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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between violence, masculinity, and alcohol use among heterosexual, economically disadvantaged, and primarily Black men officially identified as batterers. Violence occurred against intimates and strangers. Alcohol use coupled with violence against intimates and violence against others (e.g., strangers) appeared to be used for masculinity construction. The use of alcohol before and during assaultive behavior combined with the use of violence symbolized dominance and control. This occurred in situations where markers of masculinity were largely absent (e.g., steady employment) in instances of both intimate partner violence and stranger violence.

Keywords

alcohol, gender, interpersonal violence, intimate partner violence, masculinity, qualitative research

Despite the increased focus since the 1970s on intimate partner violence (IPV), accounts from male perpetrators have not received due attention. Addressing this specific gap in the literature, Wood (2004) noted that most work on IPV, both quantitative and qualitative, has focused mainly on female accounts of victimization perpetrated by men. Researchers have begun to address the absence of men's voices in IPV research to further the understanding of the relationship between masculinity and intimate violence. Additionally, scholars have taken note of how the perceptions and interpretations of researchers and clinicians have

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sometimes eclipsed those directly involved in violent behavior (see Mullaney, 2007; Schrock & Padavic, 2007). Inadequately addressing male accounts can lead to skewed perspectives of the circumstances of interpersonal violence in general and IPV in particular. Studies that do incorporate male perpetrator perspectives mainly use quantitative frameworks (see Hamberger & Hastings, 1986; Schmidt et al., 2007). The few qualitative pieces published that discuss alcohol use in their findings have not explicitly examined the interlocking features of masculinity (e.g., doing gender; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and alcohol use in the context of IPV and other forms of interpersonal violence (Anderson & Umberson, 2001).

This study centers on male perpetrator perceptions of alcohol-related IPV¹ and interpersonal violence: We analyze their experiences to further theoretical contributions to violence research. Triangulated approaches (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, and critical) are used here to contextualize heterosexual male violence occurring within marginalized or disadvantaged contexts. This article contributes to the literature on IPV specifically and interpersonal violence in general by (a) examining the intersecting qualities of masculinity and alcohol use, (b) highlighting how IPV and stranger/acquaintance violence co-occur, and (c) focusing on officially labeled heterosexual male batterers (predominantly Black) using a mixed-method, primarily qualitative approach. Centering men over women is not the intention here, as the two perspectives are not at odds. Rather, the aim is to acknowledge that “more effective strategies of intervention may not be possible until and unless some effort is made to understand the perspective of men who commit IPV” (Wood, 2004, p. 556).

Literature Review

It is important to gain a better understanding of not only why violence is present in some relationships (and not others) but also to understand why men continue to inflict the most harm. We draw from a rich, albeit competing, theoretical literature on alcohol-related violence that has developed power motivation (Gondolf, 1995), proximal effects (Leonard & Quigley, 1999), and deviance disavowal (MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969) as theoretical interpretations of alcohol-related violence. Gondolf (1995) deftly pointed out that violence against women in part stems from masculine struggles for control and power. Leonard and Quigley (1999) attended to the importance of the proximal or psychopharmacological impact of alcohol as a facilitator of violent behavior. MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) suggested that alcohol produces a time-out period where deviant behavior (e.g., violence) occurs without social sanction. We expand on this body of literature by examining problematic aspects of hegemonic masculinity and normative heterosexuality constructs (Jackson, 2006). Specifically, we use structured action theory (Messerschmidt, 1999), which suggests that gender is a mechanism through which situated social action reproduces social structure as a guiding framework for our analysis. This orientation highlights how normative beliefs about gender require social actors to present, monitor, interpret, and reproduce gender displays that are structured by specific contexts and situations.

IPV, Alcohol Use, and Masculinity

Alcohol use among male batterers appears to be an important factor in both purposeful criminal justice and nationally representative samples. Bennett and Lawson (1994)

estimated that approximately half of the substance-abusing men in a treatment program survey engaged in IPV toward their partners. Reoccurring instances of violence against one's partner was linked to alcohol and drug use in this study. Other literature pertaining to IPV repeatedly associates IPV to alcohol use in particular (Field, Caetano, & Nelson, 2004; Roizen, 1993). Individuals who report alcohol problems are more likely to perpetrate IPV than those who do not (see Cunradi, Caetano, Clark, & Schafer, 1999). O'Leary and Schumacher (2003) analyzed the relationship between the dosage of alcohol and other drugs using National Family Violence Survey and National Survey of Families and Households data. They found a significant positive linear association between drinking classifications of men and their likelihood of engaging in any IPV. Furthermore, the relationship between alcohol and IPV has also been reported in a community sample of married individuals. Testa, Quigley, and Leonard (2003) found wives who reported alcohol use by husbands resulted in a greater number of aggressive acts and greater violence by husbands in episodes that involved alcohol in comparison to those where alcohol was not present.

In terms of research identifying more direct linkages between alcohol use and IPV, mixed findings have been reported (Cruz & Peralta, 2001). Roizen (1993), for example, found that 45% of men and 20% of women were drinking during episodes of IPV.² Others have shown that if a perpetrator uses drugs or alcohol at the time of the incident, the victim was more likely to be injured (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). For extreme outcomes of IPV, namely, homicide, 45% of convicted prisoners reported being under the influence of alcohol. Others attempting to find a causal link between substance use and IPV have failed to show temporal order of alcohol or other drug use in episodes of IPV (Fals-Stewart & Kennedy, 2005; Gelles, 1993). Yet Fals-Stewart's (2003) recent longitudinal study of substance use and IPV has shown that instances of IPV often occur soon after alcohol and/or drug use. Fals-Stewart and Kennedy (2005) further noted that the weakest element of the argument supporting the causal relationship between substance use and IPV is the inability to reject myriad plausible alternative explanations. The controversial link between IPV and substance use is generally accepted to be an interaction of contextual, social, biologic, psychological, and personality factors that exert influence at different times as well as under different situated contexts (e.g., households touched by poverty, sexism, racism, and homophobia).

