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**Qualitative Exploration of Cognition in Intimate Partner Violence Offenders and**

**Intimate Partner Violence Sex Offenders**

**Research Portfolio**



**THE UNIVERSITY**  
*of* **EDINBURGH**

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This thesis is dedicated to everyone who has been affected by intimate partner violence and family violence.

## DClinPsychol. Declaration of own work

**Name:** Sarah Weldon  
**Assessed work:** Thesis  
**Title of work:** Qualitative Exploration of Cognition in Intimate Partner Violence  
**Sex Offenders**

*I confirm that all of this work is my own except where indicated, and that I have:*

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## **Research Portfolio Abstract**

**Aims:** Recently, empirical literature exploring cognitive characteristics of intimate partner violence offenders has received considerable attention with both theory and practice historically focusing on victims of the abuse. Qualitative exploration has proposed implicit theories (ITs), that is distinct sets of schemas that offenders hold in relation to themselves, the world and others. In relation to cognition in intimate partner violence offenders, this thesis had two aims: to systematically analyse qualitative literature exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders and to implement interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore cognition in intimate partner violence sex offenders.

**Methods:** Aims are addressed separately in two journal articles. A systematic review of qualitative literature exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders is presented in journal article 1. Journal article 2 utilises interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore cognition in 11 intimate partner sex offenders.

**Results:** In relation to journal article 1, systematic searches of bibliographic databases in addition to hand-searches of various articles in the domain of intimate partner violence were conducted to identify eight empirical papers qualitatively exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders. Synthesis of the papers resulted in 10 themes being extrapolated thought to be representative of cognition in intimate partner violence males: “violence is normal”; “policing partner”; “women are provoking” “need for control”; “grievance/vengeance”; “external factors responsible”; “rejection/abandonment”; “minimisation/denial”; “entitlement” and “remorse”. Journal article two utilised interpretative phenomenological analysis of 11 transcripts of IPV offenders. This revealed five superordinate and 14 subthemes which are proposed as implicit theories present in this specific offender group. These are: “violence is acceptable”; “grievance/vengeance”; “dangerous world”; “need for control”; “real man”; “entitlement/women are objects”; “male sex drive/policing partner”; “women are provoking”; “rejection/abandonment”; “women are supportive”; “uncontrollability”; “nature of harm”; “the new me” and “I’m not like them”.

**Conclusions:** Cognitions identified from the systematic review are discussed in addition to limitations of the synthesis and clinical and empirical utility. The implicit theories identified in journal article 2 are discussed in relation to other offending behaviour groups in addition to their clinical implications in the development of effective interventions and risk assessment tools.

## **Research Portfolio Introduction**

This thesis is presented in portfolio format and is comprised of two journal articles which have the following aims in relation to cognition in intimate partner violence offenders:

- (1) To systematically review qualitative empirical literature specifically investigating cognition in intimate partner violence offenders.
- (2) To explore intimate partner violence sex offenders' cognition from their perspective using interpretative phenomenological analysis. This analysis will reveal themes which may be representative of distinct cognitive schemas present in intimate partner violence sex offenders.

In this context, intimate partner violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force within an adult intimate partner relationship. Intimate partner sex offending is defined as the use of physical force to compel a partner to engage in a sexual act including sexual assault and rape in an intimate relationship and hence does not include child sex offending or sex offending against an adult female when the victim is not known to the perpetrator.

With regard to the current review, individual articles provide an introduction to specific background literature, however the clinical and theoretical context for the overall thesis is outlined here.

Intimate partner violence, brought to the attention of the public by feminist activists in the 1960's and 70's, remains a pervasive problem in the UK. Figures from Women's Aid demonstrate the on-going frequency and severity of intimate partner violence with one incident reported to the police every minute and two women being murdered by a current or former partner weekly in the UK (Women's Aid website, 2013). Various offending behaviour programmes have been implemented with intimate partner violence males in the hopes of reducing reoffending behaviour (Gilchrist, 2009). However, these programmes tend to focus on patriarchal beliefs and attitudes related to masculine entitlement and do not offer an account of why these beliefs and attitudes came to be held.

The theoretical perspectives of intimate partner violence, while offering an explanation as to why intimate partner violence and intimate partner sex offending occur, do not adequately account for the cognition behind this specific type of offending behaviour. The Duluth Model (Pence & Paymer, 1993) offers a conceptualisation of feminist theory based largely on data from female victims of intimate partner violence. As with offending behaviour programmes, its theoretical perspective is related to societal perspectives of male entitlement and offers no explanation as to how these views come to be held in an intimate partner violence offender.

A second influential perspective is that of social learning theory (Dutton, 1998) which has been implicated in intimate partner violence research since its inception. Kalmuss (1984) found that a male

child's past exposure to intimate partner violence was a stronger predictor that he will go on to perpetrate intimate partner violence than if he were to be abused as a child. Again, however, while stating that early experience of violence may lead to an increased likelihood of perpetration of violence as an adult, the theory does not account for the underlying cognitions and mechanisms by which this process occurs (Gilchrist, 2009).

The lack of a theoretical all encompassing model accounting for cognitions in intimate partner violence has led to exploration of cognition in this offending behaviour group (Holtzworth-Munro, 2000; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000). This work has largely focussed on attributions and interpretation of conflict in relationship scenarios by maritally violent and non-violent males again not encompassing specific underlying schemas present in intimate partner violence males.

Recently, exploration of cognition in other types of offending behaviour groups has led to the identification of specific schemas which have been treatment targets in these offender groups (Beech, Bartels & Dixon, 2012; Fisher & Beech, 2007). When proposing implicit theories in child sexual abusers, Ward (2000) refers to these schemas as "implicit theories" that is essentially a number of interconnected beliefs that is related to the offenders' view of themselves, others and the world. Ward (2000) is keen to note that implicit theories are simply another way of conceptualising a schema however, in a way which aids an individual's interpretation of their internal and external environment. In this way, implicit theories are defined and conceptualised in relation to general scientific theories. According to this model, children operate like scientists who routinely develop theories in order to explain and predict the world around them (Ward & Keenan, 1999). Ward utilises the term "implicit theory" as opposed to "schema" because of latter's ambiguity and lack of conceptual development (Fisher & Beech, 2007).

Implicit theories, are therefore, largely based on the schema model in cognitive psychology (Mann & Beech, 2003). They also incorporate the idea of "cognitive distortions" (Abel, Becker & Cunningham-Rathner, 1984) within the area of sex offending research. Abel et al. suggest that cognitive distortions account for how maladaptive sexual arousal develops in males as a defence mechanism which appear to allow the child sexual abuser to feel more comfortable with his behaviour (Thakker, Ward & Navathe, 2007). In this way, implicit theories may play a maintenance role in offending behaviour.

The access of offenders' implicit theories has been largely through qualitative exploration as it is thought possible to identify an offender's latent cognition without the offender explicitly acknowledging these. This is, therefore, invaluable given assessment of offenders using standard psychometrics is often fraught with difficulty given offenders are often keen to be seen in a positive light and answer questionnaires as such in addition to being defensive and denying. Hence, allowing offenders to give a free narrative of their offending is more likely to give access to implicit theories held.

The identification of implicit theories has obvious clinical implication given that the implicit theories themselves can be specific treatment targets much like in Young's schema focussed therapy (e.g. Young, 1990). Ward noted that offenders may present with some offence supportive implicit theories and not others and therefore identification of the implicit theories present in the offender would be part of the clinician role. They may also overlap with others types of offender group e.g. sexual murderers may overlap with rapists, and so identification of a distinct set of implicit theories in specific offending behaviour groups would be beneficial both empirically and clinically. Consequently, specific treatment should be guided by the particular type of implicit theory present in each individual.

To date, implicit theories present in intimate partner violence sex offenders has received little empirical attention. The current research and review, therefore, looks solely at cognition in this distinct group of offenders in the hopes of identifying specific cognitions in intimate partner violence males and intimate partner violence sex offenders. This is done in the hope that these cognitions can be successful intervention and treatment targets and incorporated into risk assessment tools. Journal article 1 is a synthesis of qualitative articles exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders. Journal article 2 is qualitative exploration of cognition in intimate partner violence sex offenders using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

While it is noted that violence often occurs within the context of same-sex relationships and female-to-male violence, the literature is not yet suitably progressed so as to account for cognition in these intimate partner violence perpetrators (Morgan & Gilchrist, 2010). Therefore, the current study shall focus solely on male perpetrators of abuse so as to add to the literature on cognition within this population.

**Journal Article 1**

**TITLE**

**Systematic Review of Qualitative Articles Exploring Cognition in Intimate Partner Violence Offenders**

**WORD COUNT**

6586

Submitted for publication to *Journal of Family Violence*

## **Systematic Review of Qualitative Articles Exploring Cognition in Intimate Partner Violence Offenders**

### **Abstract**

Empirical literature on qualitative exploration of intimate partner violence (IPV) offenders is sparse with both theory and practice historically focusing on the victims of the abuse. However, recently there has been a notable interest in this area due to acknowledgment of the need for effective clinical intervention for IPV offenders focusing on specific aspects of cognition (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). In order to design and implement effective intervention strategies, it would be beneficial to have a general consensus as to the specific offence orientated beliefs and schemas present in IPV males. Therefore, the current review aims to systematically analyse qualitative empirical literature specifically investigating cognition in IPV offenders. Systematic searches of bibliographic databases in addition to hand-searches of various articles in the domain of IPV were conducted to identify eight empirical papers qualitatively exploring cognition in IPV offenders. Synthesis of the papers resulted in 10 themes being extrapolated thought to be representative of cognition in IPV males: “violence is normal”; “policing partner”; “women are provoking” “need for control”; “grievance/revenge”; “external factors responsible”; “rejection/abandonment”; “minimisation/denial”; “entitlement” and “remorse”. Each theme is discussed, in addition to limitations of the current synthesis and clinical and empirical utility.

### **Introduction**

Empirical research into cognition in IPV offenders is not as established as in other types of offender groups (Dempsey & Day, 2011; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). This is perhaps due to a lack of consensus regarding what constitutes intimate partner violence in addition to the dominant feminist perspective in this area focusing on victims of IPV (Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Gilchrist & Kebbelle, 2004). The Duluth Model (Pency & Paymer, 1993) represented a conceptualisation of feminist theory. According to this extreme, feminist approach, one would expect cognition in IPV offenders to be related to patriarchal entitlement. In terms of informing intervention, the feminist approach deemed Western societal constructs, related to concepts of masculinity and patriarchal beliefs, to be suitable foci, ignoring individual differences in cognition in IPV offenders.

However, acknowledgement of distinct cognitions in other offender groups such as sex offenders (Polaschek & Ward, 2002; Ward, 2000) and violent offenders (Polaschek, Collie & Walkey, 2004) has led to development of a distinct set of implicit theories (ITs). ITs have been defined as offence supportive schemas of the individual’s view of the world which supports their specific type of offending behaviour (Ward, 2000). The term *implicit theory* is derived from developmental research as to how children acquire theory of mind (Wellman, 1990). Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the presence of specific implicit theories in offender groups has led to the development and

implementation of interventions which target distinct criminogenic needs and have been shown to demonstrate efficacy in reducing recidivism (Beech, Bartels & Dixon, 2012; Ciardha & Ward, 2013).

To date, most research looking at cognition in IPV offenders has been from a social information processing theory perspective (Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchison 1993). This research has focussed on how IPV males arrive at a specific cognition in response to a perceived slight and how this cognitive process is related to noticeable patterns of behaviour and emotional expression (Eckhardt & Dye, 2000).

Moore, Eisler and Franchina (2000) investigated the effect of female provocation on affective response and attribution in verbally abusive males in comparison with non abusive males. Findings indicated that abusive males exhibited greater feelings of jealousy; rejection/abandonment and reported greater negative attribution. Moore et al. (2000) theorised that abusive males were more likely to misinterpret female intent and ineffectively cognitively appraise the situation.

Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchison (1993) investigated social skills deficits in IPV males by comparing maritally violent, maritally distressed non-violent and happily married nonviolent control groups. The results indicated that, when comparing responses to imagined relationship conflict, IPV males evidenced more dependency/attachment issues in childhood, had an increased likelihood of developing a personality disorder, had an increased likelihood of developing problems with substance misuse, overtly displayed aggression and evidenced greater psychological distress than their non violent counterparts. However, Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchison did not investigate the impact that cognitive arousal, for example, a marital conflict, would have on the response of IPV males. This was considered significant by Eckhardt and Dye (2000) in accessing underlying cognitive schemas that may not be evident in an experimental setting.

Recognising this deficit in the research, Eckhardt, Samper, Suhr and Holtzworth-Munroe (2012) administered an implicit measure of attitudes to IPV and nonviolent males, as opposed to paper and pencil questionnaires which are prone to social desirability biases. They found no observable group differences on explicit attitudinal measures. They did, however, find that IPV males evidenced a more rapid association between females and violence and that the IPV males demonstrated greater implicit attitudes supporting violence.

Therefore, the experimental studies offer information as to the content of cognition in IPV offenders. However, cognitions, and indeed access to latent cognitions, may change under aroused conditions and in response to a perceived slight from an intimate partner. Furthermore, no definitive cognitive characteristics of IPV offenders have been unequivocally established. Hence, adopting a qualitative approach, as with the papers in the current synthesis, may give access to latent cognitive content, schemas and cognitive distortions, in the hopes of developing distinct implicit theories in this offender

group. Gilchrist (2009) proposed implicit theories thought to be present in the IPV offender by deducing from empirical, theoretical and clinical literature: *uncontrollability; violence is acceptable; women are objects/women are owned; entitlement/respect; women are to blame/at fault; real man; need for control/man in control; win or lose; out of control and sex drive is uncontrollable*. Consequently, one would expect these implicit theories, or variations of these, to be present in studies qualitatively exploring cognition in IPV offenders.

