against women at the societal level

(rather than perpetrator level) to support and inform larger scale interventions for this severe and dangerous form of IPV. Specifically, in Study 3, I ask if men's and women's beliefs about women in general (sexism) are associated with how they think society should respond to men's violence toward women.

Thus, across the three studies in this thesis, I evaluate a broad spectrum of factors that I propose to be related to IPV perpetration and the way in which society views men's violence toward women. While each of the studies are novel, the research was informed by existing literature and theories which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Underpinnings of the Current Research

*Every breath you take
Every move you make
Every bond you break
Every step you take
I'll be watching you
Every single day
Every word you say
Every game you play
Every night you stay
I'll be watching you
Oh, can't you see
You belong to me
How my poor heart aches
With every step you take
Every move you make
Every vow you break
Every smile you fake
Every claim you stake
I'll be watching you
Since you've gone I've been lost without a trace
I dream at night I can only see your face
I look around but it's you I can't replace
I feel so cold and I long for your embrace
I keep crying baby, baby please*

-Sting, 1983-

Preamble to Chapter 3

Early accounts of IPV explained this behavior as a response to unreciprocated love (Baumeister et al., 1993; Mullen & Pathé, 1994a, 1994b) and proposed relational termination as a trigger (Davis et al., 2000; Tassy & Winstead, 2014). In line with such arguments, the intensity of IPV is, indeed, reported to escalate if the victim attempts to terminate the relationship (Mechanic et al., 2000). However, given that not all those who are rejected (or have a tempestuous relationship) engage in IPV, it is clear that other factors contribute to the instigation and maintenance of such behavior. Over the past several decades, scholars have developed a considerable body of literature to further the understanding of IPV, providing considerable insights and underlying much of the work in the three studies of this thesis. In the following section, I discuss some major theories and empirical works that have contributed to IPV literature and are of relevance to this thesis.

While peripheral to the work of this thesis, I begin by briefly reviewing evolutionary theory due to its theoretical links with relational goal pursuit theory and its popularity in some literature to account for the persistent nature of IPV. I then discuss relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) and rationalization in detail. Rationalization is one of the five core constructs of relational goal pursuit theory and is central to two of the empirical studies included in this thesis – Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5) - as a novel addition to IPV literature. Further into this chapter, I provide an overview of attachment theory's (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988) contributions to the IPV literature. I then introduce contact theory (Allport, 1954) as a means of exploring the associations between IPV and relationships outside of early attachment figures, a focus of Study 2 (Chapter 5). Finally, I discuss feminist perspectives of understanding IPV and explain how the work produced by such perspectives can be extended by specifically focusing on sexism. These perspectives are relevant to the aims of Study 2 (Chapter 5) and Study 3 (Chapter 6), which

explore how men's and women's attitudes towards each other's gender group, and toward women specifically, relate to IPV and responses to men's violence toward women.

Unconscious Drives and Unconscious Motives: Evolutionary Theories, Relational Goal Pursuit Theory, and Rationalization

Evolutionary theories are not explicitly explored within this thesis. However, it would be remiss to overlook the links between such approaches and relational goal pursuit theory, which is of great interest to this thesis. Further, evolutionary perspectives have gained popularity in IPV literature and have, in many ways, informed theoretical approaches to IPV, whether as complementary or competitive. In this section, I provide a brief overview of evolutionary approaches to IPV and discuss how such viewpoints connect with relational goal pursuit theory. Then, I move to discussing one of the variables within relational goal pursuit theory: rationalization. Rationalization is, perhaps, a main protagonist in this thesis as it is incorporated in two of the three empirical chapters. Through Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5), I hope to highlight the as yet unseen potential of rationalization to support a better understanding IPV.

Evolutionary Theories in the Context of IPV

Much of the evolutionary literature posits that intimate partner violence has evolved as an at least partially effective (although antisocial and dangerous) mate retention strategy that occurs largely because of unconscious biological drives. Evolutionary perspectives view intimate partner violence as predominantly engaged in by males as a behavioral output of jealousy in response to threats to reproductive fitness (Goetz et al., 2008). In this sense, specific behaviors such as vigilance (e.g., checking up on a partner unexpectedly), mate concealment (e.g., isolating a partner from social settings where competitors might be present), and time monopolisation (e.g., insisting a partner stays home), are proposed to serve the purpose of retaining an intimate partner by maintaining proximity and restricting their

contact with other potential mates. It is proposed that such behavior is intended to induce fear (physical and psychological) to keep the intimidated partner nearby in order to reduce opportunities for poaching by competing potential suitors (Buss, 1988). This theory has gained popularity as an explanation for the pervasiveness and persistence of IPV throughout history, and across a vast array of cultures. Specifically, it has been assumed by some that IPV could have an evolved component considering it continues to be so frequently engaged in, despite overt public disapproval (Kamir, 2001; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003).

However, while evolutionary theory might be useful to understand distal causes of such behavior (such as natural and sexual selection), IPV is not exclusive to male perpetration and, further, IPV behaviors are frequently and severely engaged in during some relationships, but not at all in others. Some scholars note that if this were a behavior that was a natural expression of evolutionary reproductive strategies then it would tend to be present in all, rather than some, intimate relationships (Serran & Firestone, 2004). Further, historically, evolutionary perspectives have been viewed as suggesting IPV and men's violence against women are somewhat inevitable based on the inherent nature of the instincts proposed to motivate and maintain such behavior. More recent literature has challenged this by suggesting evolutionary drives present opportunity for change as they are an expression of malleable biological functions, and that certain male biological processes might only emerge in particular environmental contexts in which the benefits of violence are viewed as outweighing the consequences (Johnson, 2012). Thus, evolutionary perspectives appear to suggest that the internal processing of and ability to adapt to the environment, at the individual level, could also impact propensity for IPV. Similarly, whether the surrounding social environment respects or condones violence likely influences the perceived costs and benefits of this behavior and, thus, also influences the propensity for engaging in IPV (Johnson, 2012).

Overall, evolutionary theory has developed answers to some of its early criticisms. Historically, the theory was believed to provide little insights for prevention and intervention efforts, and it still does not provide a thorough insight to IPV in which men are the targets and women the perpetrators. While still likely inadequate to singularly explain IPV, evolutionary perspectives have informed many other theories that are better able to account for specific and proximal factors that contribute to IPV perpetration. Thus, IPV research such as this thesis, draws from and complements work within the evolutionary field. In line with this, in Study 1 (Chapter 4), I explore relational goal pursuit theory, which has theoretical links with evolutionary theories related to the mate retention aspect of IPV. Further, I specifically focus on rationalization in Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5). Where evolutionary theories focus on the unconscious biological drives that motivate behavior, rationalization centres on the unconscious cognitive processes that distort reality to a more self-serving viewpoint. Thus, while evolutionary variables are not included in my empirical work, they have informed the approaches taken herein.

Relational Goal Pursuit Theory's Account of Obsessive Relational Intrusion

Evolutionary perspectives are consistent with the underpinnings of relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000). This is the predominant theory relied upon to explain obsessive relational intrusion in which a pursuer attempts to initiate or maintain intimacy with an unwilling other. Evolutionary theories tend to view IPV as a strategy to engage or maintain a romantic mate, with relational goal pursuit theory aligning with this proposition and further suggesting that a series of internal processes prevent a perpetrator from “giving up” romantic pursuit – sometimes at all costs.

Many of the behaviors that occur within obsessive relational intrusion could, in another context, be viewed as adaptive attempts to woo a partner should the targeted person reciprocate. For example, receiving gifts, messages, and being asked on dates (forms of

obsessive relational intrusion, Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) are likely flattering should there be mutual engagement. Indeed, despite being present in the vast majority of IPV occurrences, obsessive relational intrusion behaviors often occur within adaptive intimate relationships as well (Kienlen et al., 1997). Thus, relational goal pursuit theory views obsessive relational intrusion behavior as amplified attempts at otherwise adaptive strategies to initiate or maintain a relationship in order to achieve an overvalued goal. Relational goal pursuit theory also provides an account of the internal processes that facilitate the unwanted pursuit and make it difficult for the pursuer to cease the behavior. Specifically, relational goal pursuit theory posits that an individual's goal linking, self-efficacy, affective flooding, rumination, and rationalization tendencies contribute to the initiation and maintenance of unwanted romantic pursuit behaviors. The five core processes of relational goal pursuit theory are detailed below.

Goal linking. Some people view lower order goals as essential in order for them to achieve other (sometimes unrelated) higher order goals. In such cases, the importance of the lower order goal becomes exaggerated and is perceived to hold the potential for greater success (McIntosh & Martin, 1992). Should achievement of the lower order goal become obstructed in some way, efforts to achieve it are increased due to the perceived amplified importance of the goal. Given the goal's disproportionate perceived value, this exertion of effort can also be disproportionate and exceed what would otherwise be considered "healthy". In the context of obsessive relational intrusion, this goal seeking process (goal linking) is evident when a pursuer believes an intimate relationship with a specific person (i.e., the target) must be achieved in order for other aspects of life to proceed as desired (e.g., happiness, success). That is, the pursuer considers that he or she will *only* be a successful and happy person if they are able to secure an intimate relationship with the specific targeted person (i.e., the relational goal). Thus, in line with mate retention strategies suggested by

evolutionary theories, goal linking positions romantic pursuit as a necessity for success.

Self-efficacy. Relational goal pursuit theory posits that a pursuer develops the expectation that he or she has the ability to achieve the relational goal if they persist for long enough and exert sufficient effort (Cupach et al., 2011). In a similar cost/benefit analysis that evolutionary perspectives propose for IPV, this efficacy is driven by the pursuer's belief that the rewards of achieving the goal (i.e., the intimate relationship, as well as higher order goals such as life success) will exceed the costs of resources expended in the process (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Rumination. Rumination occurs when the pursuer experiences repeated and intrusive thoughts that are predominantly aversive and are focused on the victim and the achievement of the relational goal (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). The pursuer ruminates on potential failure to achieve the relational goal, and the intensity of the rumination increases the longer the goal is not achieved (Cupach et al., 2000). Thus, as the victim resists the intimate relationship, the pursuer spends more and more time overthinking and processing the importance of "winning" the victim over. Rumination is understood to have two main components: *rumination persistence*, which refers to an individual's difficulty in ceasing thoughts related to their victim, and *rumination affect*, which reflects the emotions associated with the process of rumination or the possibility of reuniting with the victim (Spitzberg et al., 2014).

Affective flooding. Not *all* unwanted pursuit behavior occurs in the context of relationship breakdown. However, relational goal pursuit theory proposes that the typical negative emotional experiences associated with the dissolution of an intimate relationship are simulated in the context of obsessive relational intrusion and become complicated by further emotional distress. This pattern feeds from the pursuer's tendency to overvalue the importance of the relational goal, as well as rumination about not being able to achieve the goal. The pursuer also becomes overwhelmed by anticipatory negative emotions

(Baumgartner et al., 2008) related to events they fear could eventuate (should they not achieve their relational goal) but have not yet actually occurred. Therefore, affective flooding is understood to have two underlying components: *break-up distress*, which describes the typical emotional distress experienced within relationship termination, and *residual distress*, which refers to more enduring emotional suffering (Spitzberg et al., 2014).

Rationalization. In the face of rebuke by the victim, the pursuer persists with attempts to achieve the relational goal. In response to the negative feelings that arise in the face of rejection, the pursuer's unconscious incorporates defenses of rationalization to relieve the discomfort of affective flooding and rumination, and to self-justify the continuation of pursuit in the face of rejection (Cupach et al., 2000). During the rationalization process, the pursuer tends to unintentionally and disproportionately focus on any *reasons* to explain away and suppress negative feelings, rather than actually experience the feelings (e.g., a belief that "the victim only appeared upset by my gift because he or she is not used to being shown attention" results in alleviated feelings of rejection at the cost of the reality that the target did actually reject the gift). Rationalization aids the pursuer in creating a more palatable version of reality for him- or herself that distorts the intentions of others and the consequences of ongoing pursuit. This cognitive defense style tends to conceal the unconscious motives of conscious behavior (Abbass, 2015) and serves an unhelpful purpose by providing the pursuer with a series of excuses that justify negative behavior to avoid the discomfort of underlying emotions (e.g., guilt, grief) (Davanloo, 1980). Therefore, in the case of obsessive relational intrusion, rationalization obstructs the pursuer from developing insight to the reality of the situation: the victim's unwillingness, and likely the pursuer's own fear of rejection and distress.

In relational goal pursuit theory, rationalization is understood to have two main underlying processes: *permissiveness* in viewing the pursuer's own behavior through an

overly positive lens that minimizes negative impacts on others (e.g., “I only kept calling because the victim probably had their phone on silent”) and *distortions* in the interpretation of the intentions of the target in such a way that suits the pursuer’s own version of reality (e.g., “the victim was only crying to make me come and provide comfort”). Specifically, the pursuer rationalizes to create an interpretation that minimizes the impact of his/her own behavior on the victim and thus exonerates the pursuer from blame. Rationalization also results in the pursuer misinterpreting the intentions and behaviors of the victim, such that signs of romantic reciprocation are perceived, even when the intention is clearly one of rejection (Cupach et al., 2000; Cupach et al., 2011).

Relational Goal Pursuit Theory: Putting it all Together. In putting these processes together, relational goal pursuit theory proposes that perpetrators of unwanted romantic pursuit view an intimate relationship as a highly desirable goal and a relationship with a specific targeted person as essential in order for higher order goals to be achieved (i.e., goal linking). Given the perceived significance of this goal, the pursuer develops a sense that if they just keep trying, then they will surely be able to increase intimacy with the targeted person (i.e., self-efficacy). When the achievement of the relational goal becomes obstructed by rejection from the targeted person, the pursuer experiences repeated intrusive and aversive thoughts about the victim and the desired relationship (i.e., rumination). Concomitant with rumination, the pursuer experiences overwhelming emotional distress as a result of goal obstruction by the victim (i.e., affective flooding). This creates an unpleasant reality for the pursuer, and, in response, the pursuer unconsciously creates a new version of reality through a self-serving interpretation of him/herself and others (i.e., rationalization). This unconscious cognitive process views the victim’s intentions and behaviors through a distorted lens to make them align with the pursuer’s own intimacy desires. That is, the pursuer unconsciously begins to skew any and all rejection attempts by the victim to be encouraging of intimacy

(e.g., “they are playing hard to get”).

The outcome of the distorted reality (i.e., rationalization) is a reduction of the pursuer’s own discomfort and alleviation of negative affect (e.g., guilt, grief) that might, otherwise, prompt the pursuer to cease romantic advances in the face of rejection. Rather, the pursuer feels justified to persist as, in his or her own perception of reality, this is also what the victim desires and the achievement will be worth it. The pursuer experiences more distress as continued pursuit attempts fail and the goal of a relationship with the desired person appears more unlikely. Given the amplified value of the relationship to the pursuer, the rejection results in increased commitment to the goal and increased reliance on rationalizations to make self-serving sense of the rejection. In due course, this rationalization process detaches the pursuer’s perceptions further from the reality that their pursuit is unwanted. The internal processing described by relational goal pursuit theory provides opportunities for clinical intervention in terms of addressing emotion, cognitive, and behavioral regulation and is of value to the field. However, there is scant literature that empirically assesses the theory in its entirety. Providing such evidence was a major impetus for Study 1 (Chapter 4) in which relational goal pursuit theory is empirically investigated thoroughly. In the next section, I discuss the existing literature and then describe the core relational goal pursuit theory variable of interest in Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5): rationalization.

Relational Goal Pursuit Theory: What the Literature Says. In sum, relational goal pursuit theory proposes that obsessive relational intrusion behavior emerges due to the interplay of an individual’s goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding, and rationalization tendencies. Existing empirical literature provides promising results that confirm the theory’s validity and relevance to the obsessive relational intrusion field (e.g., Cupach, et al., 2011; Dardis & Gidycz, 2019; Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Spitzberg et al., 2014; Wheatley et al., 2021). However, the exact constructs comprised within the relational

goal pursuit model are inconsistently represented, with research incorporating different combinations of the variables to represent the model. Further, and of great significance to this thesis, rationalization has received little empirical attention despite being a core concept of relational goal pursuit theory.

Generally, there is support for the constructs of relational goal pursuit theory, albeit dispersed across a variety of different research pieces. Johnson and Thompson (2016) conceptualized relational goal pursuit theory as rumination and affective flooding only, with support emerging for the relevance of each of these variables. Results of their study suggested 52% of convicted ex-intimate stalking offenders (i.e., severe obsessive relational intrusion) experienced rumination, 40% reported anger toward their victim, and 59% reported feeling emotionally hurt by their victim (i.e., affective flooding). Thus, findings of this study are supportive of two general concepts (i.e., rumination and affective flooding) of relational goal pursuit theory among a highly relevant population, but do not provide insights to the model as a whole. Dardis and Gidycz (2017) incorporated three constructs of relational goal pursuit theory (i.e., rumination, goal linking, affective flooding) and found the model to significantly predict minor obsessive relational intrusion behaviors. Cupach et al. (2011) has provided the most comprehensive account of the relational goal pursuit model, by including four of the five core variables: goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, and affective flooding. In this case, the overall model significantly predicted obsessive relational intrusion, with self-efficacy and rumination noted to each account for a unique amount of variation, dependent upon which partner instigated the relationship dissolution. However, neither goal-linking nor affective flooding were found to be uniquely relevant.

Similarly, Spitzberg et al.'s (2014) relational goal pursuit theory model comprised of goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding, and face sensitivity. While not part of the original relational goal pursuit theory, the concept of face sensitivity draws from earlier

work that suggests an individual presents a self-constructed concept of his- or herself (i.e., face) that he or she wishes to internalize and wants others to accept (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Perpetrators of obsessive relational intrusion are theorized to be sensitive to rejection of this face (i.e., face sensitivity), given the high value placed on validation from the victim (Spitzberg et al., 2014). In this model, both subfactors of rumination (i.e., persistence and affect) uniquely predicted perpetration. However, self-efficacy, goal linking, and affective flooding did not.

Evidently, there is still room for exploration of the relational goal pursuit theory. The literature provides support for variants of the relational goal pursuit model in general, and, more specifically, suggests some constructs could be more critical within the model than others when considered independently. However, the literature sheds little light on rationalization and leaves scope for the current research to explore how this variable contributes to obsessive relational intrusion (Study 2, Chapter 4) and IPV in general (Study 3, Chapter 5).

The Relevance of Rationalization: Where Comfort Causes More Harm than Good

I focus now specifically on rationalization, and then discuss its relevance to IPV and the approach to rationalization adopted within this thesis. To review, rationalization is an unconscious tendency to focus on self-serving explanations in order to make sense of and interpret the world in such a way that an individual feels justified, irrespective of evidence to the contrary (Spitzberg et al., 2014). This is a specific cognitive style that lends itself to the self-justification of potential negative thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Cupach et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). In the context of relational goal pursuit theory, and as investigated in Study 1 (Chapter 4), rationalization is integral in enabling a pursuer to pursue within obsessive relational intrusion behavior. Without rationalization to distort and suppress, it seems the pursuer would be forced to confront the feedback of negative feelings and

thoughts and this would make it difficult (or at least less comfortable) to persist. Thus, it seems, according to relational goal pursuit theory, rationalization is relied upon by the pursuer to make sense of the rejection from the victim in such a way that they are able to maintain the belief that they can and will form an intimate relationship. It seems possible, then, that rationalization might also enable other antisocial behavior that would normally be attached to negative affective feedback (e.g., broader IPV behavior) and I explore this further in Study 2 (Chapter 5).

Rationalization happens unconsciously and automatically to create a narrative that, if it were true, would redact uncomfortable emotions. The complication is that the individual who is rationalizing believes the rationalization's version of reality, which results in reduced negative feelings such as sadness and anxiety. However, this leads to the person becoming more and more detached from the *real* reality, as experienced by those around them, and less likely to feel empathy or remorse (Dobash & Dobash, 2011). As a result, rationalizations can contribute to disconnection from the experiences of others. While it might, at face value, sound adaptive to avoid a "bad" feeling, the cost of doing so can be high and, in relation to violence at least, damaging. This is because the unconscious process of rationalization promotes a cognitive style that misinterprets the intentions of others and trivializes their needs and suffering in order to remove internal experiences of anxiety and negative affect. This distortion of reality promotes thoughts and behaviors that facilitate disinhibited behavior that might not occur if the initial negative affect was processed in a more connected and adaptive manner. Thus, it seems possible that rationalization could also be a part of the internal processing for a perpetrator of violence outside of obsessive relational intrusion.

While theoretically rationalization has sound links with obsessive relational intrusion (Cupach et al., 2000) and appears to be theoretically critical within relational goal pursuit theory (e.g., Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014), it has received far less research attention than the

other constructs. Literature outside of obsessive relational intrusion work, however, has established links between rationalization and other antisocial and violent behaviors. As Brody and Costa (2020) identified, rationalization has been connected with shoplifting (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), contract murder (Levi, 1981), sex crimes (Rush Burkey, 2015), and war crimes such as genocide (Bryant et al., 2018; Lifton, 1986). This evidence seems to lend itself to the argument that rationalization could actually be relevant to broader violence such as IPV. From a clinical perspective, rationalization also could be key to understanding IPV, as highlighted by forensic psychologist, Reid Meloy (1998). Meloy noted that he frequently observed rationalization defenses from clients presenting for treatment related to fixation and stalking behaviors. Given the links between stalking and obsessive relational intrusion, and obsessive relational intrusion and IPV (as earlier discussed), it seems highly likely that rationalization could also be relevant to IPV.

Despite the theoretical and clinical support of rationalization, to the author's knowledge, there seems to be no explicit rationale provided within the literature for the omission of rationalization from past studies. From a theoretical standpoint, rationalization seems to be the crucial process a person engages to "make peace" with their own antisocial behavior. Consequently, the re-introduction of rationalization to the empirical evaluation of relational goal pursuit theory would seem vital to providing a comprehensive understanding of the application of this theory to obsessive relational intrusion and, in extension, to IPV. Given this, Study 1 (Chapter 4) of the current research advances literature by conducting a thorough empirical evaluation of relational goal pursuit theory, incorporating all five of the original variables (goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding, rationalization). Specifically, Study 1 aims to create a measure of rationalization and incorporate this measure, along with the existing relational goal pursuit theory battery of measures, to further explore this theory and evaluate if the inclusion of rationalization improves the theory's account of

obsessive relational intrusion behavior.

Additionally, as it seems highly likely that rationalization could also have application beyond unwanted romantic pursuit, I explore rationalization further in Study 2 (Chapter 5). Obsessive relational intrusion can be considered a subtype of IPV and there is considerable overlap of obsessive relational intrusion behavior and the three main subtypes of IPV: physical violence (interactional contact, coercive violence), sexual violence (hyperintimacy, coercive violence), and psychological violence (mediated contact, harassment and intimidation, coercive threats). The link between obsessive relational intrusion (often labelled as stalking) and IPV is also well established in the literature (e.g., Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Norris et al., 2011). Thus, in Study 2 (Chapter 5), I explore the role of rationalization in relation to a broader range of IPV behavior and propose individuals with stronger tendencies to rationalize will also report more IPV behavior as the rationalization process enables them to internally justify engaging in such behavior.

Study 2 also incorporates rationalization as part of a broader framework of constructs that interplay to contribute to IPV. Specifically, I propose that negative interactions between men and women outside of early attachment figures (i.e., negative contact) likely generalize and contribute to general negative attitudes toward the other gender as a group (i.e., sexism). I propose that, then, both of these processes (negative contact and sexism) could contribute to a tendency to rely on rationalization, and rationalization, then, facilitates the perpetration of IPV. Specifically, Study 2 includes a sequential mediation model of negative cross-gender contact, sexism, rationalization, and IPV. There are two constructs (cross-gender contact; Allport, 1954; and sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996) relevant to this model that are yet to be reviewed in this chapter. As a lead in to contact theory, I first discuss attachment theory and its contributions to IPV literature because attachment theory focuses narrowly on important early attachment figures, where contact theory considers the impact of many. After reviewing

contact theory, I will then overview feminist perspectives in relation to IPV and outline how such theories inform my research. Specifically, I will introduce sexism via feminist perspectives and review the approach to sexism and IPV adopted within the empirical chapters of the thesis.

It Takes a Community: Considering Relationships beyond Early Attachment Figures by Applying Contact Theory

A novel aspect of this thesis is the exploration of relationships between men and women across a variety of contexts and their associations with IPV perpetration (Study 2, Chapter 5). Historically, the main relationship of interest to adult romantic relationship behavior has been the attachment relationship that stems from the bond with a primary caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988). Attachment theory has long been relied upon to provide insights to behavior and relationships, and a wealth of research has made significant advances in the way we understand such interactions. Developing from this research, there is scope to also explore possible connections between other significant relationships and IPV. In this section, I discuss attachment theory and its account of IPV before moving to contact theory as a means of assessing the associations between IPV and relationships outside the primary caregiver. As will be discussed, much literature supports that certain attachment styles are associated with IPV perpetration, and this is valuable research. However, in recognizing the complexity of IPV and the likelihood that many factors influence the propensity for IPV perpetration, there is also a possibility that relationships beyond those with early attachment figures have an impact. I later explore this possibility in Study 2 (Chapter 5).

Attachment Theory: Does that One Bad Apple Really Spoil Intimate Relationships?

Attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988) suggests warm, responsive parenting produces infants who feel secure in their environment and are comfortable in

exploration, returning to check in with parents from time to time as a safe base and source of comfort. By comparison, cold and rejecting parenting is proposed to produce children who tend to avoid contact with parents, appearing instead to have a preference for exploration of the world around them in the absence of accompaniment and connection. These, and other, attachment patterns are formed in infancy and early childhood, and have been proposed to have long term effects on an individual's behavior, capacity to regulate and self-soothe, and their ability to connect with and respond to others in a healthy manner (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1998). Attachment styles (e.g., secure, avoidant, anxious; Ainsworth et al., 1978) are considered relatively stable from childhood to adulthood, although can adapt or change in response to relationship or therapeutic experiences (Feeney, 1999; Wallin, 2007). Of relevance to this thesis is the proposition that childhood attachment styles impact adult romantic relationship behavior (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Infants who develop a secure attachment with their primary caregivers (i.e., early attachment figures) are proposed to develop confidence and assurance to support the healthy development of adult relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) as they trust it is safe to connect with their partner who will respond to their needs. However, if the infant-caregiver relationship is disrupted (e.g., physical separation; neglect; physical, emotional, or sexual abuse), the child becomes more likely to develop maladaptive ways of relating to others (e.g., insecure attachment: anxious or avoidant). This difficulty in accepting and responding to connection with others is theorized to persist into adult romantic relationships. Research suggests individuals with insecure attachments experience difficulty interpreting social cues from romantic partners, tending instead to respond as though their partner had treated them in the negative way their early attachment figure had. Consequently, individuals with insecure attachment styles are prone to inappropriate responses that contribute to relationship dissolution (Feeney & Noller, 1994).

Even at an intuitive level, it is clear that disrupted attachment styles (i.e., any attachment style other than secure) are likely to contribute to conflict within relationships that may lead to IPV. Attachment forms the blueprint for how people ensure their needs are met and drives later attempts to maintain a sense of security within a relationship. A blueprint that tells you that a partner will leave you even when there is no evidence of this (anxious attachment; a paradox of cravings for closeness and insecurity around the responsiveness and availability of others to meet one's needs) or that people cannot be trusted so not to form close bonds (avoidant attachment: discomfort with emotional closeness and disclosure, and trusting or depending on others) is unlikely to create healthy responses to a partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). This notion is supported by research that suggests the feelings of abandonment triggered by perceived conflict in a relationship are particularly intense for those who formed an insecure attachment in early life (Patton et al., 2010). Indeed, both anxious and avoidant attachment have been linked to physical violence perpetration in IPV (e.g., Spencer et al., 2021), and anxious attachment has been frequently linked to unwanted pursuit behaviors in IPV (e.g., Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). Given the consistency between childhood and adult means of connection within relationships proposed by attachment theory (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987), these early childhood experiences of relating to a caregiver have a well-supported relationship with IPV. Thus, it could be that other relationships also are related to this behavior.

Attachment literature has provided insights to the backgrounds and internal processes that contribute to IPV perpetration. Such literature lays groundwork that tells us that relationship experiences outside of a specific romantic partner have an impact on behaviors within intimate relationships and, specifically, on IPV perpetration. Attachment remains highly relevant to the field and has provided reasons to look beyond relationships with early attachment figures when attempting to understand perpetration of IPV. First, as attachment

style is developed in early childhood, there is restricted opportunity for preventative measures, leaving a necessity for research to discover other related constructs that might provide greater scope for practical intervention. Second, as IPV does not develop across *each* intimate relationship for insecurely attached individuals, or for *every* individual fitting this attachment profile (i.e., insecure attachment), it is likely that other individual characteristics are also of relevance to IPV. Further, attachment theory's tendency to focus on exclusively internal, individual factors has been identified as somewhat insular and possibly unable, on its own, to inform a framework that addresses large-scale social and policy changes (Park, 2016), such as those needed to address the pervasive and systemic nature of IPV. Similarly, attachment theory does not account for the potential impact of other influential relationship experiences (e.g., friends, family members) and how these might shape connections and behavior in intimate relationships.

Evidently, there is scope to develop the work of attachment in relation to IPV and the current body of research does this. Specifically, in addressing the above areas for development, I introduce contact theory (Allport, 1954) in Study 2 (Chapter 5). Contact theory provides an account of how interactions between men and women can impact general views toward a gender group. I propose that, like attachment relationships, negative contact experiences between men and women in a variety of relationship contexts (e.g., romantic partner, friends, family members, parents) are also noteworthy and could relate to IPV. Specifically, I propose negative contact with the opposite gender to be associated with gender-based prejudice, rationalization, and, through these processes, more frequent IPV perpetration. Next, I introduce and discuss contact theory in the context of IPV between men and women.

Contact Theory: A Little Goes a Long Way with Negative Interactions Between Men and Women

Existing literature has tended to focus on associations between attachment relationships and IPV perpetration. However, it is possible that a variety of interactions with a variety of people (beyond attachment figures) could impact beliefs about certain social groups and, therefore, impact responses to individual members of such groups (such as intimate partners). In this thesis I explore this possibility by considering how interactions between men and women in a variety of contexts relate to IPV. The rationale for this is that my focus is on IPV within *heterosexual* relationships (while noting this is not the only relationship context in which IPV occurs). Heterosexual IPV is inherently related to gender – that is, it involves violent behavior by men toward women, and women toward men. Thus, in the context of this thesis, men and women are considered to belong to distinct and at times, opposing social groups. In order to explore how interactions between men and women across relationship contexts impact IPV behavior, I introduce contact theory (Allport, 1954), a social psychological theory established in reference to racial prejudice. In applying this theory within the context of IPV in Study 2 (Chapter 5), I aim to address the gaps in the literature around how gendered social interactions impact behavior, and how relationships beyond attachment relate to IPV perpetration by both men and women.

Originally formalised by Allport (1954), the contact hypothesis suggests positive interactions between individual members of opposing social groups can contribute to positive attitudinal shifts that generalise to the broader social group. Via such interactions (i.e., contact), it is proposed that general attitudes toward outgroups improve such that prejudice is reduced. That is, more positive contact with members of an outgroup is posited to reduce intergroup prejudice and anxiety, in turn, increasing the levels of trust between the social groups and improving intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). While initially

explored in terms of racism, the effects of positive contact on attitudinal shift have now been reported across a broad array of outgroup targets (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental health, physical disability, neurocognitive differences, and age; Eller & Abrams, 2007; King et al., 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Voci & Hewstone, 2003; West & Hewstone, 2012; West et al., 2014).

A core process of this theory is the generalization of positivity from an interaction with a single group member to the entire outgroup (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). An example of this was noted by Barlow et al. (2012): when segregation ended in America during the 1950s racial integration increased and, consequently, interactions and contact between members of different racial groups increased. This facilitated increased positive interactions between individuals of different races (i.e., positive inter-racial contact). Since this time, the separation of social groups based on their race has been largely and socially condemned, which could, at least in part, be indicative of a reduction in racial prejudice. From a contact theory perspective, this suggests as individual members of the two racial groups experienced increased positive interactions, they began to view the entire opposing racial group more positively (i.e., less prejudicial). Indeed, research suggests such positive contact supports the development of social cohesion and is associated with reductions in prejudice and social distance (e.g., Barlow et al., 2009; Paolini et al., 2007; Paolini et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

During the formation of the contact hypothesis, Allport (1954) proposed that certain situational conditions must be met in order for prejudice to be reduced. Such contact was referred to as “optimal contact”, with the conditions including support from relevant authorities, cooperation between the groups, common goals, and equal group status. Research has suggested greater reductions in prejudice can be achieved when optimal conditions are met (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), but only to a *very* small and possibly negligible degree.

Furthermore, enforcing optimal conditions within research has been noted to likely reduce the ecological validity of findings, as it is improbable that such conditions would frequently occur in naturalistic settings (Dixon et al., 2005). In terms of the current research, it could be argued that contact occurring between men and women has not achieved these optimal conditions (e.g., equal group status) and this could, theoretically, account for the persistence of gender-based prejudice between men and women across many centuries. However, research is moving away from the “Utopian” concept of optimal contact and toward more ecologically valid means of conceptualising contact (Dixon et al., 2005).

In addition to this shift, there have been several other advances in contact theory research. Early contact researchers predominantly applied the theory in the context of positive contact (i.e., positive intergroup interactions; see Hewstone, 1996; Mann, 1959; MacKenzie, 1948; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). However, prejudice remains a dominant issue in modern society irrespective of a high number of opportunities for largely positive interactions between people of varying backgrounds. In line with this, it has become evident that negative contact also impacts attitudes toward outgroups (Barlow et al., 2012). Negative information tends to be attended to, processed, and stored with greater vigilance, and therefore becomes more salient than positive information (Baumeister et al., 2001). This means, in the context of contact theory, the salience of group membership is heightened during negative compared to positive intergroup contact (Paolini et al., 2010). Thus, the increased salience of group membership in the context of negative contact contributes to a stronger negative impact on outgroup attitudes than the positive impact of positive interactions. That is, under certain conditions, negative contact can be more detrimental to intergroup attitudes than positive contact is beneficial (Barlow et al., 2012).

Another more recent development in contact theory is the discovery that a more comprehensive account of contact is achieved by observing the frequency with which contact

occurs, as well as the intensity of the subjective emotional experience of the persons involved (i.e., how positive or negative the person found the contact to be; Hayward et al., 2017). In line with work on negative contact (Barlow et al., 2012), Study 2 (Chapter 5) focuses on the impact of negative contact (over and above the impact of positive cross-gender contact) between men and women (labelled herein as cross-gender contact) in terms of both frequency and intensity, and subsequent gender-based attitudes.

As noted, contact theory has been predominantly explored in the context of race but is developing traction in other research contexts. Study 2 (Chapter 5) contributes to such literature by exploring the theory in the interpretation of IPV between men and women. Specifically, I propose there to be an association between negative cross-gender contact and IPV that is sequentially mediated via sexism and rationalization. There is preliminary evidence to support an association between contact and sexism. For example, male adolescents who have a greater number of heterosexual intimate relationships have been found to also hold stronger sexist attitudes toward girls (de Lemus et al., 2010). This could indicate that those adolescents who were involved in a higher number of intimate relationships also experienced negative interactions with their partner (e.g., relationship termination) that generalized to the broader gender group (i.e., sexism), irrespective of the likely positive interactions that also occurred within the relationships. Thus, there is evidence to support a potential connection between negative cross-gender contact and sexism toward the other gender (for males at least).

Following the link between negative cross-gender contact and sexism, the next step in the proposed model of Study 2 (Chapter 5) is an association between sexism and rationalization. If negative cross-gender contact creates a general animosity toward the broader gender group (i.e., sexism), there is likely a high degree of negative affect that arises from holding prejudice toward a group with whom there is such common interaction in

everyday life (i.e., for men, women; for women, men). Thus, a cognitive style that provides a self-serving lens that justifies prejudice (i.e., rationalization) likely aids in the reduction of associated negative affect and distorts intentions of the other gender to align with prejudicial beliefs. The final link in the model is between rationalization and IPV. This distorted viewpoint of rationalization contributes to a detachment from “normal” emotional experiences of the self and others, and obstructs affective feedback that would, perhaps, stimulate empathy and make holding prejudicial attitudes uncomfortable. Thus, it could be that rationalization provides a cognitive justification for sexism and contributes to a perpetrator’s sense of entitlement in acting on sexist beliefs to keep a partner in line (e.g., IPV). In doing so, it is proposed that rationalization provides a reason for the perpetrator to be violent toward a partner and minimizes the sense of wrongdoing, guilt or shame that would otherwise arise.

