

Idealization, Intimate Partner Violence, and Relationship Satisfaction

by

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ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that intimate partner violence (IPV) plays an important role in relationship satisfaction. Consistently, the research has indicated a negative association between the prevalence of IPV and relationship satisfaction (Cano & Vivian, 2003; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994); however, more recent research has provided evidence of higher relationship satisfaction when IPV is present (Frieze, 2005; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Williams & Frieze, 2005). There has been less emphasis placed on uncovering possible explanations for this inconsistency. Some researchers have suggested that victims find ways to rationalize their offender's behavior (Ackerman & Field, 2011), do not consider themselves victims of violence (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000), or even fail to identify physical violence as IPV (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983) in order to maintain their desire to feel satisfied in their relationship. There is a need for additional research to understand why an individual might report higher relationship satisfaction when IPV is present in her/his intimate relationship and attempt to uncover underlying, contributing factors of IPV.

This study sought understanding of the potential mediating role that idealization, the overly positive illusions of a partner or the intimate relationship (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a; 1996b), may play on the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, gender was examined as a potential moderator between the predictor and outcome variables as IPV research has consistently documented the need for greater gender symmetry within this topic. One hundred and fifty-two adults (75 males and 77 females) who were currently involved in an intimate relationship (e.g., dating, engaged, married) or had been within the past 12-months completed a survey that

assessed IPV, idealization, and relationship satisfaction. Three types of IPV were measured for the purposes of this study (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion), and each was analyzed separately. Results indicated that idealization served as a mediating variable in the relationship between IPV and relationship satisfaction for all three types of IPV. Gender was not found to moderate the relationships for any of the three types of IPV and relationship satisfaction. Limitations, implications, and future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE

Idealization is used to explain the tendency for a partner to describe her/his intimate partner or the relationship in unrealistically positive terms (Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996; Fowers, Veingrad, & Dominicis, 2002; Murray et al., 1996a). Early literature on idealization dates back to the 1930's, and subsequent research over several decades overwhelmingly suggests that holding overly positive perceptions of one's partner and/or the relationship is generally strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction (Fowers & Applegate, 1995; Fowers et al., 1996; Murray et al., 1996b). Murray et al. (1996a, 1996b) conceptual framework, referred to as "positive illusions" (p. 79), has become an important basis for modern idealization research for investigating intimate partner relationships.

Investigation of idealization has proliferated with regards to conceptual frameworks and correlated factors for understanding dating and married individuals in non-violent relationships. Some examples of correlated factors include communication patterns (Stafford & Merolla, 2007; Stafford & Reske, 1990), social desirability (Snyder et al., 1977), commitment and self-esteem (Martz et al., 1998; Rusbult et al., 2000), and conflict and love (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010; Murray et al., 1996b). Furthermore, more idealization has been associated with greater relationship stability (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010; Murray & Holmes, 1999). Idealization research has also further expanded to include cross-cultural samples of Asian Canadian, European Canadian, and Japanese college students (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000).

Despite its long history and the increasing interest in idealization, only one study was found that examined the topic of idealization and relationship violence (Lin-Roark, Church, & McCubbin, 2015). Lin-Roark et al. (2015) hypothesized that idealization would serve as a mediating variable in the association between IPV and women's self-esteem; however, mediation analyses were not tested due to lack of idealization endorsed by their participants. The current study examined idealization and intimate partner violence (IPV) to broaden the understanding of any potential relation between the two. In the following discussion, a broad overview of existing literature on idealization as well as IPV are presented separately. Idealization was examined within the context of a positive illusions framework (Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b, 1997), and IPV was examined within the framework of power and control theory. Taylor's (1991) mobilization-minimization theory of coping served as the conceptual foundation for this study. Gender differences were also addressed.

Review of the Literature and Theory

Idealization in Intimate Relationships

There is a widely held belief among scholars that enduring satisfaction with an intimate relationship is dependent on an individual's realistic perception of one's partner's strengths and weaknesses (Brickman, 1987; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994; Swann, Hixon, & De La Ronde, 1992). Conversely, this belief also implies that intimates with high idealization, where partners ignore faults and exaggerate virtues, may suffer from low relationship satisfaction. Existing research suggests, however, that intimate relationships where partners exhibit greater idealization tend to be higher in positive relationship traits such as persistence, satisfaction, aversion to conflicts, and individual

self-esteem (Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b). In fact, some researchers state that idealization and relationship satisfaction are inextricably linked (Fowers et al., 2002; Murray et al., 1996a; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of Idealization: Positive Illusions Theory

Developed by Murray et al. (1996a, 1997), positive illusions theory is a leading theoretical framework for the study of idealization. This theory suggests ways in which individuals perceive their partners as overly positive. Positive illusions theory was based on Taylor and Brown's (1988) self-illusion perspective that outlined three domains in which individuals create self-oriented illusions: 1) unrealistically positive illusions about the self; 2) exaggerated perceptions of one's control over any given situation; and 3) unrealistic optimism. These three domains are viewed as critical for adjustment and mental health (Taylor & Brown, 1988; Weinstein, 1980). An illusion is defined as "a perception that represents what is perceived in a way different from the way it is in reality. An illusion is a false mental image or conception that may be a misinterpretation of a real appearance or may be something imagined. It may be pleasing, harmless, or even useful" (Stein, 1982, p. 662).

While Taylor and Brown (1988) had focused on self-oriented illusions, Murray et al. (1996a, 1997) shifted the focus to the individual's relational context, thus exploring how people view imperfect partners in idealized ways. Mirroring Taylor and Brown's three domains, the positive illusions theory also outlines three domains: 1) idealized/unrealistically positive view of the partner; 2) exaggerated perceptions of one's control over the future of the relationship; and 3) unrealistic optimism about the relationship. Testing their framework on a sample of 69 married, cohabitating, or

engaged couples, Murray et al. (1996a) examined the role of positive illusions on relationship satisfaction by asking both members of the couples to complete a self-assessment on interpersonal attributes as well as an assessment of her/his partner. It was hypothesized that positive illusions would have a greater influence than would accurate assessments of interpersonal attributes on relationship satisfaction. Unexpectedly, intimates held both a realistic as well as an unrealistically positive view of their partners. In support of the positive illusions theory, individuals generally viewed their partners even more positively than their partners viewed themselves. Additionally, higher positive illusions were predictive of greater relationship satisfaction.

Murray et al. (1996a, 1996b) viewed positive illusions as a natural byproduct of relationship development. According to the theory, in the early stages of intimate relationships, intimates focus on what they perceive to be their partner's virtues due to intense feelings of love and to hope for the relationship's success (Holmes & Boon, 1990; Weiss, 1980). Interactions may be restricted to positive domains, self-disclosure is minimal, and self-presentation may be skewed in these early stages of the relationship in hopes of strengthening the perception that the partner is the "right" person (Brehm, 1988; Brickman, 1987). Further, the partner uses preexisting models of the ideal relationship to fill in gaps caused by her/his limited knowledge of the other partner. Thus, the relationship ultimately becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in which reality becomes a representation of one's desires (Murstein, 1971).

As the relationship evolves, interdependence between the partners increases, and interactions broaden to include more conflict. These conflicts may lead partners to exhibit increases in negative behaviors, leading to disappointments in the relationship

(Braiker & Kelley, 1979). The positive illusions theory suggests that this emerging evidence of a partner's shortcomings may be viewed as a threat to the relationship, because it has the power to undermine the desired belief that the partner is the "right person" (Murray, 1999). Further, by the time evidence of their partner's shortcomings has amassed, people have already made several irretrievable investments in their relationship that further validate their decision to idealize their partner (Murray, 1999).

In fact, it has been suggested that increased evidence of a partner's imperfections may actually bolster the idealization process, thereby increasing people's feelings of love for their partner (Brehm, 1988). According to this perspective, people become reluctant to begin new intimate relationships due to the considerable investments already made in the current relationship, and they become even more motivated to interpret evidence of a partner's shortcomings in ways that support their idealizations of their partner (Brehm, 1988; Brickman, 1987). These idealizations that manifest even in conflicts, where intimates focus on the partner's virtues rather than flaws, are made in hopes of reclaiming positive perceptions of relationship security. To illustrate, partner A may overlook verbal abuse received from partner B by interpreting it as honesty instead of cruelty. Alternatively, partner A may excuse this fault by recalling and exaggerating instances where Partner B displayed kindness. This process creates "yes, but..." refutations that link a partner's shortcomings to greater virtues, thus reinforcing idealizations of the partner (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994, 1999). These examples illustrate that the desire to maintain perceptions of confidence and security through relationship conflicts necessitates creating a story (or fiction) that exaggerates a partner's virtues and overlooks faults (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1997).

Research on Idealization and Relationship Satisfaction using Positive Illusions Theory

Research on positive illusions in close relationships has focused on the link between positive illusions and relationship quality and stability. Two approaches to assess idealization have been used. The first approach is to compare people's perceptions of their partners to the "typical" or median partner. Illusions occur when the majority of people rate their partner's qualities more favorably than the qualities of this hypothetical other. The underlying assumption in these types of studies is that it is logically impossible for the majority of partners to be better than the "typical" or median partner, because by definition, this "typical" partner divides all partners equally for any given quality. They found that participants' ratings of their partners were significantly more positive than ratings of the "typical" partner, which provided additional support for positive illusions theory. Further, more positive illusions were associated with more satisfaction, trust, and love as well as with less conflict and ambivalence in the relationship. Additional studies have found similar results indicating that the majority of people rate their partners more favorably than the "typical" or median partner (Blood & Wolf, 1960; Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995).

The second approach to assess idealization is to compare people's ratings of their partner with the partner's ratings of her/his own qualities. Positive illusions occur when people rate their partner's qualities more favorably than the partner rates her/his own qualities. As mentioned earlier, Murray et al. (1996a) used this approach and found that participants rated their partner's qualities more positively than their partner rated her/his own qualities in both dating and married relationships. In a later study, Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, and Griffin (2000) asked 105 married or cohabitating couples who had been

together at least two years to complete measures assessing interpersonal qualities, self-attributes, and relationship satisfaction. Their finding offered further support for the positive illusions theory in that individuals idealized their partners and were happier in relationships when idealizations were present.

Although the majority of studies on idealization are cross-sectional in nature, longitudinal studies have also provided support for positive illusions theory. For example, Murray et al. (1996b) examined idealization, relational conflict, and relationship satisfaction for both members of dating couples over the course of one year. During the initial session, a sample of 121 dating couples completed measures of self-attributes, their partner's attributes, their ideal partner, and a typical partner on a variety of interpersonal qualities. Measures assessing relationship satisfaction, ambivalence about their relationship, and frequency of conflict were also completed. The couples completed abbreviated versions of the questionnaire at time two, which occurred four to five months after the initial session, as well as at time three, which occurred 11 to 12 months after the initial session. Over the year, 35% of the couples were no longer in their relationships; however, several couples continued in follow up sessions. Although Murray et al. (1996b) were able to replicate the findings of their previous work (Murray et al., 1996a), they also found new links between positive illusions and relational conflict. They found that the more people idealized their partners, the happier and more satisfied they were in their relationships. More specifically, even when satisfaction was held constant, the presence of idealizations predicted fewer and less destructive conflicts, doubts, and ambivalence in the relationship.

Research on idealization has also expanded to include people who are not in traditional dating and married relationships. For example, Stafford and Merolla (2007) explored idealization and relationship stability in geographically-close dating relationships and in long-distance dating relationships. Despite consistent empirical evidence that highlighted the importance of everyday, face-to-face, communication for intimate relationships (Duck & Pittman, 1994), previous literature on long-distance relationships revealed that partners who are long-distance reported higher relationship quality than did those partners who were geographically close (Stafford & Reske, 1990). Stafford and Merolla proposed that idealization was the key component to this seemingly contradictory finding. Idealization was measured using the Idealistic Distortions Scale (Olson et al., 1985). Additional measures assessing romantic love, reminiscent thinking, and perceived agreement as well as communication satisfaction, commitment, relationship quality, and conflict management were included in the study. The first part of the Stafford and Merolla's study included 122 couples with 58 of those couples identified as long distance. They found that idealization was higher among couples identified as long distance, with the highest idealization among those who had the least face-to-face interactions. Additionally, long-distance couples reported higher perceived communication quality than did geographically-close couples. The second part of their study examined the relation between idealization and long-term relational stability for 69 individuals who were currently in an intimate relationship. The findings revealed that when partners in long-distance relationships engaged in extreme idealization during separation, they were more likely to terminate their relationship if they transitioned to become a geographically-close couple. Stafford and Merolla concluded that while

extreme levels of idealization may be problematic for long-distance couples, overall, some idealization is necessary in relationships.