Adams (2007) conducted a study in which he interviewed 31 men who were convicted of murdering their partner. He found that men who murdered their intimate partner, as with general IPV offenders, often minimised and denied their violence. Furthermore, he found that they often blamed their partners for their violence, citing reasons such as “she didn’t talk to me respectfully” and “she’s got a big mouth” (Adams, 2007, pg 29). With regard to offender profiling, Adams found that he was able to identify distinct types of IPV murderers, inclusive of *jealous; substance abusing; materially motivated; suicidal and career criminal*. One would expect, therefore, that these types of offender would be representative of definitive individual differences in cognition in this offender group.

### **Aim**

The aim of the current paper is to systematically review peer-reviewed qualitative, empirical articles exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders. The results will then be synthesised to determine distinct implicit theories which may be present in IPV offenders and identified from the abuser’s perspective. Recognition of distinct implicit theories in this group of offenders will have clinical utility in design and implementation of specific offending behaviour interventions.

### **Method**

#### **Search Strategy**

The systematic review was conducted based on the guidelines for assessing the quality of qualitative empirical articles outlined by Chenail (2011) utilising the CASP Tool (Critical Appraisal Skill’s Programme; “*Making Sense of Evidence Tool: 10 Questions to Help You Make Sense of Qualitative Research*”). In order to identify appropriate articles for inclusion in the review, comprehensive searches of bibliographic databases were conducted between 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Eight databases were systematically searched: MEDLINE; PsycINFO; Google Scholar; SAGE; Science Direct; CINAHL; NCBI and the University of Edinburgh Library electronic journal database. The PsycInfo and OVID databases produced a limited amount of papers despite numerous searches (four in the search period). Thereafter, the systematic search largely focussed on the Science Direct database (due to its association with forensic literature) and the SAGE database (due to its association with qualitative literature) to maximise the opportunity of finding relevant articles.

Medline, OVID and Psycinfo databases were searched on 13<sup>th</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012 in addition to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Google Scholar database was searched on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013. Science Direct database was searched on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013. SAGE database was searched on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January. CINAHL database was searched on 21<sup>st</sup> January and The University of Edinburgh Library e-journal database was searched on 21<sup>st</sup> January. All eight databases were subsequently revisited on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and searched for a second time to ensure all relevant articles had been captured since the commencement of the search period. This process was repeated across all eight databases on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 to determine if any articles were published since January which met the inclusion criteria. No such articles were found.

Search terms were chosen to encapsulate all articles qualitatively exploring cognition in IPV offenders. Therefore, each search conducted consisted of a term relating to intimate partner violence; cognition and qualitative research, for example, “*domestic violence AND content analysis AND schema*”. Additionally, Table 1.1 illustrates the specifiers and synonyms used for each search term to maximise access to relevant literature.

**Table 1.1 Key word representative of search term entered into bibliographic database**

<b>Search Term</b>	<b>Key Words</b>
Intimate Partner Violence	<i>Intimate partner violence; domestic violence; partner abuse; domestic abuse; marital violence; marital conflict; spouse abuse</i>
Qualitative Research	<i>Qualitative; interpretative phenomenological analysis; content analysis; grounded theory; account*</i>
Cognition	<i>Cognition; cog*; implicit theory; cognitive distortions; schema*; cog* schema*</i>

Furthermore, the reference list of Gilchrist’s chapter on the cognition of domestic abusers was hand searched (in Gannon, Ward, Beech & Fisher, 2007). In addition, an article exploring implicit theories in intimate partner violence offenders based on empirical literature was hand searched due to the focus on cognition in IPV offenders (Gilchrist, 2009). The reference lists of the eight articles included in the current synthesis were also hand-searched.

Finally, seven expert authors in the field of intimate partner violence research were emailed between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013 to determine if they knew of any further relevant articles to be included in the current synthesis. This resulted in access to unpublished manuscripts but no peer reviewed articles and hence no inclusion in the current review. The Google scholar database search resulted in access to two unpublished doctoral theses qualitatively exploring cognition in IPV offenders. Both authors were contacted by email on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January respectively and, as

neither paper had yet been prepared in journal article format nor submitted for publication, they were not included for review in the current study. The reference lists of these doctoral manuscripts were however, hand-searched. The studies identified from hand-searches were screened by article title and abstract to determine inclusion in the current synthesis.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

All studies identified using the above search methods were analysed and thereafter accepted or excluded due to their accordance with specific criteria. In consensus with the aims of this review, articles were included if they were:

- Articles published in English in a peer-reviewed journal
- Utilising a qualitative design
- Exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders
- From the perspective of the IPV offender

Studies were excluded if they were:

- Adopting a quantitative methodology (to investigate cognition in IPV offenders)
- Utilising a qualitative methodology to focus on the language used by IPV offenders (as opposed to focus on cognition)
- In doctoral thesis format (and hence not meeting inclusion criteria for peer-reviewed journal)

### **Assessment of Quality**

The eight papers which met the above inclusion criteria were then assessed for quality using the CASP Tool (Appendix I) in accordance with guidelines recommended by Chenail. The CASP Tool consists of ten questions designed to determine the quality of qualitative research. The questions concern the research design adopted; the sample; data collection; discussion of reflexivity; ethical issues; data analysis; overall findings of the research in addition to its value both clinically and empirically.

In the current synthesis, the CASP tool was adapted by incorporating a scoring system. The distinct items of the CASP were scored as follows: a score of 2 was awarded when a specific criterion was present; 1 when partially present and 0 when a criterion was absent. This resulted in a total score of 20 ascertaining the maximum quality criteria. Therefore, total scores for each of the eight papers were then calculated. Articles that achieved a total score of 16-20 were awarded a “++” status indicative of 80-100% of the quality criteria being met therefore representing good methodological quality. An “+” grade was awarded when an article achieved a total score falling within 11-15 range indicative of 55-75% representing average methodological quality. Finally, studies were awarded an “-“ grade if the

total score fell within the 0-10 range suggestive of less than 50% of the quality criteria being met meaning the paper demonstrated poor methodological quality in accordance with the CASP tool. An independent researcher co-rated a sample of the articles in the current synthesis for the purposes of methodological validity. Of the three articles co-rated only one criterion in one article was rated differently by the independent raters suggesting 97% agreement. The results of the quality assessment for each paper which met the inclusion criteria are outlined below.

**Table 1.2 Quality Assessment Ratings**

Empirical Article	Quality Criteria in Accordance with CASP Tool										Total Score (/20)	Overall Rating
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1. Anderson & Umberson (2001)	2	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	15	+
2. Coleman (1980)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	7	-
3. *Dempsey & Day (2010)	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	2	1	2	15	+
4. *Dobash & Dobash (2011)	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	13	+
5. Polaschek et al., (2009)	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	2	12	+
6. Reitz (1999)	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	16	++
7. *Weldon & Gilchrist (2012)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20	++
8. Wood (2004)	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	18	++

\* Marks papers co-rated by expert in qualitative research to improve validity of quality assessment.

**Score: 2= criterion present; 1= criterion partially present; 0= criterion absent**

**Quality criteria items in accordance with CASP**

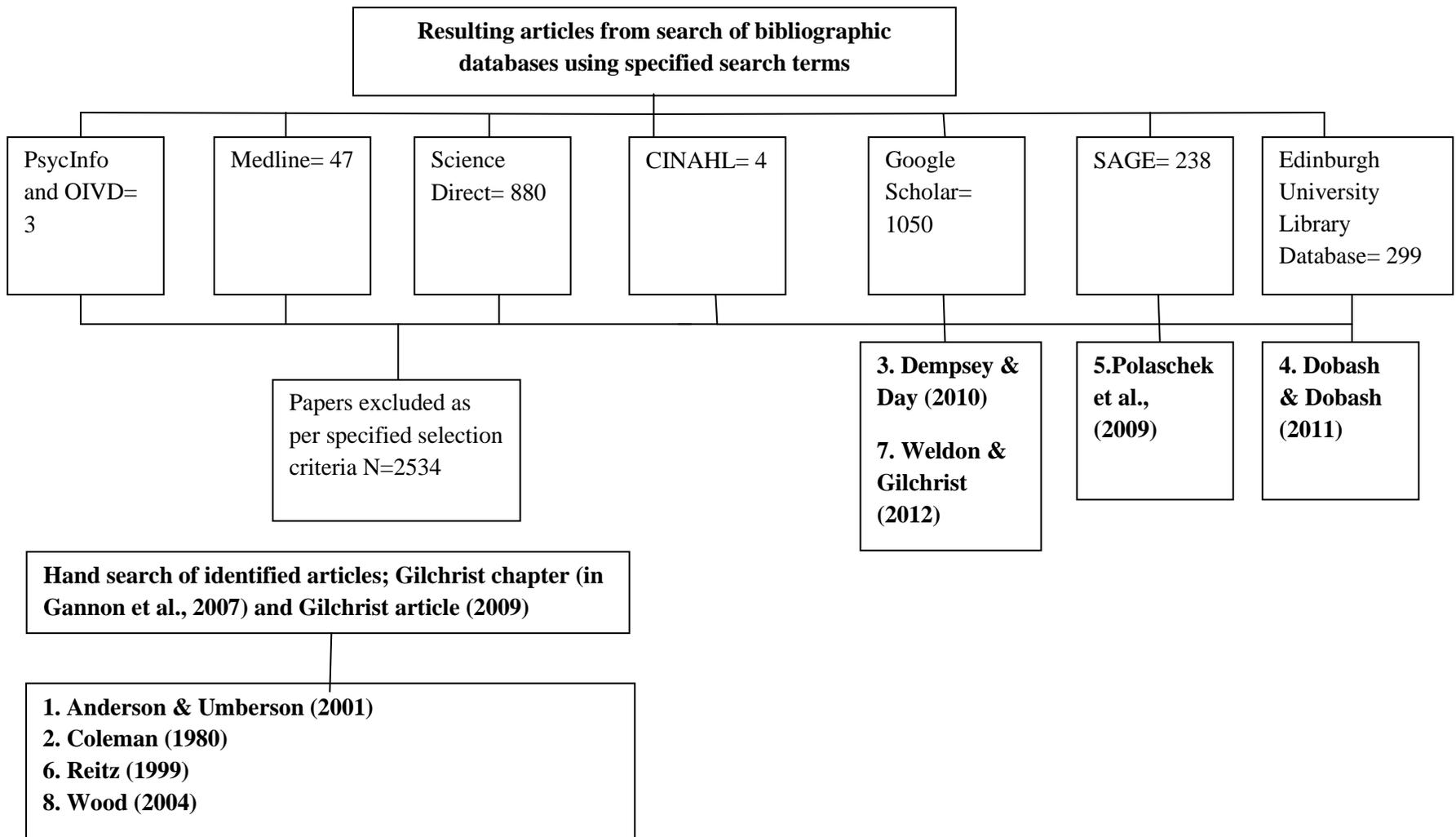
- 1) Presence of explicit aims
- 2) Qualitative methodology appropriate
- 3) Research design appropriate to address aims
- 4) Sampling strategy appropriate
- 5) Data collection appropriate to research aim
- 6) Reflexivity addressed
- 7) Ethical issues considered
- 8) Data analysis sufficient
- 9) Findings made explicit
- 10) Discussion as to value of research clinically and empirically

## **Results**

### **Studies Included in Synthesis**

A schematic representation of the search process for ascertaining the final 8 studies is outlined below in Figure 1.1. The bibliographic search process of eight databases which utilised a variety of combinations of search terms (each representative of the inclusion criteria) produced a total of 2538 studies. Upon removal of duplicates and screening titles and abstracts based on the specific inclusion criteria, four articles were deemed relevant for the current synthesis. After duplication, the studies which were not relevant often focussed on experience of female victims of intimate partner violence; adolescent victims and perpetrators (and so not adult intimate partner violence offenders); implicit theories in sex offenders (sex offenders who offended against children and adult sex offenders whose victim was not known to the perpetrator); substance misuse and intervention and so did not meet inclusion criteria for the current synthesis.

Hand-searches of the four relevant articles; a chapter on cognition in IPV offenders (Gannon et al., 2007) ; a chapter on violence related cognition (specifically interview studies) (Gannon et al., 2007); an article exploring implicit theories in intimate partner violence offenders based on empirical literature (Gilchrist, 2009), identified a further three studies eligible for inclusion. The final article was identified from a hand search of an article, which did not meet the inclusion criteria, due to its focus on language used by IPV offenders (as opposed to cognition).