There is agreement that persons engaging in IPV have a higher likelihood of drinking or using drugs and that these activities often accompany instances of violence against one's partner. Whether the consumption of alcohol and/or other drugs augments, facilitates, or provides an excuse for heightened physical, verbal, and psychological abuse in the form of IPV is uncertain (Fals-Stewart & Kennedy, 2005). Drinking and fighting have been shown to be demonstrative of power, especially for those with few economic resources (Kantor & Strauss, 1987). Thus, alcohol use may serve a purpose beyond the obvious potential for intoxication it promises (Campbell, 2000). Drinking and violence are perhaps social activities that have implications for men and their pursuit of masculinity expression and normative heterosexuality. More broadly, alcohol-related violence perpetrated by men may help to establish and maintain a gendered identity.

A dominant ideology of what it means to be a "man" is reinforced, reproduced, and recreated through group consensus and the social interaction that is informed by this consensus (Komter, 1989). Hegemony is a concept that embeds certain notions and actions of

consent and participation by subordinate groups (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gramsci, 1971). Hegemonic masculinity describes a culturally specific ideal masculinity (e.g., heterosexual, White, athletic, financially sound; Connell, 1995). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) iterated, hegemonic masculinities provide cultural frameworks that are materialized in daily practices and interactions. Oftentimes, resources needed to approximate hegemonic masculinity are not equally available in stratified societies (Bourgeois, 2003). Moving beyond an analysis of gender “traits” allows for thinking about the precarious status of the “heterosexual male” that exists only in as much as it can be continuously constructed (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The use of the body in aspects of masculine construction (e.g., violence) among men without access to resources (e.g., status, employment) and the subsequent harm incurred on the body has been well established in the masculinities literature (Kimmel, 1987; Schrock & Padavic, 2007). Connell and Messerschmidt note the irony in attempts to express strength and endurance as markers of masculinity. These behaviors place the male body at risk for harm as “other-inflicted” (e.g., alcohol-related violence) and “self-inflicted” injuries are quite common in masculinity expression rituals.

Similarly, alcohol researchers routinely address the physical damage on the body caused by “problematic” alcohol use (Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt, & Lee, 1998). Research reveals that alcohol-related behaviors, despite the high potential for self-harm, ascend a particular form of masculinity at the expense of stigmatized masculinities and femininities (Campbell, Harris, & Lee, 1995; Peralta, 2007). In relation to the structured action theoretical framework outlined above, Anderson and Umberson (2001) reviewed and extended research on the gendered nature of IPV by interviewing men who batter. Anderson and Umberson’s research documents how violence is gendered in its action, its depiction, and its justification. Although alcohol use simply did not emerge as a theme in Anderson and Umberson’s study or was not of primary interest, it is important to note that previous research has associated alcohol use with masculinity expression (Campbell, 2000; West, 2001), violence in general (Peralta & Cruz, 2006), and IPV in particular (Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, & McGrath, 2003). Wood (2004), for example, identified alcohol and drugs as important factors relevant to IPV using qualitative methods to study gender construction among men who batter. Connecting this intersecting body of research to feminist theorizing on how normative heterosexuality affects the lives of heterosexuals (Jackson, 2006) frames this research.

The Current Study

The scope of the current study centers on furthering the understanding of the male perpetrator by analyzing qualitative data on the contextual and intersecting meanings of masculinity, alcohol use, and experiences with violent behavior among men formally charged with IPV. Descriptive quantitative data acquired from these men supplement the analysis. Specifically, we ask: What is the meaning of masculinity, alcohol use, and interpersonal violence for male perpetrators of IPV and how do these meanings intersect and inform one another? This question is triangulated using qualitative interviews, survey responses, and critical approaches. We attempt to expand on intersectional approaches to interpersonal violence research by focusing specifically on interpersonal violence, masculinity construction, and alcohol use.

Method

A mixed-methods research design (see Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) was employed to study IPV using a nonrepresentative sample of adult males. The present study is based on 11 self-selected, predominantly Black heterosexual men convicted of IPV.³ The qualitative portions of the study are the primary units of analysis; the quantitative data are for descriptive purposes only. In compliance with full disclosure, I (the first author and sole interviewer) am a gay 35-year-old Hispanic male. Coauthors are heterosexual White females.

Conceptualization and Measurement

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) defines IPV as any actual or threatened physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological act of violence or abuse directed toward a current or former spouse or dating partner. We adopt this definition as a guiding framework and expand on this definition by including “economic violence.” The interview guide, which consisted of open-ended questions, was used to organize the flow of the interview. Specific questions relevant to the study included the following: (a) Can you tell me about the first time you experienced violence in your relationship? (b) What is the significance of IPV in your life? (c) Is/was alcohol use related to this violence? Probing questions were incorporated into the interview guide and applied when needed to facilitate further discussion.

Participants completed a 143-item questionnaire. In addition to obtaining demographic information, the questionnaire was designed to obtain information pertaining to the respondent’s childhood exposure to alcohol and violence, past and present relationships, alcohol use, and IPV perpetration. Three instruments were incorporated into one questionnaire: The revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) for current and past relationships (Strauss, 1979), the Graduated-Frequency Measure for alcohol use (Midanik, 1994), and the Drinker Inventory of Consequences (DrInC-2R; Midanik, 1982) were selected for this study given their reliability and validity and relevance to the research questions posed in the current study.