In the next section I discuss the final piece of the puzzle for this thesis’ empirical investigation of IPV: sexism. As previously mentioned, sexism’s positioning in IPV research is heavily informed by feminist theory and this thesis is no exception. Thus, I begin by discussing the many merits of feminist perspectives in IPV literature before moving on to discuss sexism and outline the approach to sexism adopted in Study 2 (Chapter 5) and Study 3 (Chapter 6) of this thesis.

Are All Men and All Women Tarred with the Same Brush? Building on Feminist Approaches by Exploring Sexism.

Feminist approaches have made considerable contributions to the way in which IPV is understood and have informed interventions at the individual and societal level. In challenging the patriarchal society, feminism has led the way for the exploration of gender-based attitudes and expectations. Thus, from feminism emerges a research focus on sexism. In this thesis, feminist works have greatly informed Study 2 (Chapter 5) and Study 3 (Chapter

6), in which I incorporate sexist attitudes in accounting for IPV perpetration as well as responses to men's violence toward women (established earlier as the most common and lethal form of IPV). Of note, this research is conducted with the intention to remain cognizant that men and women can hold prejudice against each other *and* also toward members of their own gender. Thus, I build from feminist perspectives by examining men's and women's attitudes toward each other (Study 2, Chapter 5) and also men's and women's sexism specifically toward women (Study 3, Chapter 6). Women's sexism toward women is underexplored, particularly in relation to IPV, and highlights that some women might adhere to patriarchal expectations of members of their own gender. In the following section, I first review feminist approaches in relation to IPV before moving on to discuss sexism and its positioning with this thesis.

Feminist Approaches to IPV

Feminist approaches to IPV have played a critical role in understanding such behavior over the past 50 years and have contributed to a vast array of public campaigns, social commentary, advocacy, legislation amendments, and preventative and intervention programs. While multiple feminist perspectives exist (Saulnier, 1996; Simpson, 1989), it is common for such approaches to connect gender and power in order to explain gendered violence (Brubaker, 2021). A traditional feminist viewpoint is that IPV is an effect of the patriarchal society in which men are afforded dominance and women are preordained to be subordinate (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The structure of a patriarchal society is established within cultural and social settings, and becomes reinforced via interpersonal relationships, as well as via the variation in resources (e.g., education, employment) to which men and women have access. Within intimate relationships, the gender differential between men and women becomes salient as authority and decision-making draws attention to perceptions and expectations of the power assigned to each member of the union (Lorber, 2001). Traditionally, and presently

in many households and cultures, the male in a heterosexual relationship is assigned the majority of decision making and authority tasks, whereas the female is assigned tasks central to nurturing and caretaking for the family unit (Johnson, 2005). Feminist perspectives propose this arrangement filters down from social and political messages, and essentially maintains women in a position of reliance on men (Simpson, 1989). Men are in charge of resources and women must seek permission from men to access these resources (Lenton, 1955).

From a feminist perspective, then, IPV is a tool through which men assert their authority over women to maintain the status quo. Thus, men are conceptualized to be the primary perpetrators of IPV and are viewed to have maintained power differentials set by society within the home for generations. Men are proposed to achieve this by using IPV behaviors such as physical and sexual assault, and controlling behavior (e.g., intimidation, isolation, economic withholding; McPhail et al., 2007). In line with this proposition, research suggests that male perpetrated IPV is more common in cultures where gender inequality is more pronounced. While there are some anomalies (e.g., the Nordic paradox; see Gracia et al., 2019 for a detailed review), this is generally found to be consistent across cultures. For example, among Hispanic populations, where traditional gender roles are highly valued (Galanti, 2019), it has been found that the risk of IPV is increased in contexts where both partners are working as opposed to the female being unemployed (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). These findings are in line with the idea that a woman working outside of the home is a threat to a man's control of power and status as the breadwinner, thus he needs to assert himself in other ways (e.g., IPV) to maintain a sense of power. In this way, IPV becomes a mechanism to maintain patriarchal homeostasis.

Feminist perspectives suggest the patriarchal system has existed for an extensive amount of time, and yet feminist theories have a hopeful outlook and largely view the power

imbalance between men and women as changeable. Men's perceived privilege is not, from a feminist perspective, biologically driven and therefore can be altered. As many feminist perspectives view IPV as a behavior that men have *learned* to use in order to maintain their privilege over women (Miedzian, 1991), IPV is viewed as something that can, therefore, be reversed with intervention. The Duluth Model (Pence & Paymar, 1993) is one such intervention that was championed by the feminist perspective. The Duluth Model is a group intervention program and is largely educational in approach. The program aims to challenge men's perceived right to control women and uses tools such as the "power and control wheel" to represent the ways in which specific IPV tactics manipulate power within a relationship. Feminist perspectives also promote societal level changes to challenge the cultural, social, and political systems that have maintained patriarchal order and promoted IPV as a private matter rather than one of public concern. In doing so, feminism campaigns for gender imbalances and the consequences to be a societal responsibility, rather than the burden falling on those who are directly impacted.

Study 2 (Chapter 5) and Study 3 (Chapter 6) both complement the work of feminist approaches in the IPV field. Study 2 explores the associations between gendered interactions (contact) and gender-based attitudes (sexism) with IPV. Study 3 explores the relationship between gender-based attitudes (sexism) and general societal responses to violence against women. In doing so, Study 2 (Chapter 5) adds to the literature that attempts to understand IPV via gender relations and Study 3 (Chapter 6) contributes to the groundwork established by feminist theory in challenging the societal and cultural beliefs that minimize the accountability of male IPV perpetrators. Study 3 also draws from feminist approaches to look at how women might internalize anti-woman attitudes and react negatively to attempts to stem male violence towards women. This approach is in line with feminist perspectives that recognize, through a history of male dominance, that women might have habituated to

oppression (McPhail et al., 2007). Accordingly, Study 3 (Chapter 6) explores women's sexism toward women (along with men's sexism to women) in relation to responses to men's violence. I propose that women's sexism toward women (as well as men's sexism) could contribute to less accountability for male perpetrated violence toward women. In the next section I will discuss sexism and describe how it is integrated in the empirical chapters.

Sexism: Attitudes toward a Broader Gender Group are Associated with Violence toward Individual Members of the Group

Feminist theories have provided valuable insights within the IPV context and have greatly informed the research in this thesis. Nonetheless, a limitation of feminist approaches is the emphasis on male perpetrated IPV, with less attention invested in accounting for female perpetrated IPV and women's sexism. I address this limitation by exploring whether sexism is one of the reasons men *and* women might engage in IPV (Study 2, Chapter 5), and if men's *and* women's sexism toward women contributes to beliefs that imply men's violence toward women is, in part at least, women's responsibility (Study 3, Chapter 6). In doing so, I hope to shed light on the mechanisms that promote both men's and women's IPV perpetration as well as attitudes from men and women that might maintain men's violence. In this section, I begin by overviewing sexism and then discuss connections between sexism, IPV, contact, and rationalization (relevant to Study 2, Chapter 5). I then discuss sexism's relationship with the ways in which men and women respond to men's violence toward women and the merit of exploring such responses (Study 3, Chapter 6), and I close the chapter with a summary and overview of the three empirical chapters that follow.

Ambivalent Sexism's Relationship with IPV is Ambivalent. Throughout the current thesis, I adopt a definition of sexism consistent with Glick and Fiske's (1996, 1999) work on ambivalent sexism. This conceptualization of sexism captures the conflict of the competing desires between men and women. On one hand, men and women are outgroups

and thus compete for resources; on the other hand, men and women seek comfort and intimacy from one another through intimate relationships. Accordingly, ambivalent sexism (sexism toward women; Glick & Fiske, 1996) and ambivalence toward men (sexism toward men; Glick & Fiske, 1999) propose sexism to comprise two components: the carrot and the stick. Specifically, benevolent sexism, the carrot, refers to a general view of women as pure, chaste, weak, and in need of men's protection. Hostile sexism, the stick, refers to a general deprecating attitude toward women as inferior to men, and a sense that women seek to control men and should be treated with contempt and punishment if they step out of line (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In the case of sexism toward men, there is also a carrot and a stick. Benevolent sexism, the carrot, is the admiration of men for the benefits their power offers to women in terms of protecting and providing in traditional relationship roles. Hostile sexism, the stick, is the resentment of men based on their abuse of power over women (Glick & Fiske, 1999).

The two components of ambivalent sexism (hostile sexism and benevolent sexism) align theoretically with IPV. By definition, hostile sexism is intuitively consistent with IPV. For example, the belief that a woman who stands up to a man is probably trying to control him and needs to be put back in her place by any means required, is consistent with hostile sexism and also seems to endorse, in this example, men's IPV. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, has a less clear relationship with IPV and does not align as clearly with physical and sexual assault components of IPV. Conceptually at least, benevolent sexism is more consistent with tactics of coercive control, surveillance, and obsessive relational intrusion. For example, an understanding of women that suggests they should focus on home tasks and not be burdened to "worry their pretty little heads" over finances is consistent with benevolent sexism and describes a financial aspect of coercive control. Thus, the relationship

between sexism and IPV appears to be nuanced, such that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism relate to IPV in different ways.

These associations between hostile and benevolent sexism and IPV are also echoed in the literature through a well-established link between hostile sexism and IPV, and a less clear description of the relationship between benevolent sexism and IPV. Hostile sexism has been linked with IPV via physical (Lynch & Renzetti, 2020; Renzetti et al., 2018), sexual (Morelli et al., 2016), and psychological (Cross et al., 2017; Juarros-Basterretxea et al., 2019; Martinez-Pecino & Duran, 2019) behaviors, as well as relationship problems such as power struggles (Cross & Overall, 2018). In contrast, benevolent sexism has been shown to dampen the risk of more overt IPV such as physical and sexual abuse in some research studies (Morelli et al., 2016) but not others (e.g., Radke et al., 2018; Renzetti et al., 2018). More consistently, benevolent sexism has been linked with beliefs and unhelpful responses to IPV (e.g., victim blaming) that might enable, or at least excuse, the perpetration of such behavior (e.g., Viki et al., 2004). Thus, it appears the relationship between sexism and IPV is complex. In recognition of this complexity, in this thesis I explore both benevolent and hostile sexism. As Study 2 (Chapter 5) focuses specifically on IPV perpetration, I focus on hostile sexism while controlling for any effects of benevolent sexism. In Study 3 (Chapter 6), the focus is exclusively on responses to men's violence toward women, so here, both hostile and benevolent sexism are investigated.

Exploring a Link Between Cross-gender Contact, Hostile Sexism, and Rationalization with IPV. To further clarify the relationship between sexism and IPV, Study 2 (Chapter 5) draws from existing literature by positioning sexism in the context of a broader model of IPV. Specifically, I propose there to be sequential relationships between negative cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV. There is underlying support for this model in literature that highlights associations between sexism, cross-gender contact, and

perceptions and likelihood of engaging in rape. Men who have more frequent and pleasant experiences with women generally (i.e., positive cross-gender contact), also have *lower* levels of hostile sexism, tend to endorse rape myth acceptance *less*, and self-report *less* likelihood of raping a woman even if there was no chance of being caught (Taschler & West, 2017). Of note, the exact nature of these relationships has not been thoroughly explored, nor has the influence of negative cross-gender contact been taken into account. However, there is at least preliminary evidence of links between cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, and IPV. Study 2 (Chapter 5) builds on this research to further understand the links between cross-gender contact and hostile sexism with IPV by also introducing a novel construct, rationalization.

Rationalization is generally understudied in relation to IPV, and so there is limited empirical work to draw from. However, what research is available supports the idea that there could be a cognitive distortion processes that occurs within the sexism – IPV relationship. For example, Cross et al. (2017) found that men who report stronger endorsement of hostile sexism tend to be more aggressive toward their partners (IPV) when they also perceive their partner (rightly or wrongly) to lack commitment to the relationship. While not conceptualized as rationalization within Cross et al.'s study, the perception of a lack of commitment from a partner in the absence of any evidence is a misperception akin to a distortion of reality (i.e., rationalization) that may suit the perpetrator's own agenda based on their belief system (i.e., sexism). Thus, there is, in part, some empirical evidence that could support links between contact, sexism, rationalization, and IPV. Study 2 (Chapter 5) therefore offers a point of novelty to the literature and is an opportunity to establish a better understanding of the nature of the relationships between contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV.

Men and Women can be Sexist toward Women. I move now to discuss Study 3 (Chapter 6) and the possible relationship between men's and women's sexism toward women and the ways in which people view and respond to men's violence. Research in this field is

scant. The focus in what literature there is has predominantly been on men's, and not women's, responses to violence toward women. Research is supportive of a link between sexist attitudes and leniency toward male perpetrators of sexual violence. For example, it has been found that beliefs that are consistent with sexism (e.g., the belief that women should adhere to traditional roles that elevate men in power and social dominance) are also associated with increased approval of a male aggressor's behavior in the context of rape allegations (Koepke et al., 2014). Other research has explored both men's and women's sexism toward women and responses to men's violence. It has been proposed that both men and women who applaud women's adherence to traditionally feminine behaviors (i.e., benevolent sexism) are more likely to view female victims as being responsible for sexual violence and are more likely to report the targeted woman, rather than the male perpetrator, as being in violation of appropriate behavioral expectations (Viki et al., 2004).

It seems that the limited literature in this field is suggesting that both men's and women's sexist attitudes toward women contribute broadly to distorted perceptions of male sexual violence that dismiss the culpability of a male perpetrator and condemn the targeted female (i.e., victim-blaming; Whiting et al., 2014). Based on such findings, it seems men's and women's sexism, *toward women* in particular, is not only relevant to perpetration of violence (as discussed earlier), but also plays a part in how people form ideas about, and responses to, men's violence toward women (the most common form of IPV) by alleviating blame from male perpetrators.

Is Society's Scrutiny of IPV Misplaced? As well as exploring men's and women's sexism toward women, Study 3 (Chapter 6) also explores *responses to* (rather than perpetration of) men's violence toward women. I now move focus to discussing the merit of adopting this approach. Women targeted with physical and sexual violence by men frequently have their character, motives, and prior behavior scrutinized in a way that unreasonably

minimizes harm to the victim and attempts to diminish perpetrator responsibility (Chapleau et al., 2007; Koepke et al., 2014). This victim-blaming contributes to a culture in which violence toward women is tolerated (Chahal et al., 2021; Simpson, 1989; Follingstad et al., 2021). Thus, how individuals and broader society respond to men's violence toward women is likely to have an impact, at some level, on the likelihood of such behavior occurring and so there is merit in understanding such responses.

Study 3 (Chapter 6) evolved from research that explores associations between hostile and benevolent sexism with two forms of action in response to violence toward women: feminist action and protective action (Radke et al., 2018). These responses to violence are considered forms of the broader term *collective action*, which refers to action (e.g., signing petitions, advocacy) taken on behalf of, and intended to improve conditions for, a specific, usually disadvantaged, social group (Wright et al., 1990). Thus, in terms of Study 3 (Chapter 6), women are considered a specific social group that is disadvantaged by men's physical and sexual violence. The endorsement of feminist action and protective action, then, identifies the strategies an individual sees as most fitting to instigate change that will improve conditions (i.e., reduce violence) for women.

Specifically, feminist action refers to actions that intend to elicit change by challenging gender inequality and includes behaviors such as participating in protest groups, individually opposing observed sexism, and boycotting companies that are not viewed as supporting gender equality. Protective action refers to behaviors engaged in on behalf of women, in such a way that gender inequality is accepted as inevitable, and the aim is to protect women from the perils of it. Examples of protective action behaviors include arming women with weapons, self-defense classes to enable women to protect themselves from men's violence, and encouraging women to avoid travelling alone at night. Benevolent and hostile sexism have been linked with an individual's willingness to engage in feminist action

and protective action, with results suggesting the relationship could differ for men compared to women. Radke et al. (2018) found men who more strongly believed that women should be pure and chaste (i.e., high benevolent sexism) were also more willing to engage in action to guard them from men's violence (i.e., protective action). However, the effect was not replicated for women. Whilst only explored at the zero-order correlation level, for both genders there was an association between views of women as being generally inferior to men (i.e., high hostile sexism) and low willingness to engage in feminist action. Specifically, results provide preliminary support for an association between sexist attitudes and willingness to respond to gender inequality, and suggest that, for benevolent sexism at least, gender could be implicated. It seems, then, that sexism likely plays a role not just in IPV perpetration but also in what people are willing to do in order to prevent IPV. Extending on this research, Study 3 (Chapter 6) investigates whether hostile sexism and benevolent sexism have an association with responses to men's violence toward women that suggest that it is men's responsibility to stop being violent, and responses that suggest it is women's responsibility to avoid such violence.

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the novel theoretical frameworks and empirical literature that inform my work. To close the chapter, I will first summarize the theoretical links with my own work and highlight the gaps in the literature I address. Following this, I present a summary and overview of the three empirical chapters (Study 1 [Chapter 4]; Study 2 [Chapter 5]; Study 3 [Chapter 6]).

Chapter Overview

Apparent from the evidence presented in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, IPV is a diverse range of behaviors and, overwhelmingly, it is women who are most often targeted. However, women can also be the perpetrators of IPV, and this is understudied in the literature. When it

comes to understanding IPV, several core theories have provided insights, although there is work still to be done as knowledge gaps remain. This chapter began by reviewing evolutionary theory, which suggests IPV to be an undesirable and dangerous mate retention strategy. I then described links between evolutionary theory and relational goal pursuit theory that proposes obsessive relational intrusion (a form of unwanted pursuit in IPV) to be facilitated by a series of dysregulated internal processes in the pursuer: goal-linking (expecting that the intimate relationship will lead to other great achievements), self-efficacy in relation to the relational goal (expecting that they can form the relationship with enough effort), affective flooding (overwhelming emotions), rumination (persistent thoughts about the relational goal), and rationalization (a self-justifying distorted perspective of reality).

From here, I focused on the contribution of rationalization to the relational goal pursuit theory of obsessive relational intrusion (explored in Study 1, Chapter 4), and then discussed the potential for rationalization to also be relevant to broader IPV behavior (explored in Study 2, Chapter 5). The next section overviewed attachment theory in relation to IPV and proposed contact theory as a means of extending the work of attachment by looking beyond the relationships with early attachment figures in accounting for IPV (explored in Study 2, Chapter 5). After this, I discussed feminist approaches to IPV and the ways in which feminism has informed research of sexist attitudes. Then, I finished the review part of this chapter by describing ambivalent sexism and IPV, and the need for a focus on men's *and* women's sexism and responses to (rather than just perpetration of) men's violence toward women (Study 3, Chapter 6).

Gaps in the Literature Addressed in the Thesis

It is clear from this chapter that further research is needed to address specific knowledge gaps in IPV literature. Throughout this thesis I address these gaps. In response to the oversight of the role of rationalization in IPV and how this could interplay with other

factors in relation to IPV, I explore rationalization in Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5). While much research recognizes that IPV occurs within a social context (e.g., Renzetti, 2009), there is a paucity of research that explores the associations between social relationships (outside of early attachment figures) and IPV perpetration. In answer to this, I investigate associations between cross-gender contact (social relationships) and IPV in Study 2 (Chapter 5), and also include men's and women's sexism and rationalization within this study. Women's IPV perpetration has not received as much attention as men's IPV in the literature and so there remain questions around whether the same factors are associated with IPV perpetrated by men and women. I address this by including both men's and women's IPV perpetration in Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5). Finally, literature has, understandably, tended to focus on IPV *perpetration* with less focus on societal responses despite suggestions that culture and political contexts can influence IPV prevalence. Thus, in Study 3 (Chapter 6), I explore if (men's and women's) sexism toward women is related to responses to men's violence toward women. Overall, the series of three studies herein addresses multiple gaps in the literature and incorporates novel applications of existing constructs to provide insights to IPV and responses to men's violence toward women.

Overview of Studies

Each study has been written as a journal article and submitted for publication. Study 1 (Chapter 4; Brownhalls et al., 2019) and Study 3 (Chapter 6; Brownhalls et al., 2021) have been published, and Study 2 (Chapter 5) is currently under review. A brief overview of each study is included below, with a description of study aims, design, and analyses presented later in the thesis during the relevant chapter for each study.

Study 1 (Chapter 4) – Reintroducing Rationalization: A Study of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory of Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion. As mentioned, relational goal pursuit theory has been well explored in the literature, but with a notable

absence of attention paid to rationalization. Study 1 aims to clarify the role of rationalization within the relational goal pursuit theory of obsessive relational intrusion and does so in relation to both men's and women's perpetration. The study draws from the US population ($n = 379$, 46% women) using an online survey in which participants completed a questionnaire of demographic information, relational goal pursuit scales (Spitzberg et al., 2014), a rationalization scale developed for this study (Brownhalls et al., 2019), and an obsessive relational intrusion perpetration scale (Spitzberg et al., 2014). A series of hierarchical regressions were conducted to measure the variance accounted for by each individual component of the relational goal pursuit theory in relation to each of the eight clusters of obsessive relational pursuit behavior.

Study 2 (Chapter 5) – Once Bitten, Twice Shy: Hostile Sexism and Rationalization Mediate the Relationship between Negative Cross-Gender Contact and Intimate Partner Violence for Men and Women. Study 2 (Chapter 5) draws from the findings of Study 1 (Chapter 4) and existing literature in the attachment and feminism fields. The aim is to investigate a novel model of IPV that proposes that more negative cross-gender contact in a variety of relationship contexts (caregiver, romantic, general/platonic) will be associated with more frequent IPV perpetration, and that this association will occur sequentially via hostile sexism (toward the other gender) and rationalization. I propose, for example, that a man who has more frequent negative interactions with a female caregiver/dates/friends will also have a stronger general view of women as needing to be kept “in their place” (hostile sexism). This belief system then contributes to a distorted view of reality that skews the intentions of others and makes the man feel justified (rationalization) to adhere to his belief system. Through this process of self-justification, the man is likely to feel entitled to use whatever behavior he deems necessary (e.g., yelling, hitting, scaring) toward his partner and, thus, IPV behavior is likely to be more frequent. The model is tested across

male and female perpetrated IPV, drawing from a US population ($n = 886$, 50.6% women). An online survey included a questionnaire of demographic information, measures of cross-gender contact in caregiver, romantic, and general/platonic relationship contexts (created specifically for this study drawing from past literature), sexism (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Glick & Fiske, 1996; Ambivalence toward Men Inventory, Glick & Fiske, 1999), rationalization (based on the measure developed for Study 1), and IPV (The Conflict Tactics Scale Revised Short Form; Straus & Douglas, 2004). Three sequential mediation analyses were conducted with either caregiver, romantic, or general/platonic negative cross-gender contact as the predictor, hostile sexism (toward the other gender) as the first mediator, rationalization as the second mediator, and IPV as the outcome variable.

Study 3 (Chapter 6) – Make it Safe at Night or Teach Women to Fight? Sexism Predicts Views on Men’s and Women’s Responsibility to Reduce Men’s Violence Toward Women. Study 3 is informed by feminist literature and aims to provide clarity to the ways in which attitudes toward women (held by both men and women) relate to responses to men’s violence toward women. The study draws from wave eight of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study: a longitudinal, national probability study of New Zealand residents. Participants ($n = 21,937$; 62.6% women) completed a survey of a range of measures, with those relevant to this study being a subset of items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and two single item measures related to responses to men’s violence toward women (developed specifically for NZAVS research). A series of hierarchical regressions are conducted to measure the variance accounted for by benevolent and hostile sexism toward women in relation to each of the two measured responses to men’s violence toward women. Interactions with gender, and between hostile and benevolent sexism, are analyzed with simple slopes analysis.

In sum, the three studies of this thesis aim to better our understanding of the mechanisms that drive men's and women's IPV perpetration, and responses to men's violence toward women. Each study introduces novel concepts, explores a different approach to IPV, and incorporates a sample of both men and women in order to achieve these aims.

**Chapter 4: Reintroducing Rationalization: A Study of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory
of Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion**

*Rationalization is a process of not perceiving reality, but of attempting to make reality fit
one's emotions.*

-Ayn Rand, 1974-

Preamble to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 contains Study 1, presented as a published journal article (Brownhalls et al., 2019). The formatting for the specific journal of publication has been retained, with tables embedded in the article text for reader ease. For a similar reason, references for the article are presented in a combined reference list positioned at the end of the thesis. The aim of Study 1 was to better understand the key processes that contribute to a person engaging in unwanted pursuit of a romantic partner, a common behavior in IPV. Specifically, Study 1 explored relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach, Spitzberg, & Carson, 2000), an existing model of the affective and cognitive processes involved in the unwanted pursuit of a current or former heterosexual intimate partner. RGP theory proposes that five key variables - self-efficacy, goal linking, rumination, affective flooding, and rationalization – contribute to such unwanted pursuit. However, research prior to Study 1 appears to have overlooked rationalization in the evaluation of this model.

Thus, in Study 1, relational goal pursuit theory, including rationalization, was comprehensively assessed to determine what, if anything, rationalization added to the explanation of unwanted pursuit behavior in intimate relationships. Given unwanted pursuit has been established to be of concern to both men and women (Spitzberg, 2010), relational goal pursuit theory was also examined in relation to both male and female perpetrators of unwanted pursuit. For this study, a measure of rationalization was developed, drawing from literature, theory, and existing measures (Abbass, 2015; Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993; Cupach, et al., 2000; Frederickson, 2013; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). The rationalization measure and other relational goal pursuit measures were then included in an online survey that was disseminated in the USA. In sum, Study 1 provided insights to the processes that are associated with both men and women engaging in unwanted pursuit behaviors within intimate relationships.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO CO-AUTHORED PUBLISHED PAPER

This chapter includes a co-authored paper. The details of the co-authored paper, are:

Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., & Barlow, F.K. (2019). Reintroducing Rationalization: A study of relational goal pursuit theory of intimate partner obsessive relational intrusion. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, (online publication), 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518822339>.

My contribution to the paper involved: literature review, study conceptualization, measure development, survey design, and data management including collection, cleaning, scoring analyses, interpretation and critical appraisal. Further contributions include writing the manuscript and implementing feedback from secondary authors, as well as throughout the journal submission process.

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**Reintroducing Rationalization: A Study of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory of Intimate
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Abstract

Obsessive relational intrusions (ORI) are the repeated and unwanted attempts by one person to initiate or maintain an intimate relationship with a specific, targeted, and unwilling other. To date, ORI has been commonly explained by relational goal pursuit (RGP) theory. Centrally, RGP theory posits that five clusters of goal-related cognitions and emotions explain ORI. These are goal-linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding, and rationalization. However, while the first four factors have been empirically investigated as predictors of ORI, rationalization has not. Thus, the current study aimed to re-introduce rationalization to the evaluation of the RGP model among heterosexual former intimate partners. Participants ($N = 379$; 45.6% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 34.4$) were recruited from North America and completed an online survey assessing the RGP factors and engagement in ORI. Overall, we found that, after the other factors from the RGP model were considered, the inclusion of rationalization increased the variance explained in ORI. Furthermore, the rationalization sub-factor of distortion (as opposed to permissiveness) uniquely predicted ORI both at a broad level and across specific clusters of ORI behavior. These findings not only support the inclusion of rationalization within the RGP model, but provide initial evidence that this construct might be the most individually critical to the explanation of a wide array of ORI behaviors. As well as having implications for the prediction and explanation of ORI, these findings can also be used to direct clinical treatment of ORI perpetrators toward addressing defenses of rationalization.

Keywords: obsessive relational intrusions; stalking; relational goal pursuit theory; intimate partner violence; rationalization

Reintroducing Rationalization: A Study of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory of Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion

The end of an intimate relationship is typically followed by feelings of sadness and anger, lasting for a limited period of time (Baumgartner, Pieters, & Bagozzi, 1993). Frequently, a member of the dyad attempts at least once to remain connected to their former partner, even when this desire is not reciprocated. Indeed, the majority of break ups include at least one unwanted pursuit behavior such as a phone call, or asking friends about a former partner (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2000). The break-up process can, however, become more complicated when unrequited desire for intimacy with a former partner is enduring. This can result in unwanted and persistent pursuit behaviors known as obsessive relational intrusions (ORI; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998). ORI can severely impinge on the targeted person's daily life, and physical and mental wellbeing (Melton, 2007).

Relational goal pursuit (RGP) theory proposes ORI to be the result of five processes: goal linking, self-efficacy, affective flooding, rumination, and rationalization (Cupach, Spitzberg, & Carson, 2000). While there has been some empirical assessment of RGP, to date, rationalization has been excluded from such assessments. The current study addresses this by developing a measure of rationalization and including it in a comprehensive empirical assessment of the RGP model in the context of ORI by former intimate partners. In doing so, this study aims to consolidate the validity of RGP theory in relation to ORI and establish the importance of rationalization within the model.

Obsessive Relational Intrusions

The term obsessive relational intrusion refers to repeated behaviors enacted in an attempt by one person (the pursuer) to establish or regain an intimate relationship with an unwilling other (the target). Severe ORI that induces a sense of threat in the target, crosses the legal threshold and constitutes stalking (Cupach et al., 2000). Thus, ORI incorporates

some, but not all, stalking behavior. Specifically, the term ORI only includes stalking behaviors motivated by a desire to form or maintain an intimate relationship with the target, as opposed to any other drive such as, for example, financial gain or malicious intimidation (e.g., stalking intended to rob a person). Thus, broadly, ORI incorporates a vast array of behaviors specifically focused on attaining an intimate relationship, ranging from those which might be mildly annoying to highly threatening.

Previously, ORI has been categorized into eight behavioral clusters (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). These are: *hyperintimacy* (exaggerated and inappropriate courtship behavior); *interactional contact* (attempting interaction in the physical vicinity of the target), *mediated contact* (attempting interaction via some variation of media); *surveillance* (monitoring the target in the absence of interaction); *invasion* (intruding in the target's symbolic or physical space); *harassment and intimidation* (vexatious behavior intended to incite fear or compliance); *coercive threats* (veiled warnings and overt threats toward the personal safety of the target, associates, and property); and *coercive violence* (physical or sexual acts that are violent or forceful). ORI can therefore be understood as either an overarching composite construct, or as specific and separate clusters of unwanted pursuit behavior.

ORI is a common experience (Spitzberg, Cupach, Hannawa, & Crowley, 2014; Spitzberg, Cupach, & Ciceraro, 2010). Up to 51% of young adults report experiencing ORI (Fais, Lutz-Zois, & Goodnight, 2017) and, in the context of the broader community, 16% of women and 5% of men report being stalked during their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). This suggests women are at an elevated risk of being the targets of extreme ORI; however, when looking at ORI in young adult samples, little to no gender differences in prevalence has been found (e.g., Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). Upon conducting meta-analyses of stalking and ORI behaviors, Spitzberg et al. (2010) concluded ORI was of concern to both men and

women. Thus, the current study focuses on both genders.

Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusions

ORI can arise where target and pursuer have a non-intimate prior relationship, or even no prior relationship at all (Cupach et al., 2000). However, the most common context in which ORI emerges is between former intimate partners (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Indeed, in the case of ORI that crosses the threshold into stalking, the most common perpetrator is a former intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). It has been theorized that ORI includes exaggeration of ordinary relationship behaviors that, if reciprocated by the target, could be deemed acceptable or even pro-social (Cupach et al., 2000). This may contribute to the common misperception that current or former intimate partner ORI behavior is less serious than ORI in which the pursuer is a stranger (Scott, Nixon, & Sheridan, 2013). Perhaps consequently, former partners, in comparison to stranger pursuers, are less likely to be convicted when ORI crosses the legal threshold to stalking (Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Given the high prevalence of intimate partner ORI, as well as correlations with other types of abuse (e.g., psychological; Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000), and high levels of posttraumatic stress disorder among targets (Edwards & Gidycz, 2014), it is important to understand the specific mechanisms that may account for it. The present study therefore focuses specifically on intimate partner ORI.

Relational Goal Pursuit Theory and Obsessive Relational Intrusion

To date, a popular theoretical explanation for ORI has been RGP theory (Cupach et al., 2000). The theory operates on the premise that an intimate relationship can be conceptualized as the pursuit of a desired end state (i.e., a goal) in which ordinary relationship pursuit tactics (e.g., gift giving, proximity seeking) become persistent and obsessive by way of five processes: goal-linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding, and rationalization. The processes described within RGP likely occur in many

typical break-ups. For example, intense, repeated, non-controllable negative affect is common after relationship dissolution (Baumgartner, 1993) and is representative of affective flooding. However, according to RGP theory, when specific processes co-occur, and escalate in persistence, the break-up process becomes complicated and ORI behaviors emerge.

According to RGP theory, the importance of the relational goal becomes exaggerated by the pursuer; the goal of reestablishing the relationship comes to be seen as vital to the achievement of higher order goals such as over-arching life-success (i.e., goal linking). The pursuer also believes the intimate relationship goal to be obtainable with sufficient effort (i.e., self-efficacy), despite the target's unwillingness to engage in the intimate relationship. This rejection obstructs goal achievement, causing the pursuer to have excessive intrusive thoughts about the target (i.e., rumination). This is understood to occur via two main pathways: *rumination persistence*, which refers to the pursuer's difficulty in ceasing thoughts related to their target, and *rumination affect*, which reflects emotional content associated with the pursuit process that centers around the possibility of reuniting with the target (Spitzberg et al., 2014). Furthermore, the pursuer experiences intense and overwhelming negative feelings (i.e., affective flooding). This includes *break-up distress*, which is emotional distress concurrent to the actual pursuit process, and *residual distress*, which is enduring emotional suffering that continues beyond the pursuit-rejection cycle (Spitzberg et al., 2014). Finally, pursuers adopt a cognitive style that justifies their unwanted pursuit behavior by downplaying its negative impact and misconstruing the target's behavior as being conducive to intimacy (i.e., rationalization). That is, the pursuer's unconscious incorporates rationalization as a defense mechanism to relieve the discomfort of unrequited attempts at intimacy, and to justify persistence in the face of rejection (Cupach et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). In the context of ORI, rationalization is understood to have two main underlying processes: *permissiveness*, or positive attributions of the pursuer's own behavior, and *distortions* when

interpreting the intentions of the target (e.g., seeing the target as desiring the relationship).

Existent empirical literature largely supports RGP theory (e.g., Cupach, Spitzberg, Bolingbroke, & Tellitocci, 2011; Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Spitzberg et al., 2014). For example, Johnson and Thompson (2016) measured rumination and affective flooding and found that 52% of convicted ex-intimate stalking offenders reported experiences of rumination, while 40% reported feeling angered, and 59% reported feeling emotionally hurt by their target (i.e., affective flooding). Furthermore, Dardis and Gidycz (2017) found that relational goal pursuit (formulated as a latent variable with rumination, goal linking, and affective flooding indicators) predicted past engagement in minor unwanted pursuit behaviors both online and in person. Cupach et al. (2011) and Spitzberg et al. (2014) represented RGP by goal linking, rumination, affective flooding, and self-efficacy. Both studies supported the unique effects of rumination, but only Cupach et al. (2011) found that self-efficacy independently predicted ORI. Furthermore, neither study supported affective flooding or goal linking as independently predicting ORI. Overall, this literature provides support for the RGP model in general, while suggesting that some constructs could be more critical within the model than others.

It should be noted, however, that the studies conducted so far include only subsets of the five proposed facets of RGP, and none look at rationalization. Rationalization is a defense style that is incorporated to conceal the unconscious motives of conscious behavior (Abbass, 2015) and serves an obstructive purpose by providing an individual with a series of “reasons” that justify negative behavior and circumvent emotions (e.g., guilt, grief) (Davanloo, 1980). While rationalization might broadly be common in many break-up scenarios, in terms of RGP theory it manifests as the pursuer holding a suite of beliefs that the targeted person secretly desires the intimate relationship, irrespective of what that person says or does. When the target rejects the pursuer’s intimacy, this frustrates the pursuer’s goal and activates a set

of cognitions that support these beliefs and facilitate the unwanted pursuit. Therefore, theoretically, in the case of ORI, a pursuer is likely to engage in some form of rationalization, such as minimizing target suffering or reframing the behavior as actually wanted, in order to be able to engage in ORI. Adding to this theoretical relevance, there is also some indirect clinical evidence that rationalization is key to understanding ORI. In qualitative work, Meloy (1998) reported on his interactions with clients who exhibited stalking behaviors. He noted rationalization was a commonly employed defense mechanism amongst these clients (e.g., a client stated: “she deserves it – look at what she did to me”; p.9).