**Figure 1.1 Schematic Representation of Search Process**

**Table 1.3 Characteristics and summary of themes of the primary articles in qualitative synthesis of cognition in intimate partner violence offenders**

<i>Study</i>	<i>Quality rating</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Summary of Themes</i>
1. Anderson & Umberson (2001)	+	33 Domestically violent males Mean Age: 32	Examine the construction of gender in men's accounts of domestic violence	Data: in- depth interviews Analysis: Thematic coding	- Gendered practice - Gendered depictions and interpretations - Gendering blame
2. Coleman (1980)	-	33 Conjugal violence males Age: 23-44	Examine the sociodemographic characteristics, experience of violent episodes and previous experience of violence, psychiatric history and personality characteristics of men involved in conjugal violence	Data: semi-structured interviews Analysis: unclear	- No clear themes extrapolated
3. Dempsey & Day (2010)	+	8 Male community corrections clients Age: 28-43	Examine implicit theories held by perpetrators of domestic violence	Data: interviews Analysis: grounded theory	- <u>Threat</u> : violence is normal; trust no-one; women are unknowable; I am always right; emotional volatility - <u>Retreat</u> : drugs and alcohol; avoid intimacy; avoid abandonment; depression/hopelessness - <u>Perfect world</u> : create a better life; I am a good person; Male provider and protector
4. Dobash & Dobash (2011)	+	104 males convicted of murdering a female partner Age: unspecified	Understand intimate partner violence more fully and bring this understanding to the process of positive personal	Data: case-files; interviews with convicted men and with professionals working with them	- Complete denial of the murder - History of non-lethal violence to the victim and a previous partner - Problems with women in intimate relationships - Possessiveness/Jealousy/Estrangement and Separation - Orientations to the murder: Denial of responsibility for the murder and Blaming the victim for the murder

			change for perpetrators	Analysis: systematic analysis; documentary content analysis	- Orientations to the victim and the murder: Lack of empathy and remorse and Remorse - Resistance to Engaging in the Process of Change
5. Polaschek et al., (2009)	+	20 males in high intensity programme for violent offenders Age: 17-45	Study 1: to develop a preliminary series of implicit theories using grounded theory analysis. Study 2: to examine the validity and reliability of the results of Study 1.	Data: offence process interviews Analysis: grounded theory	- Normalisation of violence - I am the law - Beat or be beaten -Self-enhancement -Self-preservation - I get out of control
6. Reitz (1999)	++	9 male in domestic violence programme Age: 28-51	To gain information from the first person perspective of the experience of being domestically violent	Data: open-ended and unstructured interviews Analysis: phenomenological analysis	- Contextual (Self/Other) - Big/Little - Good/Bad - Winning/Losing -Focal - In control - Out of control - Pressure - Exploding
7. Weldon & Gilchrist (2012)	++	6 male intimate partner violence offenders Age: 27-63	To explore intimate partner violence from the abusers perspective and propose implicit theories representative of their cognition	Data: semi-structured interviews Analysis: interpretative phenomenological analysis	- <u>Violence is normal</u> : violence is acceptable; grievance/revenge - <u>Desire to remain in control</u> : need for control; real man; entitlement/women are objects; male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner - <u>Women's Role in Violence</u> : women are provoking; rejection/abandonment; women as supportive - <u>Diminishing personal responsibility</u> : external factors responsible; nature of harm
8. Wood (2004)	++	22 intimate partner violence males Age: 23-54	To understand the perspectives of men who commit intimate partner violence	Data: interviews Analysis: inductive analysis	- <u>Justifications</u> : she disrespected me as a man; a man has a right to control women; she provoked me; she took it - <u>Dissociations</u> : I am not abusive type; my violence was limited - <u>Remorse</u> : I regret that I abused her

Table 1.3, above, evidences the summary characteristics of the studies included in the current synthesis inclusive of quality rating; sampling data; aims of study; methodology utilised and summary of findings.

### **Critical appraisal of empirical papers included in synthesis**

Coleman (1980) was the only paper included in the current synthesis which fell below the average range of methodological quality. The Coleman paper is the most dated in the current study hence formal qualitative data analysis methods may not have been as widely utilised at this time. Furthermore, the paper states it aims to seek “first hand information about the battering husbands” (Coleman, 1980, pg1) as opposed to extrapolate schemas or specific cognitive patterns prevalent in this group of offenders.

While all papers, with the exception of Coleman (1980), fell within the “average” to “good” range of methodological quality, there were evident limitations when considering the quality assessment criteria. Firstly, with regard to ethical considerations, all papers except Dempsey and Day (2011) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) did not refer to formal ethics committee approval nor state that this had been sought. Reitz (1999), Wood (2004) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) discussed issues around informed consent in addition to clarifying to participants that they would receive no privileges for participating in the study. Conversely, however, Anderson and Umberson (2001) stated participants received payment for participation in the study and made no reference to this in terms of ethical considerations or motivation to contribute.

Secondly, when considering reflexivity, that is the researchers awareness of their subjective role in the research process and any biases that may be evident, only Anderson and Umberson (2001), Reitz (1999) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) adequately addressed this criterion. This was in relation to discussing their role in the research process and any bias they may have held in addition to acknowledging the impact the role of a female researcher may have had on collecting data from this participant group.

Thirdly, pertaining to participant selection, Polaschek et al. (2009) did not explain how participants were selected. Furthermore, the interview data were archival (offence process interviews conducted by a psychologist) and there was no mention of informing participants of their inclusion in the study. Polaschek et al. was the only study to be included in the current synthesis exploring cognition in general violence offenders, inclusive of IPV offenders. However, the number of offence specific participants is absent from the study, and was unknown when the author was contacted by email to obtain this figure. Polaschek et al. did, however, provide comprehensive demographic data inclusive of age, race and sentence length of participants, which was often omitted from other studies (Dobash & Dobash, 2011).

Fourthly, with regard to design, methodological approach and data analysis, only Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) explained why they chose their particular analytical method in favour of other qualitative methods. While most of the papers provided a comprehensive description of the analysis process, none explained how the data presented were selected from the original transcript to evidence a particular theme. Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) and Wood (2004) were the only studies to acknowledge contradictory data, in relation to themes derived from their analysis. Wood (2004) went so far as to interpret the tension in the two opposing views derived at both a concrete and abstract level when considering the contradiction from the participant's perspective.

Finally, with reference to explicitness of findings, all eight papers gave a clear statement of findings and related this back to the original research aim. However, Reitz (1999) did not acknowledge any limitations of the study and Anderson and Umberson (2001) did not discuss the credibility of their findings in terms of triangulation. When considering clinical and empirical validity, all eight papers stated the contribution the study made to existing knowledge in addition to the clinical implications.

### **Synthesis of Findings**

Ten themes were identified from synthesis of the eight studies which are deemed to be representative of offence related cognition in intimate partner violence offenders: "violence is normal"; "policing partner"; "women are provoking" "need for control"; "grievance/revange"; "external factors responsible"; "rejection/abandonment"; "minimisation/denial"; "entitlement" and "remorse". Each theme was evident in at least three of the eight papers synthesised in the current study. Dobash and Dobash (2011) was the only paper to identify an outlier theme, which was not consistent with one of the above categorisations. The theme of "resistance to engaging in change" was extrapolated from Dobash and Dobash's analysis and did not correspond to themes emerging from the other studies included in the synthesis. It should be noted however, that in addition to inclusion of interview transcripts from IPV males, Dobash and Dobash also included an analysis of interviews with professionals working with IPV offenders. Therefore, the theme of "resistance to engaging in change" may be evident from the professional perspective as opposed to the IPV male and may explain why it was not present in the other studies which were from the perspective of the IPV offender. When overlapping themes were identified in papers they were differentiated by determining whether they were present in IPV only offenders or generally violence offenders in placed under the appropriate category. For example, "real man/entitlement" was differentiated from "need for control" as the latter was thought to occur only in relation to intimate relationships whereas "real man/entitlement" is in reference to how men should respond to certain situations using violence (both within and out-with intimate relationships).

The results of Coleman's (1980) study were not included in the synthesis of results as no clear themes were extrapolated. While no clear themes are identified, Coleman does discuss perceived reasons for

intimate partner violence from the offender's perspective which are largely consistent with the other studies, such as blaming the wife (*women are provoking*); jealousy (*policing partner*); women cannot be trusted (*woman are provoking*) and blaming of external factors, such as alcohol intoxication (*external factors responsible*).

<b><u>Anderson &amp; Umberson (2001)</u></b>	<b><u>Dempsey &amp; Day (2010)</u></b>	<b><u>Dobash &amp; Dobash (2011)</u></b>	<b><u>Polaschek et al., (2009)</u></b>	<b><u>Reitz (1999)</u></b>	<b><u>Weldon &amp; Gilchrist (2012)</u></b>	<b><u>Wood (2004)</u></b>
	Violence is normal	History of non-lethal violence to victim and previous partner	Normalisation of violence		Violence is acceptable	
Gendered depictions and interpretations	Trust no one	Possessiveness/jealousy/Estrangement/separation			Male sex drive/Policing Partner	
Gendered depictions and interpretations Gendering blame	Woman are unknowable	Problems with women Blaming victim			Women are provoking	She disrespected me as a man She provoked me She took it
	I am always right Create a better life	Authority and Control	I am the law	In control Out of control	Need for control	
			Beat or be beaten	Big/little Good/bad Winning/Losing	Grievance/Revenge	
	Emotional volatility Depression and hopelessness Drugs and Alcohol		I get out of control	Pressure Exploding	External factors responsible	
	Avoid intimacy Avoid abandonment	Problems with women			Rejection/abandonment	
	I'm a good person	Complete denial Denying responsibility			Nature of harm	I am not the abusive type My violence was limited
Gendered practice Gendered depictions and	The male is the provider and protector				Real man/Entitlement	A man has a right to control women

interpretations Gendering blame						
		Empathy Remorse			Women as supportive	I regret that I abused her
		Resistance to engaging in change				

## **Identified themes**

### **Violence is normal**

The theme of “violence is normal” was evident in four of the studies. This theme refers to the belief that violence is an understandable response to certain situations in an intimate relationship. Furthermore, this belief is pervasive in interactions and communications out with an intimate relationship. Indeed, Polaschek et al., (2009) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) noted that participants experienced violence as a habitual occurrence between individuals that warrants little explanation. This theme is also associated with IPV offender’s childhood and adolescent development in which violence is a persistent and pervasive factor of their upbringing.

### **Policing Partner**

This theme was evident in four of the studies. It refers to the perception that the male sex drive is uncontrollable and therefore men have to police their partner. It also relates to the belief that females cannot be trusted and that their sex drive needs to be monitored by their partners inclusive of advances from other men. Dempsey and Day (2010) evidenced this theme in relation to a lack of trust in relationships and jealousy on the part of the IPV offender. The theme is also consistent with violence being an acceptable response to a perceived slight. For example, in this group of offenders, sexual violence is often blamed on the women who are perceived as alluring men who are powerless in the face of their uncontrollable sexual urges (Anderson & Umberson, 2001).

### **Woman are Provoking**

This theme was apparent in five of the studies and was evidenced by most participants in each of these. This theme concerns the notion that women are responsible for the violence by placing unreasonable demands and expectations on their partners. Dempsey and Day (2011) noted that participants expressed the view that women were mysterious and unknowable therefore making them dangerous and so violence is a necessary means of control. Wood (2004) found that participants justified their violence by stating that “she provoked me” hence their actions were in some way out of their control, perhaps linking to the “*external factors responsible*” theme. Professionals interviewed in the Dobash and Dobash (2011) study stated that the vast majority of IPV offenders described experiencing problems in interpersonal relationships with women and expressed negative attitudes to women in this regard.

### **Need for Control**

This theme was evident in five of the studies and is in reference to the notion that it is a prerequisite for a male to be in control of his own domestic domain. Dobash and Dobash (2011) found that, in relation to a female partner, IPV males held the view that males should be obeyed and have ultimate

authority. Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) noted that participants felt violence was an acceptable means of exerting control over a partner if she challenged his authority in any way. This was consistent with Polaschek et al's., (2009) "*I am the law*" theme in which offenders perceived it be their role to exert control over others both within and out-with intimate relationships.

### **Grievance/Revenge**

This theme was apparent in three of the studies and is consistent with the "*violence is normal*" theme, in that it encapsulates the idea that it is appropriate to respond to a perceived slight with violence. It therefore refers to a desire to maintain the "winner" position as noted by Weldon and Gilchrist (2012). Reitz (1999) noted this as a constant opposition of identities such that there was little room for negotiation from the offender's perspective, and a "win or lose" mentality in intimate relationships consistent with the "women are provoking" theme. Polaschek et al. (2009) make reference to the grievance/revenge theme in terms of *self-preservation*, that is violent offenders believe themselves to be vulnerable to exploitation and so perceive that they are forced into violence to prevent others from taking advantage of them.

### **External Factors Responsible**

This theme was evident in four of the studies. It refers to the notion that the offenders do not recognise themselves as responsible for the violence but rather blame external factors. Dempsey and Day (2011), Polaschek et al. (2009) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) evidenced that participants often blamed substance use for their actions or used this as a means of justifying their violence. In addition, Polaschek et al. (2009) and Reitz (2009) found that IPV males often described their violence as being uncontrollable as if they are powerless to it. Polaschek et al. (2009) also found that offenders would hold others responsible for their own emotional dysregulation.

### **Rejection/Abandonment**

This theme was apparent in three of the papers. It is representative of the feeling of being disregarded and/or neglected by an intimate partner evoking a negative response from the IPV male usually in the form of violence. Dempsey and Day (2011) found that all participants in their study avoided intimacy for fear of rejection or abandonment which they saw as a constant threat. Dobash and Dobash (2011) found that the professionals working with IPV males were aware of a fear of rejection leading to long-standing problems with intimacy in this population. Additionally, both Dempsey and Day (2011) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012), attributed the development of this theme to an abusive and dysfunctional childhood in which insecure attachments were formed, often leading IPV offenders to perceive women as mistrustful.

### **Minimisation/Denial**

This theme was evident in four of the studies. It refers to the minimisation of the violence, denial of the violence itself, in addition to denial of the intimate partner violence label. Dobash and Dobash (2011) looked exclusively at men who had murdered their intimate partner and found that this act in itself was often denied and minimised, for example, referring to it as an “accident”. Wood (2004) found that IPV males often dissociated from the violence by making justifications such as “I could have killed her but I didn’t”. This is consistent with Dempsey and Day (2011) who noted participants would admit to violence but voice their disdain at other behaviours they considered to be immoral, for example, extra-marital affairs. In corroboration, Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) found that participants would minimise and deny their violence by expressing contempt at those who engaged in this behaviour.