Although the main purpose of this study is to examine the subjective experiences of men who batter and the meaning that accompanies their violence, we were also interested in the severity and frequency of IPV. We used the CTS2 for several reasons. Ramirez and Straus (2006) found that the CTS2, which presents questions in a randomized order, produces higher disclosure rates for criminal behavior (physical assault, injury) than the original CTS. Using the CTS2 allows for the comparison of rates on IPV across different research projects and over time as it is the most widely used and best known method for obtaining information on IPV (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). Finally, using the questionnaire is likely to prompt respondents to recall past events more efficiently compared to open-ended questions.

Regarding IPV variables, data on incidents of IPV occurring in the past year with a current partner and/or incidents of IPV occurring in the past with the respondent’s most recent partner were collected. Respondents who reported having “physically hurt” their current and/or past partner were coded as having inflicted harm on their partner. Consistent with the CTS2, types of IPV for present and past relationships were coded as follows:

physical violence, psychological violence, emotional violence, economic violence, and sexual violence. If a respondent reported engaging in any one of these behaviors, they were identified as having perpetrated a type of violence consistent with the categorization detailed above.

Data Collection

Recruitment took place at a batterer's intervention program (BIP) in an urban, Midwestern city. Participants who opted to enroll in the BIP avoided a jail sentence for their participation in the intervention program. Participants were notified of the study at the outset of their participation in the intervention sessions. Interested individuals contacted the principal researcher to volunteer. To encourage participation, respondents received a US\$15 stipend for taking part in the interview and a US\$10 stipend for completion of the questionnaire.

Participants were asked to take part in an in-person interview with the first author using a semistructured face-to-face interview guide. The interviews, conducted in a private and secure setting, were approximately 90-min long. The standard protocol of confidentiality was assured to the respondents, all of whom provided informed consent. Interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and knowledge. Recordings were destroyed after transcription took place. Participants were informed that they could end the study at any point. Every participant in the study completed both the interview and questionnaire. By the 6th interview, similar themes began emerging. By the 10th interview, theoretical saturation among the convicted men was reached. A final interview (interview number 11) was obtained to ensure theoretical saturation; no new information was gleaned from this interview.

Participants

The participants were a group of heterosexual adult males, the majority of whom were economically disadvantaged and men of color. Including men from different racial and ethnic backgrounds allowed for a nuanced examination of masculinity and its relationship to interpersonal violence and alcohol use. Moreover, using men from different racial and ethnic backgrounds enriched the data by allowing for perspective variation. The majority of men interviewed were of lower or working social class. The social class standing of the majority of participants contributed to the findings.

Data collection took place from June 2005 through December 2005. The ages of the respondents ranged from 25 to 55 with a mean age of 42. A majority of participants were Black (72%). The remaining three respondents were White, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino. Six of the respondents were unemployed during the time of the interview, four worked full-time, and one respondent worked part-time. Six respondents reported an annual household income below US\$15,000 and three reported incomes between US\$15,000 and US\$20,000. Eight respondents completed high school, three did not. Of those eight, five continued on to complete some college, but none received a 4-year college degree. Eight respondents stated that they were in a relationship at the time of the study. Three respondents self-described their relationship status as "single."

Data Analysis

Interviews, transcriptions, data entry, and quantitative and qualitative analyses overlapped throughout the research process. All of the interviews were transcribed and coded by the authors using Nvivo v.7, a qualitative data analysis program. The study relied on inductive analysis as informed by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which places emphasis on tracking respondents' versions of reality and therefore the meanings constructed from their experiences. These methods have been shown to be effective at understanding relationships especially those that involve violence (Wood, 2004). We specifically wanted to know about self-reported severity and frequency of IPV and alcohol use behaviors among participants to compliment the interview data. Having a grasp of the type, severity, and frequency of IPV in quantitative terms provides an enhanced contextual basis from which to interpret the qualitative accounts. Data from questionnaires were coded and then analyzed using SAS, a statistical analysis program. The quantitative results are for descriptive purposes only and are not meant to be generalized to any specific population. Descriptors of participants are provided; pseudonyms are used to protect respondents' confidentiality. Ethical approval for this project was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the primary author's home university.

Quantitative Findings: IPV, Alcohol Use Severity, and Frequency

Due to the nature of the prevention program from which respondents were recruited, it was anticipated and ultimately found that all the respondents would admit to at least one account of IPV over the course of the 12 months prior to study participation; what was unknown was the frequency, severity, and type of IPV these men inflicted. The degree of "spillover" violence that was recounted in the interview process was unexpected. By *spillover*, we refer to the fact that accounts of violence outside of intimate partner contexts were very common. All of the respondents spoke of perpetrating some form of interpersonal violence outside the home with strangers and/or acquaintances. These experiences are included in the analysis due to their association with our themes of interest (gender, alcohol, and violent behavior).

Of the eight respondents who were partnered at the time of the study, the frequency of self-reported harm inflicted on their current partner and most recent partner is shown in Table 1. Over the course of the past year, nearly 63% of respondents, 5 of 8, reported inflicting harm on their current partner on at least one to two occasions. One respondent reported having inflicted harm on his current partner between 3 and 10 times during the course of the previous 12 months. The remaining three men reported no instances of inflicted harm in the past year. Similarly, nearly 64% ($n = 7$) of respondents reported harming their most recent partner from a past relationship. The scope of physical and verbal violence against the partners of the respondents was made increasingly evident during the course of the interviews.

Table 2 depicts the self-reported frequencies of five different forms of violence directed by respondents toward their current and most recent female partners. Physical

Table 1. Infliction of Harm

Instances	%	<i>n</i>
Frequency of self-reported harm inflicted on current partner in past year ^a		
0	37.5	3
1-2	50	4
3-10	12.5	1
Frequency of self-reported harm inflicted on previous partner in a past relationship		
0	36.4	4
1-2	45.5	5
3-10	9.1	1
11 or more	9.1	1

a. Does not sum to 11 due to missing data.