Irrespective of this, rationalization, in empirical literature at least, has been excluded. In some cases, rationalization is included in conceptual discussion of RGP theory, but is noted as not being of relevance to the specific study’s research questions (e.g., Cupach, Spitzberg, Bolingbroke, & Tellitocci, 2011). Other research (e.g., Johnson & Thompson, 2016) describes RGP theory as comprising four *main* factors: goal linking, self-efficacy, affective flooding, and rumination. Since rationalization was not included in the early battery of RGP scales developed, the absence of a suitable measure of rationalization to isolate this construct in the context of RGP theory has likely also restricted empirical investigation of this factor. Thus, the exclusion of rationalization from investigations of RGP theory appears to be an oversight, given that it remains a central component of recent RGP theorizing (e.g., Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014), and that there is circumstantial evidence that rationalization is a core component of the mindset of those engaging in ORI (Meloy, 1998). Consequently, the re-introduction of rationalization to the empirical evaluation of RGP theory seems vital to providing a comprehensive understanding of the application of this theory to ORI.

Finally, there has been little exploration of how RGP facets relate to each of the eight clusters of ORI behavior separately. Spitzberg et al. (2014) explored correlations between RGP factors (goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding) and found significant

and positive correlations between some RGP factors and certain ORI clusters (e.g., goal linking, rumination, and affective flooding positively correlated with hyperintimacy, mediated contact, interactional contact, and surveillance) but not others (i.e., none of the RGP factors were associated with intrusion, harassment, coercive threats, or coercive violence). This suggests the RGP factors evaluated might relate more to less menacing behaviors (e.g., hyperintimacy) compared to more overtly hostile behavior (e.g., coercive violence). However, exploration of these relationships beyond the zero-order level appears absent and, consequently, there is little information regarding the unique relationships between RGP factors and ORI clusters. Thus, we suggest it is important to assess all facets of RGP with each ORI cluster to better understand the unique relationships before conclusions can be confirmed.

The Current Study

In this study, we argue that RGP theory provides an account of ORI arising between former heterosexual intimate partners and that the inclusion of rationalization in the RGP model will provide a more comprehensive account of such ORI. The decision to focus on heterosexual couples was the result of reported differences between heterosexual and same-sex ORI (Edwards et al., 2015).

To summarize, the current study had two main aims. First, we aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature examining RGP theory in the prediction of ORI behaviors, by exploring whether each of the RGP constructs previously considered in empirical research (i.e., goal linking, self-efficacy, affective flooding, and rumination) makes a unique contribution to the explanation of ORI among heterosexual former intimate partners. Second, we aimed to re-introduce rationalization to the RGP model, with the expectation that this factor would contribute significantly to the explanation of ORI beyond the four other RGP factors.

Method

Participants

Participants were 470 adults from the USA, recruited via the online platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Study advertising stipulated that, to be eligible, participants must have been involved in a heterosexual intimate relationship (referred to as the *identified relationship*) that lasted at least 2 months and that ended either temporarily or permanently at least 4 weeks prior to completing the study. Data from 91 participants were deleted prior to analysis as they did not meet relationship inclusion criteria, failed attention checks, or were assessed as having spent inadequate time completing the survey (i.e., more than two standard deviations shorter than mean completion time). This left a final sample of 379 adults aged 18 to 72 ($M = 34.4$, $SD = 9.6$).

The demographic and identified relationship information for participants is presented in Table 1. The final sample included slightly more males (54.4%) than females. Most participants identified as heterosexual (92.9%) and the remainder had previously been involved in at least one heterosexual relationship. At the identified relationship's peak, the majority reported being in a serious dating relationship (71.0%).

Measures

Existing relational goal pursuit (RGP) measures. RGP scales were drawn from Spitzberg et al. (2014) to measure goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, and affective flooding. Each scale asked participants to use a 7-point response scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*) to rate a series of statements preceded by the conditional phrase "After we broke up...", with the exception of goal linking which was preceded by "Before we broke up...".

Goal linking ($\alpha = .86$) included eight items (e.g., having this person in my life seemed essential to becoming who I wanted to be). **Self-efficacy** ($\alpha = .90$) included eight items (e.g., I

Table 1
Participant Demographic and Identified Relationship Information (N = 379)

	% or <i>M (SD)</i>
<i>Demographics</i>	
Age (years)	34.4 (9.6)
Gender	
Male	54.4%
Female	45.6%
Sexuality	
Heterosexual	92.9%
Bisexual	6.3%
Gay or Lesbian	.8%
Ethnicity	
Multiple	9.2%
Caucasian	75.2%
African American	10.8%
Asian	10.0%
Latino/a	8.4%
Native American	2.9%
Other	1.9%
Employment	
Not Working	14.8%
White Collar	58.6%
Blue Collar	41.4%
Education	
University degree	60.0%
Diploma/ High School Certificate	39.5%
Current Relationship Status	
Married	31.7%
Dating	26.0%
Single	47.7%
<i>Identified Relationship Information</i>	
Break up most desired by:	
My partner	39.6%
Myself	39.1%
Mutually desired	21.4%
Break up initiated by:	
My partner	42.5%
Myself	33.2%
Equally initiated	24.3%
Strength of relationship at its peak:	
Married	11.9%
Engaged	8.4%
Dating seriously	71.0%
Dating casually	8.7%

believed that persistence in trying to re-establish the relationship with my ex-partner would pay off). **Rumination** included 20 items in two subscales. *Rumination persistence* ($\alpha = .92$) included 12 items (e.g., I thought about this person even more when I tried not to). *Rumination affect* ($\alpha = .95$) included eight items (e.g., I am worried that we might not ever get back together). **Affective flooding** included 11 items across two subscales. *Residual distress* ($\alpha = .90$) included seven items (e.g., even now I get upset thinking about this person), and *break-up distress* ($\alpha = .84$) included four items (e.g., I felt intense emotions when this person wanted out).

Rationalization. A scale, consisting of eight items, was developed to measure an individual's tendency to utilize defenses of rationalization. The items were preceded by the conditional phrase "After we broke up...". As this construct has not previously been measured in RGP scales, items were generated from the literature related to rationalization defense mechanisms (Abbass, 2015; Frederickson, 2013), RGP theory (Cupach, et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014), and an existing non-relationship specific rationalization measure (DSQ-40, $\alpha = .80$; Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993). All items are listed in Table 2. The two main sub-domains of rationalization identified within the RGP literature (Cupach et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) were included as factors within the scale: *permissiveness of pursuer's own behavior* and *distortion of the target's intentions and behaviors*. Each factor consisted of four items and the 7-point response scale from existing RGP measures (i.e., 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*). As this is a new measure, exploratory factor analysis with oblique rotation was conducted to assess the structure of the eight items (see Table 2). Two eigenvalues > 1.0 and the scree plot indicated a two-factor solution, with item 2 and item 3 presenting with poor communality ($< .4$). In addition, item 3 did not load on the expected factor (i.e., distortion). As the more problematic item, item 3 was removed. Using the remaining seven items, a clean two-factor solution, with a KMO of .8, accounted for

Table 2

Rationalization Item Loadings on Permissiveness (Factor1) and Distortion (Factor 2) (N = 373)

Item	8-Item Solution		7-Item Solution	
	Factor1	Factor2	Factor1	Factor2
6. My identified partner might have been upset by my actions but due to the circumstances it wasn't my fault. (literature)	.78	-.32	.78	-.01
4. Even if my identified partner was upset by my behavior, I was always able to think of a good reason for what I did. (existing measure)	.76	-.38	.71	-.09
7. If things didn't work out for me, there were good reasons why. (existing measure)	.72	-.19	.77	.14
2. If I behaved badly it was because of the way I was feeling (e.g., hurt, angry, sad). (literature)	.49	-.43	.54	-.20
3. My identified partner was likely wanting to get back together irrespective of what s/he said. (theory)	.49	-.29	-	-
5. I could find reasons to pursue the relationship, even when my identified partner seemed disinterested. (existing measure)	.34	.85	-.01	.83
8. Even if s/he appeared upset by it, there would not be any real harm if I kept trying to contact my identified partner. (theory)	.39	.83	.03	.82
1. If my identified partner ignored me, it was because s/he was playing hard to get. (theory)	.38	.72	-.01	.76

Note: The primary source from which the item was generated is displayed in brackets (i.e., literature = literature related to rationalization defense mechanisms; theory = RGP theory; existing measure = existing non-relationship specific rationalization measure).

58.7% of the common variance. Community of all items was acceptable (i.e., $> .4$) and all items loaded as expected. The first factor was labelled *permissiveness* ($\alpha = .70$) and consisted of three items (e.g., If I behaved badly it was because of the way I was feeling). The second factor was labelled *distortion* ($\alpha = .74$) and consisted of four items (e.g., If my identified partner ignored me, it was because s/he was playing hard to get).

Obsessive relational intrusion. ORI was measured with the ORI-42 Perpetration Inventory (Spitzberg et al., 2014). Participants rated the frequency with which they engaged in eight clusters of ORI behaviors using a 7-point scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *once*, 3 = *2-3 times*, 4 = *4-5 times*, 5 = *6-10 times*, 6 = *11-25 times*, 7 = *25 or more times*). Mean scores were calculated for each cluster and, in addition, a total ORI score was generated by summing these sub-totals ($\alpha = .98$). The eight clusters included hyper-intimacy ($\alpha = .90$; e.g., leaving unwanted gifts), interactional contacts ($\alpha = .90$; e.g., showing up at the persons work, school, gym, or place of worship), mediated contacts ($\alpha = .85$; e.g., instigating unwanted phone calls, emails, chat, instant messages), surveillance ($\alpha = .90$; e.g., checking up on him/her through mutual friends), invasion ($\alpha = .88$; e.g., stealing/checking her/his mail/e-mail), harassment and intimidation ($\alpha = .88$; e.g., seeking to be invited to social events through her/his friends, family or co-workers), coercive threats ($\alpha = .95$; e.g., threats or vague warnings that something bad will happen to her/him), and coercive violence ($\alpha = .96$; e.g., holding the car door while she/he is in the car). Standard instructions were adapted slightly for the current study, as, participants were directed to consider their behavior during/after the break up with their *identified partner*.

Procedure

Following institutional ethical clearance, the Qualtrics survey link was loaded to the online scientific survey platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The reliability of data sourced via this platform has been shown to be similar to data gathered via more traditional

methods and samples are reported to be representative of the general population (Burhmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Note that the scales and items used to test the current research question were taken from a larger survey looking at ORI. The larger study included measures unrelated to the current research question (e.g., measures of gender-based attitudes).

Participants were each paid \$3.50USD for completing the study, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Demographic items were presented at the start and at the end of the survey, with the order of the scales randomized in between.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

During assumption testing, positive skew and extreme scores were identified in the outcome measure. Normality was achieved with a square root transformation; however, there was no variation to the direction or significance of results when this transformed data was used. Therefore, for ease of interpretation, untransformed data was retained and is reported herein. Missing data for each scale ranged from 0% to 1.3% and Little's MCAR test was non-significant $\chi^2(5890, N = 379) = 5896.43, p = .474$, indicating that there was no identifiable pattern in missing values. As missing data were completely at random and represented a low proportion of the data (< 5%), listwise deletion was used to deal with missing data.

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for RGP and ORI are displayed in Table 3. Each RGP variable was significantly and positively correlated with ORI. A series of one-way ANOVAs was conducted to determine if ORI differed depending on who initiated the break up and, further, how serious the severed relationship was (i.e., casual dating – married). Results indicated there were no significant differences in ORI behavior between people who were the recipients or instigators of the break up (all $ps > .05$). Neither did ORI differ according to relationship seriousness (all $ps > .05$).

Table 3

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations among Relational Goal Pursuit Variables (N = 378)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. ORI	1.60	.92																
2. Hyperintimacy	2.20	1.33	.77**															
3. Mediated Contact	1.77	1.11	.91**	.76**														
4. Interactional Contact	1.74	1.14	.91**	.72**	.82**													
5. Invasion	1.45	1.00	.90**	.58**	.75**	.82**												
6. Harrass/Intimidation	1.48	.97	.92**	.58**	.79**	.80**	.87**											
7. Surveillance	1.61	1.02	.91**	.64**	.79**	.83**	.83**	.87**										
8. Coercive Threats	1.30	.92	.90**	.56**	.78**	.74**	.86**	.87**	.81**									
9. Coercive Violence	1.25	.83	.87**	.52**	.74**	.72**	.83**	.84**	.79**	.95**								
10. Goal Linkage	4.20	1.76	.18**	.31**	.21**	.16**	.12*	.11*	.18**	.07	.06							
11. Self-efficacy	3.77	1.54	.20**	.26**	.20**	.19**	.15**	.17**	.16**	.12*	.12*	.26**						
12. Residual Aff-flooding	4.05	1.65	.26**	.27**	.27**	.28**	.21**	.21**	.27**	.15**	.13*	.39**	.12*					
13. Break-up Aff- flooding	4.41	1.94	.16**	.26**	.20**	.19**	.11*	.10	.18**	.04	.01	.59**	.16**	.73**				
14. Rumination persistence	4.27	1.81	.23**	.35**	.25**	.22**	.15**	.16**	.25**	.10	.09	.62**	.28**	.65**	.72**			
15. Rumination affect	3.88	1.86	.26**	.39**	.28**	.24**	.16**	.17**	.26**	.12**	.11*	.69**	.32**	.57**	.76**	.83**		
16. Rationalization distort.	2.87	1.52	.52**	.54**	.51**	.48**	.43**	.45**	.45**	.40**	.38**	.41**	.38**	.35**	.39**	.45**	.53**	
17. Rationalization permiss.	4.01	1.43	.29**	.31**	.28**	.31**	.24**	.24**	.29**	.18**	.18**	.29**	.19**	.44**	.25**	.32**	.30**	.48**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Note: All measures had a possible range from 1 to 7.

Prior to the main regressions, moderation analyses were conducted to assess if there was a moderating effect of gender for the associations between RGP variables and ORI. Gender was dummy coded and individual interaction terms between gender and each RGP variable were created. In separate moderated regressions, each RGP variable was entered with gender in Block 1 of the model, and the interaction term entered at Block 2. There were no significant interactions (i.e., all $ps > .05$), which indicated that RGP variables similarly predicted ORI for men and women. Consequently, results reported below refer to a gender-pooled data set that does not control for break-up instigation or previous relationship seriousness.

Primary Analyses

A series of hierarchical regressions was used to examine the unique contribution of RGP factors to the explanation of ORI, to determine if the inclusion of rationalization in the model added to the variance explained in ORI and assess if this model differentially related to certain clusters of ORI behaviors. Due to a large range in age (18 – 72 years) and time elapsed since the most recent break up (1 month to > 5 years), these, along with gender, were entered as control variables at Block 1 in each regression. Existing RGP measures (goal linking, self-efficacy, rumination, affective flooding) were included at Block 2, and the newly created rationalization measure was entered at Block 3, to identify if any additional variance could be accounted for by its inclusion in the RGP model. Tables 4 and 5 display beta values and change statistics for the hierarchical regressions.

Predicting ORI with RGP theory. As can be seen in Table 4, the overall model was significant and accounted for 29% of the variance in ORI. At Block 1, *time since the most recent break-up* accounted for a significant amount of variance in ORI, such that a greater passage of time was related to less ORI behaviors. Neither of the other control variables (i.e., age and gender) uniquely accounted for variance within ORI. When the RGP variables were

Table 4
Predicting Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion as a Function of Control Variables and Relational Goal Pursuit Variable Subscales (N = 378)

Block	ORI		
	1	2	3
<i>Controls</i>			
Age	-.07	-.06	-.07
Gender	-.03	-.05	-.01
Time	-.21***	-.19***	-.10*
<i>RGP variables</i>			
Goal Linking	-	.03	-.01
Self-Efficacy	-	.11**	.01
<i>Rumination</i>			
Persistence	-	-.07	-.05
Affect	-	.26**	-.05
<i>Affective Flooding</i>			
Residual distress	-	.27***	.20**
Break up distress	-	-.20**	-.17
<i>Rationalization</i>			
Distortion	-	-	.47***
Permissiveness	-	-	.02
R ² _{Ch}	.06***	.11***	.14***
R ² _{adj}	.06***	.15***	.29***
F _{Ch}	8.37***	8.17***	37.61***

*** < .001 ** < .01 * < .05

Note: "Time" refers to time since break up.

introduced at Block 2, self-efficacy, rumination affect, and both affective flooding subscales (i.e., residual and break-up distress) each uniquely accounted for variance in ORI.

Specifically, higher levels of self-efficacy, rumination affect, and affective flooding residual distress were related with more ORI behaviors. Conversely, individuals that reported more contemporaneous emotional distress related to the break-up (i.e., affective flooding break-up distress) reported fewer ORI behaviors, despite the opposite relationship presenting at the zero-order correlation level. With the addition of the two rationalization subscales (distortion and permissiveness) at Block 3, rationalization distortion uniquely accounted for a significant 11.56% of the variance in ORI, with those individuals who distorted the intentions of their identified partner engaging in more ORI behavior. No other RGP variable remained a unique predictor of ORI, with the exception of affective flooding residual distress.

Predicting IP-ORI behavior clusters with RGP theory. To understand how RGP theory in general, and rationalization in particular, relates to the various subtypes of ORI, correlations between all RGP variables and ORI clusters were examined (Table 3). Several differences across the ORI clusters at the zero-order correlation level were present, suggesting sufficient complexity across the relationships to warrant further examination. Therefore, a series of hierarchical regressions with control variables at Block 1, existing RGP variables at Block 2, and rationalization subscales at Block 3 were used to examine all RGP variables as predictors of each of the ORI clusters.

As can be seen in Table 5, for each of the eight ORI behavior clusters, the overall model was significant and accounted for between 18% (coercive violence) and 31% (hyperintimacy) of variance. At Block 2, self-efficacy, rumination affect, affective flooding residual, and affective flooding break-up each uniquely accounted for a significant amount of variance for several of the clusters of ORI behaviors. With the introduction of rationalization distortion and rationalization permissiveness at Block 3, however, of the RGP variables, only

Table 5

Predicting Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion Behavior Clusters as a Function of Control Variables and Relational Goal Pursuit Variables

Block	Hyperintimacy (N = 378)			Mediated Contact (N = 378)			Interactional Contact (N = 378)			Invasion (N = 378)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
<i>Control variables</i>												
Age	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.08	-.08	-.08	-.06	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.08	-.08
Gender	-.01	-.02	.01	-.07	-.09	-.06	-.01	-.03	-.01	-.01	-.04	-.04
Time	-.14**	-.13*	-.05	-.19***	-.18**	-.09	-.19**	-.16**	-.08	-.20***	-.17**	-.09
<i>RGP variables</i>												
Goal Linking	-	.07	.03	-	.05	.01	-	.01	-.05	-	.04	.01
Self-Efficacy	-	.13**	.04	-	.11*	.02	-	.12**	.03	-	.10	.01
<i>Rumination</i>												
Persistence	-	-.20	.01	-	-.10	-.08	-	-.06	-.04	-	-.06	-.04
Affect	-	.36***	.18	-	.27**	.09	-	.19	.01	-	.11	-.07
<i>Affective</i>												
<i>Flooding</i>												
Residual	-	.13	.05	-	.27***	.21**	-	.27***	.18*	-	.25**	.19*
Break up	-	-.14	-.10	-	-.16	-.13	-	-.12	-.08	-	-.14	-.11
<i>Rationalization</i>												
Distortion	-	-	.40***	-	-	.42***	-	-	.42***	-	-	.42***
Permissiveness	-	-	.05	-	-	.02	-	-	.07	-	-	.01
R ² _{Ch}	.03*	.19***	.11***	.07***	.12***	.12***	.05**	.10***	.13***	.06***	.06**	.11***
R ² _{adj}	.02*	.20***	.31***	.06***	.17***	.28***	.04**	.13***	.26***	.05***	.10**	.21***
F _{Ch}	3.61*	14.65***	29.90***	8.76***	9.29***	30.01***	6.04*	7.50***	32.13***	7.62***	4.11*	26.98***

*** < .001 ** < .01 * < .05

Note: "Time" refers to time since break up.

Table 5 (cont.)

Predicting Intimate Partner Obsessive Relational Intrusion Behavior Clusters as a Function of Control Variables and Relational Goal Pursuit Variables

Block	Harass/Intimidation (N = 378)			Surveillance (N = 377)			Coercive Threats (N = 378)			Coercive Violence (N = 378)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
<i>Control variables</i>												
Age	-.05	-.04	-.03	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.08	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.04	-.04
Gender	-.04	-.06	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.03	-.05	-.01	-.03	-.05	-.02
Time	-.18**	-.16**	-.07	-.22***	-.19***	-.13*	-.20***	-.19***	-.11*	-.20***	-.18**	-.10
<i>RGP variables</i>												
Goal Linking	-	.01	-.02	-	.02	-.02	-	.01	-.02	-	.01	-.02
Self-Efficacy	-	.11*	.01	-	.07	-.01	-	.07	-.02	-	.07	-.01
Rumination												
Persistence	-	-.07	-.04	-	.01	.03	-	-.12	-.10	-	-.09	-.07
Affect	-	.20	.01	-	.19	.04	-	.23*	.05	-	.24*	.06
Affective Flooding												
Residual	-	.28***	.24**	-	.24**	.16*	-	.25**	.23**	-	.24**	.21**
Break up	-	-.23*	-.20*	-	-.16	-.12	-	-.24*	-.23*	-	-.29***	-.28**
Rationalization												
Distortion	-	-	.46***	-	-	.35***	-	-	.44***	-	-	.42**
Permissiveness	-	-	-.01	-	-	.07	-	-	-.05	-	-	-.03
R ² _{Ch}	.05**	.08***	.13***	.06***	.10***	.09***	.07***	.05**	.10***	.05***	.05**	.10***
R ² _{adj}	.04**	.10***	.23***	.05***	.14***	.23***	.06***	.09**	.20***	.05***	.08**	.18***
F _{Ch}	5.88**	5.24***	31.18***	7.54***	7.14***	22.47***	8.60***	3.47**	25.82***	6.97***	3.43**	23.14***

*** < .001

** < .01 * < .05

Note: "Time" refers to time since break up.

the variance accounted for by affective flooding subscales (residual distress and break-up distress) remained significant. As can be seen in Table 5, rationalization distortion significantly accounted for unique variance in each of the eight ORI clusters (hyperintimacy 8.30%, mediated contact 9.43%, interactional contact 9.18%, invasion 9.49%, harassment/intimidation 11.20%, surveillance 6.55%, coercive threats 10.11%, coercive violence, 9.12%). There were no unique significant effects of rationalization permissiveness for any of the ORI clusters. Of note, rationalization distortion was the only unique predictor of hyperintimacy at Block 3, and the only variable to uniquely account for variance in each of the ORI clusters of behavior.

Discussion

Relational goal pursuit (RGP) theory posits that ORI can be understood by a series of processes: goal linking, rumination, affective flooding, self-efficacy, and rationalization (Cupach, et al., 2000). A small number of studies have empirically evaluated the theory, but none have included the full five factors; prior research empirically evaluating RGP theory in relation to ORI has excluded rationalization. A key purpose of the current study was to re-introduce rationalization and determine if its inclusion strengthens the application of RGP theory to ORI. In line with our predictions, the inclusion of rationalization in the RGP model provided a more comprehensive account of ORI. These results add to the support of RGP as a valid and important theory of ORI and highlight that rationalization is relevant, and critical, to this model.

Consistent with other research (e.g., Cupach et al, 2011; Spitzberg et al., 2014), we found a four-factor model of RGP predicted ORI. However, in current findings, the accuracy of the RGP model's account of ORI increased from 15% to 29% of variance explained with the introduction of rationalization. Consistent with past research (Cupach et al., 2011; Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Spitzberg et al., 2014), we found self-efficacy, rumination

affect, and affective flooding uniquely predicted ORI. However, in current findings, a negative beta weight was displayed by affective flooding break-up distress (see Table 4), despite the presence of a positive zero-order correlation with ORI. This could indicate there is an avoidance component of affective flooding break-up distress when other predictors are taken into account. It could also be the result of a statistical artefact, as Spitzberg et al. (2014) has mentioned that such negative associations may be due to complex multivariate relationships within the RGP model. Future research may benefit from evaluating the exact nature of these complex relationships.

More critically, we found rationalization could be of greater relevance to ORI than other RGP variables, as it was the strongest and most consistent unique predictor. Specifically, individuals who viewed their identified partner's behavior through a distorted lens to perceive signs of encouragement for the pursuit (rationalization distortion), but not those who tended to downplay the negative consequences of pursuit (rationalization permissiveness), were most likely to report also having engaged in ORI. Significantly, rationalization distortion was also the only RGP variable that uniquely predicted ORI for each of the eight categories of ORI behavior, from the seemingly benign behaviors (e.g., mediated contact) to behaviors that are more evidently hostile (e.g., coercive violence). Thus, individuals who justify their behavior through distorted perceptions of their former partner's true feelings, wants, and needs are more likely to engage in unwanted pursuit behaviors. At a theoretical level, it is possible that some degree of rationalization is necessary to be able to engage in ORI (e.g., people may need to think that advances are secretly welcomed in order to engage in them). While no work has explicitly looked at rationalization predicting ORI within the RGP framework, our findings are broadly consistent with work showing that offenders of ex-intimate partner stalking feel hurt *by* their former partner, rather than seeing their own behavior as hurtful to their former partner (Johnson & Thompson, 2016). It is

possible the rationalization distortion process is so common because it allows individuals to escape from negative affect (e.g., guilt) which would otherwise challenge their persistence in pursuit.

Furthermore, rationalization negated the unique contribution of some RGP variables (e.g., self-efficacy, rumination affect, affective flooding break-up distress) in relation to ORI broadly, as well as within several clusters. This suggests the effects of some RGP variables in predicting ORI may be mediated by rationalization. For example, in the case of self-efficacy, the belief that pursuit attempts can be successful might lead to the development of complex cognitions that distort perception of the target's behavior as encouraging the pursuit (i.e., rationalization), and this, in turn, predicts ORI. Further work is required to investigate the exact nature of the complex relationships between RGP variables and ORI.

To gain a thorough understanding of the RGP relationships, it appears there is merit in examining these at the subscale and ORI cluster levels to detect subtle nuances. Our results suggest the overall RGP model may be more applicable to some aspects of ORI (e.g., hyperintimacy) than others (e.g., coercive violence), and individual RGP constructs specifically and uniquely relate to varying isolated components of ORI (e.g., affective flooding residual distress was related to all clusters *except* hyperintimacy).

At a surface level, these results bear some consistency with recent findings (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017) that suggest RGP is related to "minor" (e.g., unsolicited contact, following) but not "severe" (e.g., threat, kidnapping) unwanted pursuit behaviors, as both findings support the differential nature of relationships between RGP factors and ORI clusters. However, seemingly, there can be both "minor" and "severe" cases of each ORI cluster (e.g., minor surveillance: driving past the target's workplace; severe surveillance: breaking into and hiding in the target's home to covertly monitor him/her). As such, behaviors classified as "minor" in previous research have the potential to be severely distressing to the target. This is

particularly pertinent to note as both the current study and comparative research (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017) incorporated behavioral frequency measures of unwanted pursuit behaviors that did not explicitly capture severity. Therefore, relationships between RGP and ORI *severity* cannot be assumed on these findings alone.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

Current findings support the conclusion that RGP theory gives a more comprehensive account of ORI when rationalization is included, and provide a strong justification for rationalization to remain included in the RGP model as originally proposed by Cupach et al. (2000). Current findings also better our understanding of the complex nature of associations between RGP constructs and ORI clusters of behavior. Several methodological strengths were also present. First, by isolating ORI directed at a target with whom there has formerly been an intimate relationship, the current study controlled for the extraneous influence of the nature of the relationship between target and pursuer. Second, in comparison to many other studies in the field that draw from college populations (e.g., Cupach et al., 2011; Spitzberg et al., 2014), the current sample was drawn from an online North American community population and displayed diversity across ethnicity, age, employment, and education. This provides the benefit of current results being broadly generalisable to the wider community.

A limitation of current findings is the sole focus on ORI within heterosexual relationships; the current results are not able to be extended to sexual minority groups (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer/questioning; LGBTQ). To the knowledge of the authors, RGP theory has not yet been empirically applied specifically within sexual minority populations. Given ORI among LGBTQ intimate relationships is reported to be more severe compared to ORI within heterosexual relationships (Edwards et al., 2015), future research could examine whether the explanatory power of RGP theory and, specifically, rationalization extend to LGBTQ populations. Further, given that rationalization had not

previously been measured in the context of RGP, there was no existing RGP rationalization measure available. Thus, the current study is limited by the use of an as yet unvalidated measure of rationalization. We encourage future research to further validate this measure. In addition, factors not addressed in the current study (e.g., co-habitation, shared children and financial assets) could impact behavior in the context of relationship break down. Future research could address this by gathering comprehensive relationship information for analysis. Finally, the current study is limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data. Although RGP theory proposes that its constructs predict ORI, we cannot infer causality from cross-sectional data. Longitudinal and experience sampling studies may be valuable in establishing if the relationships are cyclical in nature, such that specific sequences of RGP factors instigate ORI and others perpetuate such behavior.

Clinical Implications

Given that rationalization appears integral to predicting ORI, it could be a key focus for clinical interventions. Defense mechanisms are pervasive in nature and thus a rationalization defense is not likely to self-correct. Rather, clinical intervention would generally be required to assist the individual to confront their feelings (Frederickson, 2013). Previously, the predominant treatment for ORI type behaviors has been Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT; Rosenfeld et al., 2007), supported by research that suggests intolerance of distress plays a role in ORI perpetration for some populations (Reilly & Hines, 2017). The current findings, however, suggest there could also be clinical utility in treatment such as Davanloo's (1990) Intensive Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy that assists patients to first identify the unhelpful impact of defenses, separate from them, and then address them. This is an important area of development considering the suffering of targets can be alleviated by perpetrator rehabilitation, and pursuer focused therapy might also reduce pursuer distress. While the priority remains the well-being of the target, pursuer care should also be

considered of importance given stalking offenders are at significantly greater risk of suicide in comparison to the general population (McEwan et al., 2010).

Conclusion

Current findings confirm that the reintroduction of rationalization to RGP theory improves the theory's applicability to ORI, at least among heterosexual former intimate partners. They also highlight intricate relationships between each broad RGP variable, and RGP sub-factors, with each cluster of ORI behavior. Critically, our work suggests that one of the most central constructs within the RGP model is the very construct that has previously been excluded: rationalization. A distorted view of the intentions of the target as a means to rationalize the behavior of the pursuer may play an integral role in the perpetration of ORI across each cluster of behavior. Our findings provide a platform for future research to incorporate rationalization in RGP theory evaluation, as well as having implications for future research in risk assessment and clinical interventions for ORI perpetrators.

Summary of Chapter 4

Study 1 (Chapter 4) is the first of the empirical chapters of this thesis and contributes to the thesis' aim to improve understanding of men's and women's IPV perpetration. In line with this aim, the specific objective of Study 1 was to empirically evaluate the role of rationalization within the relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) of obsessive relational intrusion (a common behavior in IPV), and to do so looking at both male and female perpetrators. The findings presented within this chapter indicate that relational goal pursuit theory provides a more comprehensive account of obsessive relational intrusion behavior when rationalization is included in the theory, and this is true whether the perpetrator is a man or a woman. These results also support rationalization as being the most significant of the relational goal pursuit theory variables in that it uniquely accounts for the most variation across each of the eight clusters of obsessive relational intrusion behavior, as well as obsessive relational intrusions overall.

In the context of the broader thesis, Study 1(Chapter 4) provides initial evidence that rationalization has a place in the literature that attempts to explain IPV perpetration. The findings presented within this chapter also imply that factors of influence in IPV perpetration could be similar for men and women. Chapter 5 (Study 2) builds on the findings of Study 1 (Chapter 4) by applying rationalization within the context of broader IPV and including it in a novel model along with other variables.

Chapter 5: Once Bitten Twice Shy: Hostile Sexism and Rationalization Mediate the Relationship between Negative Cross-Gender Contact and Intimate Partner Violence for Men and Women

*The healthy man does not torture others.
Generally, it is the tortured who turn into torturers.*

-Carl Jung-

Preamble to Chapter 5

Chapter 5 includes Study 2, presented as a journal article submitted for publication and currently under review (Brownhalls et al., *under review*). Again, original formatting for the specific journal of publication has been retained, with adjustments to embed tables and figures in the article text for reader ease and references specific to the article presented in a combined reference list positioned at the end of the thesis. Study 2 (Chapter 5) extends on the findings of Study 1 (Chapter 4) by exploring the role of rationalization within IPV more broadly (i.e., not just for those behaviors enacted to initiate/reinitiate an intimate relationship). Of note, only rationalization (rather than all variables of relational goal pursuit theory) was included in Study 2 (Chapter 5), given rationalization was supported as the strongest and most consistent predictor of obsessive relational intrusion in Study 1 (Chapter 4).

Study 2 builds on the findings of Study 1 by positioning rationalization within a larger model that attempts to explain IPV as a result of cognitive, social, and affective experiences. Specifically, I propose that negative experiences (i.e., contact) with members of the other gender (in the context of men and women) contributes to hostile sexism toward that broader gender group, and this could contribute to a tendency to rely on rationalization to interpret gendered interactions in a self-serving way. In turn, I propose rationalization could then contribute to more frequent IPV. I also explore whether this model differs for male and female perpetrators of IPV. The model was tested using a survey of existing measures, and an adapted version of the rationalization scale developed for Study 1. This survey was circulated online within the USA. Overall, Study 2 contributes to the knowledge of factors that relate to IPV perpetrated by men and women toward the other gender by introducing a novel model of cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, and rationalization to the field.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO CO-AUTHORED PUBLISHED PAPER

This chapter includes a co-authored paper. The details of the co-authored paper, are:

Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., & Barlow, F.K. (2021). Once bitten twice shy: Hostile sexism and rationalization mediate the relationship between negative cross-gender contact and intimate partner violence for men and women. *Psychology of Violence*, (under review)

My contribution to the paper involved: literature review, study conceptualization, measure development, survey design, and data management including collection, cleaning, scoring analyses, interpretation and critical appraisal. Further contributions include writing the manuscript and implementing feedback from secondary authors, as well as throughout the journal submission process.

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Once Bitten Twice Shy: Hostile Sexism and Rationalization Mediate the Relationship between
Negative Cross-Gender Contact and Intimate Partner Violence for Men and Women

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Abstract

Objective: Past research has largely focused on associations between attachment relationships and male perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV). This study took a different approach by exploring associations between negative cross-gender interactions in three relationship contexts (i.e., romantic partners, caregivers, general/platonic), hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV perpetrated by both men and women. We expected people who reported more negative cross-gender interactions to report more frequent IPV perpetration, and for this relationship to be sequentially mediated by hostile sexism and a distorted thinking style (rationalization).

Method: Participants ($N = 886$) were recruited online from the United States and completed a survey assessing cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV perpetration.

Results: For both men and women, we found hostile sexism and rationalization sequentially mediated the relationship between negative cross-gender contact and IPV in all three relationship contexts (romantic partners, caregivers, general/platonic). The relationship between rationalization and IPV was the strongest in the model. Gender was found only to moderate the relationship between negative cross-gender contact and rationalization in caregiver and general/platonic contexts.