### **Real Man/Entitlement**

This theme was evident in four of the papers and is concerning the view that men must be treated well and respected by their partner. Furthermore, it relates to the concept of how men *should* behave in certain circumstances and how deviations from that may lead to violence. Dempsey and Day (2011) found that participants saw their role in the family as the protector and provider and being unable to ascertain this goal resulted in them feeling emasculated. Wood (2004) noted that participants had a strong sense of what it meant to be a man and that violence was an entirely legitimate response if disrespected as a man. This theme overlaps slightly with “*need for control*” however while “*need for control*” may be evident in all violent offenders (Polashek et al., 2009) it would seem “*real man/entitlement*” is specific to the cognition of IPV offenders.

### **Remorse**

This theme was substantiated in three of the studies. It is representative of the notion of IPV offenders viewing their own act of violence negatively in addition to viewing women in a positive light (Weldon and Gilchrist, 2012) and so it is somewhat contradictory to the other themes. Wood (2004) found that more than half of the participants expressed remorse and regret at their actions. Both Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) and Wood (2004) noted that statements of remorse or discussion of females in a positive, supportive light might not necessarily be genuine but rather strategic attempts to win favour. They also noted issues with reflexivity and the demand factor, all the more pronounced in a custodial setting. Conversely, Dobash and Dobash (2011) found both a lack of empathy and remorse and genuine remorse to be coinciding themes. Interestingly, this was from the perspective of professionals working with IPV offenders and so minimises the demand factor.

## Discussion

The aim of the current paper was to systematically review peer reviewed qualitative empirical articles exploring cognition in intimate partner violence offenders. The review identified eight such papers. Synthesis of these papers resulted in extrapolation of ten themes thought to be representative of cognition in IPV offenders: “violence is normal”; “policing partner”; “women are provoking” “need for control”; “grievance/revenge”; “external factors responsible”; “rejection/abandonment”; “minimisation/denial”; “entitlement” and “remorse”. These themes are largely consistent with those proposed by Gilchrist (2009) from clinical, theoretical and empirical IPV literature thereby improving the validity of the current synthesis. Furthermore, as seven of the eight papers included in the current synthesis achieved an above average rating in terms of methodological validity in accordance with the CASP tool, it can be predicted that these themes are an accurate representation of cognition in IPV offenders.

A theme that emerged from the current synthesis which was not proposed by Gilchrist, is “*remorse*”. It should be noted however, as acknowledged by Wood (2004) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012), that the theme of remorse may be more pronounced in a custodial setting where offenders are keen to be seen in a positive light for strategic reasons hence why it may not have been evident as a potential cognition in the empirical literature.

The themes synthesised in the current study are in corroboration with Adams (2007) who noted that IPV murderers often killed in a jealous rage and made frequent reference to jealous thoughts and behaviours, consistent with the “policing partner” theme. Adams also identified emotional dependence and instability in addition to substance abuse as being key factors in IPV homicide. This is substantiated in the current study by the “rejection/abandonment” and “external factors responsible” themes. Finally, in relation to Adams (2007), he found that IPV murderers often minimised their violence or denied it completely supporting the theme of “minimisation/denial” in the current synthesis.

The current findings are consistent with those of quantitative studies looking at cognition in IPV offenders. Holtworth-Munroe and Hutchison (1993) found that, in comparison with a non-violent control group, IPV males were more likely to exhibit attachment/dependency issues in childhood, which supports the “rejection/abandonment” theme. Moore et al. (2000) noted IPV males exhibited greater feelings of jealousy (“policing partner” theme) and, as with Holtworth-Munroe and Hutchinson (1993), greater feelings of rejection abandonment (“rejection/abandonment” theme).

## Limitations

The results of the current synthesis are supported by quantitative and qualitative empirical literature and by methodological validity of papers included in the synthesis. There are, however, a number of limitations to the current paper. Firstly, as with all qualitative research, the number of participants for the entire synthesis is 235 making it hard to generalise results to the IPV population. This limitation is however minimised by the themes identified in the current synthesis corroborating findings of quantitative studies.

Secondly, the various qualitative methodologies utilised may mean that, had an author employed an alternative methodology, different results may have been obtained. Again however this is minimised by the findings being consistent with IPV empirical research.

Thirdly, a limitation of exploring intimate partner violence from the abuser's perspective relates to the afore-mentioned demand factor. It is important to be mindful of an offender's motivation for participating in research and a potential desire to be seen in a positive manner so as to perhaps have implications for them within the justice system. While this limitation may be more pronounced in qualitative research due to participants offering their expert opinion on a subject, it could be that offenders' narratives give access to latent schemas to be interpreted by the researcher. Furthermore, the demand factor may be evident in all research requiring offender participation. When answering psychometric questionnaires offenders may be keen to answer in a way that shows them in a certain light.

Finally, with regard to limitations of the current paper, is the issue of the subjective role of the researcher in the synthesising process. While the review was compiled in a systematic manner, it should be noted the first author is familiar with research exploring cognition in IPV offenders and so a completely objective synthesis is not possible.

### Implications for practice

The distinct cognition present in IPV offenders identified from the current synthesis can be utilised to inform assessment and intervention. The acknowledgement of distinct implicit theories in other offender groups, based on empirical research has led to the successful development and implementations of offending behaviour groups targeting specific criminogenic needs (Beech et al., 2012; Collie, 2007). The themes extrapolated in the current research could be employed when designing and implementing IPV specific assessment and intervention.

### Future research

The themes identified in the current synthesis from qualitative studies could be quantitatively investigated to increase their empirical validity. When considering future qualitative research, it would be beneficial to employ an approach similar to that of the quantitative work of Holtworth-

Munro and Hutchison (1993). This could be done designing interview studies with IPV males in addition to happily married nonviolent males and maritally distressed non-violent males to determine to what extent the cognitions of IPV males differ from their non-violent counterparts.

While the current paper offers explanation as to the cognition present in intimate partner violence offenders, it does not explore how these schemas develop in these offenders and so this process could be investigated in future research.

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**Journal Article 2**

**TITLE**

Implicit Theories in Intimate Partner Violence Sex Offenders: An Interpretative  
Phenomenological Analysis

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## **Implicit Theories in Intimate Partner Violence Sex Offenders: An Interpretative**

### **Phenomenological Analysis**

#### **Abstract**

An increased understanding of the cognitive characteristics of Intimate Partner Violence Sex Offenders would have implications for clinical intervention and risk assessment in this distinctive offending behaviour group. The improved understanding of cognitions in violent offenders, sex offenders and intimate partner violence offenders has led to the development and implementation of specific offender behaviour programmes taking these cognitive characteristics into account. Recently, empirical investigations have focussed on qualitative exploration of cognition to propose implicit theories (ITs), that is distinct sets of schemas that offenders hold in relation to themselves, the world and others. The current paper utilises Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore cognition in 11 Intimate Partner Sex Offenders. Five superordinate and 14 subthemes were identified thought to be representative of Implicit Theories present in this specific offender group. These are: “violence is acceptable”; “grievance/vengeance”; “dangerous world”; “need for control”; “real man”; “entitlement/women are objects”; “male sex drive/policing partner”; “women are provoking”; “rejection/abandonment”; “women are supportive”; “uncontrollability”; “nature of harm”; “the new me” and “I’m not like them”. These ITs are discussed in relation to other offending behaviour groups in addition to their clinical implications in the development of effective interventions and risk assessment tools.

#### **Introduction**

The identification of implicit theories (ITs) in certain offender groups, that is, offence-related schemas of their view of the world which support their offending behaviour (Ward, 2000), have led to the development and implementation of successful offence specific interventions (Beech, Bartels & Dixon, 2012; Collie, Vess & Murdoch, 2007). In recent years, the cognitive characteristics of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators has received considerable attention, however, empirical research regarding implicit theories among these individuals is an area which has, only recently, begun to be explored (Gilchrist, 2009; Dempsey & Day, 2011; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). Moreover, as of yet, the cognitions of intimate partner violence offenders who also sexually offend (SO) against their partners has received no empirical investigation. This is surprising given that IPV risk assessment and screening tools in addition to intervention strategies are aimed at addressing attitudinal differences thought to be present in the IPV offender (Gilchrist, 2007; Rabin, Jennings, Campbell & Bair-Merritt, 2009; Morgan & Gichrist, 2010).

Defining implicit theories for intimate partner violence offenders who sexually offend against their partner would be extremely beneficial in terms of intervention and treatment as the specific schemas present in this group of offenders could be targeted. Furthermore, intimate partner rape has been

found to be a recognised risk factor in intimate partner homicide (Campbell, 2007). Distinct implicit theories which have been identified in sex offenders, and the current ongoing work relating to violent offenders, have increased our understanding of specific offending behaviours and led to the design and implementation of intervention programmes targeting specific criminogenic needs (Ward, 2000; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Collie, Vess & Murdoch, 2007). Schema-based therapy is now being established as an appropriate treatment for sex offenders (Beech et al., 2012; Fisher & Beech, 2007) and so the same could be utilised in the distinct group of IPV and IPV SO offenders. In addition to intervention, the current research may also be useful in the development of appropriate risk assessment tools which take specific schemas into account.

When considering the implicit theories established in other offender groups, Polaschek and Ward (2002) identified five potential implicit theories in rapists by applying the implicit theory perspective to existing scales that measured rape related cognitive distortions. The implicit theories extrapolated were: “women are unknowable”; “women are sex objects”; “male sex drive is uncontrollable”; “entitlement” and “dangerous world”. These implicit theories were later corroborated by Polaschek and Gannon (2004) who examined transcripts of sex offender interviews and coded them for the presence or absence of the five implicit theories proposed by Polaschek and Ward (2002). While not a distinct implicit theory from the analysis of interview transcripts, Polaschek and Gannon (2004) also noted the importance of denial in rapists accounts of their offences, given that males who are in denial of the offence may not be suitable for treatment. Therefore, Polaschek and Gannon (2004) defined deniers as men who admit that they had sexual contact with the victim but insist it was not offensive and so minimising the negative impact this would have had on the victim.

Beech, Fisher and Ward (2005) investigated the presence of implicit theories in sexual murderers by applying a grounded theory analytical approach to the murderers’ account of their offence. Their findings corroborated the same five ITs found to be present in rapists by Polaschek and Ward (2002) and Polaschek and Gannon (2004) indicating that sexual murderers are not qualitatively distinct from rapists with reference to the underlying schemas that they have regarding the world. Beech, Fisher and Ward concluded that this would have intervention implications and suggested that a schema approach would allow offenders’ cognitions to be challenged.

When considering IPV offenders, Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) investigated implicit theories from the perspective of the intimate partner violence perpetrators, by examining their own accounts of their background, relationship history, offending behaviour history and role ideology. They proposed eleven potential implicit theories in IPV offenders using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 2004). The implicit theories proposed were “violence is acceptable”; “grievance/revenge”; “need for control”; “real man”; “entitlement/women are objects”; “male sex

drive is uncontrollable/policing partner”; “women are provoking”; “rejection/abandonment”; “women as supportive”; “external factors responsible” and “nature of harm”.

The established implicit theories in rapists and sexual murderers greatly overlap with those proposed by Weldon and Gilchrist (2012). In addition to the apparent commonality in cognition in IPV and SO offenders, there is also increasing recognition that IPV often co-occurs with child sexual abuse (Morgan & Gilchrist, 2010). Hester, Pearson and Harwin (2007) note that familial settings in which IPV occurs are the most common context for child abuse and that male IPV perpetrators are more likely to be abusive to children and more extremely so. This has been recognised in government policy with the Action Plan on Sexual Abuse (HM Government, 2007) calling for an integrated approach to tackling child abuse and IPV (Morgan & Gilchrist, 2010). When considering cognition in child sex offenders, Ward and Keenan (1999) proposed five implicit theories based on measures of cognitive distortions in empirical literature. These implicit theories are as follows: “children as sexual objects”; “entitlement”; “dangerous world”; “uncontrollability” and “nature of harm”. These findings somewhat overlap with the implicit theories presented in intimate partner violence offenders and sex offenders however were not derived from qualitative exploration of the child molesters offence process. Indeed Ward and Keenan (1999) note that, for effective intervention, the child sex offenders offence process should be explored on an individual basis to gain access to the core implicit theories.

The findings of Polaschek and Ward (2002), Polaschek and Gannon (2004) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) suggest that it is possible to identify an offender’s underlying motivations without the offender explicitly acknowledging these. This is invaluable given the difficulty of assessing offenders using standard psychometric measures and interviews, where they are frequently defensive and denying (Fisher & Beech, 2007). Given the difficulty of accessing deep-level schemas and obtaining honest answers in intimate partner violence offenders and sex offenders, approaches other than direct psychometric questionnaires need to be used. Qualitative approaches, as utilised by Beech, Fisher and Ward (2005) and Weldon and Gilchrist (2012), where offenders are encouraged to give a free narrative about their offending, can be beneficial in determining the implicit theories held by the offender.

### **Aims of Current Study**

The current research study aims to explore sex offending and intimate partner violence from the abusers’ perspective and identify schemas which could be representative of distinct implicit theories in this specific group of offenders. Therefore, interpretative phenomenological analysis shall be utilised to explore the participant’s lived experience (Smith, 2004), with the intention of identifying implicit theories which may account for cognition in intimate partner violence sex offenders. Identification of distinct implicit theories in intimate partner violence sex offenders would have implications for empirical research, clinical intervention and risk assessment.