Table 2. Self-Reported Prevalence Measures of IPV Perpetration % (N)

Relationship Period	Type of Violence				
	Physical	Psychological	Emotional	Economic	Sexual
Current partner, past year					
Any perpetration of IPV					
None	0	36.4 (4)	25 (2)	75 (6)	75 (6)
Once or more	100 (10)	63.6 (7)	75 (6)	25 (2)	25 (2)
Frequency of perpetrated IPV					
0-2 instances	27.3 (3)	54.5 (6)	37.5 (3)	87.5 (7)	27.5 (7)
3 or more	72.7 (8)	45.5 (5)	62.5 (5)	12.5 (1)	12.5 (1)
Previous partner, past relationship					
Any perpetration of IPV					
None	0	9.1 (1)	36.4 (4)	63.6 (7)	54.6 (6)
Once or more	100	91 (10)	63.6 (7)	36.4 (4)	45.5 (5)
Frequency of perpetrated IPV					
0-2 instances	27.3 (3)	45.5 (5)	54.6 (6)	72.7 (8)	81.8 (9)
3 or more	72.7 (8)	54.6 (6)	45.5 (5)	27.3 (3)	18.2 (2)

Note: IPV = intimate partner violence. Due to missing data, IPV categories do not always sum to 11; any responses to questions pertaining to physical, psychological, emotional, economic, or sexual violence from the survey were collapsed into the 5 categories listed above.

violence was the most common for both current relationships and previous relationships. Psychological violence was present in approximately 64% of respondents (7 of 11) reporting violence in their current relationship, making it the second most frequent form of violence reported.

Table 2 shows that not only are the five forms of violence present but they also varied with regard to the number of violent instances. Instances of physical violence were perpetrated three times or more for 8 of 11 respondents in their current relationships. Psychological violence on three or more occasions was reported by 5 of 6 male respondents. Estimates

involving emotional, economic, and sexual violence are derived from 8 respondents. Five men self-reported three or more instances of emotional violence toward their partners in the past year. Economic and sexual violence are less frequent in comparison to the previous three forms of violence.

All of the respondents reported that they consumed alcohol on more than 20 occasions throughout the course of their lives. With regard to recent patterns of alcohol consumption within the previous 30 days, five respondents stated that they had not had more than a few sips of alcohol, three of whom had not had more than a sip in the past 12 months. This low level of relatively recent alcohol use may be due in part to involvement in the criminal justice system and the BIP.

Qualitative Findings

In this article, we focus on how a group of men from economically disadvantaged and/or racial/ethnic minority backgrounds construct the meanings associated with alcohol use and its impact on violent behavior. Men's beliefs about masculinity and the role of alcohol in violent behaviors were analyzed for meaning via narratives used by men in discussing the violence within their lives. Qualitative findings on the gendered and alcohol-related context of alcohol use are presented below.

Three themes emerged from the qualitative data: (a) Youthful Lessons in Masculinity: Early Exposure to Violence and Alcohol Use, (b) Masculine Deficiencies and Alcohol Solutions, and (c) Alcohol Facilitated "Liquid Courage" and Violent Action. The purpose of reporting on the particular emergent themes that follow is to provide empirical support for the ways in which meanings associated with the construction of masculinity and alcohol use underlie violent relationships. Below, themes are expanded on with the use of representative accounts that serve to illustrate the meaning and impact of masculinity and alcohol use on IPV specifically, and on interpersonal violence in general.

Youthful Lessons in Masculinity: Early Exposure to Violence and Alcohol Use

In recounting their histories of violence, participants often discussed childhood experiences with familial alcohol use and violence. This quickly emerged as a theme; it became clear that participants had been exposed to considerable messages about particular forms of masculinity, masculinity's significance, and how to construct and defend masculinity. Accounts of childhood exposure to violence fit into two distinct subcategories: family exposure and community exposure.

Family exposure. Childhood experiences with violence prior to adult perpetration of IPV were discussed. Such histories played a role in the perception and definition of masculinity used by participants, which appear to have played an important role in their violence. When discussing past relationships in the following passage, Alex, for example, associated his actions as an adult to childhood experiences.

Alex (Black, 50): When I was growing up . . . both my mama was an alcoholic and my father was an alcoholic. I grew up in an apartment where they fought all the time. So, my father used to beat my mother up, alright. . . . So that's my first marriage. I thought that's how it went from growing up in that type of environment. . . . And I kept on saying to myself "I'm never going to be like my mother and father," but somehow I ended up [that way].

Alex closely associates growing up with alcohol use and violence, and suggests his alcohol-related violence toward his partner is in part a result of witnessing parental behavior. Alcohol-related violence between intimates becomes normative. Alex's father beating his mother in front of Alex provided meaningful information about how masculinity and femininity are enacted and embodied. Thus, Alex's childhood IPV exposure, his subsequent alcohol use, and IPV as an adult are likely related given what we know of heteronormative socialization. Consider Felix's similar sentiments:

Felix (Hispanic/Latino, 53): You know, like when I was two, three years old, I started noticing things . . . four years old, five years old. My father used to scream a lot, fight a lot, argue a lot. He used to be out like two, three months at a time. He did 25 years in the Marines. He used to go out and then come back. He was a very strict man, very strict. On occasions I saw him hitting my mother.

Interviewer: How'd you feel about that?

Felix: I don't feel good about that. But my mother at that time, she was young, you know. There were a few times she fought him back. But still, man, he use to abuse everybody, verbally abuse, physically not that much. He used to hit us with a belt or something like that when we did something wrong, bad you know, but not often. Verbally he used to abuse not only family but everybody. He's one of those persons who have been all around the world, he knows a lot. He's the type of person that if he says that book back there is blue and you argue there's a big argument there, you know. Knowing it's black, if he says it's blue you've got to give in to him. That was the way he works, still is to this day.

