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A Mixed Method Study: West African Women and Intimate Partner Violence

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A Mixed Method Study: West African Women and Intimate Partner Violence

by
Fleur Amanda D.A Achiepo Williams

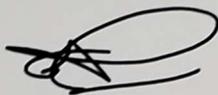
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Fleur Amanda Williams, under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the School of Criminal Justice, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education, and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Nova Southeastern University.

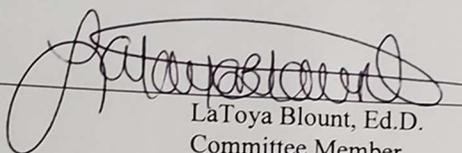
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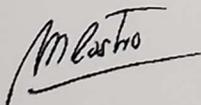
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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

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Dedication

Thank you, Lord for this process and this accomplishment. Thank you for the guidance and the strength you have given me to achieve beyond my wildest dreams. Through you everything is possible and comes into existence in your time. Thank you, Father, for the answered prayers of completing this dissertation. The road was long, challenging and filled with roadblocks but you allowed me to see beyond my difficulties. None of this would be possible without the amazing people in my life.

To my husband Tyrue, thank you for helping me to achieve my goals with your patience, love and understanding. Thank you for pushing me and being a pillar of strength in our family. Thank you for all the late-night snacks and words of encouragement.

To my daughter Zuri, know that the sky is the limit. There is nothing you can't achieve. You can achieve anything you put your mind and heart to.

I would like to thank my mother, Mariam, for always being a motivational factor in my life. Thank you for always being in my corner. Always stressing to me the importance of an education.

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Abstract

A Mixed Method Study: West African Women and Intimate Partner Violence

Fleur Amanda D.A Williams, 2020: Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University,

Abraham S. Fischler College of Education, School of Criminal Justice. Descriptors:

There has been a great amount of research conducted on women around the world, but limited focus has been placed on the countries of West Africa. The purpose of this mixed-method study was to gain insight into first-generation women of West African descent living in the United States and identify the key risk factors for victimization. The focus of this study was first-generation American women of West African descent. The study was conducted to identify the cultural/social norms and differences (e.g., lack of language skills, dependence on their spouse, etc.) that shape their experience with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The findings showed that first-generation born American women of West African descent believed that the culture influenced their interpersonal relationships and with whom they entered into relationships. The women expressed the importance of preserving culture by thinking ahead to their future children. Also, marriage is an important ritual in African culture and is more important than the traditional American wedding in America. Intimate partner violence is normalized in some of the West African countries due to wanting to respect the men, but many first-generation born American women understand the wrong in IPV.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Research Problem

The most common form of domestic violence is referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), IPV is a public health issue that includes both physical and psychological abuse of a partner (Black et al., 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that annually, more than 1.6 million people are killed from violence, and many more suffer from health consequences resulting from violence as well (Kiss, Schraiber, Hossain, Watts, & Zimmerman, 2015). Worldwide, 30% of women over the age of 15 are physically and sexually abused (Kiss et al., 2015).

The CDC states that IPV is a public health issue that includes both physical and psychological abuse of a partner, and affects millions of women in the United States, but also globally (Black et al., 2011). According to Cusack (2015), throughout history, domestic violence has been an issue, as women were seen as the husband's property. Poverty and public humiliation are some of the leading causes of domestic violence (Cusack, 2015).

IPV is one of the leading causes of intimate partner homicide (IPH) with women as the higher percentage of victims. Worldwide, 30% of women over the age of 15 are physically and sexually abused (Kiss et al., 2015). Wozniak and McCloskey (2010) discuss that female perpetrators of IPH are rare. Most homicides are increasing due to the

frequent use of guns. Gun-related homicides have increased by 26% from 2010 to 2017, from 926 women being murdered by their partners to 1,527 (Holson, 2019).

Immigrant and undocumented women are predominantly susceptible to intimate partner violence because the abuser will often use the victim's status as a means of power (National Organization for Women [NOW], 2017). According to the National Organization for Women, "abuse rates are as high as 49.8% among immigrant women, which is three times the national average. Fourteen percent of victims reported having problems accessing IPV services because of immigration problems, such as the denial of IPV services for lack of proper identification" (NOW, 2017, pg.2).