Conley, Roesch, Peplau, and Gold (2009) were the first to apply positive illusions theory to both same-sex and opposite-sex intimate couples. Their study involved secondary data from the American Couples Study (ACS; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983) and included 6,685 couples. Participants were separated into four samples: 1) lesbian sample; 2) gay male sample; 3) heterosexual married sample; and 4) heterosexual cohabitating sample. In an effort to replicate the analyses completed by Murray et al. (1996a), path analyses using structural equation modeling were used to test the positive illusions model for each sample separately. Conley et al. confirmed that the positive illusions model fit for all four samples and, consistent with Murray et al.'s (1996a) findings, people reported higher relationship satisfaction if they perceived their partners more positively than their partners perceived themselves. The results did not suggest that same-sex couples benefitted more from idealizations than did opposite-sex couples. The model operated as predicted for all four samples.

A recent meta-analysis on relationship dissolution within non-marital intimate relationships included positive illusions as an important predictor of relationship stability. Le et al. (2010) synthesized data from 137 longitudinal studies that spanned 33 years and were collected from 37,761 participants. Thirty different variables were examined as potential predictors of relationship stability, with 16 specific relationship factors - positive illusions, commitment, love, overlap between partners, dependence, ambivalence, trust, self-disclosure, closeness, quality of alternatives outside of the relationship, investments/resources in the relationship, adjustment, satisfaction,

relationship quality, relationship duration, and conflict. After careful coding of all the studies and correcting effect sizes to avoid sample size bias, weighted mean effect sizes were calculated for each predictor. With a Cohen's *d* of 0.8 or above as the cut-off score for large effects (Cohen, 1992), only three of the 16 relationship factors reached or exceeded this criterion: positive illusions; commitment; and love. More importantly, positive illusions was found to be the strongest (negative) predictor of relationship dissolution; that is, more positive illusions were associated with lower breakup likelihood.

Criticisms and Limitations of Idealization and Positive Illusions Theory

Murray et al.'s (1996a, 1997) positive illusions theory and three-part conceptualization model have not been without criticisms. The first major criticism pertains to the idea of disillusionment. Disillusionment occurs when positive illusions subsides for partners. Some researchers suggest that positive illusions begin to unravel early in the intimate relationship and this leads to disappointment, distress, and disillusionment (Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998; Brickman, 1987; Buehlman et al., 1992; Huston et al., 2001; Niehuis & Bartell, 2006). The second criticism questions Murray et al. (1996a, 1996b, 1997) model's focus on the cognitive mechanism, how people process information for which idealization operates, without considering the behavioral process that may be better explained by the self-fulfilling prophecy (Fowers et al., 2002; Hall & Taylor, 1976; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977).

Disillusionment is characterized by the decline in positive illusions and the increase in negative perceptions of a partner or the relationship (Niehuis & Bartell, 2006). Huston et al. (2001) proposed a model of disillusionment that acknowledged Murray et

al.'s (1996a, 1997) assertions that people behave in ways that affirm idealizations of their partner and the relationship; however, the disillusionment model suggested that idealizations subside early and may even cause great harm to the relationship. Huston et al. illustrated their model by explaining that during courtship, people are motivated to present themselves favorably to each other and idealize their partners in hopes of relationship success. Once married and the reality of day-to-day life sets in, disillusionment begins as people become less motivated to maintain the positively skewed versions of themselves, while simultaneously beginning to see their partners more realistically (Buehlman et al., 1992)

Huston et al. (2001) developed their model based on their longitudinal study of 168 newlywed couples who completed four phases of data collection over 13 years. Couples completed measures of love, ambivalence, perceptions of partner's personality dispositions, and affectionate and negative behaviors. The first phase occurred two months after the couple's wedding, and phases two and three occurred at yearly intervals thereafter. Phases two and three were conducted during the first few of years of marriage in order to distinguish early marital factors for couples who stayed together versus those who divorced. At phase four, 13 years after the couples had married, 105 couples were still married, 56 had divorced, three were widowed, and four could not be reached. The differences between quickly divorced couples, later divorced couples, and couples who stayed married provided evidence for the disillusionment model. Overall, the chance of divorce depended significantly on how much the marriage strayed from the romantic ideals during its first two years. The quickly divorced couples were less in love and overtly affectionate, more ambivalent and antagonistic, and had weaker romantic bonds

from the start of their marriage, which challenges the idea that newlyweds are uniformly enamored with each other. Consistent with the disillusionment model, the later divorced couples became disillusioned with each other and their relationship over time, particularly during the first year when the intensity of their romance dropped dramatically. The couples who stayed together demonstrated stability, which was calculated using correlations between the same variables across the phases. Relationship stability was attributed to strong psychological traits that partners brought to their relationships and not necessarily to positive illusions. These patterns suggested that disillusionment may underlie divorce and calls into question the power of positive illusions.

The mechanisms by which idealizations occur have also been questioned. Based on the Murray et al. (1996a, 1997) model of positive illusions, idealizations are cognitive perceptions that people hold about partners. People use these cognitive perceptions to process information that creates and maintains idealizations about their partners. Murray et al. (1996a) found that these perceptions about partners are explained by reality, by the person's projection of her/his own self-concept, and by the person's conceptions of the ideal partner. Murray and Holmes (1999) presented findings for the importance of cognitive structures in positive illusions and relationship resilience. Over the course of one year, 145 participants completed measures of relationship well-being, specifically assessing positive illusions, relationship satisfaction, trust, ambivalence, and conflict frequency. To assess cognitive thought structure, participants were asked to write an "intimacy narrative" describing major ways that intimacy had been promoted or hindered (Murray & Holmes, 1999, p. 1232). While these results supported that more idealization

was predictive of relationship stability, Murray and Holmes also found that to ensure persistent views of their partner's overly positive virtues, individuals used structured mental models that shielded them from perceiving their partner's faults. Therefore, positive illusions may represent cognitive structures that serve as an attenuating influence against doubts and negative aspects of partners and the relationship.

Other researchers have argued that idealizations are behavioral in nature, best explained as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Snyder et al., 1977), or are a product of both cognitive and behavioral mechanisms (Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001; Murray et al., 1996a; Miller, Caughlin, & Huston, 2003). To test the extent to which a self-fulfilling prophecy elicits specific behavioral responses, Snyder et al. created controlled situations in which 51 pairs of unacquainted males and females were primed about the physical attractiveness of the partner. Physical attractiveness was the variable of choice due to considerable evidence that suggests people attribute more positive qualities (e.g., warm, responsive, sociable, intelligent, better lives) to attractive people than to unattractive people (Fink, Neave, Manning, & Grammer, 2006; Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010; Wade, Irvine, & Cooper, 2004). Snyder et al. (1977) found that when participants were primed that their partners were physically attractive, they displayed different patterns in their self-presentation and styles of interactions toward their partners, which then elicited behaviors from their partners that were consistent with the perceiver's initial stereotypes (e.g., friendly, likable, social). This demonstrated that individuals behave according to a self-fulfilling prophecy and, by extension, their idealizations may be a product of behavioral cues.

Murray et al. (1996a) acknowledged the interplay between cognitive and behavioral mechanisms in idealization and, consistent with the self-fulfilling prophecy, examined how people's positive illusions of their partners and knowledge that a partner idealized them interact to understand relationship satisfaction. As cited earlier, Murray et al. (1996b) found support for positive illusions as well as a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism in their study. Specifically, when people idealized their partners, this appeared to have led the partner to have more positive self-perceptions. Idealizations seem to involve a person's cognitive and behavioral perceptions of one's partner; however, how these mechanisms relate to particular features of the individuals as compared to their relationship warrants further research.

As research on idealization continues to grow, researchers have called attention to the limited conceptual frameworks for understanding idealization due to the lack of systematic discussion of this topic. For example, Niehuis and Bartell (2006) alluded to the difficulty of viewing idealization without considering disillusionment. Fowers and Applegate (1995) discussed the limitations of research on relationship satisfaction given that research has relied heavily on self-report measures. Fowers et al. (1996) asserted that idealizations are more likely to form from perceptions of the quality of the relationship rather than from people's perceptions of their partner and highlighted the difficulty of fully distinguishing between illusions about the relationship and relationship satisfaction. Idealization research is also limited by the populations examined, as the majority of studies include heterosexual, Caucasian, married and dating couples. No study was found on idealization and relationships where partner violence was present, and potential gender differences have yet to be examined for

idealization and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the lack of consensus on operationalizing idealization has created difficulty in consolidating idealization research.

Idealistic Distortions

Historical investigations and development of multiple measures of relationship and marital satisfaction have prompted discussion among researchers on how to operationalize idealization. While testing construct validity and potential social desirability response bias of the Marital Conventionalization Scale developed by Edmonds (1967), Fowers and Applegate (1995) proposed the construct of idealistic distortions. Edmonds (1976) defined marital conventionalization “as the extent to which a person distorts the appraisal of his [her] marriage in the direction of social desirability” (p. 681). Fowers and Applegate (1995) factor analyzed the Marital Conventionalization Scale and found that it did not appear to represent a social desirability bias and that it validly assessed marital satisfaction. They also factor analyzed the Idealistic Distortions Scale (Olson et al., 1985) as a measure of marital conventionalization and again found that idealistic distortions appeared to be independent of scales that assessed social desirability (e.g., Self-Deception Questionnaire and Other Deception Questionnaire, Sackheim & Gur, 1979). In order to reflect these results more accurately, Fowers and Applegate proposed a change in terminology from marital conventionalization to idealistic distortions. An added benefit of this new term is its applicability to non-marital as well as marital relationships. Since the adoption of the term idealistic distortions, Fowers et al. (1996) have defined it as “global, unrealistically positive statements about the

marriage” (p. 193) and have used the Idealistic Distortions Scale to measure idealistic distortions. This study included the Idealistic Distortions Scale to measure idealization.

Summary of Idealization

Relationship stability and satisfaction are often attributed to partners being genuine and honest in their relationship and their ability to view accurately their partner’s strengths and flaws (Brickman, 1987; Swan et al., 1994; Swan et al., 1992). Idealizations were often portrayed as dangerous and unhealthy to relationships and were associated only with the early infatuation period (Brickman, 1987). Although somewhat paradoxical in nature, more recently researchers have established idealization as an important factor in perceptions of long-term relationship quality and satisfaction (Fletcher et al., 2000; Fowers et al., 1996; 2002; Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Stafford & Merolla, 2007). Idealizations influence people’s beliefs about their intimate partners and their relationships, which can have profound effects for their romantic lives, such as deciding to remain with or leave an unsatisfying partner (Knee, 1998; Knee et al., 2001; Murray et al., 2000; Stafford & Merolla, 2007).

Studies on idealization have evolved to include dating, married, cohabitating, and same-sex couples; however, only one study was found on idealization and relationships where intimate partner violence was present. Lin-Roark et al. (2015) examined idealization as a possible mediating variable in the association between IPV (i.e., physical and psychological abuse) and women’s self-esteem with a sample of 196 battered women seeking services from seven shelters. The majority of these women were shelter residents (75%), while the remaining 25% were receiving non-resident shelter services. The

participants completed measures of physical abuse, psychological abuse, global self-esteem, and evaluations/appraisals of their abusive partners. Lin-Roark et al. hypothesized that a battered woman may use idealizations to bond with her abusive partner, which may contribute to the development of low self-esteem. The authors based their hypothesis on the process of “traumatic bonding” (Dutton & Painter, 1981), which occurs when a battered woman develops strong affective attachment to her abusive partner under conditions of repeated IPV. Dutton and Painter (1981) noted that attachment develops due to increased power imbalance in the relationship caused by a repeated cycle of abuse and control by the abusive partner. This cycle often leads a battered woman to consider herself subjugated by her abusive partner, which in turn leads to increased feelings of helplessness and dependency, and further reinforces a strong emotional bond to the abuser. As expected, these results revealed that higher levels of physical and psychological abuse were associated with lower reported self-esteem; however, Lin-Roark et al. also found that battered women did not seem to idealize their partners and instead endorsed negative evaluations of their partners. Due to the lack of idealization endorsed by the participants, the authors did not conduct mediation analyses. It is important to note that the sample in this study was not representative of all battered women, especially those who remain victimized and isolated in their abusive relationships. Lin-Roark et al. acknowledged that battered women who seek outside help, such as the sample in this study, are typically at a more advanced stage of awareness and healthy coping with regards to their abusive relationship, thus they are less likely to idealize their abusive partners.

As mentioned earlier, the Lin-Roark et al. (2015) study was the only study found that examined the potential role of idealization in relationships where IPV is present; however, the sample in that study consisted of women who had already left their abusive relationships, sought outside help from shelters, and may have no longer needed or wanted to idealize their abusive partners. In response to the limitations of the study conducted by Lin-Roark et al., the current study examined individuals currently in intimate relationships or those who had been in an intimate relationship within the last 12 months. Also, as there continues to be limited literature examining idealization in relationships where IPV is present, this study attempted to fill this gap.