Conclusions: The results of this study suggest that past negative cross-gender interactions have a small, indirect relationship with IPV perpetration by both men and women. The process of internal justification (rationalization) is more strongly associated with IPV (for men and women). Social policy may benefit from aiming to improve interactions between men and women across many environments, rather than solely within domestic settings. Further, therapeutic interventions for IPV perpetrators may benefit from targeting process of rationalization.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, negative contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, gender-based violence

Once Bitten Twice Shy: Hostile Sexism and Rationalization Mediate the Relationship between
Negative Cross-Gender Contact and Intimate Partner Violence for Men and Women

Every minute in the United States of America, 20 people are abused by an intimate partner (Black et al., 2010), contributing to an estimated 11% of all violent victimizations (Truman, & Langton, 2015). Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a common and pervasive form of family violence and includes threats, attempts, and completed acts of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse toward a current or former spouse or dating partner (WHO, 2012). These behaviors profoundly and negatively impact the physical and mental health of victims, as well as society, and the broader public health system (Breiding, 2014; Dokkedahl et al., 2019). Globally, IPV occurs in 25 – 38% of heterosexual intimate relationships (Stöckl et al., 2013) and has been of particular concern during COVID-19 “stay-at-home” policies, evidenced by an estimated 48% increase in calls to domestic violence helplines during these periods (Agüero, 2021; Hale et al., 2020). Given the potentially lethality of IPV (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012), it is crucial to better understand factors that underlie this behavior.

Despite decades of research, knowledge gaps remain and we focus on two of these in this paper. First, given the higher prevalence of female victimization (Stockl et al., 2013), IPV is frequently considered a “gendered” crime and, consequently, a great deal of literature explores IPV involving male perpetrators and female victims (e.g., Pacilli et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018). Women are considered at greater risk of more negative outcomes from IPV than men (e.g., more severe injury, more often death; Dobash & Dobash, 2003) and research should, justifiably, focus on this population. However, female perpetrated IPV does exist, and researchers have argued that IPV is underreported when men are the victims (Ahmadabadi et al., 2017; Archer, 2000; Straus 2004, 2009). Comparatively, we know little about the female

perpetrators of IPV. Second, research often explores perpetrators' attachment styles as underlying mechanisms of IPV (e.g., Doumas et al., 2008). Such research provides important insights but does not account for the potential impact of important relationship experiences outside of attachment, or more complex associations between social and cognitive factors related to IPV perpetration by men *and* women.

The current study addresses these knowledge gaps by proposing that social experiences (negative cross-gender contact, sexism) and cognitive factors (rationalization) are associated with male *and* female IPV perpetration. Specifically, we draw from contact theory (Allport, 1954) and suggest that more frequent and intense negative experiences between men and women in romantic, parental, and general/platonic relationships across the lifespan (i.e., negative cross-gender contact) are associated with IPV perpetration. Further, we propose this association could, at least in part, occur via two sequential processes: hostility toward the other gender for either threatening (for men) or maintaining (for women) the patriarchal status quo (i.e., hostile sexism); and a cognitive style that seeks a sense of internal justification (i.e., rationalization). Initially we explore this model irrespective of whether the perpetrator is male or female (i.e., controlling for gender). Then, in the absence of existing literature to guide expectations, we explore whether the nature of the relationships between negative cross-gender contact and IPV, as well as with each of the two sequential mediators (hostile sexism and rationalization), might differ for men and women. In sum, we explore a model that clarifies whether certain social and cognitive factors are associated with IPV, and whether these are relevant to both male and female perpetrators.

Prominent Theories of Intimate Partner Violence

The current study examines IPV through the theoretical lens of the social psychological 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954), described in detail below. We argue that this perspective

complements existing prominent theoretical frameworks commonly used to explain IPV such as attachment theory and feminist theories. Attachment theory suggests the quality and style of the bond developed between a caregiver and child contributes to the child's ability to relate and connect in adult relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988). Research suggests that certain attachment styles can be risk factors for IPV perpetration (e.g., insecure attachment; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997), and that “mismatchings” of attachment styles may increase risk for IPV (e.g., anxious attachment female with avoidant attachment male; Dumas et al., 2008).

While it is clear that attachment theory makes valuable contributions to IPV literature, the narrow focus of this theory on the dominant style of child – caregiver relationships excludes other meaningful interactions that could contribute to adult behavior. For example, experiences with significant people outside of an attachment figure (e.g., peers, associates, aunts/uncles; a parent other than the primary attachment) could also impact adult intimate relationship behavior. Attachment theory has also been identified as possibly ill-suited to inform frameworks that address large-scale policy changes, given its tendency to focus on internal, individual factors (Park, 2016). The current study addresses these issues by introducing relevant, novel concepts that acknowledge a broader array of relational interactions, and, as such, aims to inform social, policy, and intervention needs of IPV. Specifically, we explore the associations of cross-gender contact (i.e., men's experiences with women, women's experiences with men) occurring in a range of relationship contexts, with IPV perpetrated by both men and women.

Where attachment literature has focused specifically on the caregiver bond, other literature has focused on IPV as a form of violence against women. Hence, much theorizing and intervention in this field understandably adopts a feminist perspective. Such research explains IPV as a result of the male oppression of women within a patriarchal society (Dobash & Dobash,

1979; Wood, 2015) in which violence against women has become normalized to enforce gender norms (Namy et al., 2017). Feminist models view men's violence against women as a tool to establish control and exert power over women to maintain the status quo and view educational interventions such as the Duluth Model as the primary means of intervention (Corvo et al., 2009; McPhail et al., 2007; Pence et al., 1993). Feminist perspectives have made valuable contributions by informing social and policy campaigns to protect women from IPV and empower gender equity (Brubaker, 2021; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kesselman et al., 2008).

The current study complements feminist work and draws attention to important concepts that may explain IPV perpetration: men's and women's interactions (cross-gender contact), gendered social attitudes (sexism), and individual cognitive processes employed to "make sense of" social interactions (rationalization). Further, we extend feminist work by exploring how attitudes toward the other gender relate to men's *and* women's IPV perpetration. There is little literature to guide our expectations on how gender may interact with the proposed process so, initially, we explore the model holding gender constant. We then explore if negative cross-gender contact relates to hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV similarly for men and women.

Proposed Theory: Negative Cross-Gender Contact

Consistent with feminist theories, despite regular interactions between men and women (Becker et al., 2014), sexism remains a significant problem that impairs gender equality (Bunch, 1990; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Within a patriarchal society, men are viewed as dominant and women as submissive (Namy et al., 2017), communicating that a person's entitlements and opportunities are gender-based. Thus, the salience of gender is highlighted in everyday interactions positioning men and women as distinct groups. Considering this, and in recognition of the inherent role of gender in IPV within heterosexual relationships (i.e., women are targeted

by men, men are targeted by women), the current study adopts the perspective of men and women as opposing social groups (in this context, at least) and explores the role of cross-gender contact (men's experiences with women, women's experiences with men) in IPV. We refer to men and women in this research as the "other" and "opposite" gender group, but we do so with recognition that gender is not binary and that gender diverse populations are severely impacted by IPV (e.g., transgender women; Wirtz et al., 2020). We acknowledge the limitations of this and encourage future work with more diverse populations. Thus, in focusing explicitly (and narrowly) on heterosexual IPV, the contact hypothesis proposes that positive interactions between members of opposing social groups (in this case – men and women), can improve intergroup relationships by reducing prejudice (Allport, 1954; Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

Originally developed as a theory of racism, the contact hypothesis is now widely supported as a means of reducing intergroup prejudice between racial groups (e.g., Voci & Hewstone, 2003), and in other social groups (e.g., sexual prejudice: West & Hewstone, 2012; mental health prejudice: West et al., 2014). Of relevance to our work, research has supported that positive contact between men and women can act to break down stereotypes and reduce prejudicial beliefs related to sexual violence (Taschler & West, 2017). However, there is little research to explain the effects of negative contact between men and women with prejudice. Literature suggests the salience of group membership is heightened in negative contact compared to positive contact (Paolini et al., 2010) and that, in some situations, negative contact is a stronger predictor of increased prejudice than positive contact is of reduced prejudice (Barlow et al., 2012; Hayward et al., 2017; see also Barlow et al., 2019, for both positive and negative asymmetry). In addition, the frequency of contact alone is recognized to inadequately account for the impact of intergroup contact. While negative intergroup contact broadly occurs less

frequently than positive intergroup contact, research suggests negative contact is influential in forming and maintaining prejudice (Hayward et al., 2017). Therefore, in applying contact theory to heterosexual IPV, we suggest that even infrequent but intensely negative interactions between men and women could contribute to prejudice toward the other gender (sexism), even if there are also frequent, positive interactions. We propose, then, there is a link between negative cross-gender contact and IPV that occurs via sexism, and another novel mediator (rationalization).

Sexism

Sexism toward men and sexism toward women are both conceptualized as comprising two components: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fisk, 1996; Glick & Fisk, 1999). In both cases, hostile and benevolent sexism are proposed to reflect men's and women's responses to a patriarchal society. Broadly, hostile sexism toward women refers to the derogation of women who threaten male dominance, whereas hostile sexism toward men refers to resentment toward men who are perceived to abuse power over women. Benevolent sexism toward women refers to a patronizing yet subjectively positive appraisal of women who adhere to stereotypically feminine roles, with benevolent sexism toward men referring to a subjectively positive admiration for men who adhere to stereotypically masculine roles (Glick & Fisk, 1996; Glick & Fisk, 1999).

Hostile and benevolent sexism are theorized to work in unison as, when certain conditions are violated or met respectively, hostile sexism offers punishment and benevolent sexism offers reward (Glick & Fisk, 2000). Unsurprisingly, hostile and benevolent sexism relate differently to IPV, and the literature highlights a stronger relationship between hostile sexism and greater perpetration risk or endorsement of IPV (e.g., Brownhalls et al., 2020; Renzetti et al., 2018). In general, there is a well supported association between hostile sexism and IPV

perpetration (by men at least) and less so in relation to benevolent sexism. In patriarchal societies (where hostile sexism is more strongly endorsed), men's violence toward women is more often normalized and excused as being men's "natural" and inevitable response to stress (Fulu et al., 2017; Namy et al., 2017). In the current study, we focus on the hostile sexism-IPV relationship, and control for benevolent sexism. As a point of novelty, we also explore the role of hostile sexism in relation to IPV perpetration by men *and* women. As we explicitly explore IPV in which men target women and women target men we focus on men's sexism toward women and women's sexism toward men. In doing so, we address an important gap in the literature in which much of the focus has previously been on men's hostile sexism toward women and perpetration of IPV. Further, we extend current literature by proposing that sexism is associated with the tendency to rationalize, and that rationalization, then, facilitates IPV.

Rationalization

According to relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000), rationalization is an unconsciously adopted cognitive style that is self-permissive and distorts the intentions of others in a self-serving manner. This way of thinking provides internal explanations that allow the individual to self-justify and temporarily alleviate otherwise associated negative emotions (e.g., guilt, anxiety; Davanloo, 1980). Rationalization has mostly been explored in the context of obsessive relational intrusion (Brownhalls et al., 2019; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), which are pursuit behaviors intended to increase intimacy with an unwilling other (e.g., stalking, hyperintimacy). Such behaviors have a clear overlap with IPV (e.g., Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Norris et al., 2011), with the association between stalking and IPV being the strongest (Love et al., 2020). Given the associations of rationalization with obsessive relational intrusion, and obsessive relational intrusion with IPV, we expect rationalization to also be associated with IPV.

Further, we propose rationalization to mediate the relationship between hostile sexism and IPV. Literature suggests there is an association between hostile sexism, perceptions and misperceptions of a romantic partner (e.g., perceived low commitment to relationship, distortion of motives; Cross et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018), and IPV. In addition, verbal aggression that stems from men's hostile sexism is often met with resistant and defensive responses from female partners (Overall et al., 2011), with these responses being cognitively processed as a challenge to men's power within the relationship and a threat to traditional masculine role norms – a context known to be associated with IPV perpetration by men (Harrington et al., 2021). Here, we see links between hostile sexism toward women and cognitive processing of women's behavior that appears to, perhaps, provide men with an internal justification (or rationalization) for violence (i.e., she threatened my role as a man). It should be noted, however, that these concepts have largely been explored in terms of men's sexism toward women and without clarity around the exact nature of the cognitive processes involved. We aim to clarify this in the current study by exploring associations between both men's and women's hostile sexism (toward the other gender) with IPV. We do so in the context of a novel model that proposes processes between negative cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV perpetration by men and women.

Available literature, aligns with the idea that hostile sexism, cognitive processes, and IPV are linked (Cross et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018) and that sexism is filtered through cognitive processes (Overall et al., 2011; Harrington et al., 2021). We suggest there is also a logical and temporal progression from hostile sexism to rationalization. Specifically, the development of belief systems that create expectations of others (e.g., hostile sexism) would logically precede the cognitive process relied upon to justify such beliefs and associated internal experiences (i.e.,

rationalization). In the current study, we bring this theorizing together to propose rationalization to be part of a sequential process in which, initially, more negative cross-gender contact contributes to higher levels of hostile sexism. Hostile sexism, then, feeds into rationalization such that sexist attitudes provide a filter that rationalization, unconsciously, applies to a person's perception of their partner. Rationalization then facilitates the relationship between hostile sexism and IPV by providing a cognitive justification that appears to legitimize the perpetrators' perceptions

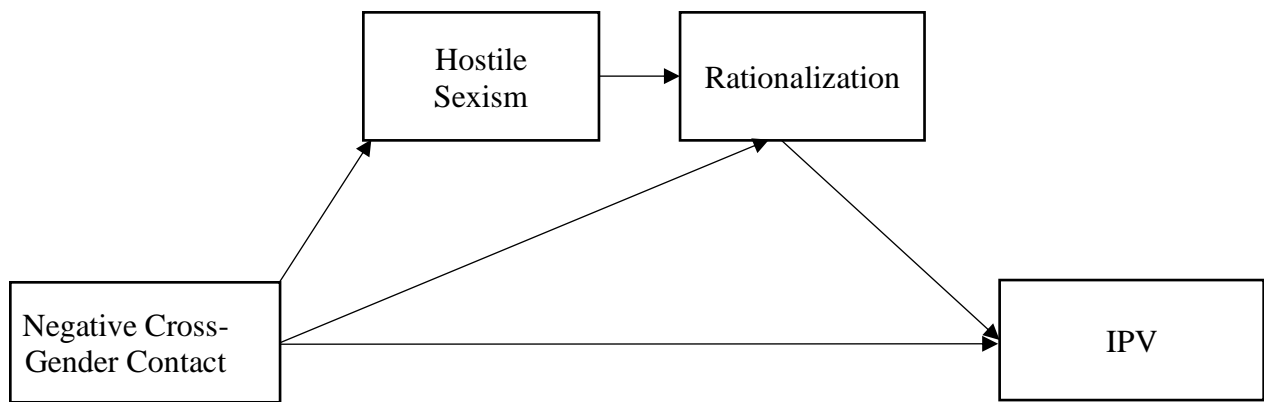
The Current Study

In the current study, we propose the link between negative cross-gender contact and IPV occurs sequentially via two processes: sexism and rationalization. Specifically, we propose experiencing more (in terms of frequency and intensity) negative cross-gender contact might be associated with the development of prejudice toward the other gender (i.e., hostile sexism), and that hostile sexism could then relate to a cognitive style that focuses on internally justifying this attitude and associated negative feelings (i.e., rationalization). Finally, rationalization is then proposed to facilitate the relationship between hostile sexism and IPV by providing a cognitive justification that appears to legitimize the perpetrators' perceptions.

In line with research recommendations, we explore our model measuring frequency and intensity of cross-gender contact while controlling for potential influences of positive cross-gender contact and benevolent sexism (Figure 1). Initially we control for the effects of gender and then, later, explore the role of gender in moderating the relationships between negative cross-gender contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV. We further extend existing research by exploring this model in relation to cross-gender contact occurring in three relationship contexts (romantic: interactions in heterosexual intimate relationships; caregiver:

Figure 1

Hostile Sexism and Rationalization as Sequential Mediators of Negative Cross-Gender Contact and IPV



Note: Controlling for the effects of gender, positive cross-gender contact, benevolent sexism.

interactions with a childhood caregiver of the other gender; general/platonic: friends, strangers, acquaintances of the other gender). We do so in recognition of the likelihood that multiple relationships could influence attitudinal development (sexism), interpretation of the intentions of others (rationalization), and behavior (IPV) toward the other gender in adult life.

Leading from this, we propose the following hypothesis and research question:

Hypothesis 1

Hostile sexism and rationalization will sequentially mediate the relationship between negative cross-gender contact and IPV, when controlling for positive cross-gender contact, benevolent sexism, and gender. That is, people who experience more frequent and intense negative contact in other gender relationships will have higher levels of hostile sexism toward that gender and, in turn, incorporate rationalization as a defense mechanism, and, ultimately, be more violent toward an intimate partner. We propose this model will be supported in three cross-gender contact contexts: (a) romantic, (b), caregiver, and (c) general/platonic relationships.

Research Question 1

We explore whether gender moderates the associations between negative cross-gender contact with each of hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV. We recognize these associations could differ for men and women but, in the absence of guiding literature, we make no specific predictions about the nature of these differences.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Following institutional ethical clearance, 450 cisgender men and 455 cisgender women were recruited from the United States via the online platform Prolific and were paid \$2.50USD each for completing a 20-minute survey. As this study focused on heterosexual IPV, study

advertising stipulated that participants must be over the age of 18 and have been involved in a heterosexual intimate relationship of at least one-month duration. Data from 19 participants were deleted prior to analysis as they did not meet inclusion criteria, had inadequate demographic information, or spent inadequate time completing the survey (i.e., more than two standard deviations shorter than mean completion time). The final sample included 886 adults (49.4% men) aged 18 to 77 ($M = 37.33$, $SD = 11.72$). Relationship length ranged from one month to 54 years, with the majority (70.2%) being in a married/de facto relationship, 27.0% in a serious relationship, and 2.8% casually dating (one – six months). The majority of the sample identified as Caucasian ethnicity (56.7%), with the remainder identifying as European (29.3%), Asian or Pacific Islander (7.1%), Black/African American (6.1%), or another ethnicity (10.3%).

Measures

Intimate Partner Violence

The Conflict Tactics Scale Revised Short Form (CTS2S; Straus & Douglas, 2004) is a 20-item scale and was used to assess IPV perpetration. We included four relevant CTS2S behavioral cluster measures: physical assault (e.g., I pushed, shoved, or slapped my partner), sexual coercion (e.g., I insisted on sex when my partner didn't want to or insisted on sex without a condom), psychological abuse (e.g., I insulted, swore or shouted or yelled at my partner), and injury from assault (e.g., I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut or felt pain the next day because of a fight with my partner). Respondents indicated their engagement in each behavior on a scale from 1 – 8 (1 = *once*, 2 = *twice*, 3 = *3 – 5 times*, 4 = *6 – 10 times*, 5 = *11 – 20 times*, 6 = *more than 20 times* in the past year, 7 = *prior to the past year*, 8 = *never before*). Similar to scoring strategies of Straus and Douglas (2017), responses were recoded so that a higher score indicated a higher number of incidents of each behavior across the lifespan (e.g., 8 = *never before* recoded to 1 =

never). A mean score was then calculated to represent a continuous measure of lifetime frequency of intimate partner violence, with a range from 1 (*never*) to 8 (*20 plus times*) ($\alpha = .89$).

Cross-Gender Contact

To measure positive and negative cross-gender contact across romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic relationships, six separate measures were developed. A series of 24 positive and negative relationship interactions were generated, drawing from previous research (Hayward et al., 2017; Schmoeger et al., 2018). Pilot testing was conducted and 129 participants (75.9% female) rated the relevance of the interactions to each relationship context (romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic) from 1 (*not at all relevant*) to 7 (*very much relevant*). For each relationship context, the five highest rated positive and five highest rated negative interaction experiences were retained, with an average rating of 5.78 across the final items. We conducted *t*-tests to check for gender differences in ratings of the final items. No significant differences were detected. Two (positive and negative) five-item measures for each relationship context were produced: *romantic positive* (e.g., s/he was genuine and sincere); *romantic negative* (e.g., rejected me); *caregiver positive* (e.g., made me feel safe), *caregiver negative* (e.g., criticised me), *general/platonic positive* (e.g., accepted me) and *general/platonic negative* (e.g., was rude to me). In line with other research (Hayward et al., 2017; Voci & Hewstone, 2003), participants in the main study rated how frequently they had experienced each interaction (e.g., how often did each of the below happen in your current and past romantic relationships?; 1 = *extremely rarely*, 7 = *extremely frequently*), as well as the intensity of the experience (e.g., When each of these experiences happened in your current and past romantic relationships, how positive/negative did it feel for you ?; 1 = *not at all positive/negative*, 7 = *extremely positive/negative*). For each participant, their mean frequency score was multiplied by their mean intensity score to create

two composite scores (positive contact, negative contact) ranging from 1 to 49 for each contact context (i.e., romantic: positive [$\alpha = .94$] and negative [$\alpha = .92$]; caregiver: positive [$\alpha = .97$] and negative [$\alpha = .93$]; general/platonic: positive [$\alpha = .94$] and negative [$\alpha = .93$]). Higher scores indicated a higher level of positive/negative contact. For simplicity, we herein refer to negative cross-gender contact as negative contact and positive cross-gender contact as positive contact.

Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Hostile and benevolent sexism were measured across genders: men's sexism toward women and women's sexism toward men. The 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) was used to measure men's sexism, and the 20-item Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999) was used to measure women's sexism. For both measures, participants used a scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) to rate items that formed the hostile sexism subscale (e.g., ASI: women seek to gain power by getting control over men, $\alpha = .93$; AMI: men would be lost in this world if women weren't there to guide them, $\alpha = .92$) and benevolent sexism subscale (e.g., ASI: women should be cherished and protected by men, $\alpha = .81$; AMI: men are more willing to take risks than women, $\alpha = .92$). The mean of each subscale was produced, resulting in separate scores for hostile sexism and benevolent sexism ranging from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sexism.

Rationalization

The rationalization scale was based on the measure developed by Brownhalls et al. (2019) to capture an individual's tendency to rationalize. Original wording was retained where possible, however, the scale lead-in and some items were adjusted to reflect IPV rather than ORI (e.g., original item: even if s/he appeared upset by it, there would be no real harm if I kept trying to contact my partner after the breakup; current item: even if s/he was to appear upset by my

actions, there would be no real harm done). Items were preceded by the lead in “Based on your own experiences with current and past romantic partners, please indicate the extent to which the following statements apply to you”. Participants responded to eight items using a 7-point response scale of 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). As this measure has not previously been explored in the IPV literature, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to assess the structure of the eight items. Community was acceptable for all items ($> .4$) and eigenvalues and the scree plot indicated a single-factor solution, meaning the factors of distortion and permissiveness identified in Brownhalls et al.’s (2019) ORI study were not replicated in an IPV context. A single factor solution with a KMO of .88 was produced and accounted for 66% of the common variance. Subsequently, a single mean rationalization score was produced ($\alpha = .87$).

Analysis Strategy

We initially conducted three sequential mediation analyses with negative contact as the predictor, hostile sexism (Mediator 1) and rationalization (Mediator 2) as mediators, and IPV as the outcome variable. Gender, positive contact, and benevolent sexism (control variables) were entered as covariates. All three analyses were conducted using Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS Model 6 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The analytic process was repeated three times with only the relationship context changing: for hypothesis 1a, we included *romantic* negative and positive contact; for hypothesis 1b, *caregiver* negative and positive contact; and, for hypothesis 1c, *general/platonic* negative and positive contact. Next, to address Research Question 1 (whether gender moderates associations between negative contact and each of hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV) we conducted three moderated sequential mediation analyses with PROCESS Model 85. In each analysis, gender was the moderator and all variable placements from initial three analyses were retained. Effect sizes were interpreted according to

recommendations by Cohen (1988; i.e., small = .02, medium = .15, large = .35)

Results

Correlations among variables, as well as means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 1. IPV was significantly and positively associated with negative contact across romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic relationship contexts for men and women, with the exception of negative caregiver contact, which did not reach significance for women. IPV, hostile sexism, and rationalization were significantly and positively associated for both genders. Gender was significantly negatively associated with IPV (i.e., men reported more IPV than women), and significantly positively associated with negative contact (i.e., women reported more negative contact than men). Gender, hostile sexism, and rationalization were not significantly associated.

Hypothesis 1: Hostile Sexism and Rationalization Sequentially Mediate the Association between Negative Cross-Gender Contact and IPV (controlling for gender, positive cross-gender contact and benevolent sexism)

Results are illustrated in Table 2. In Hypothesis 1a, we proposed the above-mentioned model would be significant for romantic contact. The total effect was significant ($\beta = .05$, 95% CI [.025, .072]). The strongest significant indirect pathway was from romantic negative contact to IPV via rationalization ($\beta = .04$, 95% CI [.020, .063]). The sequential indirect effect was significant ($\beta = .01$, 95% CI [.003, .012]). Effects were small but significant and Hypothesis 1a was supported. Hypothesis 1b proposed the model would hold with caregiver contact as the key predictor. The total effect was significant ($\beta = .05$, 95% CI [.025,.079]). The strongest significant indirect effect was from caregiver negative contact to IPV via rationalization ($\beta = .03$, 95% CI [.013, .060]). The proposed sequential indirect effect was significant ($\beta = .01$, 95% CI [.003, .017]). Effects were small, and supported Hypothesis 1b. Hypothesis 1c proposed the model

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables (N = 886)

Variables	Correlations											
	Men M (SD)	Women M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. IPV	2.63 (1.10)	2.42 (.64)	--	.15**	.14**	.16**	.17**	.25**	-.41**	-.28**	-.13**	.10*
2. Negative Romantic	13.52 (11.25)	16.68 (12.13)	.13**	--	.41**	.52**	.11*	.33*	-.23**	-.06	-.08	.04
3. Negative Caregiver	10.79 (10.90)	14.32 (13.97)	.04	.33**	--	.46**	.16**	.23**	-.14**	-.49**	-.10	-.01
4. Negative General	13.94 (10.75)	19.00 (11.78)	.10**	.47**	.28**	--	.30**	.35**	-.16**	-.09	-.18**	.14**
5. Hostile sexism	2.16 (1.09)	2.16 (1.03)	.20**	.23**	.14**	.17**	--	.53**	-.21**	-.11*	-.25**	.52**
6. Rationalization	3.34 (1.36)	3.25 (1.24)	.23**	.33**	.08	.11**	.44**	--	-.16**	-.02	-.04	.35**
7. Positive Romantic	37.58 (10.22)	37.95 (11.22)	-.15**	-.46**	-.22**	-.16**	-.32**	-.31**	--	.47**	.62**	-.02
8. Positive Caregiver	36.78 (12.50)	34.51 (15.53)	-.04	-.25**	-.78**	-.19**	-.12**	-.04	.28**	--	.40**	.03
9. Positive General	34.02 (10.48)	30.85 (10.91)	-.07	-.32**	-.28**	-.37**	-.25**	-.08	.39**	.37**	--	-.04
10. Benevolent sexism	2.50 (.94)	1.62 (1.16)	.18**	-.08	-.05	-.14**	.54**	.34**	-.06	.05	.05	--
11. Gender	438	448	-.12**	.13**	.14**	.22**	-.01	-.04	.02	-.08*	-.15**	-.37**

Note. With the exception of gender, correlations for men ($n = 448$) are presented above the diagonal, and correlations for women ($n =$

448) are presented below the diagonal. Correlations for gender (men = 1, women = 2) refer to the entire sample. IPV = Intimate

partner violence, range = 1 – 8. Hostile and benevolent sexism range = 1 – 7. Negative/Positive Romantic = negative/positive romantic

cross-gender contact; Negative/Positive Caregiver = negative/positive romantic caregiver cross-gender contact; Negative/Positive

General = negative/positive general/platonic cross-gender contact; range = 1 – 49.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Standardized Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Sequential Mediation Model Predicting IPV While Controlling for Gender, Positive Cross-gender Contact, and Benevolent Sexism (N = 886)

Predictor	Effects	β	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Romantic Negative Cross-Gender Contact	Total Effect	.05	.01	.025	.072
	Direct Effect	<-.01	< .01	-.005	.005
	Indirect Effect				
	Via hostile sexism only	< .01	< .01	-.007	.008
	Via rationalization only	.04	.01	.020	.063
	Via hostile sexism and rationalization	.01	<.01	.003	.012
Caregiver Negative Cross-Gender Contact	Total Effect	.05	.01	.025	.079
	Direct Effect	-.01	< .01	-.011	.001
	Indirect Effect				
	Via hostile sexism only	.01	.01	-.002	.019
	Via rationalization only	.03	.01	.013	.060
	Via hostile sexism and rationalization	.01	< .01	.003	.017
General/Platonic Negative Cross-Gender Contact	Total Effect	.05	.01	.023	.071
	Direct Effect	<.01	< .01	-.003	.008
	Indirect Effect				
	Via hostile sexism only	< -.01	< .01	-.015	.009
	Via rationalization only	.03	.01	.016	.054
	Via hostile sexism and rationalization	.02	< .01	.008	.023

Note: Significant pathways ($p < .05$) are in bold.

would be significant in relation to general/platonic contact. The total effect was significant ($\beta = .05$, 95% CI [.023, .071]). The strongest significant indirect effect was from caregiver negative contact to IPV via rationalization ($\beta = .03$, 95% CI [.016, .054]), with the proposed sequential pathway also being significant ($\beta = .02$, 95% CI [.008, .023]). Effects were small and supportive of Hypothesis 1c. There were no other significant pathways in any of the models.

Our retained sample size was larger than expected, so we conducted post hoc analysis of achieved power using Statistical program G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009). Based on our mean effect size ($f^2 = .03$), sample size ($N = 886$), and $\alpha = .05$, the achieved statistical power was .96. To reduce the risk of Type 1 error the significance threshold was adjusted to $\alpha = .001$ and analyses were repeated. All findings remained significant at the .001 level, and so original findings at the .05 level were retained. Overall, all three hypotheses were supported.

Research Question 1: Does Gender Moderate the Relationships between Negative Cross-Gender Contact with Hostile Sexism, Rationalization, and IPV?

In Research Question 1, we explored potential moderating effects of gender on the associations of negative contact with each of hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV. Gender moderated the associations between caregiver negative contact and rationalization ($B = -.01$, $p = .036$) and general/platonic negative contact and rationalization ($B = -.02$, $p = .003$). The relationship between negative contact and rationalization was stronger for men than for women in both caregiver (men: $B = .03$, $p < .001$; women: $B = .01$, $p = .019$) and general/platonic (men: $B = .03$, $p < .001$; women: $B = .01$, $p = .049$) contexts. Gender did not moderate any other associations. Thus, in relation to Research Question 1, gender was relevant to two of nine tested associations which indicates that negative contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV are, in general, similarly associated for men and women.

Discussion

In the present paper, we proposed that prior negative interactions with the other gender in a variety of contexts might be associated with IPV, and that sexism and the rationalization could be involved in the process. We expected this to be the case in relation to cross-gender contact occurring in romantic (Hypothesis 1a), caregiver (Hypothesis 1b), and general/platonic (Hypothesis 1c) contexts. Results indicated similar small but meaningful effects to support hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c. In all three relationship contexts individuals who reported more frequent and intense negative contact found to have higher levels of hostile sexism toward the other gender (i.e., for men, hostile sexism toward women; for women, hostile sexism toward men). Higher levels of hostile sexism, then, were associated with a stronger tendency to adopt a cognitive style to internally justify one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (rationalization). Then, higher levels of rationalization were associated with more frequent IPV perpetration. The mediation of negative contact and IPV by rationalization alone was the strongest pathway across romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic contexts, highlighting the significance of rationalization in the IPV process. In relation to Research Question 1, broadly, we didn't find gender to have a meaningful impact on this process. Consequently, it seems men and women have similar pathways to IPV via negative interactions with the other gender, hostile sexism, and rationalization.

Our findings are supportive of the contact hypothesis that suggests intergroup attitudes are impacted by interactions with individual outgroup members (Allport, 1954). While the effects were small, it appears negative interactions between individual men and women in an array of contexts can generalize to the broader other-gender group and contribute to hostile sexism. For men, this means negative interactions with individual women could skew their perception of *all* women so that women are expected to submit to male dominance. For women, similarly, negative interactions with individual men could lead

to *all* men being assumed to hold and abuse power over women. It also seems that this occurs despite co-occurring positive encounters which were controlled for in our study. This finding contributes to the growing body of negative contact research (e.g., Barlow et al., 2012; Haywood et al., 2017) that highlights the importance of (even rare) negative interactions with an outgroup over and above (more common) positive interactions. Further, as suggested by feminist theorists (e.g., Corvo et al., 2009; McPhail et al., 2007), it appears hostile sexism could indeed manifest as a learned response in reaction to negative interactions with the other gender and this is relevant for both men and women.

Based on the significance of our sequential pathway to IPV, negative contact and hostile sexism both appear to operate within a larger picture with rationalization. Where negative contact appears to contribute to hostile sexism, rationalization appears to draw from hostile sexism as a lens from which to base self-justification. Then, the tendency to rationalize facilitates the ability to think and behave in a self-serving way in the absence of “bad feelings” that might otherwise inhibit such responses. Via this process, higher levels of rationalization seem to enable violence toward an intimate partner. Thus, the results of our study support an overall picture that negative interactions between men and women contribute to the formation of prejudice toward the “other” gender; hostile sexism feeds into rationalization; and rationalization facilitates IPV perpetration.

Within this larger picture, hostile sexism appears to play a smaller role compared to rationalization, which emerged as a key component of the pathway to IPV perpetration for both men and women. Specifically, rationalization mediated the association between negative contact and IPV in the absence of hostile sexism, and this consistently emerged as the strongest association in each relationship contexts. It seems negative interactions between the genders also directly contribute to the likelihood of adopting rationalization as a cognitive style and, subsequently, engaging in more frequent IPV. This makes sense, as literature

supports the idea that negative contact gives rise to anxiety and anger toward the outgroup (e.g., Hayward et al., 2017). Given rationalization involves unconsciously seeking out a self-serving reason to alleviate negative emotion (e.g., I'm only upset because that man was a jerk), it seems plausible to expect increased negative contact (and associated increased anxiety and anger) could lead to increased rationalization. Consistent with our findings, rationalization has been proposed to relate to a variety of other antisocial behaviors (Brody & Costa, 2020; Brownhalls et al., 2019). While further work is required, a theme appears to be emerging in the literature to support rationalization as a central process in antisocial and violent behavior. While this finding is preliminary, it offers prospects for intervention and further empirical works to clarify.

We also found that our model operated similarly in romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic contact contexts. People who had more negative contact in any of these domains were more likely to report engaging in higher levels of IPV, in part through hostile sexism and rationalization. This set of findings extends on existing work in the field, suggesting that interactions with people other than early attachment figures may contribute to risk of IPV perpetration. Specifically, it seems many people, including but not limited to caregivers, can negatively impact the ways in which a person views, interprets, and responds within intimate relationships. Further to this, in the past, IPV has largely been explored in terms of male perpetrators and female victims. We explored men's and women's IPV perpetration and found, mainly, that our proposed pathway to IPV was relevant for men and women. It is critical to note, however, that our measurement of IPV referred explicitly to the *frequency* of IPV perpetration and included a variety of behaviors ranging from calling a partner names to rape and physical assault. Thus, our findings tell us that negative contact, hostile sexism, and rationalization are relevant to *how often* both genders engage in IPV broadly, but do not take the severity of violence nor the context around the violence (e.g.,

instigator, retaliation, self-defence) into account. It could be that each of the relevant factors depend on gender in terms of the severity or precise IPV behaviors engaged in, and we discuss future directions to address this below.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is limited by a narrow focus on IPV occurring in cisgender, heterosexual relationships and, thus, it remains unclear if negative contact, sexism, and rationalization would similarly contribute to IPV within more gender and sexuality diverse relationships. We recognize that IPV occurs with at least equal, and possibly higher, frequency within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) populations (Messinger, 2011) and research suggests LGBTQ and gender-diverse populations experience unique challenges and outcomes from IPV (Rollè et al., 2018). Consequently, future work would benefit from exploring the impacts of negative contact, attitudes, and thinking styles outside of cisgender, heterosexual populations. In addition, our study focuses on gender intergroup sexism and violence between intimate partners explicitly, and so does not provide insights to intragroup sexism and forms of violent behavior (e.g., men's violence toward men). Men are responsible for the majority of violent crime (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007) but are also over-represented as victims of violent crime (Vaillancourt, 2010). Thus, there is scope to explore whether the factors found to associate with IPV in the current study also apply to violence more broadly.