Additionally, according to Wozniak and McCloskey (2010), 50% of women who are currently incarcerated for homicide have killed their partners due to being victimized, and mental health and substance abuse are significant in many IPV cases. Women who suffer from substance abuse and mental health issues, and are victimized by their partners, can partly explain why some women do not report to the local authorities (De Waal, Dekker, Kikkert, Kleinhesselink, & Goudriaan, 2017). IPV is viewed differently around the world, but women are affected internationally, according to the World Health Organization (2009).

Background and Significance

Women of African descent are affected by IPV at a high rate; however, this is a topic that is not often discussed. WHO's World Mental Health Composite International Diagnostic Interview (WMH-CIDI) collected and analyzed information using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) and noted that IPV was displayed in multiple generations of women from the same family (Lacey & Mouzon,

2016). Being abused as a child is associated with IPV experiences as an adult, according to Lacey and Mouzon (2016). Machisa and colleagues (2017) stated that effective responses for abused children were needed to reduce long-term mental health well-being.

Research shows that women are more likely to experience sexual violence and less likely to report it than those experiencing physical violence (UN Women, 2019). Many of these women were reported to suffer from psychological abuse, be distant from family members due to geographical distance, and only spoke to immediate family members while not sharing the abuse they were experiencing. Many women in developing countries rely on their husbands as the supporter and do not consider the abusive actions taken against them as abuse. Immigrant women living in the United States who experience IPV have specific vulnerabilities based on their immigration status (Messing, Amanor-Boadu, Cavanaugh, Glass, & Campbell, 2013).

There has been a great amount of research conducted on women around the world, but limited focus has been placed on the countries of West Africa. These countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Saint Helena, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, which share many similar traditions and cultural elements. In many African countries, women have different experiences with IPV due to their kinship, wealth, and family status (Sedziafa, Tenkorang, & Owusu, 2016). In these cultures, a woman's role is subservient, as she is required to obey her husband and treat him with the utmost respect (Tenkorang, Owusu, Yeboah, Bannerman 2013).

Throughout this research, the focus was on women who are first-generation Americans of West African descent in order to identify the cultural and social norms and

differences (e.g., lack of language skills, dependence on their spouse, etc.) that shape their IPV experiences (WHO, 2009). There is a growing population of immigrant women who are more vulnerable to IPV than non-immigrant women in the United States (Messing et al., 2013). The significance of these findings is intended to shed light on the underreporting problem among first-generation immigrant women, how this is related to cultural norms, and how IPV is dealt with in the Western part of Africa. It is imperative that the cultural norms and traditions are identified to assist local and federal law enforcement in understanding what this population faces.

Additionally, lawmakers and officials need to be educated concerning what services and resources are needed by this population. A significant contributing factor is that IPV is viewed and handled differently because specific types of behaviors are not always attributed to being abused, making it difficult when determining effective ways to help women from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted on first-generation immigrant women and IPV to educate advocates, service providers, criminal justice system representatives, and the public, on the effects of IPV on the family and their relationships.

Language barriers are a critical issue when dealing with immigrants and their families. Agencies such as the police often lack the ability to communicate with victims of IPV, which prevents agencies from being able to represent them effectively. Furthermore, a lack of *cultural competence* from Americans who may not have a full understanding of the women's background may cause them to not provide women with the services they need, such as a shelter to remove themselves from the abuse. According to Runner and colleagues (2009), information regarding services or assistance to meet

victims' needs for housing, food, economic resources, and mental health counseling, which are generally offered to the population at large, are not often provided.

Barriers and Issues

Some barriers that affected the study was a lack of cooperation by first-generation women who are descendants of West Africa due to the fear of having their culture and families highlighted in a negative way. This affected the number of participants the researcher was able to acquire. The researcher needed to build the participants' trust. The researcher accommodated the participants by reassuring them that their identity would remain anonymous throughout the research with the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, the researcher ensured all information received was kept confidential.

Purpose Statement

The mixed-method study purpose was to gain insight into first-generation women of West African descent living in the United States and identify the key risk factors for victimization. The study aimed to highlight the cultural norms and differences as well as determining the types of IPV they are prevalent within this group. The goal of this study was to help federal, state, and local authorities with assisting overlooked populations and to better understand culture when working with these communities in the field.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for this proposed study to aid in the reader's understanding:

- *Cultural Competence*. According to the CDC, cultural competence is defined as “the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used

in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes” (Cultural Competence, 2015, p. 1.).