## **Methodology**

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

IPA is widely used in the domains of clinical, health and social psychology and is particularly appropriate to investigating unexplored territory where a theoretical or empirical pretext may be lacking (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). IPA was chosen in favour of more established qualitative methodology to interpret the data in the current research as the experience of participants are investigated from the “inside out” rather than “outside in” (Charmaz, 1995; p30-31). The goal of IPA is to study how people make meaning of their lived experience. This approach is particularly pertinent in the current study given the aim of identifying implicit theories in intimate partner violence sex offenders, an area which has little empirical support. In order to identify specific implicit theories, the central concern is the subjective experience of the individual. This is in contrast to grounded theory analysis which seeks to identify and explicate contextualised social processes which account for phenomena rather than seeking to capture the nature of the phenomena by understanding individual experience (Eatough, Smith & Shaw, 2008). Furthermore, grounded theory seeks to develop an explanatory theory of social processes in the environments in which they occur (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007). IPA was chosen in favour of content analysis which, while a useful analytical method, is usually associated with larger interview samples and is based on a group principle (i.e. there is a quantitative aspect to the method, determining the number of times a theme comes up) as opposed to IPA which is solely concerned with the individual experience.

When considering the analytical process in IPA, the themes identified are representative of a core commonality and structure of the experience (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007). Therefore, this methodology is particularly suited in the current study as it is hypothesised that the themes identified will be representative of core implicit theories held by intimate partner violence sex offenders. Additionally, it has been noted that an individualised approach to analysis of intimate partner violence offenders’ behaviour is imperative given they are established as heterogeneous in terms of both patterns of offending behaviour and idiosyncratic risk factors (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman & Stuart, 2000).

Recently, the empirical utility of IPA with forensic populations has been established (Brown & Beail, 2009; Blagden, Winder, Thorne & Gregson, 2011; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). IPA has been found to be particularly useful in this population as it assumes a link between what participants say and underlying schemas (Brown & Beail, 2009). Therefore, through a process of interpretation, cognitions can be accessed as opposed to a report of behaviour (Brown & Beail, 2009). The access to latent cognitions is all the more significant in a forensic population where the demand factor, that is the desire to be seen in a positive manner, is all the more pronounced which may have been reflected in self-report quantitative measures.

## **Participants**

Full ethical approval for the current study was sought and granted from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and this was forwarded to the School of Health University of Edinburgh Ethics Committee. Participants were recruited by a Strategy Analyst, employed by the Scottish Prison Service, who was asked to conduct a search for potential recruits by the SPS ethics board as part of his role. The inclusion criteria were that the participant be presently serving a custodial sentence and have a current or previous intimate partner violence conviction in addition to a current or previous conviction of a sex offence. The Strategy Analyst ran a statistical report using a desktop intelligence package which identified all participants who met the inclusion criteria across all prisons in Scotland. Participants were identified by having a Sex Offender Marker and Domestic Violence Aggravation Code flagged on their profile. The analyst then focussed on three particular sites due to their geographical viability of access for the researcher. Furthermore, these sites identified an adequate number of prisoners who met the inclusion criteria and therefore would pertain to sufficient numbers for interview for a qualitative study. Twelve potential participants were identified across the sites who were each sent a letter inviting them to take part and explaining what this would entail. Of these twelve participants, eleven agreed to be interviewed for the study.

Of the eleven participants interviewed, ten had a current or previous conviction of intimate partner violence. The remaining participant had been arrested on three occasions for a intimate partner violence charge and served a custodial sentence on remand. Thereafter, the charges were dropped. Ten participants had a current or previous sexual offence conviction. The remaining participant had six untried offences for the Sexual Offences Act over a two year period. All charges of rape committed by participants in the current study occurred in the context of an intimate relationship. Four of the participants were convicted of a sexual offence against a child and not an adult female while one participant was convicted with both attempted rape and sexual assault against a child. It was felt that their inclusion in the current study was warranted given the significant links between child sex abuse; intimate partner violence and family violence (Hester et al., 2007; Mullender, 2006).

The offence history and relevant demographic information for each of the participants is outlined in Table 2.1. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality.

**Table 2.1 Demographic data of participants**

Participant	Age Range	Marital Status	IPV Offence History	Sex Offending History	Previous Convictions
James	41-45	Single	Assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement; assault	Rape	Breach of the Peace; Road Traffic Act

			to injury		
Greg	36-40	Single	Assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement and attempted murder; Assault to injury x 3	Assault with intent to rape	Breach of the Peace; Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 S27 (1)(b); Misuse of drugs act
Kyle	26-30	Single	Assault to Injury; Assault to injury and rape	Rape; Assault to injury and rape	Road Traffic Act
Alan	46-50	Single	Assault	Lewd and Libidinous Practices and Behaviour	Assault and Robbery; Fraud; Road Traffic Act; Theft by opening a lockfast place; Theft by housebreaking; Misuse of drugs act; Attempt to pervert the course of justice; Breach of the Peace; Drunk and Incapable
Ryan	31-35	Single	Assault; Abduction; Assault to Injury	Rape	Assault; Road Traffic Act; Breach of the Peace
Gerrard <sup>1</sup>	36-40	Single	Assault; Assault to Injury and Rape; Assault to Injury	Assault to Injury and Rape; Lewd and Libidinous Practices and Behaviour	Breach of the Peace; Misuse of Drugs Act
Steve	36-40	Cohabiting	Assault to Injury; Abduction	Rape	Assault; Breach of the Peace; Road Safety Act; Theft; Waste Time of Police; Attempting to Pervert the Course of Justice
Paul	41-45	Single	Assault to Injury and danger of life; Assault to injury x 2	Sexual Offences Act	Assault with intent to rob; Assault; 2 x Criminal and Justice Licensing Act; Assault and Attempted Robbery; Offensive Weapon
Gary <sup>2</sup>	36-40	Single	Assault to Injury and Permanent Disfigurement;	Sexual Offences Act; Sexual Offences Act (Untried)	Assault and Robbery; Assault; Breach of the Peace;

<sup>1</sup> Lewd and Libidinous Practices and Behaviour is the legal term for any sexual offences committed against a child aged 12-16

<sup>2</sup> Sexual Offences Act is in reference to a sexual offence committed against a child under 12

			Assault to Injury		Communications Act; Failed to Attend Court
Malcolm	41-45	Single	3 x Assault to injury (Charges dropped)	Rape	Road Traffic Act; Theft of a Motor Vehicle; Theft by opening a lockfast place; Attempt to pervert the course of justice; Misuse of Drugs Act
Jonathon	31-35	Cohabiting	Assault to Injury; Assault	6 x Sexual Offences Act 2003 S84 (1) and S91 (1) (a) (Untried)	Carrying a Knife; Theft; Theft by housebreaking; Fraud; Malicious mischief; 2 x Breach of the Peace; Road Traffic Act

Due to the sensitive nature of the material covered in the interviews, each participant was given an advice sheet with telephone numbers of internal and external support lines should the interview evoke thoughts or feelings which they would benefit from talking through with a professional. Additionally, with consent from the participant, a prison officer in their wing was informed of their participation in the study so as to provide support after the interview if the participant deemed it necessary.

### **Procedure**

All eleven interviews were conducted in interview rooms within each of the three prisons. All of the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and were digitally-recorded with permission from the participant. In order to ensure safety for both the participant and the researcher, a prison officer was available outside each of the interview rooms across all sites and local security procedure was followed. The prison officer did not hear the content of the interviews. The length of each interview varied from 36 minutes to 1 hour and 8 minutes. In accordance with IPA methodology (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) interviews were semi-structured and non-prescriptive to allow the participant to reveal their own cognitions, beliefs and feelings. This enabled participants to have ownership of the direction of the conversation while the researcher implemented non-directive triggers to aid exploration of relevant topics as they emerged (Brown & Beail, 2009). This method of interview has been shown to be especially appropriate when investigating personal subject matters (Silverman, 2000). In order to gain insight into the participants perception of their world, the semi-structured interview explored childhood, relationships with prominent attachment figures, intimate relationships and their perception of male and female roles within these. Where possible, the

interviews also explored the participant's experience of offending behaviour and the context in which this occurred.

All data were anonymised and stored confidentially. The digitally-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher and kept securely thereafter. At all times, every effort was maintained to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed in accordance with IPA methodology in order to make sense of and explore the participant's lived experience from their perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). IPA recognises the importance of the researcher in the analytic process which is described by Smith (2004) as a dialectical interpretative relationship between the researcher and the text. Consequently, the construct of the participant's world is not readily available but rather accessed through sustained engagement and interpretation of the text (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Analysis is, therefore, an interactive process open to influence from the researchers' beliefs and cognitions, these must be made explicit, as far as possible, to put the analysis into context.

Transcripts were first read in detail several times in order to commence a sustained engagement with the text. Subsequent to detailed reading of the text, notes are made by the researcher in the left hand margin to identify prominent points; associations and contradictions. Thereafter, these notes are used to establish potential emergent themes which are documented in the right hand margin. These themes are recorded in the form of phrases attempted to capture the essence of what was being discussed and what sense the participant was making of their world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Participants' phenomenologies begin to be interpreted at this stage through a dialect between the text and theoretical constructs underpinning these. Emerging themes were listed separately and thereafter reviewed in relation to each other to identify those which could be clustered together as subordinate themes. Superordinate themes were then identified to encapsulate these subordinate themes.

### **Quality Assurance**

When considering what constitutes a theme, in accordance with Smith (2011) a theme was evidenced as such if it was present in extracts from at least three of the participants. Furthermore, as the transcripts of 11 participants were included in the current study, a measure of prevalence of each subtheme is included as a quality assurance measure.

In order to ensure the process from raw data to emergent themes could be ensued, three independent researchers familiar with implementing IPA methodology analysed three separate transcripts and were found to have a high level of agreement with the researcher in both subordinate and superordinate themes (75%, 100% and 92%, respectively). All three independent researchers had limited knowledge

of intimate partner violence literature unlike the original researcher. Pseudonyms were used throughout all transcripts, including when names of victims and/or family members were mentioned, to ensure confidentiality was maintained.

At interview, each participant was offered the opportunity for the researcher to feedback their transcript and analysis at a later stage in the process to ensure the researcher has adequately captured their perception of their world. All participants, other than Jonathon, declined this offer. Jonathon was no longer serving a custodial sentence when his transcript and analysis was complete. Subsequently, he was contacted through Prison Social Services (at his request at interview) and at this point he declined to meet with the researcher to discuss his part in the research process.

## **Results**

Analysis in accordance with IPA methodology and validated by three independent researchers revealed the emergence of 5 superordinate themes composed of 14 subthemes which are presented in Table 2.3. A brief illustrative extract of each subtheme is provided in addition to the prevalence of each subtheme across all participants and a description of each subtheme. This is done to demonstrate the presence of each subtheme across at least three participants as highlighted by Smith (2011).

The extracts provided in Table 2.3 and in the subsequent analysis were chosen to illustrate the superordinate and subthemes from the raw data as it was thought they best represented the experience of the participants from their perspective providing insight into their world and their interpretation of this. Analysis is presented in the format of extracts of transcripts supporting superordinate themes and detailed analysis and interpretation of the extracts.

Three of the transcripts were rated by independent researchers familiar with IPA methodology for the purposes of validity. The results of the inter-rater reliability process are outlined in Table 2.2

Table 2.2 Concordance of subthemes between researchers

Participant transcript	No. of themes identified by original researcher	No. of themes identified by independent researcher	Percentage of inter-rater reliability
Steve	12	9	75%
Greg	11	11	100%
Malcolm	12	11	92%

While all researchers used slightly different terminology to capture the themes, it was thought the themes identified were representative of themes established by the original researcher. For example, “violence as part of growing up” was thought to be representative of “violence is normal/acceptable” and was coded as such. The theme of “feeling emasculated” identified by one researcher was accurately represented in the “real man” subtheme and “external locus of control” and “blaming on

substances” were captured under the “uncontrollability” subtheme. All 14 subthemes, or variations of these capturing the same implicit concept, were identified by at least one of the independent researchers.

The fourteen subthemes identified are representative of fourteen potential implicit theories held in IPV SO offenders. The emergent subthemes correspond to five superordinate themes which are presented and analysed in accordance with IPA methodology below. The themes are representative of a descriptive and exploratory account of intimate partner violence sex offenders from their perspective. It is thought the themes are representative of implicit theories of intimate partner violence sex offenders as, throughout the interview process, participants construct narrative identities which can be understood as an active information processing structure, a cognitive schema or a construct system that is both shaped by and later mediates social interaction including that with the researcher. The superordinate themes are as follows:

- Violence is Normal
- Need for Control
- Women’s Role in Violence and Sexual Assault
- Diminishing Personal Responsibility
- Sense of Self

#### Violence is Normal

The superordinate theme “violence is normal” was evident in all participants’ accounts and is representative of violence being a habitual developmental, social and interpersonal construct pervasive in all domains of their world and may be present in all violence offenders not specifically IPV. The superordinate theme is composed of three subthemes: “violence is acceptable”; “grievance/vengeance” and “dangerous world”.