Intimate Partner Violence Prevalence, Definition, and Types

Over the past 40 years, research on intimate partner violence (IPV) has gained momentum, expanding knowledge about its prevalence and etiology (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011; Jaconis & Gray, 2013; Stare & Fernando, 2014). IPV is a significant and widespread problem in society today. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015) each year in the United States, an average of 10 million women and men are victims of physical violence by an intimate partner. This equates to 20 victims of intimate partner physical violence per minute. Additionally, there are nearly 2 million victims of rape and over 7 million victims of stalking in a year (CDC, 2015). Reported IPV prevalence rates vary widely, ranging from 12% to 60% for physical IPV, 25% to 75% for psychological IPV, and 5% to 20% for sexual IPV (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011; Miller, 2011; Perry & Fromuth, 2005; Straus & Sweet, 1992; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Even though prevalence rates vary widely, there is a general consensus that the actual prevalence of IPV is higher than the reported statistics due to IPV related

incidents being unreported for a variety of reasons including the victim's fear of retaliation by the perpetrator (Malecha et al., 2000; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), gender differences in reporting (Archer, 2000; Chan, 2011), cultural norms for help-seeking behaviors (White & Satyen, 2015), and societal pressures (Gracia & Herrero, 2007).

This wide range of prevalence rates continues to be a major issue in IPV research. It is also attributed to the inconsistent terminology and vague definitions of IPV. Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of IPV, it is broadly understood to describe the use or threat of physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and/or psychological violence (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner (CDC, 2015; Edwards, 2015; Flynn & Graham, 2010; Hamberger, 2005). Although physical violence continues to be the most frequently studied form of violence in IPV research (Sullivan, 2013), it is important to consider multiple forms of IPV victimization as research suggests that psychological aggression often precedes physical aggression (Arias & Pape, 1999; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2008; O'Leary, 1999; Sullivan, McPartland, Armeli, Jaquier, & Tennen, 2012) and that sexual IPV often co-occurs with physical aggression (Coker, Smith, McKeown, & King, 2000; Sullivan et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2013). For the purposes of this study, three forms of IPV (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion) were examined to investigate the relationship between IPV, idealization, and relationship satisfaction. This study also examined potential gender differences within the relation between IPV and relationship satisfaction.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of IPV: Power Theory

Intimate partner violence has been empirically examined using several theoretical models as conceptual frameworks (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011; Bell & Naugle, 2008). While no single theory adequately captures the complexity of IPV perpetration (Bell & Naugle, 2007), two of the most widely-recognized theories are feminist theory (Dobash & Dobash, 1977; Walker, 2009; Yllo, 1988) and power theory (Straus, 1976; 1977; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). These early models of IPV are primarily based on patriarchal influences in society (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011) and have been used to explain the gender-based power differentials for IPV relationships.

Feminist theory views IPV within a sociocultural context where men are placed in positions of power over women through societal gender roles that are defined and taught during childhood (Dobash & Dobash, 1977; Mihalic & Elliott, 1997). Thus, male-dominated gender roles are viewed as the main risk factor for victimization of women and for perpetration of violence against women by men in intimate relationships (Walker, 2009). In other words, violence is used by men to maintain control and exert dominance over women and their families (Dobash & Dobash, 1977; Walker, 2009). Some authors assert that gender is the single most significant factor for IPV victimization (Kimmel, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Findings from nationally representative surveys in the United States revealed gender-symmetry in the prevalence rates of IPV, in that IPV was perpetrated by both men and women (Archer, 2000; Straus & Gelles, 1985; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). These findings have led researchers to recognize that while the contentions of feminist theory are important, there are broader issues of power

difference that need to be examined for both men's and women's perpetuation and victimization of IPV.

Straus (1976, 1977) proposed a gender inclusive perspective of IPV called the power theory (Caldwell, Swan, & Woodbrown, 2011; Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011; Straus, 1976; 1977). Power theory views partner abuse and the persistence of family violence as a problem caused by factors that include gender inequality, family structure, and social acceptance of family conflict and violence (Bell & Naugle, 2008; Straus, 1976, 1977). The main assumption of power theory is that the family represents a system that produces stress and conflict as a response to broad socio-structural conditions. The social acceptance of violence as a means of resolving family conflict is thought to be learned during childhood through observation or experience (Straus, 1976, 1977). Power theorists have suggested that psychosocial stressors such as financial difficulties, low-status occupations, and unemployment are characterized by high levels of emotional stress and that this strain increases family tension and conflict, which then places the family at a higher risk for IPV (Straus et al., 1980). Further, power theory views power imbalances between partners as a risk factor for increasing tension within the family that leads to intimate partner aggression (Sagrestano, Heavey & Christensen, 1999; Straus, 1977).

Power has been established as an important predictor of violence (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Leonard & Senchak, 1996; Straus, 1976). Research has supported the correspondence between power imbalance and IPV with the lowest levels of physical aggression reported in more egalitarian couples (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Gray-Little, Baucom, & Hamby, 1996). Coleman and Straus (1986)

examined power structures within relationships, IPV, and conflict using a nationally representative sample of 2,143 married or cohabitating couples. Using measures of marital power type, conflict, and IPV, interviews were conducted separately for males and females. The couples were classified based on four relationship power types that explained the distribution of power between partners: male-dominant; female-dominant; equalitarian; and divided power. The male-dominant and female-dominant power types represented asymmetrical power structures where one partner held more power than the other. Equalitarian power type relationships represented couples who were equal in their decision-making process, whereas couples in divided power type relationships were equal in the sense of dividing responsibility for decisions, with each spouse having the final say for different decisions. In their analysis, lower power consensus was associated with higher levels of conflict that, in turn, was related to higher levels of violence, thus providing evidence that the power structure is an important factor in conflict levels in relationships and IPV. The male-dominant power type had the highest amount of conflict. In both asymmetric power type relationships, there was a much greater risk of violence when conflict was present as compared to when conflict occurred among the equalitarian couples. These findings suggest that power is an important factor that differentiates violent from nonviolent couples who experience intense conflict.

Using a longitudinal design to replicate the study by Coleman and Straus (1986), Leonard and Senchak (1996) found that marital conflict mediated the relation between perceived power inequity and IPV. Participants were 542 couples drawn from a larger study that followed newly married couples over three years. Marital conflict was assessed using The Conflict Inventory (Margolin, Fernandez, Gorin, & Ortiz, 1982) that

measured typical behavioral responses to conflict, including problem-solving, verbal aggression, and withdrawal from conflict. Leonard and Senchak found that high levels of verbal aggression, high levels of problem-solving by husbands, and low levels of withdrawal by husbands predicted IPV. Conflict was strongly and consistently correlated to husband-to-wife aggression before and during the first year of marriage. Husband and wife verbal aggression was strongly predictive of future husband aggression. Additionally, perception of the relationship as equalitarian was negatively related to husband marital aggression. For this study, higher levels of problem solving by husbands reflected a husband-dominant relationship. Leonard and Senchak suggested that husbands may resort to IPV when problem solving is an insufficient strategy to gain power, which provides further support for power theory.

When viewing power imbalance in IPV relationships, the majority of studies consider males as having more power than do females (Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Jacobson et al., 1994); however, some researchers have examined IPV in relationships where males hold less power. These studies have found that husbands with lower occupational, educational, and economic status than that of their wives are more likely to use violence as a form of control (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Pan, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994). Babcock et al. (1993) hypothesized that asymmetrical power structures in relationships where the male has less power serve as a risk factor for IPV. Ninety-five couples were placed into one of three groups: 1) domestically violent-couples with husbands who engaged in physical violence against the wives; 2) distressed/nonviolent; and 3) happy/nonviolent. The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) assessed demand-withdrawal

communication patterns. Spouses in the demand pattern criticized, nagged, and placed demands on their partners and withdrawal occurred when their partners became defensive and withdrew to avoid further discussion of issues. Babcock et al. (1993) indicated that spouses in the withdraw position held more power in the relationship because “those who demand something are in a less powerful position than those who want to maintain status quo” (p. 47). Husbands in the domestically violent group were more likely to report the husband demand/wife withdraw communication pattern than were the husbands in the other two groups, suggesting that these husbands use violence as a means to compensate for their perceived lack of power in the relationship. Interestingly, wives in the domestically violent group were just as likely to report engaging in wife demand/husband withdraw communication pattern as did wives in the distressed/nonviolent group. Based on these findings, both husbands and wives in the domestically violent group reported that they engaged in the demanding role and responded to their partners using withdraw communication patterns, reinforcing the idea that while gender is important, power struggles are what truly matter in IPV relationships.

Caldwell et al. (2011) further noted that gender matters because of its high correlation with power. In their review of the literature, they examined whether IPV was viewed as a gendered issue due to the repeated disproportionate findings that females are more likely to experience IPV victimization than are males (Archer, 2000; Chan, 2011; Synder & McCurley, 2008; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), or whether feminist theorists are correct in that females suffer greater negative effects of IPV as compared to males. From the start, Caldwell et al. discovered a major limitation of the studies that examined IPV outcomes; only a few of the studies directly assessed gender differences. Throughout

their review, they noted which studies controlled for baseline gender differences by conducting gender by victimization interactions. Overall, Caldwell et al. asserted that both females and males experienced negative effects of IPV, as evidenced by mixed findings for four of the seven IPV outcomes studied. These four included depression, anxiety, physical health outcomes, and substance abuse. However, gender differences also appeared when investigating injuries, posttraumatic stress, and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, women were more likely to be injured, to suffer from posttraumatic stress, and to report decreased relationship satisfaction as a result of IPV. Caldwell et al. expressed their belief that females experience poorer IPV-related outcomes than do males due to cultural norms, societal support of men's power over women, and men typically having greater physical power than women do. Thus, they concluded that while gender is important, power is the key to understanding IPV relationships. In line with power theory, the current study explored the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction, while accounting for potential gender differences by using gender by victimization interactions as recommended by Caldwell et al. (2011).

Research on IPV and Relationship Satisfaction using Power Theory

Relationship satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied topics within IPV research (Ackerman & Field, 2011; O'Leary et al., 1989; Saunders, 1995; Stith, Green, Smith, & Ward, 2008). The majority of research has found relationship satisfaction to be one of the strongest correlates of IPV (O'Leary et al., 1989; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, Tritt., 2004). Consistently, repeated observations have indicated a negative association between the prevalence of IPV and relationship satisfaction (Cano & Vivian, 2003;

Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990; Margolin et al., 1998; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994; Vivian & Malone, 1997). The role of power in relationships has been used to explain this association over the past several decades. For example, Peplau and Gordon (1985) found that both wives and husbands reported lower marital satisfaction when wives held more power in the relationship. Additionally, husbands use violence as a form of power, which is linked to lower marital satisfaction by wives (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). When power is distributed more evenly in relationships, IPV is less likely to occur and higher relationship satisfaction is observed from both partners (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Gray-Little et al., 1996; Leonard & Senchak, 1996).

Interestingly, more recent research has provided evidence of higher relationship satisfaction when IPV is present (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Frieze, 2005; Williams & Frieze, 2005). To explain this counterintuitive finding, researchers have suggested that victims find ways to rationalize their offender's behavior (Ackerman & Field, 2011), do not consider themselves victims of violence (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000), or even fail to identify physical violence as IPV (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983) in order to maintain their desire to feel satisfied in their relationship. In fact, some studies found that IPV victims rated their relationships very favorably. One such study by Williams and Frieze (2005) examined IPV and relationship satisfaction in a nationally-representative sample of 3,519 men and women. Their results indicated that 27% of respondents in violent relationships described the relationship as "excellent", and 45% of the participants who characterized the relationship as "excellent" reported mild to severe mutual violence. This suggests that some individuals report high relationship satisfaction despite the prevalence of IPV,

which has raised questions as to whether the association between relationship satisfaction and IPV is being moderated by other factors (Shortt, Capaldi, & Kim, 2010).

One of the variables that has been observed to moderate the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction is gender. In a study conducted by Ulloa and Hammett (2015), greater increase in IPV victimization was related to lower relationship satisfaction for both men and women; however, this relationship was stronger for women than for men. The study also found that for men the association between IPV perpetration and relationship satisfaction was weak, and higher relationship satisfaction was reported for some female IPV perpetrators. Ulloa and Hammett posited that this phenomenon could be caused by an increased perception of power and control in the relationship when IPV perpetration is initiated by women.

To test the potential moderating role of gender, Ackerman and Field (2011) examined gender effects in the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction by comparing same-sex and opposite-sex couples. They asserted that IPV is not gender symmetric but, because research on this topic has largely focused on opposite-sex relationships, it is unclear whether findings reflect a victim-gender or a perpetrator-gender effect. To elaborate, the authors noted that IPV studies that found lower relationship satisfaction scores among female victims could not distinguish whether these scores were due to women's greater sensitivity to relationship discord regardless of their partner's gender or whether their scores were a product of the male partner's violent behaviors. Data were collected for a larger, longitudinal study on adolescent health that began in 1995 with a sample of 7th through 12th grade adolescents enrolled in 164 participating U.S. schools. By the fourth survey wave in 2007, the participants were

between 24 and 32 years old, and the majority were married or in an intimate relationship (i.e., $N = 12,221$ in opposite-sex relationships; $N = 328$ in same-sex relationships). The authors completed interviews with 80.3% of the original participants, asking participants to complete measures on IPV and relationship satisfaction. Despite the differences in the prevalence of IPV in opposite-sex and same-sex relationships, all males and females reported similar mean relationship satisfaction scores. In order to examine differences in the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction for males and females in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, different models were used in the regression analyses. Separate models for male and female respondents as well as different models for respondents reporting same-sex and opposite-sex relationships were analyzed. The results indicated a more negative association between relationship satisfaction and IPV victimization for females than for males. After controlling for injuries from IPV, this association was almost three times greater for females than for males, regardless of the perpetrator's sex. Further, female IPV victims did not appear to report lower scores on relationship satisfaction simply because the perpetrator was a male. Ackerman and Field concluded that greater insight into a victim's relationship satisfaction could shed light on why some people choose to stay in IPV relationships.