- *Culture*. “The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization” (Merriam-Webster, 2019, p.1).
- *First-Generation Natural-Born American*: A person who is the first in her family to be naturally born in a country of relocation (i.e., the United States) (Moffett, 2019).
- *Immigrant*: “a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence” (Merriam Webster, 2020a, p. 1). Within this research, the immigrants came to the United States after departing from West African countries.
- *Intimate Partner Violence*: “Violence or aggression that occurs with a person whom you share a close relationship.” IPV includes four types of behaviors: physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and physical aggression (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, para. 1).
- *Matrilineal*: Relating to, based on, or tracing descent through the maternal lineage (Merriam Webster, 2020b). Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/matrilineal>
- *Patrilineal*: Relating to, based on, or tracing descent through the paternal lineage (Merriam Webster, 2020c).
- *West African*: A native coming from, or a descendant of, the west region of Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Research Questions

Introduction

Culture involves the overall way of life of the African people, such as how that people live, eat, worship, and marry. According to Arowolo (2010), it is the entirety of a collection of existing concepts, belief systems, principles, and norms that form the basic pillars of generally agreed social action. After Asia, Africa is the second largest continent in the world, and the second most populated (Arowolo, 2010). At approximately 30.2 million km² (11.7 million square miles), including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of the total surface area of the Earth and 20.4% of the total land area (Arowolo, 2010).

Africa was comprised of small groups of hunter-gatherers during pre-colonial ages. This included groups such as the San people of southern Africa; a more organized unit of social groups such as the family clans of the Bantu-speaking people of central and southern Africa; highly-formed clan groups in the Horn of Africa; large Sahelian kingdoms; and independent city-states and kingdoms such as those of the Yoruba and Igbo people (Arowolo, 2010).

Culture and Norms

Culture and social norms are a main factor when addressing IPV because many women suffer from a lack of language skills and are dependent on their spouse (Messing et al., 2013). IPV continues to be a huge social issue despite countless studies on the topic, both narrowly and generally, but usually it refers to instances of violence or conflictual behaviors that occur between a couple (Oxtoby, 2009). Intimate partners' relationships are characterized by an emotional attachment. A study with the Denver Metro Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (DMDVFR), funded by the

Department of Justice, was conducted to reduce intimate partner homicide related deaths while also using retrospective surveillance for more information. It was found that women offenders were more likely to have been victimized prior to committing murder, whereas men have a history of domestic violence at a higher rate than women (Belknap, Larson, Abrams, Garcia, Anderson-Block, 2012). According to Wozniak and McCloskey (2010), of those women who were incarcerated for homicides, 50% were likely to kill the males due to being victimized by their partners. According to the CDC, women from all around the world are affected by IPV. Oxtoby (2009) noted that women face unique challenges in coping with the stress of immigration and acculturation processes, as well as language, legal, and economic difficulties.

IPV affects women of all cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses (Oxtoby, 2009). There is a growing population of immigrant women who are more vulnerable to IPV than nonimmigrant women in the United States (Oxtoby, 2009). Despite the prevalence of violence against women in homes, dozens of countries worldwide do not have specific laws against domestic violence (Alfred, 2014). Immigrant women who experience IPV have specific vulnerabilities based on their immigration status (Messing et al., 2013).

Kalunta-Crumpton (2017) found preventative means of assisting Nigerian women who immigrated to the United States and experienced IPV and murder. She suggested that resources be created and provided to women in the Nigerian communities in order to assist the women in leaving the abusive spouse. There are cultural norms that require women to respect their spouse and endure the IPV (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017) and this interferes with their ability to get away from the abusive situation. Considering this from

an international perspective, many women from African countries have different experiences with IPV due to their kinship, wealth, and family status (Sedziafa et al., 2016). When focusing on women's experiences in Nigeria, based on cultural norms, women are required to obey their spouses and they must ultimately endure the IPV, because it is not viewed as a problem within this population (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017). Nigerian women are not allowed to leave their marriage once married under cultural exceptions, while abuse is normalized with a blind eye turned toward any form of IPV (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017). According to Searcey (2018), divorce was never an option for many centuries for women, and they had to endure bad marriages that only ended if the husband wanted the marriage to be terminated. Within Niger, women have less education, and lower living equality or attainment, and are viewed as being below men (Searcey, 2018).