*“I can’t remember what happened, somebody had done something wrong or something like that and I was only about two or three, maybe a toddler, he lined the 4 of us up and he put down a slipper, a belt, a bat, a cane, things like that and asked us what one we wanted to be hit with as a punishment. Then that’s like a bit bad like mental torture it’s bad enough hitting someone but asking them to pick the weapon they get hit with that’s like sadistic.”*

*Malcolm*

**Table 2.3: Table of Superordinate and sub themes and prevalence of subthemes.**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Illustrative Extract and Description of Theme</i>	<i>Prevalence theme present across participants</i>
Superordinate Theme 1: Violence is Normal	A theme which was evident in all participants was that of violence being not only a “normal” aspect of their social, developmental and relationship domains but also an acceptable means of communication which often achieved a desired effect.	
Subtheme 1: Violence is acceptable		11
James	<i>The guy was still being a bit violent towards my mum and we were being violent to each other</i>	
Gerrard	<i>When I was really young my father was really violent towards me and my family, my mum and that was through alcohol related</i>	
Steve	<i>I think violence was just a normal part of things</i>	
Subtheme 2: Grievance/Revenge	The theme “grievance/revenge” was apparent in all participants and encapsulates the perception that violence is an appropriate means to resolve an actual or perceived insult. This was the premise in all interpersonal relationships and domains.	11
Paul	<i>I could be violent know what I mean but only if I was provoked by somebody</i>	
Alan	<i>Was wanting to fight with staff for whatever reason</i>	
Jonathon	<i>If you are not going to listen to me I’ll just fight with you all of the time</i>	

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Subtheme 3: Dangerous World	The subtheme of “dangerous world” encompasses the idea that people behave in an abusive and rejecting manner thereby promoting their own inherently selfish interests. Therefore, from the participant’s perspective, people who are perceived as “dangerous”(, i.e. that they will let you down/can’t be trusted/will reject you) may often become the victim of violence and/or sexual assault.	10
Gary	<i>I got raped when I was 12 year old off my mum’s two uncles and got taken into care for it</i>	
James	<i>I was attacked by maybe 10 guys for the first three or four weeks, had my head shaved, kicked, whatever else.</i>	
Gerrard	<i>I was getting sexually abused off this neighbour who was staying a door away and everybody thought this guy was the bees knees but he was evil</i>	
Superordinate Theme 2: Desire to remain in control		
Subtheme 1: Need for control	The theme of need for control relates specifically to intimate relationships and a participants desire to maintain control of the intimate relationship, the household and the finances and was often evidenced when participants experienced partners challenging their control in some way.	8
Malcolm	<i>In my last relationship I was cooking, cleaning, changing nappies, looking after weans eh I was onsite medic when they hurt themselves cos she was hopeless</i>	
Kyle	<i>I couldn’t live with a partner with them caring for me, know what I mean? I want to be the provider right and that’s the way it was</i>	
Greg	<i>Because it was my own business I was pretty much supporting her. Then when she went back to work and I wasn’t working all of a sudden it was her money, I was this and I was that. She just made me feel really inadequate.</i>	
Subtheme 2: Real Man	The sub-theme of “real man” is in reference to the perception that violence is a means of demonstrating masculinity both within and out with intimate partner relationships. It seems participants have a social construct as to what constitutes a “real man” and	8

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	that this needs to be upheld and violence is a means of achieving this.	
Jonathon	<i>I plead not guilty to every crime, I might be guilty as sin but I plead not guilty all the time because I'll fight everything and anyone</i>	
Alan	<i>We definitely showed that you don't step on our toes. We did that end and if you get in the way well that's a challenge and we'll stand for the challenge and we did if anybody questioned us but we didnae let anybody question it</i>	
Greg	<i>She was, em, quite volatile and verbally abusive and so I had no option but to be physically abusive</i>	
Subtheme 3: Entitlement/Women are Objects	The theme of "entitlement/women are objects" refers to participant's patriarchal view of society, specifically that women are objects whose primary goal is to serve and satisfy men.	8
Gerrard	<i>I don't think I'll get into relationships, maybe one night stands and that's about it</i>	
Ryan	<i>I didn't really want a serious relationship, I satisfied myself with a never-ending string of one night stands</i>	
Paul	<i>I didnae really have anywhere to stay know what I mean so I was kinda using her</i>	
Subtheme 4: Male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner	"Male sex drive is uncontrollable/policing partner" was evident in four of the participants and is in reference to the premise that males are uncontrollable sexual beings and so are entitled to have sex when they desire it even if this means forcing themselves on a partner. Furthermore, it refers to the idea that their partners must be protected from the sexual advances of other men. It is similar to the "entitlement/women are objects" subtheme as it implies woman are objects who should serve and satisfy men sexually. It also incorporates the "grievance/revange" subtheme, specifically, that if a women is sexually involved with another man she deserves to be punished physically and/or sexually violated so as to maintain the notion of a "real man".	4
Kyle	<i>And this might sound silly right, but I don't know many guys that can say no to farewell sex right. My interpretation of farewell sex is it is what it is and then farewell you're leaving right and that's what I did.</i>	

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Greg	<i>I then tried to drag her out of the house up to the neighbours house cause one of the boys she slept with is the neighbour</i>	
Ryan	<i>I had come home from work early to find my partner sitting on top of the bed with somebody else and went absolutely mental again.</i>	
Superordinate Theme 3: Women's Role in Violence and Sexual Assault	The subtheme of "women are provoking" refers specially to the notion that women are to blame for the violence/sexual assault because of their behaviour. This is often behaviour that is perceived by the participants to be emasculating and so the violence is described as an inevitable consequence of the female's provocative behaviour.	
Subtheme 1: Women are Provoking		10
James	<i>The woman he was with made a face so I hit out, I lost the rag</i>	
Greg	<i>I have never met a women like her ken, she could say some really nasty things and I think that's what made it escalate (the violence)</i>	
Steve	<i>I thought she was going to go for me so I grabbed hold of her and that's made her worse I think, I ended up, I think I slapped her</i>	
Subtheme2: Rejection/Abandonment	The subtheme of "rejection/abandonment" is in reference to the perception that woman are deceitful and unknowable and therefore can hurt men. It was evidenced in terms of attachment to female caregivers also suggesting, for participants in the current study, fear of being rejected or abandoned by females often developed at a young age, Consequently, participants may feel violence is necessary to "put females into place".	9
Steve	<i>I don't think she (mother) could put up with me know what I mean so she put me in foster care and all that. I think it's just cause I was jumping about mad she just, I don't think she could handle it</i>	
Ryan	<i>I didn't want another relationship, I didn't want to be hurt again. If I don't let anybody get close then I can't be hurt</i>	
James	<i>My mum gives us a bit of paper cause I was the oldest man in the house and says "look, I've to pick yourselves or I've to pick Sam to have a future with him and it's easier for me to pick Sam cos we love each other so you's are going into care the morra and I'll sign the paperwork</i>	

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Subtheme 3: Women are Supportive	The subtheme “women are supportive” was only present in five of the participants. The emergence of this theme seems to contradict the image projected by participants of women as being hurtful and deceitful. It seems to reflect a common goal for participants to have a successful and supportive interpersonal relationship with a female, a desire they still uphold. It may be that women who are perceived by partners as “supportive” do not require the use of violence to put them in place and can be voiced in relation to female attachment figures who they perceived in a positive manner.	5
Alan	<i>She’s the only one in the family that I speak tae, I’ve got a good relationship with her</i>	
Kyle	<i>He was violent to her, he really was, my mum would never tell you, she still wouldnae to this day. I mean it’s... I don’t know how, it’s her, it’s the way she is, she wants to protect us</i>	
Steve	<i>Even if I’m no wi Ann I know she’s still there for support which is amazing after what I’ve put her and the weans through</i>	
Superordinate Theme 4: Diminishing personal responsibility	The subtheme “uncontrollability” refers to external factors being responsible for the violence/sexual assault which are perceived to be out with the control of the participant. It encapsulates the idea that there is a lack of choice, lack of escape and often coincides with the feeling of being the victim. Consequently, there is reference to substance misuse in addition to a sense of the violence/sexual assault being an unavoidable consequence in certain situations.	11
Subtheme 1: Uncontrollability		
Jonathon	<i>I try and stay away from people when I’m having a drink especially if I know I’m in a bad mood I try and stay away from people because something will happen and I’ll end up blowing my nut</i>	
Malcolm	<i>That’s how enraged I was that the red mist had come over and that was it and I actually got a fright there</i>	
Steve	<i>I’d been drinking all day and I’d been on eh Ecstasy... we were just sitting having a drink and I was kissing her and then tried to go further and she wouldnae let me. I forced myself on her so I got 8 year for that</i>	
Subtheme 2: Nature of harm	The subtheme “nature of harm” is representative of the participant’s extreme minimisation, and often complete denial, of the severity of the violence or assault. It also refers to the notion that there are degrees of harm, a spectrum of abuse, and participants often voiced the opinion that their act of violence or assault was not as damaging or distressing as it could have been.	11

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Paul	<i>There wasnae any violence, I was oot with one lassie, Lauran and eh we were arguing one night and I was drunk and I was sitting on the kerb and I grabbed her by the hair to pull her down, just to pull her down to sit down beside me so there wasn't any, what I would call violence</i>	
James	<i>This result in arguments which resulted in domestic incidents. Eh nothing that I would have said at the time was serious. Eh, the last domestic incident I just slapped her.</i>	
Gary	<i>She said I raped her but nothing happened. All I done was insert my finger into her vagina and that was it and she said I raped her</i>	
Superordinate Theme 5: Perception of Self	The superordinate theme of "perception of self" seemed to have a protective function for participants in that, if able to view themselves in a certain way, they are better equipped to cope with their previous actions. The subtheme of "the new me" referred to participants hope for the future and the idea of humanity adhering to common underpinning goals which they still hoped to achieve such as positive interpersonal relationships, fulfilling careers, a safe environment and social acceptance.	9
Subtheme 1: The New Me		
Gary	<i>Once my sentence is over this time I'm no coming back. I'm aff the drugs so that's the best thing for me, I'm off everything.</i>	
Greg	<i>Since I've been in here I've been trying to put things right</i>	
James	<i>I want a mother and father in law probably. I want a mum and dad I think and I want somebody to love us and be able to love them back</i>	
Subtheme 2: I'm not like them	The subtheme of "I'm not like them" seemed to have a defensive and protective factor for participants. It refers to the idea that they don't view themselves as inherently bad or violent and is consistent with the subtheme of "nature of harm" in that there are degrees of harm and they view themselves as being less problematic or traumatising in comparison with what other males do.	9
Paul	<i>It was for lewd and libidinous behaviour know what I mean for obscene comments to two teenagers but to be honest with you I can't really remember it cause that's no my real character. I'm no a paedophile or anything like that it's just the drink.</i>	
Greg	<i>I hate violence so I know when I get out of here I'll be ok</i>	
Gerrard	<i>I never done that I got touched when I was younger but I never done that. I never even hit my children</i>	

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Malcolm's account of his father's implementation of violence at such a young age demonstrates he was accustomed to violence as an acceptable punishment for "bad" behaviour. Furthermore, Malcolm's inability to recall the incident which caused the need for such a punishment shows the incident itself was not particularly unusual or extreme behaviour to warrant such a severe punishment. His statement that it's a "bit bad" shows a minimisation or desensitisation to such a punishment which is somewhat contradicted by his reference to "mental torture" and "sadistic" showing, reflecting on the violence used, he is aware of the severity of it but that it was a standard response to wrong doing in his family home. The perception of violence being acceptable within the family home was consistent with Paul's experience:

*My mum was quite bad to me, know what I mean. She used to take me and lock me in garages and cupboards and that when she was drunk. My dad worked away most of the time so he didn't know she was doing it and then he got made redundant and it just continued. I used to wet the bed and every morning, I got put in a cold bath and leathered every single day if you know what I mean. Sometimes I was terrified to go to sleep at night in case I wet the bed and when I got put in care I stopped wetting the bed you know what I mean. I don't know why it just stopped maybe it was just my nerves or something.*

*Paul*

As in Malcolm's account, Paul minimises his mother's violent behaviour by stating she was "quite bad to me" and then contradicts this account but recalling severely abusive behaviour. The statement "leathered every single day" highlights the frequency of the abuse showing that, for him, violence was an every day occurrence. This was to the extent he was scared to go to sleep at night as a young child and so seems had no experience of a nurturing home environment at a young age. Paul's account is also consistent with the subtheme of "rejection/abandonment" as it seems he felt rejected by his female primary caregiver which may have caused him to develop cognitions around women being unknowable and/or dangerous at a young age. Paul's experience corroborates to the "dangerous world" subtheme also in which the experience of participants is that people will behave in a rejecting manner to promote their own needs leading to the development of the implicit theory that the world is dangerous meaning you must be perceived as a threat or be threatened.

As well as participants' experience that violence was a standard means of practice in the family home and a form of punishment, for some participants it was viewed in a positive manner in their peer group:

*"it (violence) was usually planned for a Friday or a Saturday, Friday or a Saturday night so it wasnae like violence every day of the week you know what I mean it was... we were all kinda close. Em, I don't think, I don't think anything would've been done any different. Even if I knew then what I*

*know now just with the kind of environment I was in, I don't think it would've been any different. I'm still the same person, grew up around the same people and I think it would've just happened anyway*

*Steve*

Steve's account of violence was that it was a positive experience for him and seemed to provide him with peer support and a sense of camaraderie that was something which he valued and even reflecting on this time now does not regret it nor view it as a negative experience.