Felix mentions that his father was in the Marines for 25 years. A Marine is a hegemonic exemplar of the ideal man. Interestingly, the majority of men interviewed were either in the military or had family members in the military. Coming from a military family or being a member of the military is a meaningful condition that shapes and informs masculinity constructs. In the case of participants, once out of the military, the construct must be expressed in civilian contexts. With few resources available, resorting to control through alcohol-related violence takes place in the home and toward female partners. Take Andrew's statement below to further illustrate how childhood experiences of in-home violence became normative.

Andrew (Black, 40): There was discipline. There wasn't abuse. We was loved. But there was alcohol in our house, and we had what you would call a functional family but in some ways it was dysfunctional cuz we fell short at different times,

y' know, like bills. Mother . . . parents fighting, y' know, and actually all my life I thought it was right, y' know what I'm sayin,' cuz I was raised with it. You know, as a kid growing up I thought it was right . . . to drink, party, fight and then the next morning everything would be back to normal.

Andrew's account of childhood exposure to violence and his being subjected to violence in the form of discipline was elaborated upon further in the interview. This behavior was modeled for him by his parents in the context of alcohol use to a point where Andrew "thought it was right" for most of his life. Framing childhood experiences with family violence as "discipline" renders family violence normative and a component of normative heterosexual socialization, which relies on and reinforces assumptions about male violence and female submissive weakness (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2002). Andrew's father was performing a form of masculinity that took place in the context of alcohol use, which used violence and which took place in front of Andrew as a child. Interestingly, Andrew listed "drink, party, fight . . ." as if the process were a natural progression. It is important to highlight this sequence (i.e., alcohol use leads to violence) given the gender dynamics of the events discussed in this article and with regard to previous research on alcohol-based expectations (see Peralta & Cruz, 2006).

Community exposure. Respondents in the current study each reported witnessing some sort of public violence at a young age. Instances of exposure to community violence may also play a role in the perception of appropriate expressions of masculinity prior to IPV perpetration as adults. When asked about exposure to community violence during childhood, John stated,

John (White, 36): Every neighborhood has [violence]. You take it for a while and then you decide I'm going to get my ass beat anyway, I may as well start beating back. Screw it. I may as well beat yours back. That is how you learn to socialize when you are growing up. Kids are going to fight. You can't avoid it. You have bigger ones and little ones and you have to get through it the best you can.

John speaks about boys' behavior in particular in his recounting of youthful exposure to violence. John's account of community violence frames boys' utilization of violence as a response to violence instigated against others and as a way to "get through" seemingly unavoidable situations present in the community in which he was raised. John viewed his exposure to violence as inevitable and therefore justifiable—characteristics that appear to have carried over into adulthood.

Below, Freddy spoke of community exposure to violence in relation to a specific institution, that of schools and education.

Interviewer: Who were you fighting?

Freddy (Black, 42): A different race. It wasn't Black on Black crime. It was, you know, Black and White . . . it wasn't all of them but it was some. It was like that so we had to go through that. That was like back in '75, '76, around up in there. . . . There was group fights all the time . . . we get off the bus, there'd be 3 or 4 of us, and there are

about 15 to 20 of them. Ambush just waiting on us. Actually, we'd get jumped and you'd just jump. You had to almost have something in your hand. I tell ya . . . a stick, a bat, or something. You know you're gonna have to fight. If you came late it was best for you not to come . . . you're gonna get jumped. You've got a fair chance walking with a crowd than you've got walking by yourself.

Freddy brought to the forefront the impact of race in violence as well as access to education. Here, community violence not only contributed to social learning and the socialization of gender-appropriate behavior but also affected educational opportunity. Because safe educational environments were not as readily available due to informal racial segregation, violence became a resource by which to assert and ascend a particular form of masculinity. These conditions were present in childhood for many of the participants and continued to be present in adulthood.

Early exposure to alcohol use. The earlier the onset of alcohol use the greater the likelihood of developing alcohol-related problems in adulthood (Grant & Dawson, 1997). Evidence of this relationship was found in the present study. Of the 11 interviews, 6 participants directly referenced the age of their first use of alcohol (the mean age was 11.5 years old). All of the respondents remembered observing their parents and particularly their fathers drinking heavily at an early age. Sam's account illustrates how respondents discussed their first experiences with alcohol.

Sam (Black, 53): I basically come from a tight knit family, but my father was a little abusive. And by growing up poor, he always had some kind of . . . umm, something with me that I didn't measure up to. So as a youngster, I always wanted to fit in. So, like, when I first started drinking that made me not feel . . . feel as though I didn't want to feel. I liked it the way it made me feel. It didn't make me feel the pain that I was enduring as a younger adult. It made me deal with some of the things that I was going through . . . we was poor and by us being five kids and like I said my father was a little bit abusive. So alcohol made me kinda cope with some of the things.

Above, Sam discussed his childhood alcohol use; it was in relation to an abusive home where his father was both physically and verbally abusive. Sam perceived his father's abuse as being "over anything." Sam appeared to use alcohol early in life as a coping mechanism for unpredictable violence emanating from his father. Tyler similarly discussed his early onset of alcohol use:

Tyler (Black, 48): I got put out of high school for drinking and, um, that was my downfall. When I started going to public school, I started hanging around some unscrupulous people, and I got led down the wrong track. I mean, I had morals and sensitivity but I got led down the wrong track, man. You know, and I just decided to live that way. I thought it was fun, exciting, you know, and that's what I did.

Tyler discussed the pressures to conform to alcohol use behavior as early as junior high. Importantly, alcohol use did not occur alone but in front of peers. Respondents describe feeling “grown up” or like an “adult” or “mature” and most importantly “powerful” when engaging in preteen alcohol use. These feelings can be interpreted as emerging from masculinity performance embodied through public alcohol use.