The recent findings of the paradoxical relation between IPV and relationship satisfaction warrant further research about the role of power in IPV as well as the potential moderating role of gender. As mentioned above, many researchers believe that power differences are a potential cause for gender asymmetry with regard to relationship satisfaction in IPV relationships (Babcock et al., 1993; Caldwell et al., 2011; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Ulloa & Hammett, 2015). Given the discrepancies across the IPV and

relationship satisfaction literature (Stith et al., 2008), research on potential mediating factors may help explain why IPV is associated with greater relationship satisfaction. The current study examined idealization as a potential mediating factor in this association using the Mobilization-Minimization Theory of Coping as the basis to conceptualize and explain the counterintuitive findings between IPV and relationship satisfaction. This theory was used in an effort to explain any link between these two topics.

Mobilization-Minimization Theory of Coping and IPV

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral strategies used to minimize and manage internal and external demands of a stressful or threatening situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Situations are considered to be stressful when the demands between people and their environment are perceived as taxing, as exceeding their resources, and as placing their well-being at risk (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A widely accepted conceptualization of coping is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory that distinguishes problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping strategies attempt to manage, alter, or eliminate stressful situations, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies are aimed at the regulation of emotions associated with a stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Additional coping models have identified active versus avoidance strategies and engagement versus disengagement coping (Ebata & Moos, 1991; Finn, 1985; Fowler & Hill, 2004; Moos, 1995; Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds & Wigal, 1998). Active/engagement coping is used to change a problematic situation, while avoidance/disengagement coping results in distancing oneself from the problem.

Research has identified coping as an important construct for understanding IPV (Clements & Sawhney, 2000; Foster et al., 2015; Iverson et al., 2013; Kocot & Goodman, 2003; Krause, Kaltman, Goodman, & Dutton, 2008; Zanville & Cattaneo, 2012).

Expanding on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work on coping, Taylor (1991) developed the mobilization-minimization hypothesis to explain "that positive and negative events evoke different patterns of physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral activity at different points in their occurrence" (p. 67). Much of the literature on coping provides evidence that negative events elicit greater activity than neutral or positive events. A prime example of this is the fight-or-flight reaction first described by Cannon (1929). Cannon proposed that when people perceive a threat, their bodies are aroused and rapidly mobilize the sympathetic nervous system, resulting in preparations to attack or to flee the threat. There is also evidence to suggest that once the threat of the negative event subsides, counteracting processes work to reverse and minimize the initial response to the negative event; therefore, after people experience a negative or threatening event, there is an offsetting of positive emotions of relief or extreme relaxation once the negative event is removed (Taylor, 1991). This phenomenon has been described using different names including the safety reaction, the relief response, or the relaxation response (Denny, 1971; Mowrer, 1960; Woodworth & Scholsberg, 1954). From these findings, Taylor explained that responses to negative events involve patterns of short-term mobilization and long-term minimization.

Taylor (1991) highlighted additional phenomenon to support the mobilization-minimization theory of coping. The process of long-term minimization may be explained by the Pollyanna principle defined by Matlin and Strang (1978). After reviewing 52

studies, Matlin and Strang repeatedly found that people processed positive events more efficiently and accurately than they did negative events, which also led to them recalling positive events more than they recalled negative events. Further, people actively engaged in reinterpreting negative events into neutral or even positive events (Taylor & Brown, 1988). This process also applied to people's self-perceptions, in that they were more likely to reinterpret, distort, or minimize negative self-conceptions in favor of positive ones.

The mobilization-minimization theory of coping may offer a framework for understanding why IPV victims report higher relationship satisfaction. When IPV victims are in violent situations, they are forced to mobilize quickly. Once the violent situation has subsided, IPV victims may engage in idealization of their partner or the relationship as a means to minimize the negative events. If this is the case, idealizations may serve as a type of coping strategy or as a mediator between IPV and relationship satisfaction.

Summary

Over the past several decades, theories related to power (Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Gray-Little et al., 1996; Leonard & Senchak, 1996; Peplau & Gordon, 1985), coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Taylor, 1991; Taylor & Brown, 1988), and gender (Ackerman & Field, 2011; Ulloa & Hammett, 2015) were developed to help better understand the possible causes of IPV. Relationship satisfaction has been subject of increased focus in more recent research on IPV as a possible correlate (O'Leary et al., 1989; Stith et al., 2004; Stith et al., 2008). Research on IPV and relationship satisfaction indicated mixed findings, with less emphasis placed on exploration of why IPV victims

report high relationship satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to understand why an individual might report higher relationship satisfaction when IPV is present in her/his intimate relationship and try to uncover a possible underlying, contributing factor of IPV. As IPV continues to become a widespread and growing public health concern across the United States (CDC, 2015), it is important to uncover any underlying, contributing factors of IPV in hopes to help end IPV. Although research on IPV and idealization has amassed over the years, it has done so as two separate topic areas. In attempt to merge these two major topic areas, this study investigated the potential mediating role of idealization on the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction. In response to criticisms of the lack of IPV studies assessing for gender differences (Archer, 2000; Caldwell et al., 2011; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), this study also examined the moderating role of gender for IPV and relationship satisfaction. IPV included physical assault, psychological aggression, and sexual coercion. Three global hypotheses were posited. The first hypothesis simply tested the relationship between IPV and relationship satisfaction. The second hypothesis examined the potential mediating role of idealization on the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, while the third hypothesis tested the potential moderating role of gender. Specific hypotheses and expected direction of relationships are outlined below.

Hypotheses

H1: IPV will be negatively related to perceived relationship satisfaction.

H2: IPV will indirectly affect perceived relationship satisfaction through the mediating effect of idealization.

H3: The relationship between each type of IPV will be moderated by gender and will contribute unique and shared variance to perceived relationship satisfaction.

H3a: Gender will moderate the relation between IPV and perceived relationship satisfaction such that physical assault IPV will be a significant predictor for females but not for males.

H3b: Gender will moderate the relation between IPV and perceived relationship satisfaction such that psychological aggression IPV will be a significant predictor for males but not for females.

H3c: Gender will moderate the relation between IPV and perceived relationship satisfaction such that sexual coercion IPV will be a significant predictor for females but not for males.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

After receiving Institutional Review Board Approval (see Appendix A), participants were recruited for this study from October 2016 through May 2017. Participants were a sample of individuals who were 18 years old or older and had been in at least one intimate relationship within the past 12 months. G-power analysis indicated that 107 participants were needed for this study. Individuals were excluded from the study if they were 17 years old or younger, did not reside in the United States, were non-English speaking, and had not been in an intimate relationship within the past 12 months. Although 172 individuals initially participated in this study, 13 participants did not meet study criteria, and seven participants were excluded due to incomplete data.

The resulting sample was composed of 152 individuals (75 males; 77 females). Average age was 23.00 years ($SD = 6.22$) with an age ranging from 18 years old to 49 years old. Participants described themselves as Caucasian (63.2%), Hispanic or Latino/a (16.4%), Asian or Pacific Islander (6.6%), Biracial/Multiracial (5.9%), African-American or Black (4.6%), “other” (2.6%), and one participant did not identify race/ethnicity (0.7%). The vast majority of participants identified as heterosexual (90.1%), followed by gay or lesbian (3.9%), bisexual (3.3%), “other” (2.0%), and “prefer not to say” (0.7%). Most participants reported educational level and average household income as “some college credit” (46.1%) and between “\$0 - \$19,000” (27%), respectively. See Table 1 for more complete demographics for all participants.

Fifty participants were “single, currently not dating,” 49 were “in a committed relationship,” 20 were “married,” 18 were “dating, non-committed relationship,” 9 were “in a committed relationship and cohabitating,” 5 were “engaged,” and 1 was “divorced.” When asked about experiences of IPV within the past 12-months, 135 (88.8%) participants denied the presence of IPV; however, when examining the data, all 152 participants reported being victim of some type of IPV as measured by the Revised Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, 1996).

Table 1
Frequencies of Sample Demographics (N=152)

Demographics	Frequency	
	Count	%
Age		
18-24	109	71.7%
25-31	24	15.8%
32-38	9	5.9%
39-45	2	1.3%
46-51	3	2.0%
Did not say	5	3.3%
Gender		
Male	75	49.3%
Female	77	50.7%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	137	90.1%
Gay or Lesbian	6	3.9%
Bisexual	5	3.3%
Other	3	2.0%
Prefer not to say	1	0.7%
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American/Black	7	4.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	10	6.6%
Caucasian/White	96	63.2%

Hispanic or Latino(a)	25	16.4%
Biracial or Multiracial	9	5.9%
Other	4	2.6%
Did not specify	1	0.7%
Highest Level of Education completed		
High school graduate or GED	30	19.7%
Some college credit	70	46.1%
Associate's degree	15	9.9%
Bachelor's degree	20	13.2%
Master's degree	14	9.2%
Doctorate degree or equivalent	3	2.0%
Average Household Income		
\$0 - \$19,000	41	27.0%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	28	18.4%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	11	7.2%
\$60,000 - \$79,999	23	15.1%
\$80,000 - \$99,999	12	7.9%
\$100,000 or more	37	24.3%
Current Relationship Status		
Single, currently not dating	50	32.9%
Dating, non-committed relationship	18	11.8%
In a committed relationship	49	32.2%
In a committed relationship and cohabitating	9	5.9%
Engaged	5	3.3%
Married	20	13.2%
Divorced	1	0.7%
Experience of any abuse by current or former (past 12-months) partner		
Yes, in a past intimate relationship (that occurred within the past 12-months)	12	7.9%
Yes, in my current intimate relationship	2	1.3%
Yes, in my current and in past 12-month relationships	1	0.7%
No, I have not experienced partner abuse	135	88.8%
I am not sure if I have experienced partner abuse	2	1.3%

Any and all past relationships where IPV was present		
0/None	120	78.9%
1-3	32	21.1%

Recruitment

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants through social media, email, and in person. This researcher sent emails to professors at multiple universities with the request to forward the recruitment email to students and staff. Advertisements about this study were posted on social media sites including FaceBook and Instagram. The advertisements provided a brief description of this study, the link to complete the survey, and encouraged people to share it with their network of friends and family. This researcher also distributed flyers to students on Arizona State University's (ASU) campus as well as mental health community agencies such as La Frontera-EMPACT SPC (Trauma Healing Services program) and Fresh Start Women's Foundation in Phoenix, Arizona.

Procedures

Prior to completing the study measures, participants were provided with the informed consent letter (see Appendix B). A brief demographic questionnaire was completed first, and then participants completed the 20-minute online survey that included measures of intimate partner violence, idealization, and relationship satisfaction (see Appendix C). The survey was maintained through Qualtrics.com, an online survey platform that allows users to create and distribute surveys. As an incentive, all participants were given the option to enter themselves in a random drawing for one of 25 gift cards to Amazon.com. These \$25 gift cards were funded through a JumpStart Research Grant awarded to the researcher by ASU's Graduate and Professional Student

Association. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants did not provide their names or any additional identification information beyond the demographics questionnaire. If participants opted to enter the random drawing for a gift card, their names and email addresses were stored in a separate database from the database containing responses to the survey.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was included to determine participant age, sex, sexual orientation, racial/ethnic background, highest education level completed, income level, intimate partner relationship status, and history of intimate partner violence (see Appendix C).

The Revised Conflicts Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS2, based on the original Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), is the most widely used scale for assessing the extent to which partners in dating, cohabitating, and marital relationships engage in partner violence (Mills, Avegno, & Haydel, 2006; Straus, 1979). The CTS2 is a self-report questionnaire containing five subscales that measure major areas of intimate partner violence including negotiation, psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury. The 39 items on the CTS2 assessed both the perpetrator and the victim perspectives for a total of 78 questions. Respondents used a seven-point Likert type response format to indicate how often the violent acts in each item occurred within the past 12 months (see Appendix C). The Likert type scale responses ranged from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*more than 20 times*), and 7 (*never in the last year, but it did happen before that*).