The current study is cross-sectional in design and relies upon self-report measures, which limits the causality that can be inferred from results. There are possible bidirectional relationships between negative contact, hostile sexism, rationalization, and IPV that could well operate in a feedback loop. Future longitudinal or experimental work, possibly including imaginal cross-gender contact as an intervention, with observational measures is encouraged to provide clarity. This is particularly relevant to the measurement of contact, as self-report of

frequency and intensity of negative interactions could be distorted during the recall process. A further measurement limitation of the current study was our use of contact and rationalization measures that had not been previously validated within the current population of interest. Given the exploratory nature of the present research, there were no existing suitable measures available. Thus, measures for rationalization and contact were created drawing closely from existing, published measures (i.e., Brownhalls et al., 2019, and Hayward et al., 2017, respectively). Given the relevance of findings related to these constructs, we encourage future research further validate these measures.

Our findings are somewhat limited by our measure of IPV. There has been some criticism of behavioral measures (as used in our study) as such measures tend not to capture information relevant to severity or the context in which IPV arises (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). However, these “downfalls” have also been proposed as strengths (Straus, 1999), as they contribute to bias-reduction in the measurement of IPV by controlling for situational factors that may otherwise confound the measurement and reporting of IPV. In terms of the exploration of gender effects in the current results, while our findings provide insight into factors that predispose both men and women to more frequent IPV perpetration, they are limited by a lack of information surrounding gender and the instigation and severity of IPV. Thus, while in our study men and women were found to arrive at IPV via a similar pathway, it could be that each of the relevant factors depend on gender in terms of the severity or precise IPV behaviors engaged in. Future research including a measure of violence that can account for severity and context related to IPV (e.g., instigator, retaliation) is encouraged to provide further insight to the exact ways in which contact, sexism, and rationalization relate to differing expressions of IPV perpetration.

Policy and Clinical Implications

There are several ways the current study might apply to intervention at a societal level and we address these policy implications first. Our findings provide initial support that frequent and intense negative interactions between men and women across a variety of settings (i.e., romantic partners, parents, friends, colleagues, strangers) might result in adverse attitudinal shifts, thinking styles, and IPV. Social campaigns that aim to address sexism and reduce IPV could benefit by highlighting the possible impact of negative interactions between men and women both within and outside of the family and home setting. Further, given the unavoidable nature of at least some negative interactions, there may be benefit in supporting the public to better understand responses to negative interactions to reduce the tendency to generalise negativity and adopt unhelpful interpretations as a reaction.

From a clinical perspective, our findings suggest negative cross-gender contact, hostile sexism (to a lesser degree), and rationalization could all provide effective areas of intervention for IPV perpetrators. The idea that hostile sexism can be incorporated in treatments to reduce IPV by men and women is consistent with, and builds upon, feminist programs such as the Duluth Model: a commonly court-sanctioned intervention for men convicted of intimate partner violence (Corvo et al., 2009). The model includes skills training that could be extended to target conflict management in gendered interactions (e.g., communication, problem-solving skills), and more healthy ways to interpret conflict. This particular feminist treatment model of IPV, however, does not comprehensively focus on female perpetrator – male victim IPV. Thus, there is scope for development of other gender-neutral or female-specific skills-based interventions to better target women's IPV perpetration.

Links have been established between hostile sexism and aggression toward an intimate partner for men (Cross et al., 2017) and our results suggest, similarly, hostile sexism

is related to aggression toward a partner for women as well. Thus, our results add to the idea that individual or group therapy that challenge perceptions that *all* women threaten men's power or that *all* men abuse power over women could target attitudinal shift and, subsequently, reduce IPV. Similarly, our findings are consistent with the idea that therapeutic interventions that target rationalization as a defense mechanism could assist in treatment for IPV perpetrators. Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP; Davanloo, 1990) is a form of therapy specifically developed to assist patients to identify and challenge unhelpful defense mechanisms. In terms of rationalization, this would include supporting the perpetrator to challenge the utility of justifying oneself at the cost of conflict and violence within an intimate relationship. In doing so, the quality of relationships could be improved, and conflict (both internal and external) reduced. It seems possible, then, that this could well translate to a reduction in IPV perpetration.

Conclusion

The current study provides initial support for the idea that negative interactions between men and women across a variety of settings are associated (indirectly) with violent behavior toward a partner in a heterosexual relationship. Further, we found support that hostile sexism toward the partner's gender group (to a small degree), and the tendency to distort reality to internally justify oneself (rationalization; to a larger degree), could be involved in the process. Our findings suggest this suite of processes is relevant to both men's and women's IPV, in terms of perpetration frequency at least. Overall, our results complement and add to the existing literature by highlighting the relevance of rationalization and providing preliminary evidence that contact theory (traditionally a theory of racism) could be relevant to gender-based violence. These findings are particularly salient in the ongoing and unpredictable context of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, as many people are likely to experience increased negative interactions, and possibly fewer positive

interactions, with members of the other gender. Our results provide insights for both policy and clinical interventions that could assist in increasing awareness, supporting public engagement, and reducing the significant issue of IPV by both male and female perpetrators.

Summary of Chapter 5

Study 2 (Chapter 5) contributes to the overarching aim of this thesis to provide a better understanding of factors related to men's and women's IPV perpetration. Specifically, Study 2 (Chapter 5) determined if negative interactions between men and women in a variety of relationship contexts (contact; Allport, 1954) relate to increased IPV perpetration (by both men and women) and, if so, whether the relationship occurs, sequentially, through sexist attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999) and rationalization (Brownhalls et al., 2019; Cupach et al., 2000). The findings presented in Chapter 5 support this model of IPV for both male and female perpetrators of IPV. These results are significant in that they further support the critical role rationalization plays in a broad range of IPV behaviors, as well as providing preliminary evidence that inter-gender contact and sexism are involved in the trajectory to IPV perpetration for both men and women.

More broadly, then, the findings of Chapter 5 contribute to the thesis' aims in two ways: (1) by providing support for a novel model of the factors that are associated with IPV perpetration, and (2) by highlighting that the factors (at least, for those studied here) that contribute to IPV are similar for male and female perpetrators. The empirical chapters now move to the final study of the series, which builds on the findings of Study 2 (Chapter 5). Where Study 2 supports sexism as being associated with IPV perpetration, Study 3 (Chapter 6) extends on this to explore if sexism is also related to men's and women's responses to a common and severe form of IPV: men's violence toward women.

Chapter 6: Make It Safe at Night or Teach Women to Fight? Sexism Predicts Views on Men's and Women's Responsibility to Reduce Men's Violence toward Women

*She is a woman, therefore may be wooed
She is a woman, therefore may be won*

-William Shakespeare, circa 1588-

Preamble to Chapter 6

Chapter 6 includes Study 3, presented as a published journal article (Brownhalls et al., 2020). As with the prior two empirical chapters, original formatting for the specific journal of publication has been retained, with the exception that tables have been embedded in the article text and references are presented in a combined reference list positioned at the end of the thesis for ease of reading.

Study 2 confirmed the relevance of hostile sexism in processes that contribute to IPV perpetration. Specifically, higher levels of hostile sexism were found to be associated with more frequent IPV perpetration. Study 3 builds on this finding by asking, on the basis that sexism is related to IPV perpetration, is it also related to how people respond to one of the most common and lethal forms of IPV, men's violence against women? In asking this question, Study 3 extends research in this field to the societal level to explore the attitudes of broader society toward women. This study also explored whether sexism toward women differentially impacted men's and women's responses to men's violence toward women. We answered these questions drawing from a large-scale longitudinal population study in New Zealand, in which existing measures of sexism were abbreviated for inclusion. The aim of Study 3, then, was to extend the findings of Study 2 beyond the individual perpetrator, to establish how gender-based attitudes are involved in society's perception and responses to men's violence toward women.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO CO-AUTHORED PUBLISHED PAPER

This chapter includes a co-authored paper. The details of the co-authored paper, are:

Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., Overall, N., Sibley, C. G., Radke, H. R. M., & Barlow, F.K. (2020). Make It Safe at Night or Teach Women to Fight? Sexism Predicts Views on Men's and Women's Responsibility to Reduce Men's Violence toward Women. *Sex Roles, 84*(3-4), 183 – 195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01159-5>

My contribution to the paper involved: literature review, development of analysis strategy, and data management including scoring analyses, interpretation and critical appraisal. Further contributions include writing the manuscript and implementing feedback from secondary authors, as well as throughout the journal submission process.

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Make It Safe at Night or Teach Women to Fight? Sexism Predicts Views on Men's and
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Abstract

The current study explores associations among sexism, gender, and support for two approaches to reduce men's violence toward women targeting (a) men's behavior to reduce male violence toward women and (b) women's behavior so that they can avoid male violence. The associations between sexism and support for these two interventions were examined in 21,937 participants in the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey. For both women and men, hostility toward nontraditional women (hostile sexism) was associated with lower support for targeting men to reduce men's violence against women. To a lesser degree, stronger attitudes that women who adhere to traditional feminine roles should be rewarded (benevolent sexism) were associated with greater support for targeting men to reduce men's violence. In contrast, both hostile and benevolent sexism were positively associated with support for targeting women to avoid men's violence. These complex and nuanced relationships could suggest that sexism perpetuates the idea that women are responsible for keeping themselves safe from men's violence while excusing men from accountability. This possibility has implications for addressing how society can be best engaged in the campaign against men's violence toward women.

Keywords: ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, sexual and non-sexual violence, gender inequality, gendered violence

Make It Safe at Night or Teach Women to Fight? Sexism Predicts Views on Men's and Women's Responsibility to Reduce Men's Violence toward Women

Within a 7-month period in 2018-2019, two women, Eurydice Dixon and Aiiia Maasarwe, were physically and sexually assaulted and then murdered by male strangers in Melbourne, Australia (Cuthbertson, 2019). In both cases, the women had been walking home alone at night and had used their phones to notify a loved one of their whereabouts shortly before the attacks. In response to the death of Ms. Dixon, a senior police officer made a public statement that appeared to place responsibility on women to avoid men's violence. He encouraged women to consider their own personal safety, carry their mobile phones, and be aware of their surroundings (Davey, 2018). Conversely, the Victorian State Premier responded by suggesting women should go about their daily activities and that men should change their behavior to reduce such violence toward women.

Evidently these and similar incidents typically elicit two distinct responses: that women should take measures to avoid and protect themselves from men's violence and that men should take measures to stop being violent toward women. These responses are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but the point of intervention is different in each: one targets women as a mechanism of change whereas the other targets men as a mechanism of change. It seems likely that support for each response may be linked to underlying attitudes toward the group most impacted by this violence: women. In the present study, we aim to clarify the roles played by gender and hostile and benevolent sexism toward women in determining support for intervening with men and women in the prevention of men's violence against women. Findings of the study provide insight relevant to the campaign against men's violence toward women.

Men's Violence toward Women

In the current study, we focus specifically on men's physical and sexual violence toward women because these behaviors act as dangerous and extreme manifestations of gender inequality that maintain the status quo of a patriarchal society (Turquet et al., 2011). For the purpose of the current research, the terms "men" and "women" are primarily used to refer to cisgender men and cisgender women (i.e., men and women whose gender identity matches their biological sex or sex assigned at birth). We want to note, however, that we recognize that men's violence is often enacted on transgender women (Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2016; Wirtz, Poteat, Malik, & Glass, 2020). Further, gender identities beyond the male/female binary are worthy of study and attention. Within the present work, however, we focus narrowly on understanding responses to cisgender men's violence toward cisgender women.

Population studies conducted within New Zealand (where participants in the present study are located) suggest that over the course of their lifetime an estimated 12% to 17% of women are targeted with sexual and/or physical violence by a stranger or acquaintance and 39% of women are sexually and/or physically abused by a male intimate partner (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). In North America, estimates suggest approximately 25% of young adult men (18 to 35 years) self-report that they have knowingly forced or coerced a woman to engage in some form of sexual activity to which she did not, or was not able to, consent (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015). Women targeted with sexual and physical violence by men have an increased risk of emotional and health problems (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004), with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression being the most common (Ayre, Lum On, Webster, Gourley, & Moon, 2016). Furthermore, the risk of suicide attempts is significantly elevated among women who have been physically or sexually abused (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). The cost to society in

policing, legal, and healthcare provisions for violence against women is estimated to be \$22 billion over a 12-month period in Australia (KPMG, 2016). Thus, men's violence toward women carries severe costs for the impacted individual, women as a group, and the broader community.

Addressing Men's Violence

Although men's violence toward women is a pervasive and enduring issue at the individual and societal level, exploration of what solutions people see as appropriate is understudied. To contribute to the growing body of literature in this field, the present study identifies two possible approaches to preventing men's violence toward women: (a) target men to not be violent and (b) target women to avoid men's violence. Although both interventions may appear to share a common goal of reducing men's violence, they vary in the specific means by which this change in conditions is achieved—targeting men or targeting women—which has important implications for assigning or communicating responsibility for men's violence toward women.

Intervening by targeting men to reduce their violence toward women considers men, broadly, as the mechanism of change. This strategy does not imply that all men are violent toward women or that all men are responsible for men's violence toward women. Rather, it positions men's violence toward women within a larger societal structure where norms implicitly allow or even encourage men's physical dominance over women. In line with this notion, research suggests the ways in which women, sexual behavior, and sexual consent are discussed in male peer groups influences men's violence behaviors. For example, male perpetrators of sexual violence toward women report perceived pressure from male peers to have sex “by any means” and identify that, within male friendship groups, there is frequent use of language that objectifies women (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015). Public movements, such as the White Ribbon

Campaign, aim to eradicate violence toward women by focusing on the roles of peer pressure and male norms in either promoting or preventing violence against women (White Ribbon Campaign, 2019). Such campaigns appeal to all men to participate in education programs and to be advocates and activists in the prevention of violence toward women (Flood, 2011).

Intervening by targeting women to protect themselves from men's violence toward women considers women, broadly, as the mechanism of change. This approach suggests that women should be encouraged to avoid (e.g., don't walk alone at night) or protect themselves from (e.g., carry pepper spray or learn self-defense) men's violence. In doing so, women are tasked with taking responsibility for securing their own safety from men's violence. This perspective positions male violence as inevitable (at least in the current social environment) and may reflect common beliefs about male sexuality: that men (but not women) have an uncontrollable need to have sex and a right to act violently if disrespected (Messerschmidt, 2000; Torbenfeldt Bengtsson, 2016). Popular media, a common reflection of social and cultural expectations (Rakow, 2001), often adopts this viewpoint by suggesting that (some) women are guilty of putting themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and, thus, make themselves vulnerable to men's sexual and dominance desires (Nettleton, 2011). Hence, if men's violence toward women is to be prevented, from this perspective, it is women who are responsible for avoiding such behavior.

Gender

Limited literature explores differences in men's and women's beliefs about, and responses to, men's violence toward women. Radke, Hornsey, and Barlow (2018) labelled behaviors associated with responses to gender inequality as *feminist action* (i.e., action that intends to challenge sexism) and *protective action* (i.e., action that intends to guard women from

men's inevitable violence), and they conducted preliminary studies exploring gender differences in willingness to engage in either of these responses. They identified that women and men were equally likely to report willingness to engage in behaviors that guard women from men's violence (protective action, such as sponsor a woman to take self-defense classes) and that women, compared to men, were more likely to report willingness to engage in actions that challenge gender inequality (feminist action, such as boycott companies that do not support women's rights). Thus, it seems men and women equally believe that women need protection, and thus they may be equally supportive of educating women to avoid men's violence.

Extending from Radke et al., however, women may be more supportive than men of efforts to challenge the existing gender status quo. Finally, given that the ways in which women and men broadly view women is likely involved in such responses, we also explore how sexism interacts with gender to predict support for educating women or men to prevent men's violence toward women.

Sexism

Benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are components of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), a construct that conceptualizes sexism as comprising both negative and positive appraisals of women that serve to maintain male dominance. *Hostile sexism* fits with a classic conceptualization of discrimination that views the disadvantaged group (in this case, women) negatively, and it frames women's rejection of a patriarchal society (e.g., feminist ideology, campaigning for equal pay) as a threat to men. Consequently, from a hostile sexism perspective, women who violate traditional gender norms should be punished (Glick & Fiske, 2000). On the other hand, *benevolent sexism* refers to a subjectively positive, although patronizing, appraisal of women that is characterized by the idealization of women who embrace traditional,

stereotypically feminine gender roles. Thus, benevolently sexist ideas suggest that women who adhere to roles that support male dominance and express femininity (e.g., damsel in distress, sexually chaste) should be rewarded with protection and care from men (Glick & Fiske, 2000).

Both men and women can and do hold sexist attitudes toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000) and, consequently, although we explore possible interactions with participants' gender, we make all our predictions about how sexism should be related to responses to men's violence toward women for both men *and* women. With hostile sexism, our predictions are relatively clear. Targets of men's sexual violence are frequently subjected to victim-blaming and rape myth acceptance in which their character, motives, and prior behavior are scrutinized in a way that minimizes harm to the victim and attempts to diminish perpetrator responsibility (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Koepke, Eyssel, & Bohner, 2014). In such cases, high levels of hostile sexism among men are associated with victim-blaming and approval of the aggressor's behavior (Koepke et al., 2014), which tends to shift responsibility for preventing such violence onto female victims. Consequently, we propose that people who report higher levels of hostile sexism would be less supportive of targeting men's behavior to reduce violence against women.

Predictions around benevolent sexism are more closely associated with support for targeting women to avoid male violence. There is some evidence that people who have high levels of benevolent sexism view a woman who leaves herself vulnerable to rape as having violated her expected role of chastity and purity (Viki, Abrams, & Masser, 2004). From this perspective a "good" woman is one who can navigate the bestial world of men and avoid sexual assault, an idea which places the responsibility for avoiding men's violence with women. An examination of the table of correlations reported in Radke et al. (2018) further reveals that men

high in benevolent sexism were more willing to sponsor women to protect themselves (e.g., through self-defense classes). Thus, we propose that benevolent sexism may be associated with higher levels of support for educating women to avoid male violence.

The Current Study

In the current study we examined the degree to which hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender were associated with support for two responses to men's violence toward women: targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women and targeting women to avoid men's violence. We also explored the degree to which gender, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism interact to predict differences in support for these two responses to men's violence toward women.

Consistent with past research (Koepke et al., 2014), in Hypothesis 1a, we expect that hostile sexism will be negatively associated with support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women. In terms of targeting women's behavior, the predictions are less clear. Although it is possible that those high in hostile sexism are simply more likely to oppose any effort to reduce male violence, some work suggests that hostile sexism is associated with victim-blaming (Koepke et al., 2014) and, thus, it is possible that those high in hostile sexism would expect women to change their behavior to avoid the possibility of men's violence. Therefore, in Hypothesis 1b we propose that hostile sexism will be positively associated with support for targeting women to avoid men's violence.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b relate to benevolent sexism. Benevolently sexist ideas position women as weak and dependent on men who take the role of strong protectors. Indeed, benevolent sexism is theorized to appeal to some men and women based on the guise of protection it offers women (Glick et al., 2000). This reasoning suggests those high in benevolent

sexism may also believe men should modify their behavior to reward and protect the perceived weaker sex. Therefore, we expect benevolent sexism to be positively associated with support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women (Hypothesis 2a). Further, people high in benevolent sexism tend to see women's behavior as crucial in determining whether sexual assault takes place or not (Viki et al., 2004) and so we propose that benevolent sexism will be positively associated with support for targeting women to change their behavior to avoid male violence (Hypothesis 2b).

In relation to gender, Hypothesis 3a predicts that women will be more likely than men to believe that men's behavior should be targeted to reduce men's violence toward women. This hypothesis is based on prior research (i.e., Radke et al., 2018) which suggests men are less inclined to support action that challenges male dominance. As per Radke et al. (2018), we expect men and women to display similar levels of support for encouraging women to avoid men's violence. As we expect there to be no variation within our explored variables here (i.e., we expect to find support for the null hypothesis), we label this as Prediction 3b.

Finally, a series of exploratory research questions investigated interactions among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and participants' gender in the prediction of both dependent variables. We make no specific predictions in relation to these exploratory research questions. There is research to support links between both types of sexism and rape myth acceptance (Chapleau et al., 2007), although there is little clarity on whether hostile sexism and benevolent sexism interact. Thus, in Research Question 1 we explore whether hostile sexism and benevolent sexism interact when predicting support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women (i.e., is there a two-way interaction between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism?). Much research focuses on men's sexist attitudes and perceptions of

women's culpability in relation to men's violence (Koepke et al., 2014). Thus, in the current study, we also test two-way interactions between hostile sexism and participants' gender (Research Question 2) and benevolent sexism and gender (Research Question 3) to explore the possibility that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism may be more relevant to either men's or women's support for targeting men and targeting women to deal with men's violence toward women. Similarly, to the authors' knowledge, there is no existent literature from which to draw in order to understand whether the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism might be more relevant to either men or women (i.e., gender) in relation to their support for interventions that target men or women. Therefore, in Research Question 4, we explore the three-way interaction among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and participants' gender in predicting targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women.

Method

Sampling Procedure

The data were drawn from Wave 8 of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS), which is conducted by the University of Auckland. The NZAVS commenced in 2009 and is an annual, longitudinal, national probability study of New Zealand's adult residents randomly selected from the electoral roll. The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee reviews the NZAVS approximately every 3 years. Wave 8 of the data is covered by the most recent renewal, which was initiated in September 2017 and lasts until June 2021 (reference number: 014889). All participants provided written informed consent and identifying details were removed from questionnaires prior to analysis.

The initial wave of NZAVS surveys was posted to participants by mail, with a follow up copy posted 2 months later. In Wave 8, participants who had completed earlier waves of the

study and had provided an email address were also emailed and invited to complete the questionnaire online if preferred. The NZAVS survey included measures assessing a range of attitudes and values and, from these, scales and items used to test the current research questions were drawn. Note that the items included in the present study were designed by the research team and only introduced in this wave.

Participants

A total of 21,937 participants aged 18 to 97 years-old ($M = 49.62$, $SD = 13.93$) completed the targeted items in Wave 8 and were included in the current study. The final sample included more women ($n = 13,722$, 62.61%) than men, with the majority of the sample being born in New Zealand ($n = 17,396$, 79.32%) and of European (Pākēha) ethnicity ($n = 17,417$, 79.44%). The remainder were of Maori ($n = 2544$, 11.60%), Asian ($n = 943$, 4.3%), Pacific ($n = 504$, 2.3%), or other ($n = 526$, 2.3%) ethnicity. At the time of completing the survey, most participants were in a serious relationship ($n = 16,540$, 75.4%) and were parents ($n = 16,079$, 73.3%).

Measures

Hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile and benevolent sexism toward women were measured as separate constructs using a subset of items from the corresponding subscales of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The use of short forms of the ASI has been validated via previous EFA of full-scale data within community samples (Bendixen & Kennair, 2017; de Lemus, Moya, & Glick, 2010; Rollero, Glick, & Tartaglia, 2014). Further, extensive pilot testing was conducted to ensure the suitability of the 10 ASI items included within the current survey (Sibley, 2009). Participants used a 7-point response scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) to rate five items that formed the hostile sexism scale (i.e., women are too easily offended; women exaggerate problems they have at work; women

seek to gain power by getting control over men; once a woman gets a man to commit to her she usually tries to put him on a short leash; when women lose to men in a fair competition they typically complain about being discriminated against; $\alpha = .84$) and five items that formed the benevolent sexism scale (i.e., women, compared to men, tend to have greater moral sensibility; many women have a quality of purity that few men possess; women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste; women should be cherished and protected by men; every man ought to have a woman whom he adores; $\alpha = .75$). Each scale provided a composite measure for hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, separately, such that higher averaged scores indicated stronger endorsement of sexism.

Responses to men's violence toward women. Two separate outcome measures were developed specifically for the NZAVS to assess endorsement of targeting men and targeting women as mechanisms of change to prevent men's violence toward women. Drawing from previous research (Radke et al., 2018) and public discussion surrounding men's violence toward women, a single item was developed for each outcome variable. (Note that only one item for each construct was possible, due to space constraints in the nationally representative survey.) The item targeting men was developed to measure the belief that men's behavior should be the focus in reducing men's violence toward women: "We should invest more in educating men to not be physically/sexually violent toward women." The item targeting women was developed to measure the belief that women's behavior should be the focus in reducing men's violence toward women: "We should invest more in educating women how to avoid physical/sexual violence from men." Each of the items was rated on a 7-point response scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*).

Control variables. We suspected there could be some overlap between the two

dependent variables (i.e., targeting men and targeting women) that could reflect a general willingness to support any intervention to reduce men's violence. Thus, to partial out any shared variance between the two dependent variables, we controlled for support for targeting women when predicting support for targeting men and vice versa. Additionally, several factors were expected to potentially influence results, so these were included as control variables. These controls were age, country of birth, relationship status (whether a participant was involved in a serious romantic relationship such as de facto or marriage at the time of responding), and parental status (whether a participant had children). We controlled for age due to the large age range in our sample (18–97 years-old), and country of birth (New Zealand = 1, Other = 0) was included to control for cultural influence. Relationship status (Serious Relationship = 1, Other = 0) and parental status (Parent = 1, Non-Parent = 0) were controlled for because close interpersonal relationships between men and women (i.e., husband – wife, mother – son) might influence an individual's perceptions and expectations of gendered interactions.

Analysis Strategy

We used a series of hierarchical regressions to assess the relationships among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, participants' gender, and participants' expectations that interventions should target men or target women to reduce violence toward women. All control variables were entered at Block 1 of the regressions. At Block 2, participants' gender, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism were added. Two-way interactions (i.e., hostile sexism x benevolent sexism, gender x hostile sexism, and gender x benevolent sexism) were entered at Block 3, with the three-way interaction among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender added at Block 4. For any significant interactions, simple slopes analysis was conducted to determine the nature of the interaction.

To confirm results, we also conducted follow-up analyses in which the alternate dependent variable was not controlled for in Block 1 of each regression. For full analyses without controlling for the alternate dependent variables, refer to Online Resource 1 in our online supplement. The pattern of results remained consistent with the exception of two interactions (see Online Resource 1, Table 2s, parts a and b in the online supplement). When predicting support for targeting women without controlling for support for targeting men (Online Resource 1, Table 2s, part b), the interaction between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, and also between gender and hostile sexism, differed to results (reported here) that did control for support for targeting men. Consequently, on the following, we interpret these interactions cautiously. To depict the unique effects of predictor variables on each specific type of intervention, we report herein the analyses controlling for the other targeted intervention.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all relevant variables are displayed in Table 1. There was a positive association between targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women and targeting women to avoid violence from men. Hostile sexism was negatively associated with support for targeting men to not be violent toward women and positively associated with support for targeting women to avoid violence from men. Benevolent sexism was positively associated with support for targeting both men and women to reduce men's violence toward women. Prior to further analysis, gender was contrast coded (women = -1 and men = 1), and hostile and benevolent sexism were mean centered to aid in the interpretation of results. Table 2 displays beta values and change statistics for the hierarchical regressions.

As displayed in Tables 2a and 2b, a significant amount of variance in targeting men (Block 2, Adj. $R^2 = .20$), $F(3, 20301) = 626.61$, $p < .001$, and targeting women (Block 2, Adj. R^2

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Correlations						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	51.42 (13.95)	48.58 (13.78)	--	.01	.43**	.01	.06**	.05**	.04**
2. Country of Birth	.78 (.42)	.80 (.40)	-.03*	--	.02*	-.06**	-.01	-.02*	-.02*
3. Parental Status	.73 (.44)	.73 (.44)	.44**	-.02	--	.22**	.09**	.05**	-.03**
4. Relationship Status	.79 (.41)	.73 (.44)	.17**	-.06**	.41**	--	.05**	.03**	-.04**
5. Benevolent Sexism	3.96 (1.16)	3.57 (1.23)	.18**	.02	.14**	.02	--	.48**	.02**
6. Hostile Sexism	3.32 (1.26)	2.72 (1.21)	.01	.02*	-.02	.13**	.34**	--	-.18**
7. Targeting Men	5.64 (1.35)	5.89 (1.22)	.12**	-.01	.07**	.05**	.13**	-.21*	--
8. Targeting Women	4.71 (1.71)	4.89 (1.83)	.22**	-.0	.11**	.01	.29**	.16**	.40**

Note. Correlations for women ($n = 13,722$) are presented above the diagonal, and correlations for men ($n = 8,215$) are presented below the diagonal. Country of Birth: New Zealand = 1, Other = 0. Parental Status: Parent = 1, Non-Parent = 0. Relationship Status: Serious Relationship = 1, Other = 0. Gender: Men = 1, Women = 0. All other variables had a possible range from 1 to 7.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

= .25), $F(3, 20301) = 859.77, p < .001$, to reduce men's violence toward women was accounted for by hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and participants' gender. In Hypothesis 1a we predicted that hostile sexism would be negatively associated with support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women, whereas in Hypothesis 1b we predicted that hostile sexism would be positively associated with support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. In relation to Hypothesis 1a and as displayed in Table 2a, results indicated that higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with less support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women ($\beta = -.32, p < .001$). According to guidelines for effect sizes in multiple regression (small = .10, medium = .30, large = .50; Cohen, 1992), the variance explained by hostile sexism in relation to targeting men was of medium effect size (i.e., $> .30$ and $< .50$). In relation to Hypothesis 1b and as displayed in Table 2b, results indicated higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with more support for targeting women to avoid men's violence ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Here, in relation to predicting support for targeting women to reduce men's violence, the variance explained by hostile sexism was of small effect size (i.e., $> .10$ and $< .30$). Thus, the specific effects of hostile sexism support both Hypotheses 1a and 1b, with hostile sexism having a stronger relationship with (low support for) targeting men than with targeting women.

In Hypotheses 2a and 2b we expected benevolent sexism to be positively associated with support for targeting men as well as targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. In relation to Hypothesis 2a and as displayed in Table 2a, higher levels of benevolent sexism were positively associated with support for targeting men ($\beta = .10, p < .001$). In relation to Hypothesis 2b and as displayed in Table 2b, higher levels of benevolent sexism were also positively associated with targeting women ($\beta = .15, p < .001$). The specific effects of benevolent

Table 2

Predicting (a) Targeting Men to Not be Violent Toward Women and (b) Targeting Women to Avoid Men's Violence as a Function of Control Variables, Gender, and Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Block	(a) Targeting Men				(b) Targeting Women			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls								
Age	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	.21***	.20***	.20***	.20***
Country of Birth	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.02**	-.02**	-.02**	-.02**
Parental Status	-.03**	-.04***	-.03**	-.03***	.05***	.03***	.03***	.03***
Relationship Status	.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.05***	-.02**	-.02**	-.02**
Targeting women	.35***	.38***	.38***	.38***				
Targeting men					.32***	.35***	.36***	.36***
Variables								
Gender		-.01	-.01	-.01		-.11***	-.11***	-.11***
Hostile Sexism (HS)		-.32***	-.32***	-.32***		.20***	.20**	.20***
Benevolent Sexism (BS)		.10***	.12***	.18***		.15**	.14***	.14***
HS x BS			.13***	.13***			-.06***	-.06***
Gender x HS			-.02**	-.02**			-.01	-.06
Gender x BS			.02**	0.02**			-.01	-.01
Gender x HS x BS				-.01				.01
ΔR^2	.12***	.08***	.02***	.00	.17***	.08***	.01***	.00
Adj. R^2	.12***	.20***	.22***	.22	.17***	.25***	.26***	.26
ΔF	530.17***	696.52***	159.62***	.04	836.67***	744.99***	30.56***	1.24

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

sexism support Hypotheses 2a and 2b, although with small effect sizes in both cases (Cohen, 1992).

In Hypothesis 3a we predicted that women, more so than men, would support targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women. In Prediction 3b, however, we did not expect gender to impact support for targeting women to reduce men's violence. In relation to Hypothesis 3a and as displayed in Table 2a, gender did not account for a significant amount of variance in targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women. In relation to Prediction 3b, women, more so than men, expected that women should be targeted to avoid men's violence ($\beta = -.11, p = .001$) although this produced only a small effect size (Cohen, 1992). Thus, the specific effects for gender did not support Hypothesis 3a or Prediction 3b.

Research Question 1 involved exploring the two-way interaction between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. The two-way interactions entered at Block 3 (see Tables 2a and 2b) accounted for a significant amount of variance in relation to targeting men (Adj. $R^2 = .22$), $F(3, 20298) = 509.93, p < .001$, and targeting women (Adj. $R^2 = .26$), $F(3, 20297) = 636.37, p < .001$. For targeting men and as displayed in Table 2a, there was a significant two-way interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism ($\beta = .13, p < .001$). Simple slopes analysis indicated that when benevolent sexism was low, hostile sexism was negatively associated with targeting men ($\beta = -.45, p < .001$). The negative association between hostile sexism and support for targeting men remained, but was weaker, when benevolent sexism was high ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$).

In relation to targeting women and as displayed in Table 2b, a significant two-way interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism ($\beta = -.06, p < .001$) also emerged. Simple slopes analysis indicated that when benevolent sexism was low, hostile sexism was associated

with support for targeting women to reduce men's violence ($\beta = .25, p < .001$). The association between hostile sexism and support for targeting women remained, but was weaker, when benevolent sexism was high ($\beta = .15, p < .001$). The variance explained by this interaction does not reach the threshold of a small effect (Cohen, 1992) and is smaller than the same interaction in relation to targeting men. Therefore, analyses examining Research Question 1 revealed that benevolent sexism appears to slightly dampen the effects of hostile sexism in relation to support for both targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women.

Research Question 2 involved exploring the two-way interaction between gender and hostile sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. This interaction was only significant in relation to targeting men, as displayed in Table 2a ($\beta = -.02, p < .001$). The association between hostile sexism and support for targeting men was slightly stronger among men ($\beta = -.33, p < .001$) than women ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$). The variance explained was below the threshold of a small effect (i.e., $< .10$; Cohen, 1992). Therefore, analyses for Research Question 2 indicated that hostile sexism might be slightly more relevant to men than women in relation to predicting support for targeting men but, in relation to support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women, the impact of hostile sexism did not differ across men and women.

Research Question 3 involved exploring the two-way interaction between gender and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. This interaction was only significant in relation to targeting men, as displayed in Table 2a ($\beta = .02, p = .002$). Benevolent sexism was a slightly better predictor for women ($\beta = .11, p < .001$) than for men ($\beta = .10, p < .001$). This effect was below the threshold of a small effect (i.e., $< .10$; Cohen, 1992). Therefore, analyses for Research Question 3 indicated

that benevolent sexism might be slightly more relevant to women than men in relation to predicting support for targeting men but, in relation to support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women, the impact of benevolent sexism did not differ across women and men.

Research Question 4 involved exploring the three-way interactions among gender, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. Here, there were no significant three-way interactions.

Discussion

In the present paper we looked at how sexism and gender related to support for two approaches to reduce men's violence toward women: (a) targeting men to not be physically and sexually violent toward women and (b) targeting women to avoid men's physical and sexual violence. Results were broadly in line with our hypotheses, with the most substantial finding being the support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b. This pattern of findings saw the emergence of hostile sexism as a predictor of reduced support for intervening with men to reduce men's violence toward women, but *increased* support for intervening with women to caution them to avoid men's violence. The effects for benevolent sexism were weaker but also supported Hypotheses 2a and 2b: Greater benevolent sexism predicted increased support for intervening with both men and women to reduce male violence. In terms of gender, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were not supported because we found that women were slightly more supportive than men of tackling violence against women by targeting women to avoid such behavior, but both men and women were equally supportive of intervening with men.

Additionally, several significant, although weak, interactions emerged in our examination of our exploratory research questions. Higher levels of benevolent sexism attenuated the strength

with which hostile sexism related to both of the approaches to reducing men's violence. In our data, the association between hostile sexism and support for intervening with men was slightly larger for men than for women, whereas benevolent sexism was a slightly stronger predictor for women. It is also important to note that, in general, levels of support for both forms of intervention (i.e., targeting men, targeting women) were very high and that support for targeting men to reduce violence toward women approached the ceiling (5.80 on a possible 7-point scale). Consequently, there appears to be a public appetite for reducing male violence toward women, in particular by talking to and engaging men.