Masculine Deficiencies and Alcohol Solutions

Situated contexts are an important aspect of the violence discussed by participants. Men who are disenfranchised due to social class barriers and/or racism are further threatened by emasculation due to their inability to fulfill traditional roles expected of men (Messerschmidt, 1999). Providing financially for one’s partner and/or children is important in the establishment of hegemonic masculinity and subsequent respect from others. What is more, a male’s physical stature (i.e., the body) is also of great importance; yet physical stature (e.g., height, strength, muscularity) is also not equally distributed among men. Masculinity deficiency, (e.g., being physically smaller than other men, the inability to provide financially due to underemployment or unemployment and owning little or no property) requires the task of finding alternative solutions to expressing local versions of masculinity (e.g., power, dominance). Alcohol and alcohol-related violence appear to be resources or “solutions” for the problem of masculine deficiency. An example of alcohol use as a solution is captured in John’s views of the connections between employment and a man’s sense of dignity and fulfillment. Here are his words:

John (White, 36): You need a job and money to be a man. You need to have that stuff. A man should work. You should do something. It doesn’t even have to be a job. Go out there and do something. You are in the biggest, richest country in the world. Do something. If you are not finding work where you are at, hitchhike down the fucking road and find it in a bigger city somewhere. A man’s natural instinct is to provide and to be the man . . . to be in control. When you lose that, then you start getting mad at yourself and if you are not at peace with yourself, you are going to have problems with everybody. If you can’t handle yourself, you are not going to be able to handle social situations. So you drink and start to feel better. Alcohol makes the man when there is nothing else.

Interviewer: How does that translate to violence against partners?

John: Your fuse gets shorter. Your, um, you have less flexibility. You are thinking about too many things. You have this box, your head, more problems get poured into it, it gets full, and then pops open.

John invoked key concepts long established in the masculinities literature as central, which are “control” and “pride.” Lack of stable and gainful employment is an assault on a man’s sense of masculinity. The home becomes a place where control can be reestablished via violence against intimate partners. Violence is used to regain a sense of control and, at the same time, reestablishes masculinity. Yet this masculinity embodiment in the end inflicts

damage on the perpetrator and his personal relationships, which damages his status further. Another respondent, Alex, for example, said that he felt inadequate in his relationship due to his trouble holding a job. Alex discussed having to “prove his masculinity” by abusing his partner both physically and psychologically due to his problems with maintaining employment. In addition to external structural issues, Alex went on to discuss the physical limitations of his stature and his personal shame associated with his body during his time in the military and how alcohol use ameliorated the problem.

Alex (Black, 50): By me being the smallest one in the troop, when we matched up and had hand-to-hand combat—pick a fight, I always had to go against the biggest guy. And it’s a whole lot of stress and it deals with who can scare the other person first, or whatever, you know. And I wanted to be one of Uncle Sam’s finest, you know. I wanted to be all I could be. You know, and so drinking seemed like it.

Interviewer: Did you feel you were respected more if you could drink heavily?

Alex: You know what, like on Saturdays, we can go off base. We would go buy a couple cases of . . . Coors was just coming out then . . . cuz I was out there in California at Camp Pendleton. So we were like, we’d go buy a couple of cases and that’s what we would sit up and do the whole weekend is drink beer. You know, and that was the life. That’s what you were doing. Cuz you were the smaller guy did you have to prove to them that you were . . . I had to prove all the time.

Interviewer: Was alcohol a way to do that?

Alex: Yeah, it gave me enough strength and courage.

Smaller male bodies mean subverted masculinity—the opposite of the hegemonic ideal. Above, we see Alex using alcohol and physical aggression against a larger male to both embody masculinity (i.e., use the body itself to establish a masculine gender) and to compensate for physical size, thus reaffirming his masculinity to an audience comprised primarily of other males. The audience is important because the literature suggests that male-dominated institutions, such as the military (Bray, Fairbank, & Marsden, 1999), fraternities (Wechsler & Kuo, 2003), and policing (Obst, Davey, & Sheehan, 2001), establish and therefore demand increasingly traditional and narrow definitions of masculinity that also include the subjugation of women, heavy drinking, and other risky-behavior practices.

Another sense of masculine deficiency, in this case the perception that “control” over an intimate relationship had been lost, was evidenced by participants reporting being distrustful of their partners and fearing that they were being lied to. Many men reported feelings of jealousy and emotional insecurity resulting from suspicions that their partners were “cheating.” Kernsmith (2005) suggested abusers use abusive behavior to exert continuous control over their partners. Others have found this theme as well (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). An analysis of the present interviews reveals an overarching impression that most participants had a need to be in control of not only their own lives but also their partners’ lives as well. Not being in control signals an inferior or weakened form of masculinity. The use of violence was a way for participants to express to their partners and to the community at large that control over intimate partners and their social situations were

in fact maintained. These men felt that they did not have much to offer in comparison to other men (i.e., respondents' "competition"). Alcohol use was a way of coping with these feelings of inferiority. Using alcohol, according to respondents, facilitated a temporary solution or escape from feelings of inadequacy.

Alcohol Facilitated "Liquid Courage" and Violent Action

The gender and masculinities literatures in particular (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) illustrate how hegemonic masculinity emphasizes the representation and use of men's bodies as a process of social embodiment. Violence and alcohol use simultaneously embodied an image of the masculine. Commitment to aggressive and violent practices as a means of establishing a masculine reputation in a peer group context was evident in participants' accounts as illustrated below. Alex, for example, spoke of getting "jumped" by a group of men outside a gas station because he would not leave the premises.