Similarly, in Côte d'Ivoire, women saw their fathers beating their mothers and those women reported having been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that was associated with physical and sexual IPV (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2014). Women who reported that there was nothing wrong with the physical abuse from their spouse had a higher rate of physical and sexual abuse (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017). This is intensified due to the cultural expectation that Nigerian women cannot leave their marriages, even when they are living in the United States. According to Kalunta-Crumpton (2017), abuse among this cultural group is normalized and accepted because it has been a part of the culture and traditions for many decades.

Cusack (2015) explained that the word *male* is linked with society and culture's definition of masculinity, which is dominant in Africa. Patriarchy exists in many cultures

and is built on traditions and/or sociopolitical systems (Cusack, 2015). The prevalence of marriage customs remains a major concern in West Africa, due to child marriage being double the rate of the 13% world average, and as high as 74% in Niger (Ferrant & Hamel, 2008). Although the justice system, in the 21st century, has become geared more favorably toward women's rights and equality among genders, and now acknowledges the need for reform, Ferrant and Hamel (2008) explained that there are issues with the marriage of young African girls who are under age 18. For instance, in 11 known countries, such as Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, and Nigeria, legislators have weakened child-marriage laws.

Education in West Africa vs. United States

West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, and Sierra Leone have attempted to close the gender gap in enrollment for primary schools (Ferrant & Hamel, 2008). However, one in four women cannot decide on when to start a family because it is determined by the male, which prevents them from continuous education beyond primary school (Ferrant & Hamel, 2008). Women spend more time in the home conducting unpaid work such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children and elderly family members (Ferrant & Hamel, 2008). In the United States, women, since the 17th and 18th centuries, have long fought to give women the ability to study up to a doctoral level of education (Dentith, 2016). Madigan (2009) explained that, in the past, young women were trained to take on limited roles in society, such as becoming a nurse, school teacher, or secretary. Fortunately, the opportunities for young women have increased dramatically in the United States with the introduction of Title IX in 1972 and the implementation of equal access laws.

Under Title IX, according to the Department of Education, no person in the United States, male or female, shall be prevented from partaking, discriminated against, or prevented from attaining benefits under educational programs or activities that receive federal funds (Madigan, 2009). In the present day, women can choose to continue their education. For example, the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) in 1974 was implemented to help schools recruit young women in the sciences, math, and athletic programs, which gave them the same opportunities as their male counterparts (Madigan, 2009).

Women and Abuse

According to Abramsky et al. (2011), IPV was a common factor among all women when considering their lack of education, substance abuse, childhood abuse, as well as being abused in different phases of their lives. The association between IPV and women was greatest when both the woman and her partner had the risk factor of being abused themselves as children, developing a learned behavior (Abramsky et al., 2011).

Women in developing countries rely on their husbands as the main supporter and do associate the IPV as abuse. Per Oxtoby (2009), the Family Violence Prevention Fund found Asians are less likely than Caucasian Americans to define a husband's shoving his wife or "smacking her in the face" as intimate partner violence and in fact, in many Asian languages, there is no term for IPV (Oxtoby, 2009, p.14).

Mental Health

WHO's World Mental Health Composite International Diagnostic Interview (WMH-CIDI) collected and analyzed data using the DSM-IV and noted that IPV was displayed in multiple generations of women from the same family (Lacey & Mouzon,

2016). The findings indicated an association between mental and physical health in the United States. Caribbean Black women were affected by the presence of severe physical intimate partner violence (SPIV). Being abused as a child is associated with IPV experiences as an adult. Machisa and colleagues (2017) stated that effective responses for abused children was needed to reduce long-term mental health well-being.

Mental health is a dominant problem when it comes to IPV and should be a priority to providers, whether in the United States or in Caribbean islands (Sabri et al., 2013). Among African American women and Hispanic women, there are many common IPV signs and these two groups showed very similar psychological traits (Preiser & Assari, 2017). Women's mental and physical health were affected and displayed in generations of women in specific families (Preiser & Assari, 2017). The majority of women who had a history of SPIV witnessed such events between their parents who had also experienced abuse as adults (Sabri et al., 2013). Psychological abuse, substance abuse, and mental health were all associated with IPV in women from the Caribbean, which was similar to occurrences in the United States (Sabri et al., 2013).

According to the U.S. Department of State, in addition to group and individual trauma-specific counseling, a range of alternative therapies offer promise in helping victims build self-esteem and empowerment, and reconnecting with themselves and society (Kaylor, 2015). Within the United States Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has a division within the agency called the Office for Victim Assistance. In this division, the role of the victim specialist is to focus on the victims and the recovery process (FBI, 2016).