The six-item negotiation subscale measures actions taken to settle conflict through discussion and has two subscales, “cognitive” and “emotional”, with three items each (Straus et al., 1996). The cognitive subscale examines the discussions had to settle disagreements and the emotional subscale measures the expression of positive and caring feelings for the partner. An example item for each of these are “*I suggested a compromise to a disagreement*” (cognitive) and “*I showed I cared about my partner even though we disagreed*” (emotional). The 8-item psychological aggression scale measures nonverbal and verbal aggressive acts, for example “*My partner called me fat or ugly*”, “*I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner*”. Physical assault is measured using the 12-item physical assault scale. Examples of these 12-items include “*My partner punched or hit me with something that could hurt*”, “*I choked my partner*”, and “*My partner slapped me*”. The 7-item sexual coercion scale covers a range of coercive acts such as verbal or physical behaviors intended to force the partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity. Items include “*My partner made me have sex without a condom*” and “*I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)*”. Lastly, the injury scale, which consists of 6-items, assesses for any injury that required medical attention or caused persistent pain inflicted by the partner. Sample items are “*I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner*” and “*I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner*”.

One of the reasons the CTS2 is the most widely used instrument to measure intimate partner violence is the extensive evidence for the reliability and validity of the scales (Straus et al., 1996; Straus, Hamby, & Warren, 2003), as well as evidence that the CTS2 does not correlate with the social desirability factor (Fisher & Corcoran, 2007).

Straus et al. (1996) reported internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales of .86 for negotiation, .79 for psychological aggression, .86 for physical assault, .87 for sexual coercion, and .95 for injury. Straus et al. (1996) established construct and discriminant validity using a sample of 204 females and 113 males. They reported subscale correlations of .18 or higher for females and .25 or higher for males at the .01 significance level and .17 or higher for females .24 or higher for males at the .05 significance level (Straus et al., 2003).

The CTS2 has been used to estimate prevalence and chronicity rates (Straus et al., 2003). There are several methods of scoring the CTS2. One composite score can be generated by summing the midpoint scores for the response categories for all five scales. Dichotomized scores are used to assess whether behaviors or types of behaviors are present or not present (Straus et al., 1996). Thus, all responses indicating the presence of violence (i.e., responses one to six) are coded as “1,” and “0” represents no violence present. The severity of violence can also be measured for four out of the five subscales (i.e., physical assault, psychological aggression, injury, and sexual coercion) using “minor” and “severe” indicators of violence (Lucente, Fals-Stewart, Richards, & Gosha, 2001; Straus et al., 1996). For the purposes of this study, the sum of the midpoint scores for the response categories for three scales (i.e., physical assault, psychological aggression, and sexual coercion) was analyzed. The remaining two subscales of negotiation and injury were excluded from the analyses as they were outside the scope of this study’s purpose.

Idealistic Distortion Scale (IDS; Olson et al., 1985; Olson, 2005). The IDS is a part of the Marital Satisfaction subscale of the Enriching and Nurturing Relationship

Issues, Communication, and Happiness scale (ENRICH; Olson et al., 1985; Olson, 2005).

The IDS consists of five items that measure the extent to which people idealize their intimate partner or view the relationship in unrealistically positive terms. Respondents rate items on a Likert type scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include “*My partner and I understand each other completely*”, “*Our relationship is a perfect success*”, and “*My partner has all the qualities I’ve always wanted in a mate*” (see Appendix C). Total scores can range from 5 to 25 with higher scores on the scale indicating more idealization of a partner or the relationship. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .92 and a 4-week test-retest reliability of .92 have been reported (Olson et al., 1985).

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is a 7-item scale that measures relationship satisfaction. It was originally created as a brief measure of marital quality but has since been adapted for non-marital, romantic relationships. The Likert type response format ranges from 1 (*not well/not satisfied/not at all*) to 5 (*very well/very satisfied/very much*). Some examples of items include “*How well does your partner meet your needs?*” and “*How often do you wish you weren’t in this relationship with your partner?*” The author reported the scale was highly correlated with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; i.e., $r = .80$) and showed strong internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .86. The major change from the original version was the substitution of words such as “partner” for the word “mate” and the word “relationship” for the word “marriage” (Hendrick, 1988). Even after these changes, the revised version continued to show strong convergent validity with the DAS (i.e., $.64 \leq r \leq .88$) in both clinical and non-clinical samples (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). Ratings are summed across

the seven items and divided by 7 to get a mean score. Higher scores reflect more relationship satisfaction.

Data Analysis Plan

First, descriptive statistics and internal consistencies were determined. The inter-correlations among the study variables were also be calculated. To test the first hypothesis of this study, IPV (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion) was entered as a cluster to predict relationship satisfaction (i.e., score on RAS). The second hypothesis examined the potential mediating effect of idealization on the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction. A mediating variable is one that “explains the relation between a predictor and an outcome” (Frazier et al., 2004, p. 116), or hypothesized to have an intervening effect on the relation between the predictor and outcome (Wiedermann & von Eye, 2015). Mediation analyses are often used to examine theories regarding underlying processes (Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, Petty, 2011). Mediation builds on basic linear regression model by adding a third variable, the mediator, and is thought to come in between X and Y.

To test the second hypothesis, three separate mediation analyses were conducted to examine the three types of IPV. Analyses were conducted using SPSS macro called PROCESS (PROCESS macro v2.16; Hayes, 2013; PROCESS model 4). The indirect relationship, through the mediator, idealization (M), was examined between the predictor variable, IPV (X), and the outcome variable, relationship satisfaction (Y) (see Figure 1 for the statistical model). The pathway denoted by “a” represents the results of the simple regression of idealization predicted from IPV (the effect of X on M). The pathway marked as “b” represents the results of the regression of relationship satisfaction

predicted from idealization when IPV are included in the model (the effect of M on Y controlling for X). The “c” pathway indicates the total effect of IPV on relationship satisfaction when idealization is not present in the model (also equal to the sum of the direct and indirect effects). Lastly, the “c’” pathway denotes the results of the regression of relationship satisfaction predicted from IPV when idealization is included as a predictor in the model (direct effect of IPV on relationship satisfaction after controlling for idealization). The indirect effect is the product of $a \times b$. The “c” pathway, the total effect, should get smaller with the addition of the mediator, which is represented by the c' . If $a \times b$ is statistically significant, mediation has occurred (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

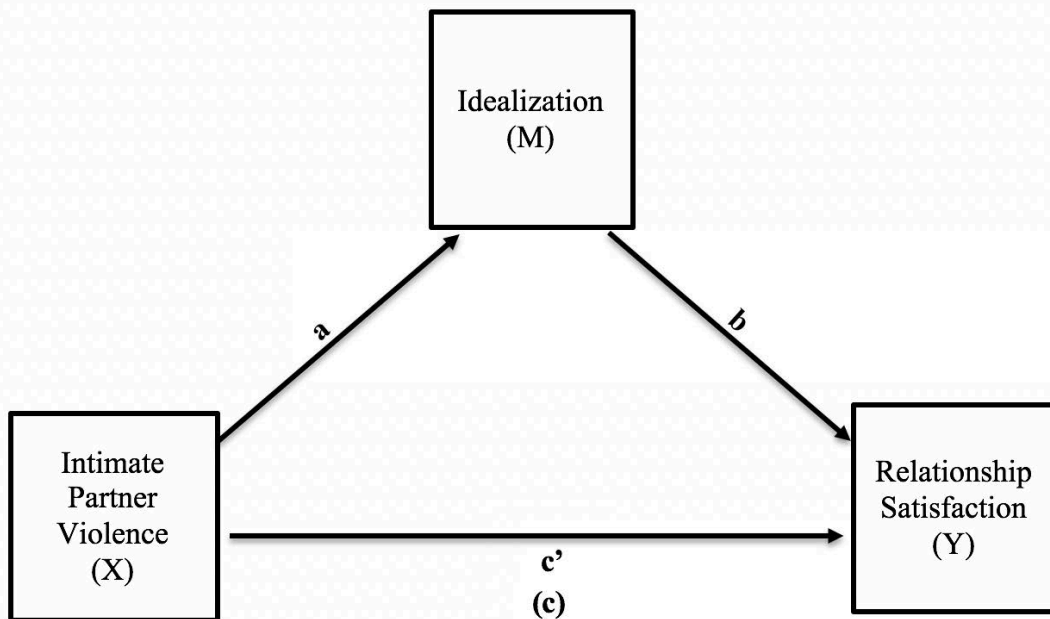


Figure 1
Model of IPV Predicting Relationship Satisfaction with Idealization as a Mediator

Bootstrapping techniques were used to estimate the indirect effect, which is the extent to which IPV (X) impacts relationship satisfaction (Y) through idealization (M) (Hayes, 2009). The use of bootstrapping based methods by PROCESS makes it superior

to the causal steps approach described by Baron and Kenny (1986) because it has greater power to detect an indirect effect and it offers a more direct significant test of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2013). This procedure used 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect for the mediation model (Hayes, 2009).

Bootstrapping methods are preferred over alternative methods such as traditional Sobel tests, for estimating indirect effects as they are more accurate, require fewer assumptions, and do not require that an outcome variable be normally distributed (Hayes, 2009; Hayes & Sharkow, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

PROCESS uses a logistic regression-based path analytic framework for estimating effects in mediation and moderation models (Hayes, 2013). This procedure is consistent with current recommendations (Hayes, 2013; Hayes & Sharkow, 2013; Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, Petty, 2011). The absence of zero within a confidence interval leads to rejection of the null hypothesis. Idealization was expected to mediate the relationship for all three types of IPV. Baron and Kenny (1986) indicated the need for a significant relationship between X and Y as a critical starting point for mediation analyses. They also indicated that after finding a significant indirect effect, if there is no longer a significant direct effect of X on Y, then full mediation has been found. On the other hand, if there continues to be a significant direct effect of X and Y, after controlling for the mediator, then partial mediation has been found. These requirements for mediation analyses have since been called into question. Several researchers have argued that the presence of a total X on Y effect before assessing mediation is not required (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Rucker et al., 2011; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). Rucker et al. (2011) provided evidence that the $a \times b$

path can be significant even when the “c” path is not significant. They have also discouraged the use of terms such as “full” mediation and “partial” mediation, as it is misleading and may result in “partial” mediations being viewed as less important, or impressive, than “full” mediations (Rucker et al., 2011, p. 361). “Full” mediation can only be claimed if researchers perfectly, without error, measured all possible mediators and suppressors, which Rucker et al. (2011) noted was impossible to claim. Rucker et al. (2011) recommend abandoning the requirement for a significant total effect of X on Y prior to running mediation analyses and instead, suggest that researchers’ use of mediation analyses be guided by theory. They also recommend focusing on the presence of a significant indirect effect as well as the size or magnitude of the indirect effect, consistent with recommendations by Preacher and Kelley (2011) and MacKinnon (2008). The results of this study will be in line with these guidelines for interpreting mediation analyses.

The third hypothesis examined gender as a potential moderating variable between IPV and relationship satisfaction. A moderator variable is one “that alters the direction or strength of the relation between a predictor and an outcome” (Frazier et al., 2004, p. 116). Gender was expected to moderate this relationship based on previous literature on IPV. Analyses were conducted using SPSS macro called PROCESS (PROCESS macro v2.16; Hayes, 2013; PROCESS model 1). Three separate moderation analyses using multiple regression via PROCESS were run for each of the individual independent variables (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion), gender, and their interaction predicting relationship satisfaction. The moderation analyses first examined whether the overall model was significant with all three predictors (i.e., IPV, gender, and

IPV X gender). Second, the analyses provided information on whether gender, specifically, predicted relationship satisfaction. Third, it examined whether IPV predicted relationship satisfaction. Fourth, the significance of the interaction, IPV X gender, on relationship satisfaction was tested. Lastly, the ability of IPV to predict relationship satisfaction was tested at each level of the moderator (i.e., males versus females). As was the case in the mediation analyses, this procedure used 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the 95% confidence interval of the moderation models (Hayes, 2009), and the absence of zero within a confidence interval led to rejection of the null hypothesis.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Statistics

Prior to analyzing the data, decisions regarding how to handle missing data as well as outliers were made based on theoretical implications. As mentioned earlier, there were 7 participants with incomplete data. These 7 participants did not proceed beyond the demographics questionnaire of the survey. Listwise deletion was used to handle these 7 cases as this did not compromise power in the design. Outliers were present for various reasons. For example, while the majority of participants reported low levels of all three types of IPV, the few cases where there were high reported levels of any or all three types of IPV automatically appeared as outliers. Some cases were considered to be outliers on only one of the three types of IPV examined in this study. In an effort to reduce manipulation of the data and to preserve as much of the data as possible, these outliers were not excluded from the analyses. Also, these were participants' true responses and did not appear to be random responding, thus it was appropriate to keep these cases in the analyses (Bakker & Wicherts, 2014).

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for all variables with this sample. In terms of IPV, participants reported the highest level for psychological aggression, followed by sexual coercion, and finally physical assault. Overall, the sample appeared generally low in terms of the presence of IPV in their intimate relationships. When comparing for gender differences, results from one-way ANOVAs indicated no significant differences in how females and males reported IPV and relationship satisfaction. All probability levels for the ANOVAs were greater than .05.