Alex (Black, 50): I'm in the Marine Corp, and I'm trained to be a professional soldier and a professional killer. . . . After going through that training, you know, now I know I'm a qualified and I'm a better man and I can meet any conflicts. So [now if] I have a problem I don't walk away . . . because I know what I can do.

Interviewer: You were taught not to walk away?

Alex: Yeah, you see what I'm sayin'? And then if I'm not drinking I could walk away. But when I'm drinking I don't walk away. See, 'cuz I could have left that property up there and went on about my business but I was drinking drunk and I wouldn't get off his property. That's why I said, I said to him, "gonna beat me up, pretty boy?"

The scenario above is explicitly about aggression toward a stranger. This illustration was chosen because strikingly similar stories revolved around Alex's violence toward his intimate partner. Alex needed to feel respected. When this respect did not materialize, alcohol-induced violence was invoked to force the respect Alex needed. In doing this violence, Alex feminized his victim by referring to him as a "pretty boy." Alex explicitly discusses the role of alcohol use in this situation. It appears that alcohol use does not make Alex more violent per se but instead affects his decision making. Masculinity is one of the few remaining resources Alex had at this point in his life. Maintaining and defending his personal masculine identity was needed to maintain a sense of dignity for Alex. This masculinity work needed to occur in the presence of other men and in his intimate relationship to maintain a sense of pride.

Alcohol use was assumed to fuel strength, aggression, and confidence, creating contexts where risky behaviors were more apt. Participants openly discussed the associations among alcohol use, risky behaviors, and the induced sense of courage or "invincibility" brought about via alcohol. Being "courageous" and engaging in risk-taking behavior are indicative of hegemonic masculinity. Courage is a sign of power and thus a potent ingredient of masculinity. Participants in the current study specifically discussed acquiring "liquid courage" through the use of alcohol. *Liquid courage* was defined by participants

as the courage that emerges through alcohol use. Three participants specifically used the term liquid courage to describe how they felt prior to and during alcohol-related IPV. The meaning of liquid courage is illustrated in two separate accounts below:

Sam (Black, 53): When I took a drink, it just made me another person. It made me an outspoken person and I liked it that. . . . So, it was like I used alcohol early on because it took me out of myself. It made me somebody else.

Andrew (Black, 40): Y' know, alcohol gives you liquid courage. Sometimes you might think somebody's done something wrong and you might comment on it. But if you drink, you'll be more outspoken. Know what I'm sayin'?

Sam literally said he felt like another person when using alcohol—not just any person but an outspoken person. Being outspoken and action oriented instead of submissive and quiet are stereotypically masculine traits. Sam went on to say that having liquid courage enabled him to defend himself and “push” around other people, including his intimate partner. Andrew expressed similar sentiments where alcohol use enabled a more proactive stance. Alcohol use, violence perpetration, and risk taking embody masculinity in that the body is physically used to accomplish masculinity.

The use of alcohol appears to be symbolically meaningful in its association with masculinity performance and risk taking in particular. Respondents' assumptions about and attitudes toward the “natural” links between risk taking, masculinity, and alcohol use suggest that alcohol use approximates a local ideal of masculinity situated in specific contexts or communities. The impact of alcohol-based expectations should not be underestimated. Alcohol use appears to be a form of risk taking in and of itself. Beiner (1987), for example, noted that heavy drinking is a “risk-taking style which is accepted, if not expected, in men” (p. 335). Ironically, risk-taking behaviors are likely to have a negative impact on the body. Also ironic is the fact that while abusive or risky alcohol use behaviors may help to ascend an individual's masculinity, the deleterious effects of long-term heavy alcohol use actually weaken the body and, in the end, weaken men's overall health and well-being.

Discussion and Suggestions for Further Research

Understanding why males are more often perpetrators of particularly injurious forms of IPV is a facet of research that continues to require more interdisciplinary empirical attention with a special focus on the intersections of race, social class, and gender. Past literature on IPV has centered mainly on epidemiological data focused on female victims (see Wood, 2004). This body of literature informs us that alcohol, more than any other substance, is associated with IPV across ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic categories and that males are most often perpetrating serious IPV against their partners (Caetano, Schafer, & Cunradi, 2001). This body of literature is useful for identifying the distribution of IPV by race, social class, and behaviors associated with IPV such as alcohol use. However, the systematic analysis of the context and meaning of alcohol-related violence among male perpetrators is necessary. This article contributes to this gap in the literature.

The intersecting impact of gender, masculinity in particular, and alcohol use on violent behavior is explored among male perpetrators of IPV in response to calls for adopting such approaches (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Wood, 2004). We further the study of interpersonal violence in general and IPV in particular by examining how the deeply rooted meanings related to masculinity and alcohol use operate in the context of male-perpetrated IPV using "Doing Gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and structured action theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) as theoretical frameworks. Finally, we critically illustrate how normative heterosexuality affects the lives of heterosexuals. Through investigations of masculinity construction, situated in the context of alcohol use, the fragility of heterosexual masculinity is exposed. This research highlights the precariousness of gender and the importance of alcohol use and violent behavior as forms of situated social action used to maintain male dominance over women and other men, which thereby reproduces social structure.

The present work highlights one area of IPV: the role and meaning of masculinity and alcohol use in the lives of male perpetrators. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on a practice that permits men's collective dominance over "others" to continue. It is not surprising that, in some contexts, hegemonic masculinity refers to men's engagement in toxic practices, including physical violence and alcohol abuse. These practices work to stabilize gender dominance in particular settings. Here, the particular setting and the local form of masculinity were in fact largely poor and Black. The participants were of disadvantaged status, which informs the links expressed by participants between masculinity, alcohol use, and violent behavior. We address the question of what role the interlocking structures of masculinity and alcohol use play in heterosexual relationships touched by IPV.