Victim specialists ensure that every victim who is a part of an FBI investigation receives the rights and assistance they are entitled to under the law, which will assist them in coping with the crime committed against them. They are trained and given skills to better serve victims, and often have a background in social work and mental health (FBI, 2016). There is still work that needs to be done, such as improving resources, but the federal government is consistently assisting victims, many of whom are faced with sexual victimization (FBI, 2016). According to McLeod and colleagues (2010), counselors are helpful to women attempting to access community resources when they are in the process of leaving an abusive male partner. Spinney and colleagues (2016) addressed racial differences in mental health needs and intervention services provided to youth in the juvenile justice system, which later affects them as adults. There have been long-standing disparities when it comes to race and the type of services afforded to one racial group compared to the other, and this directly impacts immigrants and their children of immigrant (Spinney et al., 2016).

Violence

In the West African country of Ghana, many married women experienced IPV from early on, because of the traditions and the culture, it is accepted (Tenkorang et al., 2013). The causes of violence are not fully understood when dealing with these particular communities within Ghana due to some cultural differences (Tenkorang et al., 2013). The primary issue to consider, according to Tenkorang et al. (2013), is that wealth, occupation, age, and ethnicity are not predictors of the presence of sexual violence in married women in Ghana. The data collected using the Ghana Demographic and Health

Survey showed that demographics, financial status, and sexual violence within a married woman's relationship were major predictors of violence (Tenkorang et al., 2013).

According to Tenkorang and colleagues (2013), women who did not report the occurrences of physical abuse from their husbands. According to Sedziafa and colleagues (2016), there is a difference in the type of abuse within matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Within matrilineal societies, women experience more emotional abuse compared to patrilineal societies, where there is more physical abuse and nonconsensual intercourse. In South Africa, IPV stems from generations of abuse and has been a serious public health issue within the nation (Sedziafa et al., 2016). The common contributing factors seen throughout the country were substance abuse and exposure to violence as a child (Gass, Stein, Williams, & Seedat, 2011).

Women of African descent were also affected by IPV at a high rate in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Sabri et al., 2013). It was determined that there was no difference in African Caribbean women suffering from IPV compared to first-generation African American women living in the United States (Sabri et al., 2013). Aside from just IPV, there are generational effects experienced by U.S. Caribbean Black women suffering from severe physical intimate partner violence (SPIPV), which were noted by doctors and through personal self-reporting to (Sabri et al., 2013). A majority of the women suffered from IPV and never dealt with the effects of the abuse. Psychological abuse, substance abuse, and mental health were all associated with IPV (Sabri et al., 2013). Mental health was observed as a dominant problem and no support was offered to aid in removing the person from the abusive situation.

Wozniak and colleagues (2010) described female-perpetrated IPV related homicide as being rare and not newsworthy. There is a lack of news coverage on IPV when it relates to IPV compared to homicides committed by strangers. Among women who are currently incarcerated for homicides, approximately 50% have killed their male partners due to victimization (Wozniak et al., 2010).

Religious leaders, family values, and maintaining a cultural identity is important to Nigerian women (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017). Living in America does not change the sense of culture and continuance of submissive behavior to the husband, which often leads to accepting and normalizing violence (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2017). Making women aware of resources and laws is important in creating progress. Immigrant women in America often do not recognize abuse in the form of emotional and verbal abuse, as they were only able to perceive violence as being sexual and physical (Eunha & Hogge, 2015). These women were also less likely to seek professional help and more likely to seek help from informal sources such as family and friends (Eunha & Hogge, 2015).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) as discussed by Degutis and colleagues (2010). The NISVS implemented methods to collect the most current and comprehensive national and state-level data on IPV, sexual violence, and stalking victimization in the United States (Degutis et al., 2010). The surveys gathered data on physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. The purpose of the survey was to identify the prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence. The survey acquired results on race, age, gender, and social economic status and how these individuals were affected by IPV. According to the authors, the survey also

obtained information on how the trauma they experienced affected them (Deguitis et al., 2010).

De Waal and colleagues (2017) explained that in order to understand men and women, scholars must acknowledge that there are characteristic differences in how substance abuse and mental illness affect men and women. The authors stated that there was a need for intervention to reduce the likelihood of women being victimized, and that women had a higher chance of experiencing sexual violence and not reporting being physically abused (De Waal et al., 2017). The study's goals were to identify women who suffered from substance abuse as well as mental health issues and how these related to being victimized by their partner (De Waal et al., 2017).