The subtheme of "grievance/vengeance", that is violence as an acceptable response to a perceived slight and an effective means of problem solving, was evidenced by Malcolm:

*I ended up having to hit him. I confronted him and tellt him to stop it you'd better stop your carry on it's pointless and then he bit me, well he tried to bite me. If he hadnae tried to bite me I probably wouldnae have hit him but the fact that he tried to bite me the red mist came o'er and I just hit him a couple of times and that solved the problem eh*

This extract shows that for Malcolm he perceived violence to be the only means available to respond to an altercation with a fellow prisoner after having tried to reason with him verbally. Furthermore. it seems his use of violence reinforced his application of it in future occasions given his perception that it "solved the problem". The subtheme of "dangerous world" was evidenced by James:

*"In the children's home there was a wee bit of bullying going on in there, me and my brother went into the children's home, the Officer in Charge tried to hit us, almost hit me in the arm with a hammer eh there was a bit of, I felt really scared cos the woman was quite aggressive she would make you stand in the corner for hours, you werenae getting your supper or tea and obviously the guys that were living in there were older than us so they gave us a bit of a hard time. Em I got hit by a brick aff somebody in there..."*

James experience of early family life was one of neglect hence why he was placed in a children's home. The above extract shows his experience of both peers and caregivers in the home was that they were dangerous and could not be trusted. This experience was consistent throughout James's life:

*"I was only 16 and I was in a hostel. As I say Mary Jones, Social Worker, started a relationship with us and it was a bit more friendly and familiar than it should have been. We were kissing and cuddling and stuff and she used to travel once a fortnight to visit me"*

This extract shows James's experience was that a female attachment figure, who held a position of trust, exploited him to promote her own interests. Therefore, this may have initiated a threat response in James at a time when he may have felt particularly vulnerable given his previous abusive experiences and lack of positive attachment figure. This theme is especially pertinent for James as

Mary Jones was the victim of his rape offence suggesting that people perceived as threats may become victims themselves.

### Desire to remain in control

The superordinate theme of desire to remain in control is representative of need for control in intimate relationships and patriarchal and misogynistic views of societal and familial constructs. The superordinate theme is made up of four subthemes: “need for control”; “real man”; “entitlement/women are objects” and “male sex drive/policing partner”. The importance of being in control and a “real man” were pervasive themes across participants:

*“My business went up in flames and she would throw that in my face, I lost money, she threw that in my face, she’d throw her previous relationships in my face, saying they had done this well, they had done that well. I think she just generally, she really put me down, put me down as badly as possible. I mean, as I say, I’d worked all my life kind of thing, even with drugs, I made a lot of money with that, it was like a business. Eh but since I started working at 23 I had my own wee company so I was hard working and she just kinda, made me feel really bad about no working, not earning more”*

#### *Greg*

Greg’s account of his relationship was that his partner made him feel like “less of a man” and inadequate and, perhaps more importantly, that he was made to feel like this, thereby clearly indicating that he believes these thoughts are not self-produced but rather forced upon him. Greg appears to be very proud of having his own business, albeit an anti-social business, and having made his own money and so it appears that what it means to be a man to him is to be in control and have power in the intimate relationship. Greg was convicted of rape and attempted murder of his partner and so it seems his response to feeling emasculated was to exert the ultimate exploitation and violation of his partner and yet he continues to portray himself in the victim role.

In accordance with need for control, themes of entitlement and women requiring policing from the partners emerged from the analysis:

*“There was trust there. If she said she was at home I’d accept that, if she said she was out with her mum I’d have to accept that. I wouldn’t question it because if that’s where you say you are that’s probably where you are. There were one or two occasions where I was kinda sitting thinking well I’m not sure you are right where you say you are who’s that guy’s voice in the background, why won’t you just answer your phone”*

#### *Ryan*

Ryan is here describing a positive aspect of an intimate relationship in which he states there was “trust” yet contradicts this by voicing his concern that he does not believe his partner and feels he is entitled to “police” her. Additionally, it is evident that if his partner does not answer her phone his automatic thought is that she is being unfaithful reinforcing his belief that his partner requires his policing to negate advances from other men.

#### Women’s Role in Violence and Sexual Assault

It was apparent that all participants experienced women as having a role to play in the violence and/or sexual assault that was perpetrated on them. The superordinate theme was composed of three subthemes: “women are provoking”; “rejection/abandonment” and “women are supportive”.

*She kept going on “you bought it (an apartment) so you are leaving me” and all that. So I said “well if you are going on like that I will leave you” and went away from her and maybe a week later I committed the index offence”.*

#### *Kyle*

Kyle here describes a situation in which he feels his partner initially provoked him and that, ultimately, led him to committing the index offence, raping and assaulting his partner, a week later. It was Kyle himself who subjectively made the link between his partner provoking him and the index offence. The phrase “she kept going” and “all that” suggests he perceived his partner to be consistently provoking him and challenging his authority to make decisions as a “real man” and it seems he ruminates on this altercation for a week, at which point he committed the index offence. Interestingly, when describing the index offence itself later in the interview Kyle denies it happened referring to it as “farewell sex” yet his use of language here “I committed the offence” contradicts this denial.

Women’s provocation and perceived challenge of the males dominant position was the experience for other participants also. Greg, who described feeling that nothing he did was “good enough” for his partner, explained an incident in which he learned from a female friend that his partner had been unfaithful to him:

*“when I got to her house, she still denied it, I then tried to drag her out of the house up to the neighbours house cause one of the boys she slept with is the neighbour and I was taking her to his house and in between there was a serious incident as such”*

In this extract, Greg experiences his partner’s continued emasculation of him in addition to the ultimate insult and female provocation, having a sexual relationship with another male, which further fragments his image of himself as a “real man”. In order to assert his masculinity he implements

violence and sexual assault to achieve dominance over his partner. This extract is also in fitting with the “nature of harm” subtheme as the “serious incident” which Greg refers to is the rape and attempted murder of his partner.

### Diminishing Personal Responsibility

The theme that violence and sexual assault was in some way out with the control of participants was evident across all transcripts. This superordinate theme encapsulated two subthemes: “uncontrollability” and “nature of harm”.

*“The red mist had set in and the actual events of it are a bit of a blur. I remember hitting him a lot and I remember hitting her a lot and then I stormed off... I got sentenced for that, got 9 months. Got out was still very angry and very bitter about the whole situation. Went back to the flat to pick up some stuff that had been left behind and the red mist set in again and I ended up hitting her with a curtain pole. Again, I stopped. I had every intent of killing her at that point, I though “I don’t want you to live any longer” and then stopped. I couldn’t physically do it but I was thinking throughout the whole thing I want to kill you, I want to kill you and then thought wait a minute I don’t want to kill you. I don’t want to be in this house with a dead body, how am I going to explain this and oh shit what have I done”*

Ryan

The reference to “red mist” was pervasive in four of the transcripts and is representative of the participants perception that they have lost control of the situation and the experience that they themselves are victims to the violence, and that it is no longer under their control. This contradicts Ryan’s experience of serving 9 months for his previous act of violence and choosing to go to the home he shared with his partner knowing an altercation was most likely to take place. The phrase “I ended up hitting her” implies it was not his choice to do so, that it was somehow out of his control. Again, this challenges his account of his internal world, that he “had every intent of killing her” and so it seems it is more likely that this was his intention upon going to her home. It is also apparent that, in this incidence, it was fear of the negative consequences of her murder that stopped him as opposed to any concern for the victim.

The minimisation or outright denial of violence and sexual assault was present in all participants and seemed to serve a protective function in that it was linked to the “I’m not like them” subtheme. This allowed participants to view themselves in a positive light:

*“I didnae think I would hit her back because she was pregnant with my daughter by that time so... but I, I maybe slapped her about the face to try and wake her up because I knew when she was in that phase all she could see was her abuser it wasnae me she was hitting or a pillow or anything it was her*

*abuser. And so it was getting that bad that the only way, I couldnae punch her in the stomach or anything cos she was pregnant with my daughter and that, and I didnae know what to dae so I gie her a slap in the face or something to try and bring her oot of it but it wasnae working”*

*Malcolm*

Here Malcolm describes his response to his partner experiencing flashback symptomatology in relation to being sexually abused as a child. He states that the only way he could manage this situation was through violence and does not explore other options. He minimises this violence by stating “I maybe slapped her” and “gie her a slap in the face” as it is evident he does not class these acts as particularly violent. What’s more, it is apparent he believes he was protecting his daughter, who his partner was pregnant with at the time, by only using minimal force to control the situation. The phrase “I couldnae punch her in the stomach” implies this is something he would have done had she not been pregnant.

### Perception of Self

The participants’ view of themselves and how they will improve their situation in the future and not engage in violent or sexually assaultive behaviour was pervasive in all transcripts. This view of themselves as “the new me” or “I’m not like them” (the two subthemes composing the superordinate “perception of self” theme) seemed to serve as a coping mechanism while participants served a custodial sentence:

*“I just feel out of place. I don’t know how to explain it to yourself 100% bit I just feel uneasy in here, I just feel different. I don’t know. Everybody says “you’ve done a sex offence the same as everybody else” but I dunno I cannae see it like that. I think there is a bigger picture and different people are going to take a different view when the truth comes out”*

*James*

James perception that he feels “out of place” and “different” when comparing himself to other sex offenders in the prison implies he views himself as internally distinctive from the others and this serves a protective function for him that he is not inherently “bad”. Interestingly, none of the participants expressed the view that they were intrinsically “bad” or that they should be punished for what they have done suggesting they do not view themselves as abusers and that this gives them hope that they will experience positive interpersonal relationships in the future.

### Discussion

The current research aimed to explore cognitions present in the IPV SO offender representative of their view of themselves, others and the world. Analysis in accordance with IPA methodology

revealed the emergence of fourteen themes thought to be representative of implicit theories in IPV SO offenders. These are: “violence is acceptable”; “grievance/vengeance”; “dangerous world”; “need for control”; “real man”; “entitlement/women are objects”; “male sex drive/policing partner”; “women are provoking”; “rejection/abandonment”; “women are supportive”; “uncontrollability”; “nature of harm”; “the new me” and “I’m not like them”. The majority of these themes correspond to implicit theories proposed in intimate partner violence offenders, sex offenders and child sex offenders as outlined in Table 2.4 suggesting there is great overlap in the cognitions of specific offending behaviour groups. The emergence of additional themes, limitations of the current study and clinical implications are discussed.

**Table 2.4 Implicit Theories identified in Child Sex Offenders; Rapists; Sexual Murders and IPV Offenders**

<i>Polaschek et al (2009)</i>	<i>Ward &amp; Keenan (1999)</i>	<i>Polaschek &amp; Gannon (2004)</i>	<i>Beech, Fisher &amp; Ward (2005)</i>	<i>Weldon &amp; Gilchirst (2012)</i>	<i>Current study: Weldon (2013)</i>
<i>Violent Offender ITs</i>	<i>Child Sex Offender ITs</i>	<i>Rapists ITs</i>	<i>Sexual Murderers ITs</i>	<i>Intimate Partner Violence ITs</i>	<i>Intimate Partner Violence Sex Offender ITs</i>
Normalisation of Violence				Violence is Acceptable	Violence is Acceptable
Beat or be beaten				Grievance/Revenge	Grievance/Revenge
	Dangerous World	Dangerous World	Dangerous World		Dangerous World
				Need for Control	Need for Control
				Real Man	Real Man
	Entitlement	Women as sex objects	Women as sex objects	Entitlement/Women are Objects	Entitlement/Women are Objects
	Children as sexual objects	Entitlement	Entitlement		
		Male sex drive is uncontrollable	Male sex drive is uncontrollable	Male Sex Drive Uncontrollable/Policing Partner	Male Sex Drive Uncontrollable/Policing Partner
		Women are dangerous	Women are unknowable	Women are Provoking	Women are Provoking
				Rejection/Abandonment	Rejection/Abandonment
				Women are Supportive	Women are Supportive
I get out of control	Uncontrollability			External Factors Responsible	Uncontrollability
	Nature of Harm	Denial		Nature of Harm	Nature of Harm
					The New Me

The themes “rejection/abandonment”; “women as supportive”; “need for control” and “real man” seem to be cognitions explicit to intimate partner violence and intimate partner violence sex offenders. The theme of abandonment is consistent with Mitchell and Gilchrist (2006) who found that fear of rejection is a pertinent risk factor in triggering abusive behaviours in IPV males, especially those with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder (Mitchell and Gilchrist, 2006). This theme, therefore, has implications for risk assessment and management of IPV males as at times which they perceive their partner to be rejecting them or times at which the partner attempts to leave to seek safety, will be times at which she is most at risk (Dutton, 2002).

The theme of “dangerous world” was not previously identified as an implicit theory in the Weldon and Gilchrist study (2012). It was however, an emergent theme in previous sex offender literature (as outlined in Table 3.2) and by Dempsey and Day (2011) in a paper focussing specially on ITs in domestic violence perpetrators. This theme relates specifically to the view that an individual must be protective of oneself from the possible exploitation by others and that no-one should be trusted. It was evidenced in all but one of the participants in the current study and it was apparent it was a schema which had developed at a young age due to adverse environmental, familial and attachment experiences.

Two themes emerged in the current study which were consistent with the implicit theories proposed by Dempsey and Day (2011) that of “the new me” and “I’m not like them”. The “new me” theme postulates a protective function for the participants in the current study, an idealistic view of the future, and is consistent with Dempsey and Day’s “create a better life” sub theme. This theme relates to a sense of wanting to be redeemed and striving for a second chance and is in fitting with the “wanting to change theme” which emerged in Blagden et al., (2011) when qualitatively exploring denial in sex offenders. This theme, therefore, has potential implications for intervention given its concordance with the Good Lives Model of offender rehabilitation (GLM; Ward & Stewart, 2003). The GLM is a strength-based approach and proposes that, from a humanist perspective, people offend as they are trying to secure a valued outcome in their life. As such, people offend when trying to achieve an inherently human goal: however the desire or goal is achieved in a harmful and anti-social way due to dynamic interaction between a range of deficits and weaknesses in the offender and their environment (Ward & Stewart, 2003).