Our survey data reveal varying types of alcohol use and different variations of intimate violence (i.e., physical, psychological, emotional, economic, and sexual), which vary in frequency and severity. In terms of our qualitative findings, three themes emerged: (a) Youthful Lessons in Masculinity: Early Exposure to Violence and Alcohol Use, (b) Alcohol Facilitated "Liquid Courage" and Violent Action, and (c) Masculine Deficiencies and Alcohol Solutions. Findings suggest that because alcohol-related violence is rebellious and risky, it appears to serve as a sign of bravado signified by the presumed ability of "real men" to withstand the effects of alcohol and/or alcohol-induced behavior and hence violent responses in a context where legitimate resources by which to do gender are absent or lacking (e.g., steady, gainful employment).

Childhood exposure to both family and community violence were evident in the study. Recurrent references to the early onset of alcohol use among respondents were often linked to family experiences with violence and alcohol abuse. Childhood experiences with alcohol and alcohol-related violence form cultural scripts; these scripts pertain to gender appropriate interaction that later plays a role in perceptions of masculinity and subsequent perpetration of IPV. Parental alcohol use and violence toward each other lend to respondents' perceptions that such behaviors are normative and reinforce traditional unequal gender dynamics. Also, being physically small or lacking employment as men, and thus being unable to provide for one's family, created a prevailing perception of one's own masculine deficiency that repeatedly led to the cyclic

occurrence of alcohol abuse, other violence, and IPV. Finally, risk-taking practices were used to establish a masculine reputation among peers and in response to the masculine modeling observed in childhood. More specifically, unchallenged perceptions of alcohol use as being “fun,” part of growing up, and masculine behavior fail to make available the motivation necessary to curtail drinking as well as the masculine nature of risk-taking behaviors that ensue. The general expectation for drinking-induced invincibility to occur was common among participants. Subsequently, the acquisition of liquid courage is a social phenomenon where men are assumed to feel hypermasculine, tough, strong, and invincible as a result of alcohol use.

In sum, we find that when markers of masculinity are absent, masculinity is embodied via alcohol-related violence that is perpetrated against intimates, acquaintances, and strangers alike. With emasculating conditions such as under- or unemployment comes the embodiment of masculinity through alcohol-related violence. This works as a resource by which to ascend masculinity in the subordination process imposed on women and marginalized men (e.g., homosexual, poor, and/or ethnic minority men). The data suggest that what happens within heterosexual relationships both depends on and promotes the construction of gender difference where men are socialized to engage in behaviors that are not always conducive to healthy relationships and positive relational outcomes.

A discussion of the limitations of the present study is in order. First, the context of data collection represents a very thin slice of a larger picture. Violence, of course, occurs in middle- and upper-class communities. However, it is important to examine how communities touched by economic hardship and racial/ethnic discrimination uniquely structure interpersonal violence and IPV. In addition, the purpose of this study was not to generalize our findings but to present an empirically based foundation for theory building on the relationship present between masculinity, alcohol use, and IPV. Next, the sample consisted largely of poor, minority men who are more likely to come into police contact, making this a unique population exposed to official surveillance. This social fact may be playing a large role in their subsequent violent behavior. On a similar note, an inducement of US\$25 was offered for participation in our study, which may have produced a research environment that some researchers may not define as purely voluntary. Third, although the CTS2 asks about certain acts of violence, it ignores several instances of violent acts, such as burns, scratches, being shaken, dropped on the floor, or sexual assault, which can contribute to an underreporting of violence (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Hamby, Poindexter, & Gray-Little, 1996). Furthermore, the CTS2 situates the context of violence within a dispute or conflict. It ignores random violence that may occur in a relationship (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). Also, there may be a lack of meaning behind gender neutral questions. Men and women may interpret “beat partner up” very differently. Regardless of these limitations, a number of researchers have acknowledged that the CTS2 can still be useful when used in conjunction with other methods (e.g., qualitative; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Ramirez & Straus, 2006). Many researchers have also noted the association between drugs other than alcohol and IPV. The present study did not specifically address drug use in that it was beyond the scope of our study. Future research should consider other drug use and poly drug use in investigations of violence against women.

Finally, we rely on the perceptions of alcohol-related violence presented by respondents. These perceptions may or may not accurately reflect the intersections of gender, violence, and alcohol use. However, respondents' perceptions are important because they reveal how respondents understand their world. The norms developed over the course of their lives influence their perspectives and thus, collectively, have theoretical value.

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Notes

1. As the literature continuously categorizes violence between intimates as *domestic violence*, a label excluding subsets of couples experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) outside the traditional male–female relationship (e.g., male-to-male, female-to-female, female-to-male IPV), we specifically and intentionally refer to violence between intimates as IPV. As local constructions of masculinity and alcohol use were evident in violent interactions within and outside of intimate relationships, these forms of violence were analyzed and interpreted to be related to the social sources of IPV. We thus examine local forms of masculinity (e.g., forms of masculinity informed by local contexts as opposed to national or international contexts) and alcohol use in an analysis of more generalized forms of violence against acquaintances and strangers (e.g., interpersonal violence) as well as IPV.
2. Previous studies show that this rate varies depending on ethnicity (Caetano, Schafer, & Cunradi, 2001).
3. This research is part of a larger study designed to compare the experiences of men involved in same-sex and heterosexual relationships. Difficulties recruiting men involved in same-sex relationships resulted in the termination of the same-sex portion of the study (only 3 men involved in same-sex relationships were recruited and interviewed despite intensive recruitment practices). A total of 14 interviews were conducted of which 3 participants were involved in same-sex relationships. These 3 interviews were excluded in the present analysis because they were not recruited from the BIP. It should be noted, however, that themes of masculinity, alcohol use, and experiences with IPV were strikingly similar between same-sex and heterosexual respondents.

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