IPV and Social Media

Social media is so prevalent in today's world that some would argue that the generation cannot live without it. The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997, which allowed users to upload a profile and make friends with other users (Hendricks, 2013). Since social media's first appearance, it has expanded greatly, and many new platforms have been created. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, GroupMe, and others are very popular. Furthermore, social media has allowed families and friends to stay connected with one another across the world.

Although social media is valuable in many ways, it has several downsides. For instance, some individuals use it for bullying, to convince others to harm themselves, and to promote violence. According to Barrett (2018), teens who spent more than 5 hours daily online were 71% percent more likely to have one suicide risk factor compared to

teens who spent less than an hour a day online. Despite its disadvantages, social media has been useful in spreading global awareness about various public health issues including IPV and the services available to victims. Social media has also helped the public recognize that IPV occurs even in the celebrity world. Such platforms have included images, videos, posts, and commentary that has allowed people to view the brutality committed by celebrities they admire. For example, social media informed the public that artists, actors, and professional athletes can be perpetrators as well, such as Chris Brown, Emma Roberts, and Ray Rice (Abbey, 2012; Puente, 2013; Walker, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The proposed research focuses on building a foundation based on social learning theory and social conflict theory. Bandura (1977) helped to address the behaviors in relation to the aggressor in IPV and the victim. According to Bandura:

If people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do, learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous.

Luckily, most human behavior is learned by modeling observationally: by watching others one develops a conception of how new practices are implemented, and then this coded awareness serves as a guide for practice. (p. 22)

Social learning theory is used to describe behavior patterns that can be learned by direct experience or by studying others' behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Wives who refused to accept the assigned gender roles were known to be physically abused by immediate family members such as their fathers, extended male and female family members, as well as family friends (Kaluta-Crumpton, 2017). Learned behaviors of conforming to social

exceptions are a must within African culture and these behaviors were passed on to their offspring (Kaluta-Crumpton, 2017).

Based on the principles of social conflict theory, IPV occurs when one partner has more resources to provide within the marriage which causes the provider to become the aggressor (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005). Within the West African culture, women deem IPV as acceptable due to social norms and assigned gender role expectations (Bhugra et al., 2011). Women who did not have the benefit of education in Ghana had a higher chance of being victims of abuse within their relationships (Tenkorang et al., 2013).

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. Quantitative measure: What is the relationship between country of origin and the type of abuse reported (emotional vs. physical vs. sexual)?
 - a. What is the relationship between social media and the frequency of abuse reported?
 - b. What is the relationship between age and the offender type (offender types to include husband/wife, cohabitant, boyfriend/ girlfriend, stranger, etc.) reported by the victim?
2. Qualitative measure: How do cultural traditions and experiences of first-generation born American women of West African descent impact their perception of IPV?
3. Qualitative measure: Do attitudes toward intimate partner violence differ for first-generation born American Women of West African descendants living in the United States?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

The researcher used a mixed-method research design employing both quantitative and qualitative data. According to Testa and colleagues (2011), the use of mixed methods is applicable for examining physical and sexual violence against women. Using the qualitative method allows for the researcher to comprehend and investigate groups of people or individuals' social problems (Creswell, 2018). The sample size used in qualitative research is much smaller because the focus is on a more inductive process of understanding the depth of a phenomenon (Dworkin, 2012). The researcher sought a sample size of 10. According to Creswell (2018), when testing a phenomenon, the sample size should be between three and 10 participants.

Both purposive and snowball sampling were used when gathering and identifying participants. Through careful analysis and statements, the researcher obtained information to test the validity of the results of the study and the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). While many forms of literature speak on the issues of IPV and women, these studies speak very little of West African descendants living in America as first-generation, native-born citizens and their experiences. Many studies focus on quantitative studies and do not fully express the living experience of the women. Within this mixed-method study, the researcher allowed the women's voices to be heard by recording and transcribing their experiences and feelings. Qualitative research permits the researcher to collect interview, document, audiovisual, and observation data (Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative research was employed for data collection using the Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS). Observation and phenomenon recorded can lead to

hypotheses, experimentation, and external validation (Testa et al., 2011). The AAS was given to the women before their interviews by a third party who administered the surveys. The AAS was used to assess the presence of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse for each participant. This helped determine if the women experienced abuse at any time and helped develop more targeted interview questions.