Correlational Analyses

The first hypothesis of this study stated that the three forms of IPV, psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion, would be negatively related to relationship satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, bivariate correlations were examined to determine the relation between each form of IPV and reported relationship satisfaction. Table 3 presents the correlation matrix for these variables. Psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion were expected to be correlated with relationship satisfaction, such that higher scores on the three types of IPV would be related to lower scores on relationship satisfaction. Results parallel expected directions in that all three types of IPV showed negative relations with relationship satisfaction, indicating that higher scores of all three types of IPV were associated with lower reported relationship satisfaction, thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Measured Variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Psychological Aggression	11.68	25.92	1.00				
2. Physical Assault	2.70	17.58	.66**	1.00			
3. Sexual Coercion	4.01	15.77	.70**	.90**	1.00		
4. Relationship Satisfaction	3.98	0.99	-.49**	-.33**	-.35**	1.00	
5. Idealization	18.02	5.12	-.35**	-.18*	-.17*	0.78**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed)

Mediation Analyses

Three separate mediation analyses were conducted to examine each of the three types of IPV. As mentioned before, the regression coefficient for the “c” pathway should

get smaller with the addition of the mediator variable, idealization, and if $a \times b$, the indirect effect, is statistically significant, mediation has occurred. The results from all three mediation analyses satisfied these requirements, indicating that the relationship between each of the three types of IPV and relationship satisfaction was mediated by idealization. All three mediation analyses are presented separately below.

Psychological Aggression. As depicted in Figure 2, there was a significant indirect effect of psychological aggression on relationship satisfaction through idealization, $ab = -.2415$, 95% Boot CI [-.3962, -.1368]. As noted earlier, the absence of zero within the confidence interval leads to rejection of the null hypothesis. The standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between psychological aggression (X) and relationship satisfaction (Y) as mediated by idealization (M) are shown in the “a” and “b” pathways in Figure 2. The “c” pathway is the number in the parenthesis. The number above the “c” pathway indicates the standardized regression coefficient for the “c” pathway, which is the regression of relationship satisfaction predicted from IPV when idealization is included as a predictor in the model. The “c” pathway (i.e., $b = -.49$), the direct effect, should be smaller than the c' (i.e., $b = -.25$) with the addition of the mediator, which has occurred in this model. The effect size was calculated by the percent mediation (P_M) as suggested by Preacher and Kelly (2011). The percent mediation is the percent of the total effect, “c” accounted for by your indirect effect ($a \times b$). In this case, $P_M = -.2415 / -.49 = .49$, which means the mediator accounts for roughly half of the total effect.

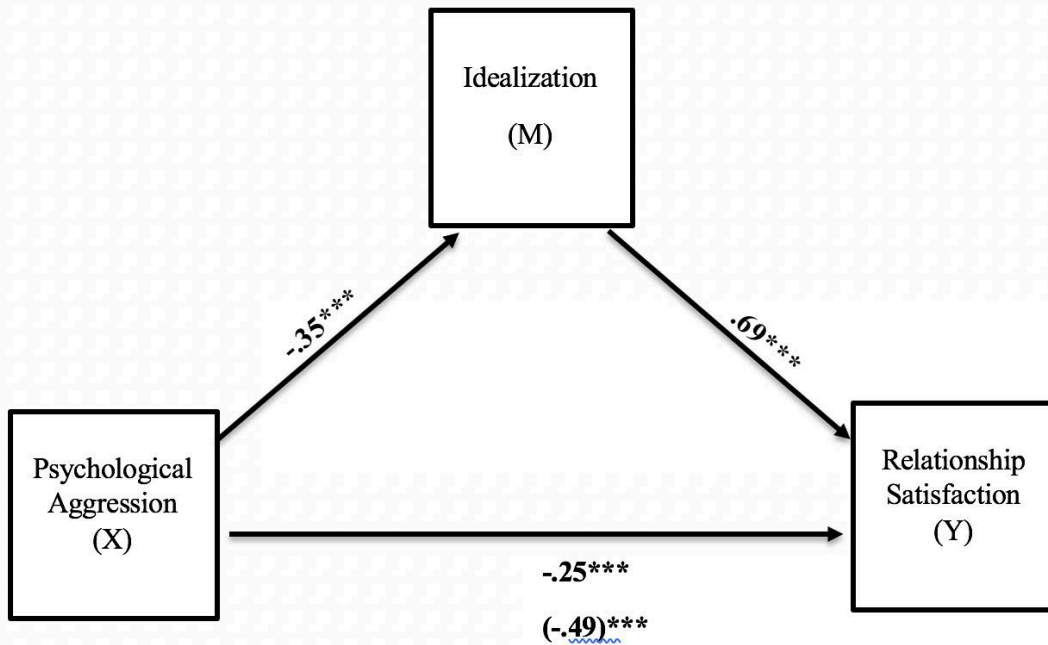


Figure 2.
 Model of Psychological Aggression Predicting Relationship Satisfaction with Idealization as a Mediator
 *** $p < .001$

Physical Assault. Figure 3 displays the significant indirect effect of physical assault on relationship satisfaction through idealization, $ab = -.1332$, 95% Boot CI [- .7318, -.0666]. The absence of zero within the confidence interval indicates that mediation has occurred. The standardized regression coefficient for the effect of physical assault (X) on idealization (M) is $b = -.18$, which is significant at the .05 level. The standardized regression coefficient for the effect of idealization (M) on relationship satisfaction (Y), controlling for physical assault (X) is $b = .74$, $p < .001$. The “c” pathway, in parenthesis, indicates the total effect of physical assault on relationship satisfaction when idealization is not present in the model, $b = -.33$, $p < .001$. Once idealization is introduced into the model, the “c” is $b = -.20$, $p < .001$. The indirect effect, or the product of $a \times b$, was significant, and the “c” pathway reduced with the

additional of the mediator, which satisfied requirements for mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). With regards to effect size, the mediator could account for less than half of the total effect, $P_M = .40$.

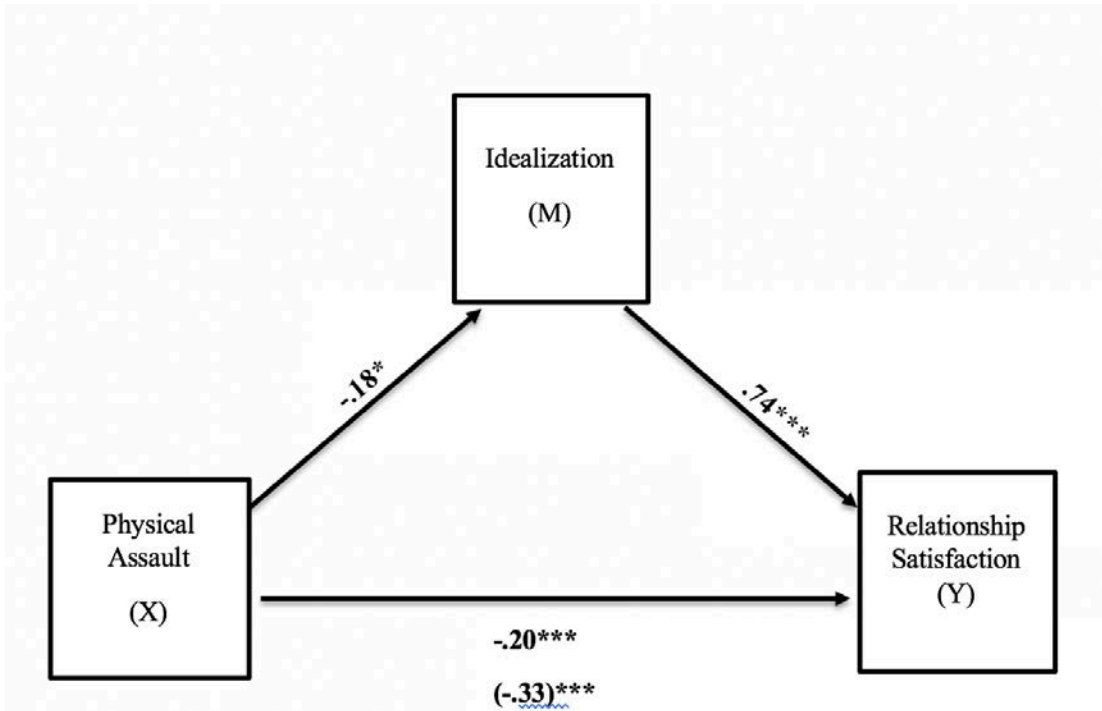


Figure 3.
Model of Physical Assault Predicting Relationship Satisfaction with Idealization as a Mediator
 * $p < .05$
 *** $p < .001$

Sexual Coercion. As depicted in Figure 4, there was a significant indirect effect of sexual coercion on relationship satisfaction through idealization, $ab = -.1258$, 95% Boot CI [-.3894, -.0184]. As was the case with psychological aggression and physical assault, the absence of zero within the confidence interval leads to rejection of the null hypothesis, or evidence that mediation has occurred in the model. The standardized regression coefficients are noted on each pathway, “a,” “b,” and “c.” The effect size

percent was calculated by using percent mediation, $P_M = -.1258/-.35 = .35$, and interpreted as the percent of the total effect “c” accounted for by the indirect effect ($a \times b$). With regards to effect size, the mediator could account for less than half of the total effect, $P_M = .35$.

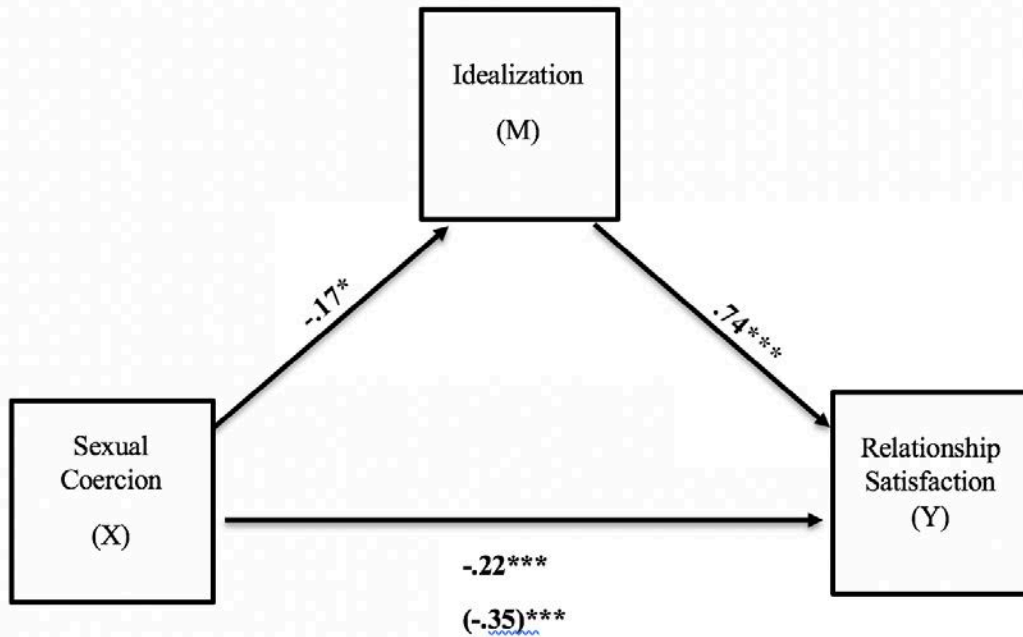


Figure 4.
Model of Sexual Coercion Predicting Relationship Satisfaction with Idealization as a Mediator

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

Moderation Analyses

The third hypothesis of this study examined gender as a possible moderator variable in the relationship between IPV and relationship satisfaction. Gender was expected to moderate this relationship based on previous literature on IPV such that physical assault will be a significant predictor for females but not for males (H3a), psychological aggression will be a significant predictor for males but not for females (H3b), and sexual coercion will be a significant predictor for females but not for males

(H3c). Analyses were conducted using SPSS macro called PROCESS (PROCESS macro v2.16; Hayes, 2013; PROCESS model 1). Three separate moderation analyses using multiple regression via PROCESS were run for each of the individual independent variables (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion), gender, and their interaction predicting relationship satisfaction. As was the case in the mediation analyses, this procedure used 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate the 95% confidence interval of the moderation models (Hayes, 2009), and the absence of zero within a confidence interval leads to rejection of the null hypothesis. Gender was not found to moderate the relation for each type of IPV and relationship satisfaction.