The “new me” theme was closely linked with the “I’m not like them” and “nature of harm” themes which similarly seem to serve as a coping mechanism for participants and was recognised as such by Dempsey and Day (2011) whose analysis revealed a similar theme of “I’m a good person”. This theme seems to provide a means of cognitively distancing themselves from the acts they committed

and protecting themselves in their surroundings with the belief that they are not “like” other sexual and violent offenders, that they are not “bad” people. Consistent with this view of themselves as not like “other” sexual or intimate partner offenders, all participants in the current study greatly minimised or completely denied their sexual offence conviction. This was often in contrast to admitting and describing violent assaults in detail when this involved other males and hence reflecting the “grievance/vengeance” and “real man” subthemes. This may reflect a desire for the participants to be seen in a certain way by the female researcher, i.e. “I’m not bad”. Perhaps more likely, however, and consistent with Blagden et al. (2011) is that minimisation and denial serves as a protective function for the participants. Therefore, denial could be seen as a narcissistic coping mechanism that, if removed, may lead to a challenge of their cognitive dissonance, that is their belief that they are “not bad”. To overcome this, participants must want to address their denial and so may benefit from a readiness to change framework as that offered by Burrowes and Needs (2008). Finally in relation to the emergence of the themes related to perception of self, participants may have a personal motivation for wishing to appear as “changed” in fitting with the “new me” construct. This motivation may be driven by their position in the custodial system and their desire to be seen in a positive light. Participants’ motivation to engage in the research process is unknown. However, it may be related to the opportunity to construct their own narrative identity to a person they perceive to be “part of the system”. Conversely, Dobash and Dobash (2011), when investigating cognition in intimate partner murderers, found that complete denial was used as a means of avoiding intervention and treatment while serving a custodial sentence. This seems to contradict the current study in which participants self-selected to participate in the research and had completed various offending behaviour programmes and so is perhaps linked to the desire to be perceived as “the new me”.

### Limitations of the Current Study

Firstly, with regard to limitations of the current study, the sample size was small and self-selecting (given that each participant volunteered to be interviewed) which makes it difficult to generalise the results to wider IPV SO population. The small sample number also means it is difficult to comprehensively establish if saturation of the data has been achieved. There was, however, a marked consistency in the participants’ narratives which was evidenced by the prevalence of ratings of each theme with twelve of the fourteen themes identified in at least eight of the participants (66%). Smith (2011) noted that, for a theme to be classed as present, it should be evident in at least three of the participants when the number of participants is eight or above. Consequently, this suggests that homogeneity does exist among men who perpetrate intimate partner violence, intimate partner sexual assault and child sexual assault.

Secondly, there is the issue of the subjective role of the researcher in the research process (Smith, 2004). This was especially pertinent in the current study given the researcher’s familiarity with the

domain of IPV. This was minimised, however, by three independent researchers familiar with IPA methodology, but with limited knowledge of IPV, analysing three distinct transcripts and coding for themes to increase validity and for the purposes of triangulation. There was a high inter-rater reliability with all themes with two raters identifying 11 of the subthemes outlined by the original researcher and one identifying 9 from one transcript.

Participants motivation to engage in the research process may have been a factor in what they choose to discuss in their interview given, at the time of interview, given that they were serving a custodial sentence. Participants may have used the interview as an opportunity to portray themselves in a positive light resulting in the themes of “new me” and “I’m not like them”. Every effort was made to minimise any such issues by assuring the participants their participation was entirely voluntary and had no implications on their sentence length or participation in offending behaviour groups. Relatedly, the issue of the demand factor may be more prominent in this setting given participants may have anti-authority attitudes and perceive the researcher as part of the system contributing to their sentence. This is in fitting with the implicit theory of “uncontrollability” given participants’ voiced an external locus of control with regard to their current custodial sentence. They did not attribute it to their own offending behaviour which they perceived to be out with their control and due to external factors.

Finally, with regard to limitations, there is consideration as to the role of the female researcher in the process and participants’ responses to this given that they all have a charge of violence and sexual assault against a female. Every effort was made to minimise any impact of the female researcher on what the participant chose to discuss by adopting a non-judgemental approach and adhering to the semi-structured interview procedure.

#### Clinical Implications and Future Research

Four of the participants in the current study were convicted of sexual assault against a child highlighting the link between the aetiology of intimate partner violence sex offenders and child sexual abusers (CSA) which has been emphasised in the empirical literature by Morgan and Gilchrist (2010) and Hester et al (2007). This link, therefore, has implications for risk assessment as to who may be at risk when working with an offender presenting as an IPV SO/IPV or CSA offender. Other potential familial victims should be considered when assessing such an offender. The Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA; Kropp, Hart, Webster and Eaves, 1999) is routinely used to assess for risk of intimate partner assault. However, given the links between IPV and CSA (Hester et al., 2007) the additional use of the Child Abuse Risk Evaluation (CARE; Agar, 2002) may have clinical utility. In the future, the development of a risk assessment tool incorporating both risk of intimate partner violence and child abuse/sexual assault may prove clinically useful and increase efficiency.

When considering intervention with intimate partner violence sex offenders, it is apparent that this distinct group of offenders hold implicit theories which make them mistrustful and suspicious of others' intentions. This may have a bearing on the development of a positive and supportive therapeutic alliance. Consequently, the implementation of schema therapy with this group of offenders may allow for implicit theories to be identified by the therapist early in intervention to improve the development of the alliance from a relational and cognitive perspective. Ward (2000) points out that, recognition of underlying implicit theories associated with offending, as opposed to simply identify individual beliefs, is essential in treatment of child sex offenders. Schema based therapy is currently being employed by the UK prison service in England and Wales with child sex offenders and so this could potentially be implemented with intimate partner violence sex offenders also. There is evidence that schema-focussed therapy can reduce distorted schema-driven beliefs (Beech et al., 2012). In order to do this successfully, the aetiology of problematic implicit theories in intimate partner violence sex offenders could be incorporated into pre-treatment assessment and the intervention itself. The implicit theories themselves can be translated into dynamic risk factors and treatment targets in a meaningful and empirically defensible way (Dempsey & Day, 2011). This is also a possibility when considering the emergent theme "the new me" which could clinically adhere to the Good Lives Approach which is a strengths based model as opposed to focusing simply on removing a problem.

Future empirical research would benefit from establishing implicit theories held by non-violent; non-sex offending males to allow for a comparison and potentially identify further treatment targets and skill acquisition. As aforementioned, little is known about the distinct cognitions present in female perpetrators of IPV and so future research would gain from exploration of this empirically and aid in risk assessment and interventions with this offending behaviour group.

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**CRITICAL APPRAISAL SKILLS PROGRAMME**  
**making sense of evidence**

**10 Questions to help you make sense of  
Qualitative Research**

**This assessment tool has been developed for those unfamiliar with qualitative research and their theoretical perspectives. This tool presents a number of questions that deal very broadly with some of the principles or assumptions that characterise qualitative research. It is *not a definitive guide* and extensive further reading is recommended.**

***General comments***

- The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is "yes", it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions.
- The subsequent questions ask you to read the main question in bold first and then use the sub-questions underneath to give more detailed feedback.
- Record your answers to each question in the spaces provided.
- The 10 questions have been developed by the national CASP collaboration for qualitative methodologies

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## Screening Questions

<p><b>1 Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?</b></p> <p><i>HINTS: What was the research trying to find out?</i></p> <p><i>Why is it important?</i></p> <p><i>What is its relevance?</i></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>2 Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>

<p><i>HINT: Does the research seek to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants?</i></p>	
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**Detailed Questions:**

<i>Appropriate research design</i>	
<p><b>3 Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?</b></p>	<p><i>Write comments here</i></p>
<p>a) Has the researcher justified the research design ? (eg have they discussed how they decided which methods to use)</p>	
<i>Sampling</i>	
<p><b>4 Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?</b></p>	<p><i>Write comments here</i></p>

Has the researcher explained how the participants were selected?

- a) Have they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study?
- b) Are there any discussions around recruitment? (eg why some people chose not to take part)

*Data collection*

**5 Were the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?**

*Write comments here*

- a) Was the setting for data collection justified?
- b) Is it clear how data were collected?  
*eg: focus group, semi-structured interview etc*
- c) Has the researcher justified the methods chosen?
- d) Has the researcher made the methods explicit (eg for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, or if they used a topic guide?)
- e) If methods were modified during the study, has the researcher explained how and why?
- f) Is the form of data clear (eg tape recordings, video material, notes etc)
- g) Has the researcher discussed saturation of data?

*Reflexivity (research partnership relations/recognition of researcher bias)*

**6 Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?**

*Write comments here*

Is it clear:

- a) If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during:
  - formulation of research questions
  - data collection including: sample recruitment, choice of location
- b) How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design?

*Ethical Issues*

**7 Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?**

*Write comments here*

- a) Are there sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained?
- b) Has the researcher discussed issues raised by the study (eg issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study?)
- c) Has approval been sought from the ethics committee?

*Data Analysis*

**8 Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?**

*Write comments here*

- a) Is there an in-depth description of the analysis process?
- b) If thematic analysis is used, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data?
- c) Does the researcher explain how the data presented was selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process?
- d) Is there sufficient data presented to support the findings.
- e) To what extent is contradictory data taken into account?
- f) Did the researcher critically examine their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?

*Findings*

**9 Is there a clear statement of findings?**

*Write comments here*

- a) Are they explicit?
- b) Is there adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researchers' arguments?
- c) Has the researcher discussed the credibility of their findings?
- d) Are the findings discussed in relation to the original research questions

*Value of the research*

**10 How valuable is the research?**

*Write comments here*

- a) Does the researcher discuss the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding?

Eg - do they consider the findings, in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research based literature?

- do they identify new areas where research is necessary?

Have the researchers discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

## **Appendix II: Ethical Approval from Scottish Prison Service**

**11<sup>th</sup> August 2011**

Sarah

Your proposal was considered at the Research Access and Ethics Committee which met yesterday. I am pleased say that your study was approved.

I attach the standard access regulations which you should sign and return hard copy to me in Calton House.

The RAEC observed that by the time you are ready to undertake your fieldwork, most respondents falling into your categories were likely to be housed in XX or XX. Even although you only require access to small numbers, the RAEC thought it would minimise demand on SPS resources if interviews were 'clustered'.

Also, given the 'double sensitivity' of sexual offending and domestic violence, the RAEC urged care in approaching respondents for inclusion in the sample, as this particular group may be reticent to participating in research.

I am happy to discuss these and other points that may arise in due course.

Regards

Jim

**Appendix III: Information Form and Consent Sheet for Participants**

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

**IMPLICIT THEORIES IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

Dear Sir

The Scottish Prison Service is collaborating with a research project being undertaken by a researcher, Sarah Weldon, from the Department of Clinical Psychology at Edinburgh University. SPS is supporting the study in order to inform the development of relevant prisoner programme interventions. The project is also part of the requirements for the researcher's doctoral degree of Clinical Psychology.

The researcher intends to explore individual thoughts and feelings regarding participating prisoners' life experiences and offending behaviour. Sarah would therefore like to ask you to participate in an interview which would take no more than an hour of your time. This would be digitally recorded. With your permission, Sarah would also wish access to your case record to review your offence history.

The aim of the study is to investigate what psychologists refer to as Implicit Theories (ITs). These can help to explain the way offenders see the world and explain their actions and behaviour. A particular strongly held view of the world may reinforce offending behaviour. The study's focus will explore the thinking, attitudes and rationales of prisoners who are in custody for current or past offences involving intimate partner violence and sexual misconduct against a partner.

The information gathered from both file review and interview will be completely anonymous. Data collected will be held in secure conditions and only the researcher will have access to it. Information will be analysed and used in the strictest confidence with your anonymity guaranteed and protected at all times. No names will appear in any report.

Information will be treated in confidence *except* when there are disclosures relating to potential self-harm or to the potential harm of others or to undisclosed criminal activity.

Participants should be aware that if such disclosures were made, these would be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities and welfare services.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time you choose. Your involvement in this project will in no way impact on your sentence. The research data gathered will be destroyed in accordance with British Psychological Society guidelines after the study has been concluded.

The study is looking to interview 10-12 offenders currently serving a custodial sentence within a Scottish prison with both a current or previous conviction of intimate partner violence *and* a current or previous sex offence conviction against a current or former partner. You have been invited to participate from a group of prisoners across the prison estate which match the 'offence profile' required for the study.

Exploring these research issues will help to understand the problem better which will in turn help to inform programmes to assist in addressing behavioural traits.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this request. If you would like to assist please follow the instructions attached.

**Jim Carnie**

**Head of SPS Research Committee**

**Sarah Weldon BSc (Hons) Neuroscience, MSc Psychological Studies; MSc Forensic Psychology**

**Clinical Psychology Doctorate Student, University of Edinburgh**



### *Further help and support*

If you require any information or advice after today's interview here are a few useful contacts:

#### *Internal*

Ask a prison officer whom you feel comfortable approaching to request that a member of one of these internal groups:

- Chaplaincy
- Social Work
- Listener Scheme (A peer trained by The Samaritans who will provide you with support)

#### *External*

Ask a prison officer whom you feel comfortable approaching to add these numbers to your list of external contacts:

- Change 01324 485595 (Established in 1989 to meet a recognised need for a means to challenge and change men who are violent to women)
- Respect Phonenumber 0845 122 8609 (Information and advice line for people who are concerned about their abusive and/or violent behaviour towards their partner)
- Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247