As we mentioned, and consistent with our predictions, participants who expressed greater hostility toward women who challenge male dominance (i.e., high hostile sexism) were less supportive of targeting men to change their behavior around violence toward women, while also being more supportive of targeting women to avoid men's violence. It seems logical that people who believe women deserve punishment if they step out of line (i.e., report high levels of hostile sexism) would also be less inclined to value the physical safety of women. From this perspective, men's violence toward women may be viewed as a viable means to maintain male dominance or the result of aberrant female behavior (i.e., she must have done something to deserve punishment). Accordingly, both men and women with high levels of hostile sexism are likely to oppose the idea that intervening with men is either appropriate or necessary (at least compared to those with lower levels of hostile sexism). Comparatively, the expectation that women should modify their own behavior to avoid men's violence removes the onus from men to reduce violence and aligns with the motives underpinning hostile sexism (i.e., to protect men from women who threaten men's power). This competitive picture of gender relations is consistent with the victim-blaming literature showing that women targeted with sexual violence by men are

often condemned whereas the man's culpability is minimized (Chapleau et al., 2007; Koepke et al., 2014; Viki et al., 2004). The current results extend that literature by providing support that, when it comes to interventions to reduce men's violence, both men and women high in hostile sexism excuse men's responsibility and place obligation on women to accept and adapt to the inevitability of men's violence.

Our results also revealed that participants with stronger beliefs that women should be cherished and protected by men (i.e., high benevolent sexism) were more supportive of targeting both men and women to make changes to reduce men's violence toward women. The harm of benevolent sexism to women is well documented: It predicts greater blame of female victims for men's sexual violence (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Viki et al., 2004), lack of support for abortion of rape-related pregnancy (Osborne & Davies, 2012), and general restriction of women to remain in traditional gender roles (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). The current results, however, indicate that higher levels of benevolent sexism appear to promote interventions that benefit women by reducing men's violence. As we speculated in the introduction, it could be that people who view men as the protectors of women (i.e., endorse high benevolent sexism) oppose violations of this role (e.g., men's violence against women) and endorse any action that reinstates women being guarded by men. However, this likely comes at a "cost" to women; namely that in order to receive men's protection, women must adhere to a restrictive, traditional, stereotyped role of a "good woman." Indeed, our results are consistent with the idea that benevolent sexism coerces women into accepting gender inequality.

Theoretically, benevolent sexism is conceived to be the "carrot" to the "stick" of hostile sexism; that is, benevolent sexism affords benefits to women and protects them from the harsh consequences of hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2000). Our results fit with this understanding, as

does the two-way interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism that we found. Higher levels of benevolent sexism attenuated the strength with which hostile sexism related to both support for targeting men to not be violent toward women as well as support for targeting women to avoid men's violence. Past work has established that when hostile sexism is high, women are likely to accept benevolent sexism as a means of reducing the negative impact (punishment) of hostile sexism (Fischer, 2006; Glick et al., 2000). In practical terms, this means that women modify their behavior to seek protection (benevolent sexism) from the very group (i.e., men) who are perceived to pose a threat (hostile sexism). Thus, consistent with our results, benevolent sexism reduces the impact of hostile sexism, and together hostile and benevolent sexism operate in tandem to maintain a cycle of male dominance.

Turning to participants' gender, we found that women were slightly more supportive than men of tackling violence against women by targeting women's behavior. In retrospect, this finding seems obvious. Women, compared to men, likely have a greater personal awareness and fear of the personal costs of men's violence (e.g., physical and psychological injury, victim-blaming) and as a consequence may be more invested in, and willing, to learn to stay out of the pathway of male violence as a means of self-defense. We note, however, that in past work men have been more willing than women to sponsor women to attend self-defense classes and gun safety training (Radke et al., 2018). Although the difference between men's and women's support for targeting women in the current study was small, the pattern is inconsistent with Radke et al. (2018). It is possible that when thinking about intervening with women to avoid male violence, participants in our study were thinking about a vast range of behaviors (e.g., walking with groups of friends, avoiding certain areas late at night). It may be the case that whereas men see physical self-defense as a viable route to avoiding male violence (the dependent

variable in Radke et al., 2018), in relative terms, women do not. A broader definition of avoidance, however, appears to see women showing more support for the initiative than men.

Gender was also found to interact with each type of sexism in relation to targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women. As previously established, both men and women can hold benevolent and hostile sexism toward women and, for both genders, these attitudes are linked to perceptions of men's violence toward women (Koepke et al., 2014; Viki et al., 2004). In our data, the association between hostile sexism and support for targeting men was slightly larger for men than for women, whereas benevolent sexism was a slightly stronger predictor for women. Although these gender differences were small, it is possible that, when considering intervening with men to not be violent, hostile sexism is more impactful for men because men with this attitude perceive gender equality to be a threat. Conversely, benevolent sexism may be more impactful for women because women with this perspective view men as potential protectors from threat and so would expect men's behavior to change accordingly.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study is limited in the sense that it did not explicitly explore violence or sexism within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) populations, and it relied on a narrow conceptualisation of gender. Thus, it is unclear if sexism toward women would have a similar impact on support for men's violence interventions when specifically explored among members of the LGBTQ population or outside cisgender populations. It could be that attitudes toward women and perspectives of responsibility for change in relation to men's violence vary according to sexual and gender identities. We know that violence toward transgender women is extremely high (Wirtz et al., 2020), and so future work would benefit by working to understand how people decide what action is appropriate when aiming to target this problem. Similarly, the

current study does not explore sexism and support for targeting men and women to reduce men's violence among other dimensions of identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status). An intersectional perspective recognizes that people face disadvantage (and advantage) on multiple fronts (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). Future research could benefit from taking an intersectional approach to understand how people respond to gendered violence.

Because the data in the current study were drawn from a larger survey, abbreviated versions of sexism measures were essential to avoid attrition. This limits the current study because we could not explore the three sub-domains of benevolent sexism (i.e., protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000). Given that each subdomain of benevolent sexism relates differently to rape myth acceptance (Chapleau et al., 2007), it seems reasonable to expect these constructs might also differentially relate to perspectives of whether men or women should be held responsible for making changes to reduce men's violence toward women. It could be that protective paternalism, specifically, drives the belief that men, as women's protectors, should be responsible for keeping them safe from violence. We encourage future research to incorporate the full-scale versions of hostile and benevolent sexism measures to enable precise evaluation of the mechanisms that drive relationships between benevolent sexism and beliefs regarding preventing men's violence toward women. Further, we recommend future studies explore the relationship between sexism toward men (e.g., Ambivalence toward Men Inventory, Glick & Fiske, 2006) and support for targeting men and women in relation to reducing men's violence. The current study was limited to the exploration of sexism toward women, and it could be that sexism toward men also plays a role in how men and women are held accountable in reducing men's violence toward women.

Also related to the avoidance of attrition from the larger survey, the dependent measures used in the current study were single-item measures that were developed specifically for the NZAVS. It is possible that these targeted constructs were not adequately described by these single items, suggesting that participants could have interpreted the items with slightly different meanings. Thus, further work to validate these items is required. Additionally, these items were introduced to the NZVAS at Wave 8 and, as such, the constructs cannot yet be analysed longitudinally from our sample. The current study is also limited by the cross-sectional and self-report nature of the data, which means causality cannot be inferred. Given the significance of results that emerged in our study, future longitudinal and observational research is encouraged to determine possible changes in these relationships over time.

Practice Implications

Our findings have implications for the social campaigns against men's violence toward women. The strongest and most relevant finding from the current study was that both men and women who hold prejudices about women who challenge the status quo (i.e., those who report high levels of hostile sexism) are less likely to expect men to play a role in reducing men's violence toward women and, so, likely excuse violent men from accountability. Providing education to reduce hostile sexism in the general public could improve public dialogue around gender equality and increase expectations for men to be accountable for their own, and their group's, violence toward women. This approach is consistent with the work of the White Ribbon Campaign (2019), who aim to engage boys and men in the movement against men's violence. However, given that hostile sexism is relevant to both men's and women's beliefs about men's role in reducing male violence, it seems such campaigns could be better supported by engaging both men and women to challenge their perceptions of women.

Further, peer group discussions that disrespect women are known to have an impact on how male perpetrators of violence justify their actions (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015). Addressing hostile sexism among male and female peer groups is likely to promote more gender-equal discussions that challenge such justifications and, therefore, make the behavior less socially acceptable. Additionally, education that addresses hostile sexism by challenging traditional role norms to promote respect for women and their autonomy could reduce both public and self-directed stigma and shame for women targeted by men's violence. This might liberate women to feel less vilified (either by themselves or others), promote help-seeking behaviors, and increase offence reporting. Overall, it seems addressing hostile sexism is crucial if we are to create a society in which women can live without fear of men's violence.

From a clinical perspective, the current findings support the implementation of therapeutic interventions that target sexist attitudes for men who enact violence toward women as well as for those who are complicit in men's violence. This proposition is consistent with recent research that revealed that men who are high in hostile sexism tend to become aggressive toward female intimate partners in contexts where they perceive male power is being undermined (e.g., perceived low relationship commitment by female partner; Cross, Overall, Hammond, & Fletcher, 2017). Thus, therapy that targets hostile sexism might reduce the perception of gender equality as a threat and, consequently, reduce aggression toward women who actually have or are perceived to have power. Our suggested approach is consistent with the Duluth Model, a commonly used court-sanctioned intervention for male offenders of intimate partner violence (Corvo, Dutton, & Chen, 2009). The Duluth Model views that male privilege promotes men's violence toward female intimate partners as a means of control, however, its application is most commonly specific to intimate partner violence rather than men's violence

toward women more broadly. Thus, according to the current findings, there is scope for similar programs to be extended to men's violence toward all women.

Additionally, links have been established between the unwanted pursuit of a romantic partner (a form of dating violence) and the defense mechanisms by which an individual justifies and legitimizes such pursuit behaviors (Brownhalls, Duffy, Eriksson, & Barlow, 2019). In relation to the current study, hostile sexism could be viewed as a rationalization defense that serves to justify and legitimize men's violence (i.e., she deserves it as punishment for not complying with male dominance). In legitimizing his violence, a man may be able to avoid negative feelings that he would otherwise experience for being violent toward a woman (e.g., guilt, shame). In the absence of these negative feelings, the man's violent behavior is able to continue. Interventions such as Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP; Davanloo, 1990) support clients to identify and turn against unhelpful defenses (in this case rationalizations) and to process the emotions that lie underneath. It could be, then, that men's violence toward women can be reduced with ISTDP that assists perpetrators to recognize and turn against the underlying processes on which they rely to legitimize violence toward women (e.g., hostile sexism) and then deal with the emotions underneath.

Lastly, it has been established that men have lower intentions to be sexually violent toward women when they also experience positive interactions with counter-stereotypical women (e.g., women who do not adhere to traditional feminine stereotypes such as feminists, activists, and career-focused women) and that hostile sexism mediates this relationship (Taschler & West, 2017). Thus, we suggest therapy could include either *in vivo* or imagined contact (see Crisp & Turner, 2012 for a full review) with such counter-stereotypical women to challenge hostile sexism and, possibly, increase beliefs that men should stop being violent toward women.

Conclusion

The current study examined the associations among sexism, gender, and support for holding men and women accountable for reducing men's violence toward women. Our results demonstrate that men's and women's sexist attitudes toward women are key to understanding support for interventions to reduce men's violence toward women. Specifically, men and women who express hostility (i.e., hostile sexism) toward women who challenge male dominance demonstrated greater support for targeting women's behavior to reduce male violence, but not men's. However, men and women who agreed that women who comply with traditional feminine behavior should be protected and cherished (i.e., benevolent sexism) were generally supportive of targeting men and women to reduce male violence. To a lesser degree, exploratory analyses also suggest that benevolent sexism reduces, but does not eliminate, the association between hostile sexism and support for targeting both men and women to reduce violence toward women.

Our results build upon and extend literatures on sexism and violence by demonstrating that the impact of hostile sexism, in particular, extends to attributions of men's and women's responsibility for change in reducing men's violence. Further, our findings provide insight to societal reactions to men's violence toward women, such as the murders of Eurydice Dixon and Aiiia Maasarwe (Cuthbertson, 2019). Extending from the current results, reactions that push men to consider their behavior and that of their male peers (e.g., make it safe at night) and reactions that appear to place responsibility on women to avoid men's violence (e.g., teach women to fight) might be driven by sexism toward women. In sum, our findings confirm that both men's and women's sexist attitudes toward women are associated with beliefs about how society should respond to men's violence toward women, and they provide a guide for future interventions and policies in helping reduce this significant problem.

Online supplement for Brownhalls, J., Duffy, A., Eriksson, L., Overall, N., Sibley, C.G., Radke, H.R. M., and Barlow, F. K. (2020). Make it safe at night or teach women to fight? Sexism predicts views on men's and women's responsibility to reduce men's violence against women. *Sex Roles*. Jessica Brownhalls, Griffith University. Email: jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Analysis Strategy

We used a series of hierarchical regressions to assess the relationships among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, participants' gender, and participants' expectations that interventions should target men or target women to reduce violence toward women. All control variables were entered at Block 1 of the regressions. At Block 2, participants' gender, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism were added. Two-way interactions (i.e., hostile sexism x benevolent sexism, gender x hostile sexism, and gender x benevolent sexism) were entered at Block 3, with the three-way interaction among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender added at Block 4. For any significant interactions, simple slopes analysis was conducted to determine the nature of the interaction.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all relevant variables are displayed in Table 1s. There was a positive association between targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women and targeting women to avoid violence from men. Hostile sexism was negatively associated with support for targeting men to not be violent toward women and positively associated with support for targeting women to avoid violence from men. Benevolent sexism was positively associated with support for targeting both men and women to reduce men's violence toward women. Prior to further analysis, gender was contrast coded (women = -1 and men = 1), and hostile and benevolent sexism were mean centered to aid in the interpretation of results. Table 2s(a) and Table 2s(b) displays beta values and change statistics for the hierarchical regressions.

Table 1s

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Correlations						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	51.42 (13.95)	48.58 (13.78)	--	.01	.43**	.01	.06**	.05**	.04**
2. Country of Birth	.78 (.42)	.80 (.40)	-.03*	--	.02*	-.06**	-.01	-.02*	-.02*
3. Parental Status	.73 (.44)	.73 (.44)	.44**	-.02	--	.22**	.09**	.05**	-.03**
4. Relationship Status	.79 (.41)	.73 (.44)	.17**	-.06**	.41**	--	.05**	.03**	-.04**
5. Benevolent Sexism	3.96 (1.16)	3.57 (1.23)	.18**	.02	.14**	.02	--	.48**	.02**
6. Hostile Sexism	3.32 (1.26)	2.72 (1.21)	.01	.02*	-.02	.13**	.34**	--	-.18**
7. Targeting Men	5.64 (1.35)	5.89 (1.22)	.12**	-.01	.07**	.05**	.13**	-.21*	--
8. Targeting Women	4.71 (1.71)	4.89 (1.83)	.22**	-.0	.11**	.01	.29**	.16**	.40**

Note. Correlations for women ($n = 13,722$) are presented above the diagonal, and correlations for men ($n = 8,215$) are presented below

the diagonal. Country of Birth: New Zealand = 1, Other = 0. Parental Status: Parent = 1, Non-Parent = 0. Relationship Status: Serious

Relationship = 1, Other = 0. Gender: Men = 1, Women = 0. All other variables had a possible range from 1 to 7.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

As displayed in Tables 2s(a) and 2s(b), a significant amount of variance in targeting men (Block 2, $R^2_{adj} = .07$, $F(3, 20346) = 532.58$, $p < .001$) and targeting women (Block 2, $R^2_{adj} = .07$, $F(3, 20326) = 580.97$, $p < .001$) to reduce men's violence toward women was accounted for by hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and gender. In Hypothesis 1a we predicted hostile sexism to be negatively associated with support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women, whereas in Hypothesis 1b we predicted hostile sexism to be positively associated with support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. In relation to Hypothesis 1a and as displayed in Table 2s(a), results indicated higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with less support for targeting men to reduce men's violence toward women ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$). According to guidelines for effect sizes in multiple regression (small = .10, medium = .30, large = .50; Cohen, 1992), the variance explained by hostile sexism in relation to targeting men was of small effect size (i.e., $> .10$ and $< .30$). In relation to Hypothesis 1b and as displayed in Table 2s(b), results indicated higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with more support for targeting women to avoid men's violence ($\beta = .01$, $p < .001$). The variance explained by hostile sexism in relation to targeting women did not reach the threshold for a small effect (i.e., $< .10$). Thus, both Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported.

In Hypotheses 2a and 2b we expected benevolent sexism to be positively associated with support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. In relation to Hypothesis 2a and as indicated in Table 2s(a), higher levels of benevolent sexism were positively associated with support for targeting men ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$). In relation to Hypothesis 2b and as indicated in Table 2s(b), higher levels of benevolent sexism were positively associated with support for targeting women ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). This supports Hypotheses 2a and 2b, although with small effect sizes (Cohen, 1992).

In Hypothesis 3a, we predicted that women, more so than men, would support targeting

Table 2s

Predicting Targeting Men to Not be Violent Toward Men, and Targeting Women to Avoid Men's Violence as a Function of Control Variables, Gender, and Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Block	(a) Targeting Men				(b) Targeting Women			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls								
Age	.07***	.08***	.08***	.08***	.23***	.23***	.23***	.23***
Country of Birth	-.01	-.02*	-.02*	-.02*	-.02**	-.03***	-.02***	-.03***
Parental Status	-.01	-.03***	-.03**	-.03**	.05***	.02**	-.02**	.02**
Relationship Status	-.02*	-.02**	-.02**	-.02**	-.05***	-.03***	-.03***	-.03***
Variables								
Gender	-	-.06**	-.05***	-.05***	-	-.13***	-.13***	-.13***
Hostile Sexism	-	-.28***	-.29***	-.29***	-	.01***	.01***	.10***
Benevolent Sexism	-	.18***	.20***	.20***	-	.21***	.21***	.21***
Hostile Sexism x Benevolent Sexism	-	-	.13***	.13***	-	-	-.01	-.01
Gender x Hostile Sexism	-	-	-.03***	-.03***	-	-	-.02*	-.02*
Gender x Benevolent Sexism	-	-	.02**	.02**	-	-	.01	.01
Gender x Hostile Sexism x Benevolent Sexism	-	-	-	.01	-	-	-	.01
ΔR^2	.01***	.07***	.02***	.00	.07***	.07***	.00*	.00
Adj. R^2	.01***	.08***	.09***	.09	.07***	.14***	.14*	.14
ΔF	23.26***	532.58***	131.04***	.05	364.47***	580.97***	2.70*	1.42

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

men to reduce men's violence toward women. In Prediction 3b, however, we did not expect gender to impact support for targeting women to reduce men's violence. In relation to Hypothesis 3a and as displayed in Table 2s(a), gender accounted for a significant amount of variance in targeting men ($\beta = -.06, p < .05$) with women, more so than men, expecting that men should be taught to avoid men's violence. In relation to Prediction 3b and as displayed in Table 2s(b), gender also accounted for a significant amount of variance in targeting women ($\beta = -.13, p = .001$) with women, more so than men, expecting that women should be taught to avoid men's violence. This produced a small effect size. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was supported although the variance explained did not reach the threshold for a small effect size, and Prediction 3b was not supported.

Research Question 1 explored the two-way interaction between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. The two-way interactions entered at Block 3 (Table 2s) accounted for a significant amount of variance in relation to targeting men ($R^2_{adj} = .09, F(3, 20343) = 131.04, p < .001$) and targeting women ($R^2_{adj} = .14, F(3, 20323) = 2.70, p = .04$). For targeting men and as displayed in Table 2s(a), there was a significant two-way interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism ($\beta = .13, p < .001$). Simple slopes analysis indicated that when benevolent sexism was low, hostile sexism was negatively associated with targeting men ($\beta = -.41, p < .001$). The negative association between hostile sexism and support for targeting men remained, but was weaker, when benevolent sexism was high ($\beta = -.17, p < .001$). For targeting women, there was no significant two-way interaction between hostile and benevolent sexism. Therefore, analyses examining Research Question 1 revealed that benevolent sexism appears to slightly dampen the effects of hostile sexism in relation to support for targeting men only.

In Research Question 2 we explored the two-way interaction between gender and hostile sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. As displayed in Table 2s(a), there was a significant two-way interaction between gender and hostile sexism in relation to targeting men ($\beta = -.03, p < .001$). The association between hostile sexism and targeting men was slightly stronger among men ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$) than women ($\beta = -.26, p < .001$). As displayed in Table 2s(b), there was also a significant two-way interaction between gender and hostile sexism in relation to targeting women ($\beta = -.02, p = .03$). Simple slopes analysis revealed that hostile sexism was a better predictor of support for targeting women among women ($\beta = .10, p < .001$) than men ($\beta = .08, p < .001$). Therefore, analyses for Research Question 2 indicated that hostile sexism might be slightly more relevant to men than women in relation to predicting support for targeting men but, in relation to support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women, hostile sexism is slightly more relevant to women than men.

In Research Question 3 we explored the two-way interaction between gender and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. This two-way interaction between gender and benevolent sexism was only significant in relation to targeting men, as displayed in Table 2s(a) ($\beta = .02, p = .003$). Simple slopes analysis revealed benevolent sexism was a better predictor for men ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) than for women ($\beta = .14, p < .001$). Therefore, analyses for Research Question 3 indicated that benevolent sexism might be slightly more relevant to men than women in relation to predicting support for targeting men but, in relation to support for targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women, the impact of benevolent sexism did not differ across women and men.

In Research Question 4 we explored the three-way interactions between gender, hostile

sexism, and benevolent sexism in relation to support for targeting men and targeting women to reduce men's violence toward women. There were no significant three-way interactions at Block

4.

Summary of Chapter 6

Study 3 (Chapter 6) is the final empirical chapter of this thesis and provides information relevant to the second overarching thesis aim; to explore societal responses to IPV. Where Study 1 and Study 2 focus on the perpetration of IPV by men toward women and by women toward men, Chapter 6 (Study 3) focused specifically on men's and women's responses to the most lethal and common form of IPV: men's violence toward women. In doing so, the aim was to step back and provide a "bigger picture" perspective of IPV. Building on the findings of Study 2 (Chapter 5) where hostile sexism was shown to be associated with IPV perpetration, Study 3 (Chapter 6) provides evidence that hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism to a lesser degree, also seem to be implicated in men's and women's views of men's violence toward women. The findings presented in the latter two empirical chapters of the thesis (Study 2, Chapter 5; Study 3, Chapter 6) make contributions to the broader thesis by determining that the way in which men and women in the community view the "other" gender group in general (i.e., sexist attitudes) is associated with their IPV perpetration and perspectives of men's violence against women. Importantly, both men's *and* women's hostile sexism toward women is associated with a tendency to expect women to reduce men's violence. In the context of the broader thesis, these findings add to the developing narrative that differences exist in men's and women's IPV perpetration rates and severity (according to other literature, e.g., Pacilli et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018), but there are similar pathways to forming responses to, and engaging in, IPV for both genders.

With the results of all three empirical studies now presented, in the final chapter of the thesis (Chapter 7), I will summarize the broader messages of the thesis and interpret these in context of larger problem of IPV. This includes reviewing the implications of the messages, a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the program of research, and suggestions for future directions in research.

Chapter 7: General Discussion

Who can represent himself just as he is, even in his own reflections?

-George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) 1872-

Preamble to Chapter 7

At the beginning of this thesis, I discussed the murders of three women in my local area, who were all killed by a male intimate (current or former) partner. Their murders underscore the seriousness of IPV; it can ruin, and end, lives (Breiding et al. 2014). Despite considerable research in the field, IPV continues to have a widespread and negative impact, and much remains to be learned to support effective prevention and intervention. In completing this thesis and the empirical research within, I wanted to provide novel information that could answer as-yet unasked questions and contribute to the way in which IPV is understood at the individual and societal level. I set out to achieve this by investigating factors I proposed to be associated with men's *and* women's IPV perpetration, and by exploring societal responses to men's violence toward women. Specifically, in three studies, I focused on the relationships between IPV and rationalization (Brownhalls et al., 2019), cross-gender contact (as per contact theory; Allport, 1954), and sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999). In this final chapter of the thesis, having already discussed in detail the findings of each study in the respective empirical chapter (i.e., Chapters 4 – 6), I begin with a brief reflection on the aims of the thesis and a synopsis of my findings. I then move to drawing these findings together to interpret what, in unison, they tell us about IPV, and where we, as a field, need to go next. I then discuss the clinical and social implications of this research and address the strengths, limitations, and possible directions for future research. I close the chapter, and thesis, with concluding remarks that summarize the major findings presented within this current work and reassert the importance of future IPV research.

Overview of Thesis

In completing this thesis, I had two major aims in mind: (1) to add to our understanding of IPV perpetrated by men and women, and (2) to provide insights to how society thinks we should respond to men's violence toward women. After first reviewing IPV

and the underpinnings of my research (Chapters 1 – 3), I achieved these aims across three empirical chapters that each had a different approach and unique contributions to the IPV literature. Findings of each study were thoroughly discussed within the relevant chapter (Study 1, Chapter 4; Study 2, Chapter 5; Study 3, Chapter 6). To review, I move now to provide a summary of the key findings for each of the empirical studies before discussing the broad messages about IPV that emerge when these findings are considered in unison.

Summary of Empirical Chapter Findings

Before proceeding to major implications of the body of work as a whole, I wish to remind the reader of the core findings from the empirical work presented within this thesis. To review, Study 1 (Chapter 4) investigated the role of rationalization within the relational goal pursuit theory of obsessive relational intrusion (Cupach et al., 2000), considering both men's and women's perpetration of such behaviors. Study 2 (Chapter 5) tested a novel model that proposed hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999) and rationalization (Cupach et al., 2000; Brownhalls et al., 2019) to sequentially mediate the relationship between negative cross-gender contact (Allport, 1954) and men's and women's IPV perpetration. The final study, Study 3 (Chapter 6), explored associations between hostile and benevolent sexism toward women and societal responses to men's violence toward women. Below, major findings from each study are reviewed.

Relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) proposes that five factors are centrally important in predicting obsessive relational intrusion behaviors. Specifically, this theory suggests people who persistently pursue an unwanted romantic relationship engage in the following: goal-linking (i.e., they attach the importance of the desired relationship to higher order goals), self-efficacy (i.e., they have a belief that with enough effort the relationship will happen), rumination (i.e., they have persistent thoughts about the desired relationship and targeted person), affective flooding (i.e., they experience overwhelming

emotions about the relationship), and rationalization (i.e., they disbelieve the targeted person's unwillingness to commit to the relationship and rationalize harm done to the target as warranted and desired). Prior to the publication of Study 1 (Chapter 4; Brownhalls et al, 2019), empirical literature exploring relational goal theory had included some, but not all five, variables (e.g., Cupach et al., 2011; Dardis and Gidycz, 2017; Johnson and Thompson, 2016; Spitzberg et al. 2014). Rationalization was consistently excluded and, thus, relational goal pursuit theory had not been tested in its entirety.

To address the exclusion of rationalization and provide further validation of relational goal pursuit theory, I developed Study 1 (Chapter 4; published in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, see Brownhalls et al., 2019). This study was conducted in a cross-sectional sample ($N = 379$, 46% women) of adults, and established that rationalization was the most central variable within relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) in accounting for men's and women's obsessive relational intrusion (a common behavior in IPV). Further, rationalization was the only variable within relational goal pursuit theory to account for a significant amount of variance in each of the eight clusters of obsessive relational intrusion behavior. Essentially, my findings indicated that the tendency to distort reality in such a way as to ease emotional discomfort and create an internal sense of self-justification (i.e., rationalization) is critical to enabling repeated unwanted pursuit behavior in IPV (i.e., obsessive relational intrusion). The results confirm the relevance of rationalization to obsessive relational intrusion despite the lack of research interest paid to this variable in past literature. My findings also highlighted that many RGP variables accounted for unique variance only among certain clusters of obsessive relational intrusion behavior and not when this behavior was examined broadly – the exception being rationalization which was a unique predictor in all eight separate clusters and obsessive relational intrusion more broadly. This reflects a need for further evaluation and refinement of the RGP theory to consolidate the

relationship each variable has with obsessive relational intrusion and the merit of the theory in predicting obsessive relational intrusion more broadly. Given that results were similar for men and women, the findings also emphasize the importance of rationalization in understanding women's obsessive relational intrusion. Study 2 (Chapter 5) set out to determine if rationalization might also be part of the bigger picture in explaining IPV behaviors beyond obsessive relational intrusion for male and female perpetrators.

Within the literature, a good deal of past work has looked at associations between maladaptive relationships with early attachment figures and IPV (e.g., Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Spencer et al., 2021). However, there has been little research interest in how other significant negative relationship experiences might be associated with IPV. I presented the first work to speak to this issue in Study 2 (Chapter 5, submitted to *Psychology of Violence* and currently under review). Study 2 presented a novel model of IPV perpetration that included negative cross-gender contact (drawn from contact theory; Allport, 1954), hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999), and rationalization (Cupach et al., 2000) to account for IPV. It was tested among a sample of 886 adults (50.6% women) aged 18 – 77. Results were supportive of the model: individuals who recalled more frequent and intense negative interactions with the “other” gender across romantic, caregiver, and general/platonic relationships also reported higher levels of hostile sexism, which in turn were associated with higher levels of rationalization and, lastly, more frequent IPV perpetration. Of note, across all three contact relationship contexts, rationalization served as the strongest and most consistent mediator of the link between negative contact and IPV. Indeed, rationalization emerged as a key predictor of IPV, replicating and extending on Study 1 (Chapter 4). Also consistent with Study 1 (Chapter 4) was the finding that the model was largely equivalent for men and women. This study also resulted in initial support for associations between cross-gender contact (and, broadly, contact theory; Allport, 1954) and IPV. While contact accounted for a

small amount of variance in IPV, this finding suggests the quality of interactions between men and women in friendships, family, and even with strangers, has the potential to contribute to broad perceptions of the “other” gender, and may have implications for violent behavior within established relationships.

In my final empirical chapter, Study 3 (Chapter 6; published in *Sex Roles*, see Brownhalls et al., 2021), I took an applied approach by exploring the association between hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and responses to men’s violence toward women. The study drew from a large sample ($N = 21,937$; 62.6% women) from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey. My findings here suggested that sexism toward women plays a role in how people form responses to men’s violence toward women. Specifically, both men’s and women’s attitudes towards women (i.e., hostile and benevolent sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996) were related to who they view (men or women) to be the major mechanism of change in reducing men’s violence. Those men and women who, generally, had belief systems that endorsed the view that women who “step out of line” should be punished (hostile sexism) tended to adopt a perspective that was consistent with the idea that men’s violence is inevitable, and women should learn to avoid it; such individuals were *less* likely to think men should learn to stop being violent. On the other hand, and to a lesser degree, the more people believed women to be the “weaker sex” and in need of men’s protection (benevolent sexism), the *more* likely they were to think that men should learn not to be violent to women. Such people also thought women should learn to avoid men’s violence. Here we see a pattern of results that confirm sexism is relevant beyond IPV perpetration and is also associated with the way people form their responses to men’s violence to women and their expectations around who is responsible for reducing this behavior. Mirroring Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5, respectively), each of which found similar patterns of prediction for

men and women, these findings highlight that men's *and* women's attitudes toward women are associated with views on men's violence toward women.

Overarching Messages from the Current Work

The series of three studies within this thesis each make unique contributions to the IPV literature that have been discussed in detail in the previous three chapters. While the studies each focused on specific aspects of IPV, when considered as a single body of work, the results converge to provide overarching insights to IPV. Having carefully considered the results of the three studies, I have identified four main overarching messages the research conveys. I discuss these below before moving to discuss the implications of these findings.

Rationalization Facilitates IPV

Perhaps the most significant finding from my thesis is the association between rationalization and IPV. Drawing from Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5), my research suggests that rationalization is a crucial component of the processes that facilitate IPV. Across Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5), I found that people who have a tendency to perceive reality in a skewed way through the misinterpretation of others' motives and leniency toward the self (i.e., rationalization) also tend to report more IPV behavior (including obsessive relational intrusion). This is a substantial finding, given the omission of rationalization from empirical work testing relational goal pursuit theory (e.g., Cupach et al., 2011; Dardis and Gidycz, 2017; Johnson and Thompson, 2016; Spitzberg et al. 2014). Via the findings of Study 1 (Chapter 4), the original theorizing of Cupach et al. (2000) has found empirical validation. Beyond this, drawing from Study 2 (Chapter 5), there is relatively convincing support that rationalization could be critical to more broad maladaptive behaviors under the IPV umbrella term.

The exclusion of rationalization from existing relational goal pursuit theory literature meant there was no existing measure for this construct. So, within my work, I drew from

existing measures, theories, and literature (Abbass, 2015; Andrews et al., 1993; Cupach, et al., 2000; Frederickson, 2013; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) to develop a scale to measure rationalization from the perspective of relational goal pursuit theory (see Brownhalls et al., 2019). Within the context of relational goal pursuit theory, rationalization is the tendency for a pursuer to *distort* their targeted partner's intentions and behaviors while adopting a *permissive* stance to their own internal experiences, decisions, and behaviors (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2004). Via this process, it is theorized that a pursuer feels justified to engage in persistent attempts to force a relationship with the unwilling other and does so with a sense of legitimacy (Cupach et al., 2000). In my work, the developed scale represented this across two factors highlighted by relational goal pursuit theory: permissiveness (toward oneself) and distortion (of others; Brownhalls et al., 2019). Outside of the context of relational goal pursuit theory, rationalization is similarly defined but with less emphasis on permissiveness and distortion. For example, rationalization is viewed to provide a person with the ability to view the world through a lens that allows it to be interpreted in a more pleasing way (Davanloo, 1996; Jones, 1908; Perry, 1990). Thus, from a more psychodynamic view, emotional pain and anxiety can be avoided (or at least suppressed for a time; Davanloo, 1980). The relational goal pursuit theory and psychodynamic definitions of rationalization are complementary and contribute to the same narrative when applied to IPV. For a perpetrator of IPV, rationalization, from any perspective, offers a means of observing victim suffering in the absence of a negative affective response (Rush Burkey & ten Bensel, 2015). Thus, it seems rationalization is purpose built to enable IPV and other antisocial behavior.

Based on my findings, relational goal pursuit theory, and psychodynamic perspectives of rationalization, I theorize that rationalization automatically and unconsciously “makes sense” of situations to facilitate IPV. Further, it does this in such a way that the perpetrator is exonerated (to him- or herself at least) from the guilt, shame, and sadness that might arise

with the desire to harm (physically, sexually, psychologically, or in any way) another person – particularly one with whom you share a close relationship. For example, a rationalization could be “s/he made me feel rejected/sad/angry because s/he was deliberately late for our date”. With the intentions of the victim distorted (in the likely event that the victim did *not* intend to be late and did *not* make the feelings arise in the perpetrator), the blame is firmly and unfairly shifted to the victim. With the victim positioned in the antagonist role (from the perpetrator’s perspective) the perpetrator is less likely to feel (or, at least, be bothered by) feelings of guilt should he or she choose to respond to the partner with violence. This distortion of the victim’s true intent is consistent with literature that suggests perpetrators, relative to non-perpetrators, are less able to show insight to the experiences of their victims and are less able to adopt the victim’s perspective (Lafontaine et al., 2018). In the mind of the perpetrator, *they* are the victim. Thus, in the absence of a lasting and insightfully interpreted affective response, the perpetrator can continue with any behavior he or she is able to justify, free from any sense of wrongdoing.

In my studies, rationalization was tightly linked to obsessive relational intrusion (Study 1, Chapter 4) and IPV (Study 2, Chapter 5). For example, in Study 1 (Chapter 4) the distortion component of rationalization (e.g., “If my identified partner ignored me, it was because s/he was playing hard to get”) correlated with obsessive relational intrusion at $r = .52$. The other variables of the relational goal pursuit theory were also consistent and important correlates of obsessive relational intrusion, but in contrast their correlations with obsessive relational intrusion were approximately half the size ($r = .16$ to $.26$). Further to this, in Study 1 (Chapter 4), rationalization was the only subcomponent of relational goal pursuit theory to be consistently and uniquely associated with obsessive relational intrusion overall, as well as with all eight clusters of obsessive relational intrusion. Similar patterns emerged in Study 2 (Chapter 5) where, relative to hostile sexism, rationalization was the more important

and consistent mediator of the association between negative cross-gender contact and IPV. I suggest that the results are so marked that they indicate that rationalization could be part of the essential process that *enables* IPV perpetrators to engage in IPV. That is, this pattern of results seems to prompt us to consider the possibility that IPV is *most* likely, and *most* at risk of developing, when a potential perpetrator has convinced themselves that IPV would in some way be warranted (e.g., by the circumstance, the victim's behavior, or the victim's "true desires").