Participants

The researcher employed purposive sampling and snowball sampling to select individuals to participate in the study. The researcher reached out to personal contacts of national Greek letter organizations via e-mail. The researcher is part of a national Greek letter organization and has contacts in other women-only organizations. To widen the pool, the e-mail was sent to members in both the undergraduate and graduate chapters. To account for the researcher's personal bias, the researcher enlisted local chapter presidents within these organizations to reach out to the women. This eliminated any preconceived bias or knowledge that the researcher may have had of the participants. The participants were first generation American born women of West African descendant (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Saint Helena, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) between the ages of 18 and 30. The participants were not compensated for their participation in the study.

Instruments

The Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Victimization Assessment Instruments for Use in Healthcare Settings (Basile, Hertz, & Back, 2007), which includes the AAS, was used in this study. The AAS is a 5-item assessment scale for IPV that

measures the presence and frequency of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse that helped to gain a perspective on the attitudes of women of West African descent.

The researcher used a pre-demographic questionnaire to gather qualitative information from potential participants to ensure they fit the criteria of the study in order to participate. The questionnaire was used to gather nominal variables such as age, gender, West African country of origin, and parental marital status. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail by the researcher. The researcher sent the e-mail (Appendix I) with a survey link using Survey Monkey. The pre-demographic questionnaire for the study focused on the following information: (a) age, (b) level of education, (c) West African country identified with, (d) marital status, (e) family household type, and (f) the will to participate in the study if qualified.

Sixty-one pre-demographic questionnaires were completed by participants, of which 14 met all selection criteria to be participants in the study. Of the 14 individuals who met the criteria, all 14 self-identified as being from West Africa and first generation. A total of 61 people completed the pre-demographic survey. There was one male respondent for the questionnaire; however, he did not complete it.

The researcher conducted interviews with 11 female participants who self-identified as being from the western part of Africa. Statistical data on these female participants were collected from the questionnaire. The purpose of the open-ended interview was to gather qualitative data. Researchers who conduct interviews are interested in understanding other people's lived experiences (Seidman, 2019). The researcher used open-ended questions to let the participants share their experiences. Each

interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on how much the women were willing to speak. Participants did not receive compensation.

The researcher reviewed the pre-demographic survey, followed by in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews of the women who qualified and self-selected to continue with the study. The researcher sought to use such interviews to gather information on physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. Women who were not West African descendants did not proceed in the study.

The researcher invited the women who fit within the scope of the research criteria to learn more about the study and conducted a semi-structured interview, but first provided them with the purpose of the research and obtained consent to be a part of the study. The researcher ensured that participants understood that participating was voluntary and that they could terminate their involvement at any time. The consent form was signed by both the person administering the interview and the participant. Furthermore, the researcher had a third-party resource administer the AAS instrument after the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in the area of choice of the woman to ensure that they were comfortable and willing to talk and virtually. The interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. The researcher interviewed West African women who were first-generation, natural born American from the countries listed above who have experienced a form of intimate partner violence (physical, verbal, and sexual). At the end of each interview session the researcher provided resources to participants, such as contact information for counselors if needed. All participants received information concerning counseling and other services as part of the interview process.

Participants received a pseudonym to protect their identities. To avoid re-traumatization, the researcher sought the assistance of a victim specialist in case a participant needed assistance. The researcher attained the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to conduct the study. The researcher also had business cards of psychologists available for the participants. One of the aims was to look at the similarities and differences to compare and contrast countries. Another aim was to analyze whether American culture has been adapted by first-generation women and if the participants' traditions from native countries have been carried on in the United States.

Data Analysis

The attitudes of first-generation American-born women who are of West African descendant were examined by statistical testing. The researcher used descriptive statistics to report the findings. Qualitative responses from the pre-demographic questionnaires and the in-depth one-on-one interviews were transcribed and later coded. A phenomenological study seeks to focus on the experiences and attain a greater understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). This was explored by using the responses received by the participants and transcribing them. The researcher then coded the information to uncover themes and categories.

The research explored the feelings and experiences of first-generation born American women who were West African descendants and experienced IPV. According to Creswell (2018), purposive random sampling is useful in identifying a population of interest and constructing a systematic approach of selecting participants without having advance knowledge.