Psychological Aggression. Prior to examining the moderating role of gender in the association between psychological aggression and relationship satisfaction, the significance of all three predictors (i.e., psychological aggression, gender, and their interaction, psychological aggression X gender) was tested. This overall model was significant, $F(3, 148) = 16.22, p = .0000, R^2 = .25$, which provided sufficient evidence to analyze gender as a moderator variable. The second step tested whether gender predicted relationship satisfaction, which in this case was non-significant, $b = .06, t(148) = .4121, p = .68$. The third step examined whether psychological aggression was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. Psychological aggression was a significant negative predictor of relationship satisfaction, $b = -.0186, t(148) = -6.5800, p = .0000$, indicating that for every one point increase in psychological aggression, there was a .0186 decrease in relationship satisfaction. The fourth step tested the interaction between psychological aggression X gender and whether this interaction term predicted relationship satisfaction. The interaction term of psychological aggression X sex was not a significant predictor of

relationship satisfaction, $b = -.0042$, $t(148) = -.7378$, $p = .4618$. Gender did not moderate the relationship between psychological aggression and relationships satisfaction, 95% Boot CI [-.0154, .0070].

Physical Assault. The overall model that examined the significance of all three predictors of gender, physical assault, and the interaction term of gender X physical assault was first examined and found to be significant, $F(3, 148) = 6.67$, $p = .0003$, $R^2 = .12$; however, as was the case with psychological aggression, gender did not moderate the relation between psychological aggression and relationship satisfaction, 95% Boot CI [-.0137, .0419]. Physical assault was found to be a significant negative predictor of relationship satisfaction, $b = -.0245$, $t(148) = -3.5176$, $p = .0006$. The interaction term of physical assault X sex was not a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, $b = .0141$, $t(148) = 1.0032$, $p = .3174$.

Sexual Coercion. Last, again the initial overall model for sexual coercion, gender, and the interaction term of sexual coercion X gender was significant, $F(3, 148) = 6.9036$, $p = .0002$, $R^2 = .12$. Similar to the other two types of IPV, gender did not moderate the relation between sexual coercion and relationship satisfaction, 95% Boot CI [-.0289, .0210]. Sexual coercion was found to be a significant negative predictor of relationship satisfaction, $b = -.0209$, $t(148) = -3.3358$, $p = .0011$. The interaction term of sexual coercion X sex was not a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction, $b = -.0040$, $t(148) = -.3140$, $p = .7540$.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the analyses presented in the previous chapter and possible explanations of the findings within the context of existing literature. The limitations of this study are reviewed, suggestions for future research are presented, followed by implications for clinical practice as they relate to psychology. In response to the mixed findings in the literature on IPV and relationship satisfaction, the two main purposes of the present study were to examine the potential mediating role of idealization and the moderating role of gender on the relation between IPV (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion) and relationship satisfaction.

The main findings of this study include support for the mediating role of idealization on the association between each of the three types of IPV examined and relationship satisfaction. These findings extend the one previous study by Lin-Roark et al. (2015) that examined idealization in relationships where IPV was present. Lin-Roark et al. hypothesized a potential mediating role of idealization in the relation between IPV and women's self-esteem. Mediation analyses were not conducted in Lin-Roark et al.'s study due to participant's lack of idealization toward their abusive partners, which the authors indicated was most likely due to the sample being away from their abusive relationship and seeking shelter/resources, thus not needing or wanting to idealize their abusive partners. The current study examined the potential mediating role of idealization with a sample of individuals who may be more inclined to idealize partners and/or the relationship as the sample consisted of individuals currently in intimate relationships or those who had been in intimate relationships in the past 12-months. Idealization was

found to play a mediating role in the associations between the three types of IPV and relationship satisfaction as evidenced by a significant indirect effect ($a \times b$) as well as the absence of zero within the confidence interval (Hayes, 2009; Hayes & Sharkow, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). More specifically, the hypothesis that idealization has an intervening effect on the relation between IPV and relationship satisfaction was soundly supported by the results. These findings suggest that idealization may be used to explain an underlying process between psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion with relationship satisfaction.

As recommended by Rucker et al. (2011), along with the significance of the indirect effect, the size or magnitude of the indirect effect (i.e., the product of $a \times b$) should also be examined for interpreting mediation analyses. Statistical significance testing provides evidence for whether an effect is present or absent, whereas, effect size measures provide information on the magnitude of the effect, or the extent to which the null hypothesis is false. Researchers have documented the challenges of adapting existing effect size measures for use in mediation analyses (MacKinnon, 2008; Preacher & Kelley, 2011) because of difficulty calculating effect size for the product of two regression coefficients for the indirect effect. The effect sizes for this study were calculated using percent mediation, or P_M , as recommended by Preacher and Kelley (2011). Preacher and Kelley indicated limitations of using percent mediation to measure effect size, including it being an “unstable” measure unless the $n > 500$ (p. 98); however, they also noted it is one of the most widely used ways to measure effect size in mediation models due to the lack of better alternatives. The effect sizes found in this study should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of P_M . In this current study, $P_M = .49$

for psychological aggression, $P_M = .40$ for physical assault, and $P_M = .35$ for sexual coercion. The effect size for psychological aggression is considered to be medium and the effect sizes for physical assault and sexual coercion are considered to be small (Cohen, 1992). The result of a larger effect size for psychological aggression when compared to physical assault and sexual coercion may suggest that the mediating role of idealization was stronger in the association between psychological aggression and relationship satisfaction; however, as mentioned earlier, due to limitations of interpreting P_M , and particularly for this study that did not include $n > 500$, these effect sizes should be interpreted with caution.

It is important to note the Pearson correlation coefficient for idealization and relationship satisfaction, $r = .78$ at $p < .01$. The correlation between these two variables, as measured by IDS (Olson et al., 1985) and RAS (Hendrick, 1988) respectively, may be due to items that capture similar constructs across both measures. Although worded differently, some items may have presented overlapping ideas. For example, item number four on IDS, “I have never regretted my relationship with my partner,” may have been interpreted similarly by participants to item number four on RAS which was reverse coded, “How often do you wish you weren’t in this relationship with your partner.” Similarly, item number five on IDS, “My partner has all the qualities I’ve always wanted in a mate,” may have been interpreted similarly to item number one on RAS, “How well does your partner meet your needs?” The sample in this study reported generally high levels of idealization and relationship satisfaction, which may also have been a function of these scales being highly correlated.

This study also provided support for the idea that higher levels of psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous literature that have also found a negative association between IPV and relationships satisfaction (Cano & Vivian, 2003; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990; Margolin et al., 1998; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994; Vivian & Malone, 1997). Notably, when reporting IPV experiences, the participants in this study reported highest levels of experiencing psychological aggression, followed by sexual coercion, and lastly physical assault. This highlights the importance of examining multiple forms of IPV victimization and not only the form of physical assault, which is the most frequently studied form of violence in IPV research (Sullivan, 2003). This is even more important as many researchers assert that psychological aggression often precedes physical aggression (Arias & Pape, 1999; Mechanic et al., 2008; O’Leary, 1999; Sullivan et al., 2012), and that sexual aggression often co-occur with physical aggression (Coker et al., 2000; Sullivan et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2013).

Another interesting finding from this study was the difference in how participants reported experiences of IPV in the demographics questions versus how they reported experiences of IPV when assessed by the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). When participants were asked “Have you experienced any abuse by your current or past 12-month former partner? Some examples include any acts such as being shoved, called names, yelled at, hit/punched, forced to do sexual acts, or stalked” in the demographics questionnaire, 88.5% of participants denied experiencing IPV by their current or former partners. However, when analyzing the data, every participant in this study endorsed being

victimized by some type of IPV as measured by the CTS2 (Straus, 1996), by their current or past 12-month former intimate partner. Participants were then asked if they had ever been in a past intimate relationship in which IPV was present, and still 121 (79.1%) participants indicated they had never been in any past intimate relationship where IPV was present. These results demonstrate the importance of utilizing a measure such as the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) for assessing for IPV instead of brief questions and are consistent with research by Hamby and Gray-Little (2000) who discussed the possibility that some victims of IPV may not consider themselves victims of violence or fail to identify certain forms of violence as IPV (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). This raises the question regarding how individuals define and perceive IPV in their intimate relationships, while also highlighting the importance of outreach to educate individuals on identification of IPV.

These findings as well as evidence of the mediating role of idealization on the associations between each of the three types of IPV and relationship satisfaction extend previous research on the separate topics of IPV and idealization, while also merging these two topic areas. This study provides preliminary support for the hypothesis that idealization does play a mediating role in the association between IPV (i.e., psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion) and relationship satisfaction, offering a possible window into an underlying factor, that is, partner and/or relationship idealization, to understand better the mixed findings on literature about IPV and relationship satisfaction. The mobilization-minimization theory of coping (Taylor, 1991) may be used as a possible explanation for the mediating role of idealization such that idealization may serve as a way to cope through or make sense of stressful or threatening

situations that victims of IPV experience. Taylor's theory suggests two steps for how individuals react to negative events such as IPV experiences. First, individuals engage in short-term mobilization through their immediate reactions to the negative event. Then individuals engage in long-term minimization of the negative event in order to cope. Taylor (1991) suggested that individuals use positive emotions of relief and extreme relaxation to cope after the negative event is removed. This process may be similar to one that victims of IPV experience. More specifically, after an abusive event occurs, victims mobilize by engaging in fight-or-flight reactions (Cannon, 1929) in the moment and after the abusive event is over, they may engage in idealization of their partner and/or relationship as an attempt to offset the negative event through use of overly positive emotions and illusions of the partner and/or the relationship. Murray et al. (1996a, 1996b) suggested that positive illusions were a natural byproduct of relationship development. Although this seems plausible, this study presents the possibility that positive illusions or idealizations are also strengthened or formed as a means to cope with the abusive event.

An alternative interpretation for the mediating role of idealization may be explained through the process of "traumatic bonding" explained by Dutton and Painter (1981). Traumatic bonds keep IPV experiences in a state of denial about the violence present in the intimate relationship due to abusers increasing their power through repeated cycles of abuse and use of control and manipulation tactics. During this process, the victim's emotional bond to the abuser increases. A similar process is shown in the cycle of violence theory created by Lenore Walker (1979) to describe the cyclical nature of IPV and its effects on victims. Walker outlines three distinct phases that are generally

present in intimate relationships where IPV is present. The first phase usually lasts for a period of time (e.g., weeks or months) and is characterized by tension building and communication break down between partners. The abuser often engages in verbal abuse and “minor” incidents of abuse may occur during this phase. The second phase is defined by the IPV event in which the abuser takes increased overt control and uses IPV against the victim. The third and final phase is known as the “honeymoon period,” when the abuser apologizes, begs forgiveness, expresses love for the victim, and often promises not to use IPV again against the victim. These theories allude to the underlying factors of power, control, and possible traumatic bonds developed by the victim for her/his abusive partner. Although this study did not examine idealization within the context of Walker’s cycle of violence theory, the finding from this study that idealization serves as a mediating role for IPV and relationship satisfaction raises new questions for how IPV is understood. Further research is needed to examine idealization as a mediating variable in relationships where IPV is present in order to establish a possible pattern and strengthen its ability to explain the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction.

In response to the criticism of a lack of gender symmetry in IPV research (Babcock et al., 1993; Caldwell et al., 2011; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Ulloa & Hammett, 2015), this study also examined the potential moderating effect of gender on the relation between IPV and relationship satisfaction; however, moderation of gender was not detected in this study. This may be explained by power theory, which asserts that power differences are a potential cause for gender asymmetry with regard to relationship satisfaction in IPV relationships (Straus, 1976; 1977). Although gender differences exist in the prevalence of IPV, power theory highlights that asymmetrical power structure, not

gender, is the major catalyst for IPV, which may suggest difficulty in finding moderation by gender alone.

Clinical Implications

The findings of this study in context of past research have significant implications for clinical work in the field of psychology. The results of this study indicate that idealizing one's partner and/or the relationship can explain why or how individuals who experience IPV in their intimate relationships report satisfaction levels the way they do. Clinicians are in a unique position to help victims of IPV, starting with appropriately assessing for the presence of IPV. As observed in this study, the majority of participants denied having experienced IPV in their past or current intimate relationships, but every participant endorsed being victim of some form of IPV when assessed using the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). A simple question about the presence of IPV may not sufficiently address whether IPV is truly present in an individual's intimate relationship. Previous research has suggested victims of IPV may not consider themselves victims of violence, fail to identify physical violence as IPV, and rationalize their offender's behaviors in order to maintain their desire to feel satisfied in their relationship (Ackerman & Field, 2011, Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000). This highlights the need for psychologists and those in the helping professions not only to provide support for victims of IPV but to also provide psychoeducation on what constitutes IPV.

Often times, more attention is placed on overt forms of abuse such as physical abuse. This has been the case in IPV research (Sullivan, 2013). Out of the three types of IPV examined in this study, psychological aggression was the highest type of IPV that participants reported experiencing from their intimate partners. These findings are a

good reminder for clinicians to assess for multiple types of IPV and not only for physical forms of IPV. Further, it is equally important for clinicians not to wait for the presence of overt, physical forms of IPV to occur before providing support and psychoeducation, especially given research that suggests psychological aggression often precedes physical aggression (Arias & Pape, 1999; Mechanic et al., 2008; Sullivan et al., 2012).