To elaborate, in the contexts where my research was conducted, IPV is almost uniformly publicly condemned, is illegal, and perpetrators are reviled by the general public (Hardesty & Ogolsky, 2020; Hunt et al., 2018; El Sayed et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, it may be possible that rationalization is *required* by perpetrators and potential perpetrators, to allow the construction of a narrative of innocence and to avoid a self-concept as the "bad guy" (or, as this thesis reveals, "bad girl"). This constructed view of the self, promoted by rationalization, aligns with the concept of "face sensitivity" (Cupach & Metts, 1994). As discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, face sensitivity refers to a desirable self-constructed image a person wants others to accept and wants to believe to be a true reflection of their self. Past research suggests the "face" is sensitive to possible rejection (Spitzberg et al., 2014). Given this, I suggest perpetrators of IPV perceive this "face" self-concept as a pretence to be desperately upheld (i.e., "the good guy/girl") as, without this fabricated self-concept, it would be necessary to confront the reality of perhaps not being such a good person.

Consistent with relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) and past research (Spitzberg et al., 2014), I expect the perpetrator would feel significant negative affect (i.e., affective flooding) if the self-concept is rejected (e.g., the victim behaves in a way that challenges the perpetrator's "good guy/girl" self-concept). Relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000) and my own work would then indicate that rationalization could make

sense of the unpleasant emotions in a self-serving way that reinstates the self-concept (to the perpetrator at least). In doing so, I suggest that rationalization maintains the self-concept, but prevents the perpetrator from learning to adaptively cope with negative emotions and the reality of their identity. From this perspective, face sensitivity and rationalization create an ongoing vulnerability to future perceived threats to self-concept and future negative affect. What I conclude from my findings and the work of others (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Spitzberg et al., 2014) is that rationalization “presents itself as the solution to the problem it has created” (Saul, 2013, p. 3). Further, rationalization forms an essential function within an IPV perpetrator, allowing them to be *able* to engage in such an antisocial and publicly condemned behavior while maintaining a positive self-concept.

Where rationalization has not received much empirical attention as a predictor of IPV, it has been the focus of considerable theorizing. Some scholars propose rationalization to be an at least partly adaptive process of “useful fiction” that occurs *post hoc* in order to make irrational behavior appear rational (Cushman, 2020). However, such views have been criticized as overlooking the considerable documentation of rationalization preceding antisocial behavior (e.g., Brody & Costa, 2020; Neidigh & Krop, 2015; Rush Burkey & ten Bensel, 2015). The perspective of rationalization as “adaptive” also overlooks the anticipatory components of rationalization that defuse negative feelings and thoughts to permit a person to engage in *later* antisocial behavior guilt-free (D’Cruz, 2020; Shalvi et al., 2015). In the case of obsessive relational intrusion and ongoing IPV, I suggest that rationalization is likely cyclical and occurs prior to, during, *and* after abusive behavior. Rationalization would thus form part of the process that both encourages IPV and “resets” the perpetrator after an attack by dissolving feelings of guilt or shame and re-establishing a positive “face”. I anticipate there are likely bidirectional relationships between negative affect/thoughts, rationalization, and behavior that operate in a feedback loop and contribute to

the cycle of violence that is so difficult to disrupt. Therefore, while I agree with scholars that rationalizations can occur *post hoc*, I suggest rationalization also occurs as an *antecedent* to behavior as it works to justify engaging in future “bad” behavior in the first place.

I mentioned above that some scholars have hypothesized that rationalization is, overall, adaptive (Cushman, 2020). I disagree. It is difficult to view rationalization as *generally* adaptive in light of the work (including my own) that shows that rationalization is tied to antisocial behaviors responsible for considerable harm (Brody & Costa, 2020; Brownhalls et al., 2019; Neidigh & Krop, 2015; Rush Burkey & ten Bensel, 2015). Clinical work adds to the rejection of rationalization as largely adaptive by labelling rationalization, specifically, as a *maladaptive* and immature defense (Andrews et al., 1993). Further, rationalization is linked with one of the most treatment resistant and criminally associated psychiatric diagnoses: antisocial personality disorder (Brody & Costa, 2020). Research suggests reliance on rationalization as a means to make sense of the world tends to *decrease* with age (Diehl et al., 2014). To me, this suggests typical development negates the need to rely on this form of distortion to cope. Thus, while rationalization is likely relatively common and, at times, seemingly benign, I propose that it is undeniable that reliance on rationalization and, perhaps, a lack of natural extinction of the process is *unhelpful* and not adaptive.

Certainly, other factors are involved, but the results presented in this thesis, as I interpret them, suggest rationalization is deeply enmeshed with IPV: the more a person relies on rationalization the more they abuse their partner. This finding alone presents convincing evidence of a pathological aspect of rationalization. Further, according to the findings of this thesis, rationalization is part of a pathway to violence for both men and women, a finding which leads to the next overarching message of the thesis to be discussed.

Men and Women have Similar Pathways to IPV

There has been a tendency in past literature to focus more often on men's perpetration and women's victimization, as opposed to women's perpetration and men's victimization, when it comes to IPV. This approach is warranted given it is more common, and the behavior more dangerous, when there is a male perpetrator and female victim of IPV (Pacilli et al., 2017; Renzetti, et al., 2018). However, the specific focus on men as perpetrators has left a lack of knowledge around the factors that contribute to IPV perpetration by women. IPV, while less severe when perpetrated by women, is nonetheless still an issue (e.g., Bates, 2020; Holmes et al., 2020). Consequently, the intention of this thesis was to explore IPV perpetration by both men *and* women.

While at each step in the thesis I proposed that rationalization (Brownhalls et al., 2019; Cupach et al., 2000), cross-gender contact (Allport, 1954), and sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999) might work differently for men and women, overwhelmingly I found that they *did not*. In fact, across the thesis, there were few meaningful differences detected between men and women and what differences were detected were small. These differences (and mostly similarities) between men and women were discussed in detail in each relevant empirical chapter (Chapters 4 – 6) and those discussions will not be repeated here. However, cumulatively, these findings form an unexpected picture that warrants a brief discussion. My thesis was never intended to be an exploration of gender in IPV. However, it *was* my intention to investigate both men's and women's IPV perpetration and perspectives on men's violence, and this brought about an element of attention to possible similarities and differences that might arise. At times, I made no specific predictions about how men and women might differ and aimed instead to control for any possible variation (e.g., Study 2, Chapter 4). However, when I did make explicit predictions that men and women would differ in their *responses* to violence toward women, they were not supported. For example, in Study

3 (Chapter 6), I expected women, compared to men, to be more supportive of the idea that men should change their behavior to reduce men's violence toward women. This was not the case. Instead, I found that men and women were equally likely to support (or not support) men's role in reducing men's violence. The lack of differences begs further exploration.

So, what does this mean? Most meaningfully, my work aligns with other literature that suggests that men and women follow a similar pathway to violence (e.g., Spencer et al., 2016). In Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5), the same factors were associated with IPV perpetrated by men *and* by women. In Study 3 (Chapter 6), for both men and women, similar attitudes (i.e., sexism toward women) were found to be related to responses to men's violence toward women. What this suggests is that similar underlying factors might drive men's and women's engagement in, and responses to, IPV. These similar patterns of prediction, however, occur in a context where the two groups engage in such behavior at different rates (more frequent by men), with different levels of severity (more severely by men; Dobash & Dobash, 2003).

In reflecting on the theories that informed this thesis, I am drawn first to evolutionary theory as an attempt to explain this finding. According to evolutionary perspectives, IPV is a quasi-effective mate retention strategy available to both genders but acted on mostly by males (Goetz et al., 2008). This could suggest that my findings highlight the *road* to IPV perpetration, and that men and women both travel this same road. To continue the metaphor, however, other research suggests this is a road that more *men* (compared to women) tend to drive down, more often, and with more gusto (e.g., Hunt et al., 2018; Renzetti et al., 2018). Why? Evolutionary theory would tell us that the road is more appealing to men because it "helps" them protect what they inherently desire – reproductive fitness (Buss, 1988; Goetz et al., 2008). Feminist perspectives might slightly differ. Men's and women's sexist beliefs are proposed to operate in a duality that upholds the patriarchy and sustains men's dominant

position (Becker, 2010). Relatedly then, both men and women are able to act on the sexist beliefs that might drive IPV. However, from feminist perspectives, IPV is a tool that men (specifically) have been “successful” in using for a considerably long time to assert power and control over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Walker, 1979). Naturally, being consistently in this position of dominance, and also being of greater physical size and strength (generally) compared to women, puts men at an advantage to use IPV against women – and so the result of a similar pathway is a dissimilar result, with male violence causing more physical and emotional harm (Hunt et al., 2018). In making sense of this, I interpret my findings to indicate that men and women have similar pathways to IPV (in line with Kimmes et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2020; Spencer et al., 2016), but that the severity of the end result is amplified when men, relative to women, are the perpetrators (in line with Hunt et al., 2018; Renzetti et al., 2018).

Of course, there are also measurement issues to consider, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. To review, there have been some suggestions that men have a higher threshold of fear in relation to IPV (Owens, 2016) and, thus, are less inclined to seek help or report to authorities (Ahmadabadi et al., 2017; Archer, 2000) as they might not perceive their well-being to be at risk. This line of thinking would suggest that, perhaps, men and women engage in IPV via similar pathways (according to the current research), but men seek help less often when they are the victim. If so, women would only *appear* to be disproportionately represented as victims. I agree that it is possible there is some underreporting by male victims of IPV, however we have to acknowledge that IPV is much more severe when women are the victims (Hunt et al., 2018; Renzetti et al., 2018). This is not something I speak to specifically in this thesis, but I consider it would be remiss to assume underreporting by men genuinely accounts for the extreme variation between men and women in recorded perpetration rates and severity of IPV (Hunt et al., 2018; Rennison, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

In sum, my findings support a general theme that both men and women can, and do, engage in IPV and follow a similar trajectory to arrive at this behavior. However, there remain unknown factors that account for the variance in men's compared with women's frequency and severity of IPV perpetration. Similarly, a comparable association was found between men's and women's interactions with one another (i.e., cross-gender contact) and IPV perpetration, but it seems there are other factors also involved in this process. In the next section, I review what this tells us about contact, and what we can learn about IPV from this finding.

Negative Gendered Interactions Play a Minor but Significant Role in IPV Perpetration

In Study 2 (Chapter 5), I discussed the finding that negative contact between men and women in a variety of contexts is associated with IPV perpetration. That is, men and women who report more negative experiences with individual members of the "other" gender who are family, friends, or even strangers also tend to report slightly more IPV perpetration. In part, this association occurs through hostile sexism, and, to a larger extent, via rationalization: the way a person makes sense of the world around them in a self-serving way. It is important to note that these negative interactions accounted for IPV in a small but meaningful way that informs the understanding of IPV and contributes to broader contact literature.

Contact theory (Allport, 1954) has not been a major focus of the IPV literature and support for its involvement, at any level, with IPV perpetration is novel. In stepping back and interpreting the findings of Study 2 (Chapter 5), it becomes evident that the relationship between negative interactions between men and women and hostile sexism is relevant to broader contact theory. According to contact theory, increased positive interactions between individual outgroup members generalize to the broader outgroup and reduce intergroup anxiety and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). However, negative interactions have an opposite and sometimes stronger effect (Barlow et al., 2012). In considering men and women

as, at times, opposing outgroups, my findings are consistent with the general concept of contact theory; that is, people who recalled more intense and frequent negative interactions with the “other” gender also reported more sexism. This is an important finding in terms of advancing contact theory as it adds to the literature that suggests negative cross-gender contact is associated with gender-based prejudice between men and women (e.g., deLemus et al., 2010; Taschler & West, 2017). Further to this, my findings support that the interactions in a variety of relationships (e.g., family, friends, dates, strangers) might be relevant to the development of gender-based prejudice and, importantly, could also be relevant to IPV perpetration. This finding indicates the quality of interactions within relationships beyond early attachment figures might contribute to violence within intimate relationships. Based on my findings, it seems that even seemingly menial negative interactions between men and women who have no existing bond or continuing relationship (e.g., strangers) might influence how each gender views the broader “other” gender group.

Possibly more meaningful than the association between cross-gender contact and gender-based prejudice supported in this thesis is the finding that negative cross-gender contact is associated with rationalization and, through rationalization, IPV. The evidence presented in my thesis is consistent with the idea that people who experience more negative interactions with the “other” gender are more likely to interpret these interactions via the distorted lens of rationalization, and then are likely to engage in more IPV perpetration (i.e., mediation). This model is also consistent with the idea that it is not the negative interactions *directly* that increase IPV; it is the experience of negative interactions that are subsequently processed and interpreted via (rationalization). This is an important finding and, from a theoretical perspective, makes sense. Prejudice is associated with intergroup anxiety, and it is well noted in the literature that positive contact assists to reduce such anxiety (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Given that rationalization suppresses negative affect (including anxiety) by

providing self-justification, it makes sense that rationalization might form part of a less adaptive means of “managing” this anxiety. In effect, this would mean that increased negative contact gives rise to increased intergroup anxiety, and this increased anxiety creates a greater need to make sense of the world in a way that suppresses the anxiety – therefore, rationalization also increases. From this perspective, with more negative-cross gender contact there might become a greater need to interpret these events in a way that reduces distress (e.g., by incorporating rationalizations). The consequences of this “reduced” distress via rationalization, however, are far from ideal in that they provide a sense of legitimacy to engage in violent behavior.

My findings support that negative cross-gender contact has a meaningful (although small) role in explaining IPV perpetration. Broadly, these results confirm that situational and social factors (e.g., cross-gender relationships) have relevance to IPV, adding preliminary evidence that a range of relationships beyond those with early attachment figures are of interest in this field. One consideration not addressed in this thesis, however, is the possibility that a general *lack* of cross-gender contact (either positive or negative) could also contribute to IPV perpetration. In this instance, it could be that a person who is isolated from gendered interactions develops in a social vacuum and has an impoverished sense of the other gender group. These experiences of isolation could lead to dehumanization of the other gender group, a common theme in prejudice (Dixon et al., 2012), and thus facilitate IPV perpetration. It might also be the case that, after cross-gender contact is considered, other social factors account for at least some of the remaining variance. I suggest significant gendered negative relationship *events* (e.g., trauma and relationship infidelity), in addition to accumulated gendered negative interactions (i.e., cross-gender contact), could be involved. To date, there has been some exploration of associations between negative relationship events and IPV and results confirm an association between these events and IPV perpetration (e.g.,

Conroy, 2014; Pichon et al., 2020; Watt & Scrandis, 2013). Based on such research and my findings, it seems cross-gender contact could be one of many social factors we need to explore in relation to IPV. As such, it could be that other variables considered in this thesis (e.g., rationalization) could also be applied in the evaluation of other predictors of IPV. In any such studies, it would similarly be important to take gender into account, to determine if associations are consistent for men's and women's perpetration of IPV.

The general message of my findings is that men's and women's general interactions have some significance to IPV perpetration. It likewise seems men's and women's attitudes toward women, specifically, are of relevance to IPV perpetration (discussed earlier), as well as to their responses to men's violence toward women. This latter point forms the final overarching message of the thesis and is discussed below.

People's Responses to Men's Violence Toward Women are Associated with their Beliefs about Women

My findings suggest that people, in part, seem to base their responses to men's violence toward women on their beliefs about women. Specifically, based on the findings of Study 3 (Chapter 6), the more a man or woman prescribes to an ideology that supports punishment for women who challenge male dominance (i.e., hostile sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996), the more likely that person is to expect women to keep themselves safe, and the less likely they are to expect men not to abuse women. To a lesser but still meaningful degree, as men and women prescribe more strongly to ideologies that praise women who adhere to traditionally "feminine" roles (i.e., benevolent sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996), the more likely they also are to expect men to learn to not abuse women and women to keep themselves safe from men. Overall, this paints a picture of sexism as a core variable informing people's expectations around how we should prevent men's violence toward women.

This is the fourth and final overarching message drawn from my findings in this thesis and suggests that how we respond to men's violence is not solely attached to how we feel about the individuals involved. Rather, our responses are linked to broader attitudes toward women. My findings add to the literature that confirms sexism toward women as a social mechanism that maintains male dominance (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Becker, 2010) through behavior such as IPV, and identifies that *women's* attitudes to women are also implicated in this process. Broadly, this pattern of results could indicate that, to elicit change in our expectations of men and women to reduce men's violence, sexism needs first to be addressed. I note, however, that in Study 3 (Chapter 6), I did not measure sexist attitudes toward men. It is entirely possible that if I had, I would also be reporting how prejudice toward men relates to responses toward men's violence.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter when discussing the similarity between men's and women's pathways to IPV, sexist attitudes *in general* contribute to the maintenance of gender inequality (Glick et al., 2004; Becker, 2010). Men can and do hold sexist beliefs about women *and* men, just as women can and do hold sexist beliefs about men *and* women (Glick et al., 2004). Through this process, both genders suffer stereotypes upheld by sexist beliefs that operate by “dangling” a carrot (benevolent sexism) and “whacking” with a stick (hostile sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996; 1999). This reward-punishment of sexism operates to keep each gender in their lane to effectively maintain a patriarchy (Chapleau et al., 2007; Glick & Fisk 1997). Research demonstrates that both men's and women's sexism is related to their tendency to accept rape myths – the stereotypical views that place blame on victims of rape while exonerating the perpetrator (Brownmiller, 1975; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Chapleau et al. (2007) reported that rape myth acceptance was stronger for people who believed women should be punished if they step out of line (i.e., hostile sexism toward women; Glick & Fiske, 1996) and rewarded when they exhibit the “feminine” qualities that

men do not possess (i.e., gender differentiation, benevolent sexism toward women; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Generally, these findings align with my own – higher levels of hostile and benevolent sexism toward women were associated with the responsibility for reducing men’s violence being attributed to women (Brownhalls et al., 2021). Chapleau et al. (2007) also found that benevolent sexism (but not hostile sexism) toward *men* was related to stronger rape myth endorsement. Extrapolating from this finding, I postulate that sexist beliefs toward men are likely also implicated in responses to men’s violence toward women. While not something I can speak to based on the results of my thesis, future research would benefit from taking the two-pronged approach of exploring associations between views on men’s violence and attitudes toward women *and* men.

Having identified that sexism plays a role in how we view men’s violence, the next practical step would be in encouraging people to act against sexism. Challenging sexism (toward either gender) holds the potential to produce important favorable outcomes such as improved inter-group relations and reduced discrimination (Mallett & Wagner, 2011). However, research shows that confronting gender inequality (e.g., publicly opposing jokes that degrade women’s value) poses considerable threats. Some such threats include retaliation from the perpetrator or associated social groups, negative reactions and increased discrimination, ostracism, and, potentially, the risk of job loss if the event occurs in the workplace (Dodd et al., 2001; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Stangor et al., 2002; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Thus, the risks and benefits of advocating for women’s rights, as well as the context in which the event arises (e.g., at work versus in a social environment), contribute to an individual’s willingness to actually engage in such action even if they deem it the most appropriate response. Of course, an individual’s own level of “buy in” to sexist ideologies is also likely to impact their willingness to take action (Radke et al., 2018).

Given the complexity of sexism toward women within the community and the difficulties in challenging it at the individual level, it is apparent that a stepped approach is likely needed to dismantle sexism at a societal level. In recent years, the “Me Too” Movement has gained considerable momentum (O’Neil et al., 2018; PettyJohn et al., 2018). While the organization has been active in campaigning against sexual violence since 2006, media attention and a popular hashtag (i.e., #metoo) endorsed by several high-profile personalities in 2017 boosted the movement’s ability to promote change (PettyJohn et al., 2018). Largely, this movement has been successful at increasing awareness, as well as providing advocacy, support, and education, around sexual violence (Lee, 2018; O’Neil et al., 2018; PettyJohn et al., 2018). However, it is as yet unclear whether such movements effectively improve gender relations and reduce sexism in a way that promotes long term shifts in gender equality. Anecdotally, it seems a large and publicly endorsed movement in support of women is often met with a combative rise in support of men. For example, the hashtag #notallmen (in response to #metoo) has gained traction as a rebuttal against perceived generalizations of men – particularly in relation to men’s violence toward women (Nicholas & Agius, 2017). The catchphrase was initially developed in acknowledgement that not *all* men are sexually predatory and/or violent. However, the phrase has progressed to become a broader counterpoint to feminist movements, serving to derail women’s plight for equality by distancing men from the perpetrators of violence and, in doing so, disowning accountability (Nicholas & Agius, 2017; Zimmerman, 2014).

The rise of such “counter movements” is consistent with the social cognitive notion of zero-sum thinking (Nash, 1950). Zero-sum thinking represents a belief system in which advances for a specific group or individual are seen to *necessarily* cause losses to another group or individual (Nash, 1950). In relation to gender groups, zero-sum thinking manifests in a belief that gains for women (e.g., gender equality) equate to losses for men (e.g., threats

to male dominance, freedom). Gender-based zero-sum thinking is associated with sexist norms that prioritize men in the workplace (Kuchynka et al., 2018). Further, there are links between gender-based zero-sum thinking and men's preferences to protect women from men's violence rather than reduce men's violence by challenging gender equality (Radke et al., 2018). Here, we see the gender hierarchy upheld at the cost of the genders working together to reduce men's violence toward women. It has been suggested that zero-sum thinking can be overcome to engage the dominant group (men, in the case of gender) in supporting the disadvantaged group (women), but *only* if certain conditions are met, such as the maintenance of the dominant group status (Radke et al., 2020). If true, this poses severe problems in terms of engaging men to support gender inequality and suggests it could be important to first address gender-based belief systems such as zero-sum thinking and, based on my findings, sexism.

This final broad message from my findings underlines the complexity of the social environment in which IPV occurs and the importance of engaging the general public in the reduction of this behavior. Each of the overarching messages from the thesis that I have discussed offers novel insights to how we understand IPV and how we are best positioned to intervene. In the following section, I will elaborate on the implications of these findings in terms of clinical and social intervention before addressing strengths and weaknesses of my research program and suggesting future directions for the field of study.

Clinical and Social Implications

Naturally, in discussing the overarching messages of the thesis, certain implications and directions for future research arose and were addressed in the previous section. In the following section, then, I discuss clinical and social implications not previously mentioned above, with a particular focus on rationalization and sexism.

Clinical Implications

First, I wish to note that it is difficult to translate the findings of this research directly to clinical implications given my findings are correlational and causality among the variables I examined cannot be inferred. This means there is no way of knowing, at this stage, whether the factors I propose to be associated with IPV are causally implicated and, thus, whether they might serve as an effective point of intervention. Further, even if future studies do confirm the causal patterns proposed within my thesis, additional steps would be required to develop and evaluate interventions. Any such interventions would need to be trialed to ensure that rationalization and sexism, for example, (1) can be reduced and (2) that their reduction causally reduces IPV. Despite this, from the available information, below I aim to make preliminary suggestions about the ways in which my findings might inform clinical interventions, but with the caution that further research is required.

In considering the implications of my findings for IPV interventions, I first need to consider the complex environments for delivering treatments for IPV perpetrators and the interventions already in place. Translating research to perpetrator interventions is complicated (Farrington, 2003; Farrington et al., 2019). Effective delivery of clinical interventions with any offender population can be difficult, and there are many barriers to treatment with the IPV population (Eckhardt et al., 2014). Such treatments are often mandated (rather than self-motivated) and are restricted by low funding, high demand, poor compliance, and lack of research supporting their efficacy (Eckhardt et al., 2014; Travers et al., 2021). Historically, IPV perpetrator interventions (and most general criminality interventions) have adopted a homogenous approach to a highly heterogenous behavior and consisted mostly of group programs based on the Duluth Model (Bohall et al., 2016; Corvo et al., 2009). The Duluth model (Pence et al., 1993) is a group intervention frequently court sanctioned for IPV perpetrators. This program has roots in feminist concepts, centring on IPV

as a tool for men's manipulation of power and control over women. The Duluth model adopts a didactic approach, with some skills training and a focus on perpetrator accountability (Mankowski et al., 2002). Despite being the predominant intervention for IPV (Corvo et al., 2009), the Duluth model has been criticized. Major criticisms include a lack of scientific input during development, diversity limitations (i.e., narrow focus on heterosexual men as perpetrators), poor treatment fidelity, inconsistent training standards for facilitators, and little empirical evidence to support treatment efficacy (Bohall et al., 2016; Schrock & Padavic, 2007; Stover et al., 2009). So, while the Duluth model continues to form the frontline of IPV treatment, there is scope for alternate or complementary interventions.

In recognition of the limitations of a "one-size-fits-all" approach to offender interventions, there is a shift in some nations (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada; Ward & Brown, 2004) to implement the risk-need-responsivity framework to inform treatment direction for IPV perpetrators (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). This framework provides three principles that inform intervention in criminal justice settings: (1) treatment access and intensity should be based on the perpetrator's individual risk, with higher risk perpetrators receiving higher intensity treatment; (2) treatment should target the factors that are functionally related to the perpetrator's offending behavior (i.e., criminogenic needs); and (3) interventions should be delivered in a modality and at a level that meets the perpetrator's ability to engage. This is an individualized approach that is well-suited, in general, to IPV intervention (Travers et al., 2021). While the risk-need-responsivity framework has empirical support as a successful approach to treatment (in relation to general criminality at least; e.g., Banks et al., 2013), it is a *framework* and does not specifically identify suitable intervention components. Thus, while the risk-need-responsivity approach seems highly relevant to treatment of IPV perpetrators, it requires the scaffolding of empirically supported intervention strategies.

My findings within this thesis could inform the required interventions rolled out in accordance with the risk-need-responsivity framework adopted by many nations. Within the criminogenic needs identified in the risk-need-responsivity framework, antisocial attitudes and antisocial personality (antisocial cognition/ criminal thinking) are reported to be among those risk factors with the strongest association with recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990). These criminogenic needs align, in theory at least, with sexist attitudes (antisocial attitudes) and rationalization (antisocial personality – antisocial cognition/criminal thinking), both of which I found to be associated with IPV perpetration. Rationalization, based on the findings of this thesis, appears to be a crucial process that perpetrators rely upon to legitimize and continue with antisocial behavior and, thus, may be a strong risk factor for recidivism. Further, according to my findings, the association between sexism and IPV perpetration appears to occur *through* rationalization, which supports rationalization as a valid focus for intervention. From the evidence available, treatment of rationalizations could reduce related distortions and prompt perpetrators to develop more adaptive means of coping.

Some existing clinical treatments target rationalizations and I take this opportunity to discuss two such treatments. The first of these is the well-known and empirically supported cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that emerged from the early work of Ellis (1962) and Beck (1963). CBT can be delivered individually or in a group and encourages people to recognize links between thought processes (including distortions, rigid beliefs, and attitudes), emotions, and behaviors. CBT also provides strategies to overcome problems arising within these domains and is reported to be incorporated, in some form, in up to 70% of IPV programs (Hamilton et al., 2013). However, there is little consistency in the specific interventions included within a typical CBT for IPV program, resulting in poor treatment fidelity (Cannon et al., 2016). In some, but not all, CBT for IPV interventions, cognitive distortions (such as rationalization) form a focus of treatment and are recognized as

information processing patterns that maintain violent behavior (Beck & Dozois, 2011). However, the literature suggests that cognitive distortions do not *consistently* feature in CBT for IPV interventions, and rationalization is just one of many distortions that *might* be addressed in treatment (Wong & Bouchard, 2021). Based on the findings of this thesis and the existing CBT treatments for IPV perpetrator populations, it is possible that CBT for IPV might be more efficacious should there be a specific focus on rationalizations. However, further research is required to validate this claim.

My findings suggest there is a relationship between rationalization and IPV but, as mentioned previously, there are steps required to translate this finding to intervention and further steps to validate its efficacy. As stated above, many CBT programs designed for IPV perpetrators include education and skills training specific to challenging cognitive distortions such as rationalization (Beck & Dozois, 2011). Drawing from such treatments, it would be necessary to conduct trials to tease apart the treatment effects specific to a rationalization intervention. This could be achieved through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with perpetrators randomly assigned to one of two groups: (1) a CBT control group program with cognitive distortion training *excluding* rationalization and (2) an intervention group of an otherwise identical CBT program that *includes* cognitive distortion training focused on rationalizations. Variation in frequency and intensity of incidents of IPV (gathered via self/partner/police/corrections report) at baseline and post intervention could reflect treatment effects attributed to the focus on rationalization in CBT programs. As with any RCT, the protocol would need to consider the specific environment and extraneous variables that might interplay with treatment effects in this population.

Another therapeutic approach that specifically targets rationalization is intensive short term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP; Davanloo, 1980). ISTDP was identified in Chapter 4 (Study 1) and Chapter 5 (Study 2) as a possible point of intervention for rationalizations. This

approach is experiential in nature and is, specifically, an individual treatment. During treatment, the participant is closely monitored by the therapist to detect rises in emotion and anxiety and the consequent emergence of defense mechanisms (such as rationalizations). The aim of the therapy is to assist the participant to recognize their defense mechanisms, realize the cost of these defenses, and turn against them. ISTDP is empirically supported for a range of pathologies (e.g., Abbass et al., 2012; Ajilchi et al., 2020; Arthey et al., 2013) and, at the surface level, ISTDP for the treatment of rationalizations could offer an effective means of treatment.

However, several barriers exist in implementing ISTDP as an intervention for IPV. Firstly, the cost of an ISTDP intervention is likely higher than CBT or other group interventions. This is because ISTDP requires considerable therapist training and is not currently empirically supported for group delivery (Whitemore, 1999). Further, despite ostensibly being a “short-term” therapy, ISTDP treatment can be necessary for extended time frames depending on participant progress and rigidity of defenses (Abbass & Berchard, 2007). Finally, ISTDP is contraindicated for problematic impulse control (Abbass, 2002). Notably, this latter point poses considerable challenges to implementing ISTDP treatment for IPV perpetrators. However, ISTDP is empirically supported to effectively address social cognitions that are associated with poor interpersonal relationships (Ajilchi et al., 2020) and the literature also suggests treatment effects for ISTDP are lasting, requiring few relapse treatments (Abbass et al., 2011). Thus, while not suited to each perpetrator, ISTDP might be effective for *some* IPV perpetrators. Despite the barriers identified to implementing ISTDP treatments for IPV, from a risk-need-responsivity perspective, this intervention could offer an additional intervention reserved for cases in which the treatment needs of the perpetrator match the specific approach of ISTDP. This is a highly exploratory claim, however, and further work is required to substantiate it.

Implementing ISTDP in IPV perpetrator interventions is considerably more difficult than incorporating rationalization focused CBT. There are many barriers to overcome, and considerably more evidence required to support the validity of the treatment in this population. The first step would be a systemized search of the available literature and consultation with trained ISTDP clinicians to develop inclusion criteria and a treatment protocol suited to this population. The next step would be to implement a trial similar to the RCT for CBT described earlier. However, ISTDP is process oriented, experiential, and not manualized, so interventions and mechanisms of change cannot be specifically “prepared” ahead of session (Davanloo, 1980; Hooviatdoost et al., 2020; Whittemore, 1999). Thus, it would not be possible, or ethical, to withhold attention to rationalizations should they arise in session (as would need to be the case in a control group). Rather, a treatment-as-usual control group with the option to be waitlisted for ISTDP would be required to compare with treatment effects of an ISTDP intervention group. To establish that ISTDP did in fact target rationalization, session recordings would be coded for the presence of interventions specific to rationalization. It may be the case, for example, that treatment sessions targeting rationalization (or more rationalizations) result in less recidivism than those that do not target rationalization (or target fewer rationalizations). Outcome measures of the two groups (control and intervention) similar to those described in relation to the RCT for CBT could also be compared. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that there are many challenges to overcome in implementing ISTDP treatment for IPV, and it could be that this form of treatment is best suited to specific forensic intervention services with the resources to train clinicians and conduct the research required.

Just as there are many steps required to translate my research findings to clinical interventions, the same applies in regard to social implications. I discuss preliminary social implications below.

Social Implications

My focus in discussing the social implications of the evidence presented in this thesis is on sexism and societal responses to men's violence toward women, rather than IPV perpetration. The findings of Study 3 (Chapter 6) identified sexism toward women, particularly hostile sexism, to be related to people believing it is women's, and not men's, responsibility to reduce men's violence. This indicates that, at the societal level, sexism could be perpetuating a culture of acceptance around men's violence by exonerating men from responsibility to cease being violent to women. Hence, I view this as the first point of intervention, particularly in light of the more frequent and severe effects of IPV on women (Pacilli et al., 2017; Renzetti et al., 2018). It is critical to note here that, in Study 3 (Chapter 6), I did not measure sexism toward men. It is possible, and likely, that sexism toward men is in some way also related to responses to men's violence. I base this possibility on established associations between rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward men *and* women (Chapleau et al., 2007). Further, findings presented in Study 2 (Chapter 5) suggest men's sexism toward women and women's sexism toward men are, to some degree, associated with IPV perpetration. It could be reasonable, then, to expect that sexism toward men could also be relevant when inspecting societal responses to men's violence.

In concentrating on the findings of my current work, the implications discussed in this section focus on the evidence presented in this thesis. So, I limit my comments to the implications of the association between sexism toward women and responses to men's violence. However, in recognition of the possibility that sexism toward men could also be related, the implications discussed below *could* be extended to sexism toward either gender. However, this is relying on an, as yet unestablished, supposition that sexism toward men is relevant in the context of societal views of men's violence. In addition, I also apply to the

social implications the same caution regarding the correlational nature of my data as I did to the clinical implications and so provide a discuss preliminary discussion below.

The message my findings convey is that it might be important to address sexism toward women to promote a cultural shift that encourages men and women to stand against men's violence. If sexist attitudes were highly receptive to change, it seems likely this would have been achieved long ago. Rather, sexist attitudes can be rigid, and meaningful reductions in sexism can be difficult to disentangle from attitudinal shift that is feigned for impression management (Klonis et al., 2005). Despite this problem, there is some evidence that sexism can be reduced through targeted intervention, and it seems this requires different approaches for men compared with women. Across a series of studies, Becker and Swim (2011) intervened with men and women and detected reduced endorsement of sexist beliefs toward women. For women, this was achieved by heightening their awareness of the prevalence of sexism by directing them to attend to sexist occurrences in their lives. This same intervention was not effective for men. Rather, men required an additional intervention that promoted empathy by focusing on the experiences of people targeted with sexism. Even so, there was a reduction in some aspects of sexism but, overall, men tended to continue to endorse benevolent sexism. Becker and Swim (2011) suggest that men were not able to consider that benevolent sexism could cause suffering for women and so were not empathic to targets of benevolent sexism; as a consequence, benevolent beliefs were upheld. The authors suggest men might also have been resistant to reductions in sexist attitudes due to a vested interest in the maintenance of men's elevated status. However, from Becker and Swim's (2011) work, it seems at least some reduction in sexist attitudes could be possible for both men and women through interventions that raise awareness (for women) and promote empathy (for men) around sexism. Longer term studies are needed, however, to confirm long-term reductions in sexism.

In considering Becker and Swim's (2011) findings in light of my own results, it seems campaigns that promote awareness *and* insight to the consequences of sexism could be effective in reducing sexism. Public campaigns using radio, television commercials, and billboards could be utilized to draw attention to "everyday" sexism, for example, in ways that are relatable and easy for observers to recognize in their own lives. Further, campaigns with a narrative that exposes the emotional experiences of those targeted by sexism might evoke the empathy needed to reduce sexism in men. Public programs and advocacy groups also often intervene with large groups (maximising message reach) and sexism specific content could be incorporated into existing programs.