This study provides evidence that idealization is an important and relevant underlying factor for intimate relationships where IPV is present. With this knowledge, clinicians can assess for overly positive illusions that victims of IPV may hold about their partners and find ways to process with the clients how holding these idealization affects them. Although there was only one other study was found that examined idealization in relationships where IPV was present (Lin-Roark et al., 2015), a major difference between that study and the present study was the presence of idealization for participants and the sample composition. Unlike this study, Lin-Roark et al. did not find evidence that participants were engaging in idealizations of their partner and/or their relationship, which the authors attributed to sample characteristics. More specifically, their sample comprised of women who had left their abusive partners. This brings to question when, or at what point in the intimate relationship, are idealizations of partners and/or relationships most commonly experienced by individuals. Any type of conclusion related to this cannot be made by only two studies, but if future research continues to expand understanding of idealization, IPV, and relationship satisfaction, it may inform clinical practice with regards to increased understanding of the cycle of violence, a victim's insight into IPV experiences, how and when to best intervene, and how to tailor treatment

approaches based on idealization level. Lastly, when considering the use of idealization by IPV experiencers as a form of coping or to rationalize abuser's behaviors, clinicians can use this as a cue to teach healthy coping skills to replace the use of idealization as a coping strategy.

Limitations

An important limitation of this study is the nature of the sample. First, the sample consisted of predominately individuals who identified as Caucasian/White. For this reason, results may not be generalized to the entire population. Future research in this area should include a more balanced sample with demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, age) that better mirrors the population. Further, the correlational nature of this study does not allow for causal inferences about the relationships between the independent variable, IPV, the mediator variable, idealization, and the dependent variable, relationship satisfaction. Other unknown or unexamined variables may have influenced the associations between these variables.

Data from this study were cross-sectional, which some authors have indicated generates bias for mediation analyses (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). This study analyzed mediation models as recommended by Hayes (2009) and Preacher and Hayes (2004); however, recommendations on the procedures, practices, and interpretations of mediation analyses have been conflicting in the psychological research literature (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004; Rucker et al., 2011; Wiedermann & von Eye, 2015). For example, this study utilized percent mediation to determine effect sizes for the mediation models even though this method was not recommended for use when $n < 500$

(Preacher & Kelley, 2011). Preacher and Kelley (2011) noted lack of better alternatives for determining effect sizes in mediation analyses.

Another limitation of this study appeared in the utilization of IDS (Olson et al., 1985) and RAS (Hendrick, 1988) to assess idealization and relationship satisfaction. Idealization and relationship satisfaction appeared highly correlated to each other, which brings to question whether these scales were measuring these separate constructs in ways that were too similar. IDS was used to measure idealization as it is widely used within idealization related research and has a strong alpha coefficient and test-retest reliability (Fowers & Olson, 1993). RAS was used to measure relationship satisfaction also because of its psychometrically sound properties, with the addition that it accounted for a wider range of types of intimate relationships such as non-married couples (Hendrick, 1988). Future research in this area would benefit from using scales that were not highly correlated.

Lastly, the overall sample in this study reported having experienced generally low levels of all three types of IPV. It may be beneficial to investigate the mediation and moderation hypotheses with a sample reporting a wider range of severity levels of IPV experiences in their intimate relationships. This study also only assessed IPV from the experiencer's viewpoint and did not account for them perpetrating IPV as well.

Future Directions

According to the results, the mediating role of idealization was supported in the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction; however, as this was the first study to analyze the mediating role of idealization in intimate relationships where IPV was present, it will be important to attempt to replicate these findings. Future research on the

specific direction of the effects would also be beneficial (Wiedermann & von Eye, 2015) to understand better how idealization mediates the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction. Gender was not found to moderate this association; therefore, it is suggested that future research explore alternative models to investigate whether a different model better accounts for IPV and relationship satisfaction.

A longitudinal study that assesses idealization at different times during an intimate relationship is also recommended for future mediation analyses as recommended by Maxwell and Cole (2007). This could also provide less biased estimates for the mediation model and provide more information on how, why, and when idealization may occur in an intimate relationship.

It would also be interesting to investigate the relation between idealization, IPV, and relationship satisfaction using dyadic data from couples and compare the results for couples within the relationship. The CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) is designed to assess IPV for experiencers as well as users of IPV. Future research can incorporate both the experiencer's side and user's side to understand better the association between idealization, IPV, and relationship satisfaction.

Conclusions

This study provided evidence for the mediating role of idealization on the relation between IPV and relationship satisfaction. It was the first study that analyzed this mediating variable for intimate relationships where IPV was present, thus merging two major topics of research, idealization and IPV, together for the first time. Research on IPV must continue in order to understand better possible underlying, contributing factors to IPV, however. The more factors that researchers can uncover, the better our

understanding of IPV. Although the moderation analyses were not significant, future research on increasing gender symmetry within IPV research remains a high priority. This study served as a solid starting point for understanding idealization, IPV, and relationship satisfaction with hopes to continue to expand knowledge of IPV and how to prevent it.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Sharon Kurpius
CISA: Counseling and Counseling Psychology
480/965-6104
sharon.kurpius@asu.edu

Dear Sharon Kurpius:

On 9/29/2016 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Idealization, Intimate Partner Violence, and Relationship Satisfaction
Investigator:	Sharon Kurpius
IRB ID:	STUDY00004347
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charlene Kim Questionnaire Items, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• Charlene Kim Recruitment Materials, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Charlene Kim Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;• Informed Consent, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 9/29/2016.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc:

Charlene Kim

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a research study about intimate relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine factors related to relationship satisfaction. Charlene Kim, M.A. a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Arizona State University is conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Robinson-Kurpius, Ph.D. This survey will take about 30 minutes of your time.

Before you consent to participate, please read the information below.

Confidentiality

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and personal information (e.g., e-mail address) will be numerically coded and kept separate from the research materials and data. All responses will remain anonymous and any identify information will not be included in the reports of this study. Data will be stored in a secured computer file. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even though answering all the items in the survey is appreciate and critical to the results of this study, you may decline to answer any questions and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. There is no right answer to any question or item.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in this Study

Some of the items on the questionnaire may elicit emotional or psychological distress. If you experience any distress, there are several hotlines you may contact which will direct you to local resources in your area: The National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE or The National Center for Victims of Crime (800) FYI-CALL. You are not obligated to complete any part of the questionnaire with which you are not comfortable.

There are potential benefits to you by participating in this study. You may experience a greater understanding of yourself and your past/current intimate relationships. Your participation will also help to further our understanding of intimate partner violence and more importantly, how to prevent it.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

The researcher obtained IRB approval through the Research Integrity and Assurance Office at Arizona State University (ASU) prior to the start of this study (IRB ID: STUDY00004347). If at any time, you have questions about your rights as a participant or are dissatisfied with any aspect of the study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the IRB by phone at (480) 965-6788 or via e-mail at research.integrity@asu.edu.

Contact Information and Questions

You may also contact the researcher at any time with any questions related to the study. Charlene Kim can be reached via e-mail at Charlene.Kim@asu.edu. This researcher's faculty advisor and dissertation chair is Dr. Sharon Robinson-Kurpius, Ph.D.

Your completion of the survey will serve as your consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is a demographic questionnaire related to the variables pertinent to the results of this study. Please respond to the following items as best you can. All of the responses will remain confidential and anonymous.

1. Age: _____

2. Sex:
_____ Female
_____ Male
_____ Other

3. Sexual Orientation
_____ Heterosexual female
_____ Heterosexual male
_____ Gay male
_____ Lesbian
_____ Other (Specify: _____)

4. Race/Ethnicity:
_____ African-American (1)
_____ Asian-American (2)
_____ Caucasian/White (3)
_____ Hispanic American (4)
_____ Native American (5)
_____ Biracial/Multiracial (Specify: _____) (6)
_____ Other (7)

5. Highest education level completed
_____ High School or equivalent
_____ Associate's degree
_____ Bachelor's degree
_____ Master's degree
_____ Doctoral degree

6. Income
_____ \$0 - \$19,999
_____ \$20,000 - \$39,999
_____ \$40,000 - \$59,999
_____ \$60,000 - \$79,999
_____ \$80,000 - \$99,999
_____ \$100,000 or more

7. Romantic relationship status – please check the item that best describes you:
_____ Single, not dating

- Dating
- Living together, committed relationship
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated and dating
- Divorced and dating
- Widowed and dating

8. Intimate partner violence “describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner” (CDC, 2016). Have you experienced intimate partner violence?

- Yes, in a past intimate relationship.
- Yes, in my current intimate relationship.
- Yes, in my current and in past intimate relationship(s).
- No, I have not experienced intimate partner violence.

9. What was the length of the longest relationship you had where you experienced intimate partner violence?

- 0 months
- 1-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7+ years

**REVISED CONFLICT TACTICS SCALE (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy,
& Sugarman, 1996)**

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with one another, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired or upset for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Some questions are about you and others are about your partner. Please circle the response that describes how many times these things happened in the past year. If one of these things did not happen in the past year, but happened before, circle “7.”

How often did this happen in the past year?	Once	Twice	3-5	6-10	11-20	More than 20 times	Not in the past year, but it has happened before	Never
1. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2. <i>My partner</i> showed care for me even though we disagreed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4. <i>My partner</i> explained his or her side of a disagreement to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5. I insulted or swore at my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6. <i>My partner</i> insulted or swore at me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7. I threw something at my partner that could hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8. <i>My partner</i> threw something at me that could hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9. I twisted my partner’s arm or hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10. <i>My partner</i> twisted my arm or hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
12. <i>My partner</i> had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
13. I showed respect for my partner’s feelings about an issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
14. <i>My partner</i> showed respect for my feelings about an issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
15. I made my partner have sex without a condom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
16. <i>My partner</i> made me have sex without a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

condom.								
17. I pushed or shoved my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
18. <i>My partner</i> pushed or shoved me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
19. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
20. <i>My partner</i> used force to make me have oral or anal sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
21. I used a knife or gun on my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
22. <i>My partner</i> used a knife or gun on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
23. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
24. <i>My partner</i> passed out from being hit on the head by me in a fight.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
25. I called my partner fat or ugly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26. <i>My partner</i> called me fat or ugly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
27. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
28. <i>My partner</i> punched or hit me with something that could hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
29. I destroyed something belonging to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
30. <i>My partner</i> destroyed something that belonged to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
31. I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner,	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
32. <i>My partner</i> went to a doctor because of a fight with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
33. I choked <i>my partner</i> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
34. <i>My partner</i> choked me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
35. I shouted or yelled at my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
36. <i>My partner</i> shouted or yelled at me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
37. I slammed my partner against a wall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
38. <i>My partner</i> slammed me against a wall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
39. I said I was sure we could work out a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
40. <i>My partner</i> was sure we could work it out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
41. I needed to see a doctor because of a fight with my partner, but didn't.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
42. <i>My partner</i> needed to see a doctor because of a fight with me, but didn't.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
43. I beat up my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
44. <i>My partner</i> beat me up.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
45. I grabbed my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
46. <i>My partner</i> grabbed me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
47. I used force (like hitting, holding down,	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex.								
48. <i>My partner</i> used force to make me have sex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
49. I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
50. <i>My partner</i> stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
51. I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but I did not use physical force).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
52. <i>My partner</i> insisted that I have sex when I didn't want to (but did not use physical force).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
53. I slapped my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
54. <i>My partner</i> slapped me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
55. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
56. <i>My partner</i> had a broken bone from a fight with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
57. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
58. <i>My partner</i> used threats to make me have oral or anal sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
59. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
60. <i>My partner</i> suggested a compromise to a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
61. I burned or scalded <i>my partner</i> on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
62. <i>My partner</i> burned or scalded me on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
63. I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
64. <i>My partner</i> insisted I have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
65. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
66. <i>My partner</i> accused me of being a lousy lover.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
67. I did something to spite my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
68. <i>My partner</i> did something to spite me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
69. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
70. <i>My partner</i> threatened to hit or throw something at me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
71. I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

72. <i>My partner</i> still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
73. I kicked my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
74. <i>My partner</i> kicked me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
75. I used threats to make my partner have sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
76. <i>My partner</i> used threats to make me have sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
77. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
78. <i>My partner</i> agreed to a solution I suggested.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

Idealistic Distortion Scale (IDS; Olson et al., 1985)

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

- 1. My partner and I understand each other completely.
- 2. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
- 3. Our relationship is a perfect success.
- 4. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner.
- 5. My partner has all the qualities I've always wanted in a mate.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988)

Indicate the number that best represents your response.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not well Very well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not satisfied Very satisfied

3. How good is your relationship with your partner compared to most?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not good Very good

4. How often do you wish you weren't in this relationship with your partner?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Never/Not often Very often/Always

5. To what extent has your relationship with your partner met your expectations?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not at all Very much

6. How much do you love your partner?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not much Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship with your partner?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not many Very many