There is also evidence of success among bystander education programs that promote prosocial action and community support through victim empathy exercises and by appealing to belief systems that align with being "a helper" (Banyard et al., 2004; Foubert, 2010). For example, Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2011) evaluated the efficacy of a brief bystander intervention (The Men's Program; Foubert, 2010) that aimed to challenge rape myth acceptance and promote male bystanders to take action against sexual violence by appealing to the self-concept as a "helper". The program effectively increased men's confidence in their ability and willingness to intervene as a bystander (e.g., provide support to someone who discloses they have been raped), and reduced rape myth acceptance (e.g., "if a woman is drunk then she is responsible if she is raped"). Similarly, The Women's Program (Foubert, 2010) targets female bystanders and has similar efficacy in improving women's bystander efficacy and reducing their proclivity to believe rape myths (Foubert et al., 2010).

By incorporating content to specifically target sexist beliefs, such bystander programs might also support attitudinal shifts to improve societal views on men's violence toward women. This outcome could be achieved through inclusion of awareness information and victim empathy narratives related to sexism. Alternatively, it could be the case that separate

programs working in unison with, and based on, the successful format of bystander interventions (e.g., Foubert, 2010) might better specifically target sexism and run alongside the existing programs. The empirical support for bystander interventions in relation to sexual violence (Banyard et al., 2004; Foubert, 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2011) is encouraging. It seems that programs that target the general public have capacity to shift perceptions of certain behaviors and increase people's sense of competency and responsibility to intervene. Similarly, bystander programs addressing underlying gender-based prejudice could have utility in challenging how people respond to men's violence. By reducing sexism and men's violence toward women via such programs, a similar increase in confidence and willingness to engage in action against these behaviors as achieved by Becker and Swim (2011) might result. Further, it would be advantageous for such programs to engage both men and women as bystanders.

There also might be merit in adapting other existing education and intervention bystander programs such as the Motivating Action Through Empowerment program (Mazerolle et al., 2019) to suit the needs of a sexism-IPV intervention. MATE encourages *both* male and female bystanders to “be someone who does something” and stand against violence toward women (as well as other forms of discrimination) by challenging unhelpful attitudes and beliefs. This form of intervention targets workplaces, specifically, to motivate cultural shifts and empower men and women to be “effective bystanders” that hold others accountable. Based on the findings of this thesis, this type of program might be well suited to also address attitudes and beliefs specific to sexism and, through those beliefs, impact responses to IPV. It also seems likely there may be application beyond workplaces to address attitudinal shift within home and community settings.

In considering adapting existing bystander programs, there is one consideration that would require attention or, possibly, necessitate the development of independent and parallel

programs to specifically address sexism. As discussed above, some sexual violence bystander programs engage men by appealing to their views of themselves as “helpers” (e.g., Foubert, 2000, 2010; Foubert et al., 2007). Given the success of these programs in promoting bystander action (Foubert et al., 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2011) this approach is relevant and effective in the context of bystander intervention for sexual violence. This same approach might not be as beneficial in terms of intervening with sexism. Intuitively, men being the “helpers” of women is an idea that is consistent with the concept of benevolent sexism through which women are viewed as being reliant on men’s strength (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Study 3 (Chapter 6) identified links between benevolent sexism and support for encouraging both men and women to take responsibility for reducing men’s violence. Based on this finding, it could be that interventions that appeal to men to help *women*, specifically, might engage those who endorse benevolent sexism. Notably, it is not the case that the aforementioned bystander programs necessarily *increase* sexism, rather they appeal to a trait that many men (and women) possess (Scheel et al., 2001). There is merit in engaging this population, given the rates of benevolent attitudes reported in the empirical chapters of this thesis and elsewhere (e.g., Cross et al., 2016; Silván-Ferrero, & Bustillos López, 2007). My point here, is that it would be important for any program specifically aiming to reduce *sexism* to be aware of potential aspects of the program that might provide subtle reinforcement of men’s dominance. This is particularly important in light of the barrier to men’s empathy for women posed by benevolent sexism (Becker & Swim, 2011).

My interpretation, based on the literature and my findings, is that it might be suitable for bystander programs to appeal to men as helpers in the context of rape intervention, and less effective in programs attempting to reduce gender-based prejudice. A first step in reducing sexism might then be in modelling bystander programs to target sexism on the established programs that target rape, and modifying how men are engaged (i.e., less

emphasis on being a “helper”). Specifically, bystander programs targeting *sexism* might be better positioned to enhance empathy, a construct the research supports to be necessary to reduce men’s sexism (Becker & Swim, 2011). These sexism-specific bystander programs might then be better equipped to intervene with sexism and, in doing so, help to reduce IPV.

Evidently, the clinical and social implications of this thesis are preliminary and require further research to establish the precise nature of the relationships between rationalization, sexism, and IPV. Below, I discuss such future directions for research, along with the strengths and limitations of this thesis.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

In each empirical chapter (Chapters 4 – 6) I discussed the strengths, limitations, and future directions of each individual study and so I will not repeat these discussion points at length here. Similarly, I have earlier addressed some limitations and future directions that arose organically in the discussion of the thesis findings and implications. Given this, I focus the current section on a general summary of the strengths, limitations, and future directions of the research program that have not been previously discussed.

In reflecting on this thesis, I view the major strengths of the research to include: (a) developing a measure of rationalization to complement other measures of the relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach et al., 2000), (b) incorporating the rationalization measure to provide the first empirical evidence to support, in its entirety, relational goal pursuit theory, (c) establishing the seemingly critical relationship between rationalization and obsessive relational intrusion as well as broader IPV behavior, (d) providing empirical support for a novel model of IPV including constructs not explored before in this field (i.e., cross-gender contact and sexism), (e) broadening the literature by exploring factors related to IPV perpetration by *both* men and women, (f) providing initial empirical investigation of sexism’s relationship with societal responses to men’s violence toward women, and (g)

adopting a cross-theoretical approach incorporating IPV theory (i.e., rationalization; Cupach et al., 2000), social psychological theory (i.e., contact theory, Allport, 1954), and attitudinal constructs (i.e., sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999). By adopting a cross-theoretical approach and applying constructs in new ways, I have been able to contribute novel findings to the literature to support better insights to IPV.

In regard to the limitations and future directions leading from this research program, my first comment is that this research is entirely cross-sectional and so causation cannot be inferred. This concern was discussed in relation to each specific study. To elaborate, there are several reasons why casual literature is often difficult to generate in this field. Firstly, it is not ethical or viable to experimentally manipulate many factors related to IPV in vivo for the benefit of research. Second, longitudinal studies require considerable resources in terms of time and funding. Specific to this population, retention might prove difficult given the disruption IPV inflicts on the victim (Clough et al., 2011) and the possibility of incarceration for perpetrators (Dutton et al., 2003). Further, social desirability could result in underreporting of IPV perpetration (Dutton et al., 2003). There are also issues to consider in terms of duty of care to intervene with victims to prevent harm that would need to be prioritized ahead of adherence to a protocol. Notwithstanding these issues, longitudinal research could provide insights to causal (or at least temporal) relationships between IPV and other variables if these barriers can be overcome. It is hoped that Study 3 (Chapter 6), in being part of a broader longitudinal survey, could form part of this literature by tracking sexism and responses to violence toward women.

An alternative to longitudinal research is experimental research in a virtual reality environment that simulates social life and in which manipulations occur via a participant's avatar proxy. Preliminary research supports the validity of this design (e.g., Adelman et al., 2016; Vicary & Fraley, 2007), which offers insights to how certain experiences might impact

decision making and behavior. Given the popularity of virtual reality in violence research, intervention, and education (Gonzalez-Liencre et al., 2020; Rovira et al., 2009; Smeijers & Koole, 2019), it would likely be relatively easy to facilitate and engage participants in such a simulated environment. The physiological (e.g., heart rate, skin conductivity) and emotional (e.g., fear, helplessness, vulnerability) reactions in virtual reality mirror those experienced in situ (Gonzalez-Liencre et al., 2020). While such an approach improves ecological validity, ethical considerations related to participant distress need to be considered. Participants would need to be carefully screened, briefed, and debriefed with a comprehensive informed consent process to manage the potential for triggering trauma or mental health symptoms related to participants' own IPV experiences. However, simulated social environment research could lay the groundwork for insights to causal relationships in IPV.

Another limitation of this research relates to the reliance on self-reported IPV perpetration and community samples. By relying on perpetrator self-report of IPV it is possible that perpetration was underreported due to impression management in my studies. Further, by focusing solely on perpetrator self-report, I was not able to account for victim-factors (e.g., interpersonal sensitivity) that could be important in determining the threshold for more nuanced aspects of IPV (e.g., psychological violence). Within the community samples, I did not ask participants to disclose past or present treatment for IPV or involvement with the criminal justice system (a common means of access to IPV treatment). This means I am not able to ascertain if rationalization (Cupach et al., 2000), cross-gender contact (Allport, 1954), and sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999) would be of significance to incarcerated IPV perpetrators. While further research is required to generalize the findings to offender populations (i.e., those who have been charged with IPV offences), such research faces the same issues that restricted my research to community samples. Specifically, conducting research within criminal justice systems, either with prisoners or community

supervised persons, has additional layers of inter-organizational ethics, consent, collaboration, and cooperation. Gaining approval for such projects can be difficult although, if achieved, offender data provide valuable insights into IPV (e.g., Hoaken et al., 2007; Eriksson et al., 2018; Eriksson et al., 2016). The additional time required to conduct interviews or surveys with this population was not feasible in the context of my PhD and is likely to be more challenging in future years given the social context of COVID-19 that has seen restrictions placed on visitors to correctional facilities. These barriers could potentially be overcome via phone or internet supported interviews, or paper circulated surveys. The value of such research in determining if rationalization (and sexism and cross-gender contact to a lesser degree) is as relevant to incarcerated perpetrators of IPV as it is within community samples would be well worth the effort.

As addressed within each study, it is also worthy to note that this series of studies is limited by a focus on a narrow sample of cisgender men and cisgender women (i.e., men and women whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth). Violence within LGBTQ+ relationships is often overlooked and subject to myths. Specifically, IPV in minority populations is incorrectly perceived as being rare, less severe, but otherwise “the same” as heterosexual IPV, and is dismissed of requiring individual focus (Messinger, 2017). Such perceptions equate to a broad and inaccurate message that IPV in LGBTQ+ populations should not be addressed. To the contrary, sexual and gender minorities, in comparison to heterosexual and cisgender populations, tend to experience IPV at higher rates and generally receive less support (Bermea et al., 2021; Messinger, 2011; Valentine et al., 2017; Walters et al., 2010). Transgender women, in particular, are frequent targets of gender-based violence and experience significant physical and mental health trauma as a result (Henry et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2020). Drawing on the association between gender-based attitudes and IPV presented in this thesis, it seems likely that gender-based

attitudes (i.e., sexism) could also be involved in gender-based violence toward transgender women. Establishing the predictors of violence against transgender women and other gender/sexuality minorities is crucial given heightened rates of violence and, thus, vulnerability (Henry et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Madera et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2020). Replication of studies similar to my own are needed to determine, in the first instance, correlates of violence within LGBTQ+ populations.

Turning to the mode with which IPV is carried out, I note that it was not my intention to explore technology within this thesis. However, developments in technology have undeniably changed IPV perpetration (Hertlein et al., 2020). Outcome measures of Study 1 (Chapter 4) and Study 2 (Chapter 5) included *some* IPV behaviors that occurred via electronic devices (e.g., emails), however these were not thoroughly or specifically investigated in the current research. IPV tactics have evolved in line with technology advances and there is now easier access to personal information, locations, and routines via social media (Freed et al., 2018; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). Technology facilitated abuse is particularly concerning in college populations, with 50% of college students self-reporting the use of social media to contact or “keep tabs” on a former partner without their knowledge (Chaulk & Jones, 2011). Aside from offering a new means of abuse, having an online presence is also likely to provide increased opportunity for negative cross-gender interactions via trolling. Research has established links between hostile sexism and cyberbullying a partner (Martinez-Pecino & Duran, 2019) and further work would benefit from exploring if online negative cross-gender contact is similarly linked to such behavior as “offline” negative contact is with IPV. Testing these hypotheses could be achieved through a similar survey design as the three studies in this thesis. However, separate outcome measures for *in vivo* vs technology facilitated IPV behaviors would be required to determine if there are different or similar pathways to IPV and IPV occurring via technology.

Quite often mental health concerns overlap with IPV perpetration, and this was not something I explored within the current work. Common diagnoses include mood disorders, schizophrenia, and pathological personality traits (Leong, 1994; Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Mullen & Pathe, 1994). Underlying mental illness is often a major contributor to IPV perpetration (Skeem et al., 2014) and so mental health has a place in IPV research. This is particularly relevant to the current work as rationalization has also been linked to many mental illnesses (e.g., antisocial personality disorder; Brody & Costa, 2020). In future works, it would be of benefit to explore the relationship between rationalization, IPV, and mental health conditions. Should a relationship emerge, it might support specific rationalization intervention for IPV perpetrators as I described in the clinical implications section. Despite the recognition in correctional facilities that psychiatric treatment is often required, access to such treatment is limited (Peterson et al., 2011; Skeem et al., 2014). Unless the perpetrator is diverted to a specialist forensic mental health service, psychological pathology is unlikely to form the primary intervention (Forrester et al., 2014; Gebbie et al., 2008). In line with the risk-need-responsivity framework, a specific mental health intervention tends to be reserved for repetitive and high risk IPV perpetration (e.g., stalking) that is directly aligned with mental health (e.g., fixation; MacKenzie & James, 2011; Rosenfeld et al., 2007). General interventions for IPV tend to be group-based treatment centred around the promotion of accountability and education around healthy relationships (e.g., Duluth Model; Pence et al., 1993). If rationalization is found to co-occur with certain mental health presentations, there may be benefit in diverting relevant offenders to specific group-based mental health interventions targeting rationalizations.

Given the convincing support I found for an association between rationalization and IPV perpetration, I am prompted to question whether rationalization might also be associated with the victim's interpretations of violence. I propose rationalization, from the relational

goal pursuit perspective, would exist for victims with a *reversal* of the two subfactors. What I suggest is that victims rationalize by distorting *their own* intentions (e.g., “maybe I did something to deserve it”) and being permissive toward their *partner* (e.g., “he didn’t mean it”). In engaging in such rationalizations there would be a temporary relief of the victim’s negative affect, toward the partner at least. This is consistent with literature that suggests victims “take the blame” for IPV to reinstate a sense of internal control because, if the *victim* perceives they caused the abuse, then they might be able to control when and if it happens again (Valor-Segura et al., 2011). Victim self-blaming in IPV is common, and the harm inflicted by a partner is often minimized (Rousseau et al., 2020). I suggest that victim rationalization serves to promote self-blame in order to make sense (although in a maladaptive way) of a confusing and painful reality. If so, then it could be that perpetrator and victim rationalizations “complement” each other to sustain a cycle of violence in which the perpetrator feels justified in perpetrating and the victim feels deserving of being victimized. Further, I postulate that when one violent relationship ends, the tendency to view relationships through the rationalization lens does not. Thus, both members of the former union could carry their rationalization tendencies to future relationships in which they each adopt their respective “perpetrator” and “victim” lenses. In doing so, a cycle of violence might be more likely to occur again, particularly if either partner pairs with a partner who carries the “complementary” rationalization tendency. If supported, this account of IPV might provide insights to the cyclical nature of such violence. To investigate this claim, it would be efficacious to explore rationalization within dyads to determine whether (a) victims rationalize abuse and (b) whether a union in which both partners rationalize is associated with more IPV. Such a study, if my hypothesis is supported, would inform how we can best intervene with victims and perpetrators individually, as well as with couples impacted by IPV but not wanting to separate, as is often the case.

As a final direction for future research, I refer back to the IPV interventions I discussed in the clinical implications section of this chapter. There are barriers to implementing rationalization targeting intervention (CBT, ISTDP, or otherwise) given the policy around treatment of IPV perpetrators in some areas. Specifically, in some US states, legislation funding for IPV perpetration treatment is restricted to programs that adhere to the Duluth model (Barner & Carney, 2011; Gondolf, 2021). As a result, treatment fidelity of the Duluth model has become somewhat compromised. In attempts to comply with this legislation but also diversify and modernize interventions, substantial elements of other treatments (such as CBT) are delivered under the guise of “Duluth” (Wong & Bouchard, 2021). This makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between treatment efficacy of genuine Duluth model programs and the other programs that slip through as “Duluth”. Evidence in support of interventions outside of the Duluth Model might otherwise contribute to legislative shifts to allow for a more diverse range of treatments for IPV. To address this problem, there is a need for empirical exploration of specific intervention programs with high treatment fidelity to tease apart the efficacy of the many approaches being delivered under a “Duluth” label. Only once the treatments can be correctly identified can the capacity of any treatment (Duluth or not) to promote healthy change be realized. Further, and in line with the risk-need-responsivity framework, legislation could benefit from allocating funding to multiple treatment programs in light of the heterogenous nature of IPV perpetrators. Disentangling the efficacy of specific treatments would be the first step to informing this process.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, this thesis had two broad aims: (1) to better the understanding of IPV and related behaviors perpetrated by men and women through the novel application of rationalization (Cupach et al., 2000), contact theory (Allport, 1954), and ambivalent sexism (Glick & Ficke, 1996; 1999); and (2) to gain insight to societal responses to men’s violence

toward women. In achieving these aims across a series of three empirical chapters, this thesis has provided unique contributions to the IPV literature. The findings confirm that rationalization should be considered critical in the explanation of IPV, an important and consistent finding across a variety of IPV behaviors and in relation to perpetration by both men and women. Further, my work suggests that negative interactions occurring between men and women in a range of relationship contexts are relevant to sexism, and that these negative interactions are associated with IPV perpetration when they are interpreted via the self-justifying lens of rationalization. These pathways to IPV perpetration are similar for both men and women. Finally, my research suggests that men and women tend to rely on their broader perspectives and expectations of women when considering how men's violence should be reduced. These findings provide novel insights to factors associated with a severe and pervasive form of violence (Brieding, 2014; Stöckl et al., 2013)

This thesis has served many purposes, some related to my own scholarly curiosity and interest in understanding IPV and some related to making contributions to the research field more broadly. The common denominator across these purposes is a desire to support the victims of IPV by better understanding perpetration and contributing to a reduction in this form of violence. I titled my thesis, in part, after lyrics of a 1990s rock song "When Love and Hate Collide" (Elliot & Savage, 1996). I thought this a fitting way to capture the love of an intimate relationship being struck with the hatred of violence. I propose it likely captures the emotional experiences of IPV victims like Kelly Wilkinson, a young mother killed by a man she likely once loved (Smee, 2021). Most humans have a biologically driven instinct to express care when a loved one is in pain (Cheng et al., 2010). IPV perpetrators appear to overcome this instinct to enable them to be the inflictors of such pain. Some research suggests IPV perpetrators are able to engage in the behavior they do due to an abnormal response to oxytocin that signals love as "risk" instead of "safety" (DeWall et al., 2014). In

now reflecting on my findings, I suggest there is another process at play: love vs hate might accurately capture the emotions that rupture inside IPV perpetrators, but these emotional experiences are reasoned away by rationalization. There is much work still required in this field. However, it is hoped that the series of studies comprising this thesis can contribute to the literature and find practical application that supports an understanding of what compels the perpetration of IPV and what can be done to prevent it.

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Appendix A: Study 1 Information and Informed Consent Sheet



Experiences between Men and Women and Resolving Conflict in Relationships

GU HREC Ref no: 2017/941

INFORMATION FORM

Who is conducting the research

Jessica Brownhalls, Email: jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

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School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University, Gold Coast

Dr. Li Eriksson, Email: l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University, Gold Coast

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School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Brisbane

Why is the research being conducted?

Past experiences can contribute to the ways in which men and women view each other and how conflict is resolved in gendered relationships. This study aims to examine the prior experiences and individual factors that contribute to intimate partner violence and conflict resolution behaviors in relationships between men and women. This research is being conducted in partial completion of Jessica Brownhalls' PhD project, under the supervision of Drs Duffy, Eriksson, and Barlow within the Griffith University School of Applied Psychology.

What you will be asked to do

You are invited to complete an online questionnaire that will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. This self-report survey includes questions about your demographic information, attitudes and beliefs about the opposite gender, and your positive and negative relationship experiences including intimate partner violence such as verbal, physical, and sexual violence. Responses will remain anonymous so there is no possibility that anyone except yourself will know how you respond. Your data will remain anonymous and will be de-identified. Only the named investigators will have access to the data.

For some people, it can be upsetting to answer questions about intimate partner violence and conflict between men and women. If you think answering these types of questions could be upsetting for you, we recommend that you do not participate in this survey. If you are experiencing distress, we encourage you to seek support from the providers listed in the "Risks to You" section later in this document.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants aged 18 years and over are invited to participate in this study and will be recruited via the Prolific research webpage. If, within the past year but at least four weeks prior to today's date, you have had (or are still in) a heterosexual relationship that lasted at least one month, you are eligible for this study.

Participants can access the experiment via a link to the online website supported by *Qualtrics* software.

The expected benefits of the research

Upon consenting to participate in the study, participants will be provided a financial reimbursement equivalent to approximately \$11.00 AUD/hour. Also, as many people experience difficulty with resolving conflict in their intimate relationships, the findings of this study may help us to understand the processes (such as prior experiences) that contribute to unhelpful attempts to resolve conflict. This can be helpful in providing better forms of advice and counselling for the people involved.

Risks to you

When responding to some of the questions, you might reflect on sensitive areas of your experiences and your beliefs about your relationships with others. Specifically, discussion of behaviors within relationships and behaviors that might have upset you might make those feelings return. If you find some questions objectionable, you may choose to not answer those questions. You can also discontinue your participation at any time during the study. In addition, if you do experience distress, we encourage you to seek support by contacting one of the following support services:

Lifeline Crisis Chat:

Call: 1-800-273-8255.

Web: Chat.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx

Crisis Text Line:

Text: text the word "HOME" to 741741 from anywhere in the USA, anytime

Web: www.crisistextline.org

Hopeline:

Call or Text: 919-213-4525 1-877-235-4525

Web: <https://www.hopeline-nc.org>

Your confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely anonymous. Your name and personal details will not be linked with your responses. Please complete the survey in a private area to ensure the responses on your screen are not viewed by others. Any information or personal details gathered during this research are confidential. No individual will (or could) be identified in any publication of results. Only the named investigators will have access to the data. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

As required by Griffith University, all research data (survey responses and analysis) will be retained in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part and, if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Participants remain eligible for financial reimbursement if you withdraw from the study prior to completing the survey. However, once you have completed the research it is not possible to withdraw your participation, as it is not possible for the researchers to identify your responses.

Mechanism for distribution and return / Web backend

The experiment will be administered via the online data software program, *Qualtrics*. This software is completely secure and protects all data gathered. Data will be available only to the named researchers. The survey will be accessed via Prolific. The software will collate all data to be downloadable into an Excel-type file.

Questions / further information

All questions regarding this research should be directed to the investigators:

Jessica Brownhalls, jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr. Amanda Duffy, a.duffy@griffith.edu.au

Dr. Li Eriksson, l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au

Dr. Fiona Kate Barlow, f.barlow@psy.uq.edu.au

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical conduct in Human Research (2007)*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on +61 (0)7 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback to you

Results of this research will be reported within an academic thesis and may also be disseminated via journal articles and professional conference presentations. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

Expressing consent – anonymous or de-identified information

Please print this sheet and retain it for your later reference. By completing the survey, you will be deemed to have consented to participate in the research. Please click on the checkbox provided to indicate you have read and understood the information provided and consent to participate.

Terms and Conditions of Reimbursement

When you consent to this research, you accept these terms and conditions. Members of the research team and their immediate families are ineligible to participate. Reimbursement is via the Prolific account registered to the participant only. The reimbursement is final and no correspondence regarding payment will be entered into. The reimbursement is not transferable and is not refundable. The participant releases the University from any and all causes of action, losses, liability, damage, expense (including legal expenses) cost or charge suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the participant as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the participant, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the reimbursement. Any participant who is unable to fulfill all of these terms and conditions will forfeit reimbursement.

Please select "**Yes**" below to consent to participate in this project (GU HREC Ref: 2017/941) and continue with the survey. If you do not consent to participate or wish to withdraw at any time during the survey, please exit the survey by closing the window.

Yes

Appendix B: Study 2 Pilot Study Information and Informed Consent Sheet



GU HREC Ref no: 2017/941

Relationship Quality between Men and Women and Resolving Conflict in Gendered Relationships

GU HREC Ref no: 2017/941

INFORMATION FORM

Who is conducting the research

Jessica Brownhalls, Email: jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr. Amanda Duffy, Email: a.duffy@griffith.edu.au

School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University, Gold Coast

Dr. Li Eriksson, Email: l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University, Gold Coast

Dr. Fiona Kate Barlow, Email: f.barlow@psy.uq.edu.au

School of Psychology, University of Queensland, St Lucia

Why is the research being conducted?

Past experiences can contribute to the ways in which conflict is resolved in relationships between men and women, as well as how gendered relationships are viewed. This study aims to examine prior positive and negative experiences between men and women, and individual factors that contribute to conflict resolution behaviors in intimate relationships. This research is being conducted in partial completion of Jessica Brownhalls' PhD project, under the supervision of Drs Duffy, Eriksson, and Barlow within the Griffith University School of Applied Psychology.

What you will be asked to do

You are invited to complete an online questionnaire that will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. This self-report survey includes questions about your views on positive and negative relationships between men and women, your experiences of conflict in relationships between men and women, as well as your demographic information. Responses will remain anonymous so there is no possibility that anyone except yourself will know how you respond. Your data will remain anonymous and will be de-identified. Only the named investigators will have access to the data.

For some people, responding to questions about positive and negative relationships and conflict between men and women can be upsetting. If you think answering questions about these topics could be upsetting for you, we recommend that you do not participate in this survey. If you are experiencing distress, we encourage you to seek support from the providers listed in the "Risks to You" section later in this document.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants aged 18 years and over are invited to participate in this study and will be recruited via the Prolific research webpage, email circulation, and a snowballing sample. If, within the past year but at

least four weeks prior to today's date, you have had (or are still in) a heterosexual relationship that lasted at least one month, you are eligible for this study. Participants can access the experiment via a link to the online website supported by Qualtrics software.

The expected benefits of the research

As many people experience difficulty with resolving conflict in their intimate relationships, the findings of this study may help us to understand the processes (such as prior experiences) that contribute to unhelpful attempts to resolve conflict. This can be helpful in providing better forms of advice and counselling for the people involved.

Risks to you

When responding to some of the questions, you might reflect on sensitive areas of your experiences and your beliefs about your relationships with others. Specifically, discussion of behaviors within relationships and behaviors that might have upset you might make those feelings return. If you find some questions objectionable, you may choose to not answer those questions. You can also discontinue your participation at any time during the study. In addition, if you do experience distress, we encourage you to seek support by contacting one of the following support services:

In Australia

Lifeline Crisis Chat:

Call: 13 11 14

Web: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat>

Suicide Call Back Service:

Text: 1300 659 467

Web: www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/phone-and-online-counselling/

1800RESPECT:

Call: 1800 737 732

Web Chat: <https://chat.1800respect.org.au/#/welcome>

Your confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely anonymous. Your name and personal details will not be linked with your responses. Please complete the survey in a private area to ensure the responses on your screen are not viewed by others. Any information or personal details gathered during this research are confidential. No individual will (or could) be identified in any publication of results. Only the named investigators will have access to the data. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

As required by Griffith University, all research data (survey responses and analysis) will be retained in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part and, if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Participants remain eligible for financial reimbursement if you withdraw from the study prior to completing the survey. However, once you have completed the research it is not possible to withdraw your participation, as it is not possible for the researchers to identify your responses.

Mechanism for distribution and return / Web backend

The experiment will be administered via the online data software program, Qualtrics. This software is completely secure and protects all data gathered. Data will be available only to the named researchers. The survey will be accessed via various online platforms including email and social media. The software will collate all data to be downloadable into an Excel-type file.

Questions / further information

All questions regarding this research should be directed to the investigators:

Jessica Brownhalls, jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

All questions regarding this research should be directed to the investigators:

Jessica Brownhalls, jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr. Amanda Duffy, a.duffy@griffith.edu.au
Dr. Li Eriksson, l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au
Dr. Fiona Kate Barlow, f.barlow@psy.uq.edu.au

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback to you

Results of this research will be reported within an academic thesis, and may also be disseminated via journal articles and professional conference presentations. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

Expressing consent – anonymous or de-identified information

Please print this sheet and retain it for your later reference. By completing the survey, you will be deemed to have consented to participate in the research. Please select "yes" below to indicate that you have read and understood the information provided and consent to participate.

Terms and Conditions of Reimbursement

When you consent to this research, you accept these terms and conditions. Members of the research team and their immediate families are ineligible to participate. The participant releases the University from any and all causes of action, losses, liability, damage, expense (including legal expenses) cost or charge suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the participant as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the participant, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the reimbursement. Any participant who is unable to fulfill all of these terms and conditions will forfeit reimbursement.

Please select "Yes" below to consent to participation in this project (GU HREC Ref: 2017/941) and continue with the survey. If you do not consent to participate or wish to withdraw at any time during the survey, please exit the survey by closing the window.

YES

Appendix C: Study 2 Information and Informed Consent Sheet



Experiences between Men and Women and Resolving Conflict in Relationships

GU HREC Ref no: 2017/941

INFORMATION FORM

Who is conducting the research

Jessica Brownhalls, Email: jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr. Amanda Duffy, Email: a.duffy@griffith.edu.au

School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University, Gold Coast

Dr. Li Eriksson, Email: l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University, Gold Coast

Dr. Fiona Barlow, Email: f.barlow@psy.uq.edu.au

School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Brisbane

Why is the research being conducted?

Past experiences can contribute to the ways in which men and women view each other and how conflict is resolved in gendered relationships. This study aims to examine the prior experiences and individual factors that contribute to intimate partner violence and conflict resolution behaviors in relationships between men and women. This research is being conducted in partial completion of Jessica Brownhalls' PhD project, under the supervision of Drs Duffy, Eriksson, and Barlow within the Griffith University School of Applied Psychology.

What you will be asked to do

You are invited to complete an online questionnaire that will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. This self-report survey includes questions about your demographic information, attitudes and beliefs about the opposite gender, and your positive and negative relationship experiences including intimate partner violence such as verbal, physical, and sexual violence. Responses will remain anonymous so there is no possibility that anyone except yourself will know how you respond. Your data will remain anonymous and will be de-identified. Only the named investigators will have access to the data.

For some people, it can be upsetting to answer questions about intimate partner violence and conflict between men and women. If you think answering these types of questions could be upsetting for you, we recommend that you do not participate in this survey. If you are experiencing distress, we encourage you to seek support from the providers listed in the "Risks to You" section later in this document.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants aged 18 years and over are invited to participate in this study and will be recruited via the Prolific research webpage. If, within the past year but at least four weeks prior to today's date, you have had (or are still in) a heterosexual relationship that lasted at least one month, you are eligible for this study.

Participants can access the experiment via a link to the online website supported by Qualtrics software.

The expected benefits of the research

Upon consenting to participate in the study, participants will be provided a financial reimbursement equivalent to approximately \$11.00 AUD/hour. Also, as many people experience difficulty with resolving conflict in their intimate relationships, the findings of this study may help us to understand the processes (such as prior experiences) that contribute to unhelpful attempts to resolve conflict. This can be helpful in providing better forms of advice and counselling for the people involved.

Risks to you

When responding to some of the questions, you might reflect on sensitive areas of your experiences and your beliefs about your relationships with others. Specifically, discussion of behaviors within relationships and behaviors that might have upset you might make those feelings return. If you find some questions objectionable, you may choose to not answer those questions. You can also discontinue your participation at any time during the study. In addition, if you do experience distress, we encourage you to seek support by contacting one of the following support services:

Lifeline Crisis Chat:

Call: 1-800-273-8255.

Web: [Chat.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx](https://www.lifeline.org.au/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx)

Crisis Text Line:

Text: text the word "HOME" to 741741 from anywhere in the USA, anytime

Web: www.crisistextline.org

Hopeline:

Call or Text: 919-213-4525 1-877-235-4525

Web: <https://www.hopeline-nc.org>

Your confidentiality

Your participation in this study is completely anonymous. Your name and personal details will not be linked with your responses. Please complete the survey in a private area to ensure the responses on your screen are not viewed by others. Any information or personal details gathered during this research are confidential. No individual will (or could) be identified in any publication of results. Only the named investigators will have access to the data. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

As required by Griffith University, all research data (survey responses and analysis) will be retained in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part and, if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Participants remain eligible for financial reimbursement if you withdraw from the study prior to completing the survey. However, once you have completed the research it is not possible to withdraw your participation, as it is not possible for the researchers to identify your responses.

Mechanism for distribution and return / Web backend

The experiment will be administered via the online data software program, Qualtrics. This software is completely secure and protects all data gathered. Data will be available only to the named researchers. The survey will be accessed via Prolific. The software will collate all data to be downloadable into an Excel-type file.

Questions / further information

All questions regarding this research should be directed to the investigators:

Jessica Brownhalls, jessica.brownhalls@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr. Amanda Duffy, a.duffy@griffith.edu.au

Dr. Li Eriksson, l.eriksson@griffith.edu.au

Dr. Fiona Kate Barlow, f.barlow@psy.uq.edu.au

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on +61 (0)7 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback to you

Results of this research will be reported within an academic thesis and may also be disseminated via journal articles and professional conference presentations. A summary of results of the data will be available to participants on email request.

Expressing consent – anonymous or de-identified information

Please print this sheet and retain it for your later reference. By completing the survey, you will be deemed to have consented to participate in the research. Please click on the checkbox provided to indicate you have read and understood the information provided and consent to participate.

Terms and Conditions of Reimbursement

When you consent to this research, you accept these terms and conditions. Members of the research team and their immediate families are ineligible to participate. Reimbursement is via the Prolific account registered to the participant only. The reimbursement is final and no correspondence regarding payment will be entered into. The reimbursement is not transferable and is not refundable. The participant releases the University from any and all causes of action, losses, liability, damage, expense (including legal expenses) cost or charge suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the participant as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the participant, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the reimbursement. Any participant who is unable to fulfill all of these terms and conditions will forfeit reimbursement.

Please select "**Yes**" below to consent to participate in this project (GU HREC Ref: 2017/941) and continue with the survey. If you do not consent to participate or wish to withdraw at any time during the survey, please exit the survey by closing the window.

Yes

Appendix D: Study 3 Information and Informed Consent Sheet

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science



The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study



Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

Human Sciences Building
Level 6, 10 Symonds Street
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 373 7599 ext. 87498
Facsimile 64 9 373 7450
www.psych.auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Follow-up Questionnaire for 2015/2016

A scanned copy of this form will be kept for a period of up to fifteen years

Lead researcher: Dr. Chris Sibley, School of Psychology, The University of Auckland.
Phone: 09-373-7599, extn 87498. e-mail: nzavs@auckland.ac.nz

Consent form and contact details

This form is to gather your consent to participate in this phase of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). Only Dr. Sibley and his research associates will have access to your responses. Your personal information will be kept separate from your responses at all times. Your questionnaire will be identified by an anonymous code. An encrypted electronic copy of all responses will be stored indefinitely for research purposes in a secure room in the School of Psychology.

I have read and understood a description of this research project. On this basis, I agree to take part. I understand that my data will remain confidential at all times. I understand that only Dr. Sibley and trusted research assistants working on the study in secure conditions will have access to my contact details. I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time up until the point at which I complete and return this questionnaire. I understand that my contact details will never be shared with anyone outside of the immediate research team. I understand that Dr. Sibley and the research team will use these details to contact and invite me to complete follow-up questionnaires, possibly for the next fourteen years. I understand that my contact details will be used to contact me if I win one of the grocery voucher **prize draws for \$500, \$300 or \$200** for participating in this study.

Name:	<input type="text"/>		
Signature:	<input type="text"/>	Today's Date:	<input type="text"/>
Home phone:	<input type="text"/>	Cell phone:	<input type="text"/>
Email address:	<input type="text"/>		
Postal address:	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
Have you ever changed your name due to marriage or a civil union? Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>			
	If yes... <input type="text"/>		
	Birth Name: <input type="text"/>		
Would you like to receive a summary of key findings from the study? Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>			

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 03-JUNE-2015 UNTIL 03-JUNE-2018. REFERENCE NUMBER: 014889.
PLEASE POST BACK THE FULL QUESTIONNAIRE (INCLUDING THIS PAGE) USING THE PROVIDED PRE-PAID ENVELOPE.