Coding process. Before the collection of data, the researcher employed an inductive approach while creating a codebook as a reference to guide through the coding process (Saldaña, 2016). During the initial coding, the researcher went through all of the transcripts and became familiar with the responses of the participants. The researcher also placed notes on the transcripts. “A code in qualitative inquiry is often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4).

Within the first cycle, the researcher used priori codes and in vivo codes. A priori codes are codes that are pre-determined by the researcher before examining the data. In vivo codes are derived directly from the voice of the participants (Saldaña, 2016). During line by line coding, the researcher went through the data with a closer eye to ensure no key statements were missed when reporting the participants' experiences.

The researcher employed a descriptive coding approach used to document and categorize the breadth of opinions stated by multiple participants using single words and short descriptions within the interview. Next, the researcher categorized the codes and put similar codes into the same categories. By analyzing and sorting the codes into groups, the researcher was able to detect consistent and overarching themes.

The categorization of codes reflects themes. Some emerging themes were (intimate partner violence definitions, family dynamics, cultural traditions, religion, education/ resources from outside sources and types of abuse. The other themes were as follows: strength of commitment to cultural/religious customs which encourage tolerance of abuse, government roles, importance/preserving culture, cultural privacy, relationship

influences, first-generation American thoughts, being prepared and knowing how to identify signs of abuse, and effects of IPV on children.

Interview data. The primary means of collecting data was through semi-structured interviews. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using the 11 women who self-identified as West African, first-generation, and met the other criteria. The researcher sent out the interviews to be transcribed by a third party after the audio and visual recordings were completed. The data was reviewed, interpreted, and coded using an Excel spreadsheet.

Limitations

The amount of research conducted on West African women is limited. There is no information on West African descendants who are born in the United States. As a result, the researcher hoped to add to the body of existing research on IPV. Some participants of the study may have had selective memory in regard to IPV and had a fear of participating in the study. A potential threat to internal validity of the study was if there were confounding factors. Participants may have exaggerated the events and made them seem worse than it really was or less severe than it really was. To address this issue the researcher proposed questions that were indirect to the violence to get a more accurate account of the event. The researcher was concerned with triggering posttraumatic stress on the participants.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study's aim was to acquire insight into first-generation women of West African descendants living in the United States and identify the critical risk factors for victimization. According to the National Organization for Women (2017), immigrant and undocumented women are predominantly susceptible to intimate partner violence because the abuser will often use the victim's status as a means of power.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that more than 1.6 million people are killed yearly from violence, and many suffer from health consequences (Kiss et al., 2015). Worldwide, 30% of women over the age of 15 are physically and sexually abused (Kiss et al., 2015). The most common form of domestic violence is referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). The research highlights the cultural norms and differences and determines the types of IPV that are prevalent within this group. There is a significant concern of first-generation women of West African descent wanting to preserve the culture and provide insight into the culture without having people judge their experiences.

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 supported the need for IPV to receive further examination. Part of the significance and barriers is a lack of cooperation by first-generation women who are descendants of West Africa, because of fear of having their culture and families highlighted negatively. Agencies such as the police often cannot communicate with victims of IPV, which prevents agencies from being able to represent them effectively. Furthermore, a lack of cultural competence from Americans who may not have a full understanding of the women's background may cause them to not provide

women with the services they need, such as a shelter to remove themselves from the abuse.

The research study applied a mixed-method approach. According to Testa and colleagues (2011), mixed methods are applicable for examining physical and sexual violence against women. According to Creswell (2018), using qualitative methods permits the researcher to comprehend and investigate groups of people or individuals' social problems from their own words. The main tools used within the qualitative segment was the use of in-depth one-on-one interviews. Eleven women met the selection criteria through the pre-demographic survey. The pre-demographic questionnaire was used to obtain demographic information on the participants' backgrounds and also as a tool to aid in the selection of potential participants.

The questionnaire obtained participants' age, gender, marital status, level of education, childhood household status, first-generation status, and country of origin. None of the participants completed the Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS) after the semi-structured interviews took place. The AAS examined the presence of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse for each participant. Participants opted not to complete the AAS due to their not being able to relate to the questions asked, or have an answer to the questions. The data from the demographic questionnaire was compiled and analyzed by the researcher. Responses given by the participants were used to develop themes as the researcher documented their life experiences.

Participants

The criteria for participation was a first-generation American born woman of African descent from West African nations (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea,

Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Saint Helena, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) who were between the ages of 18 and 30. Out of the 14 qualified respondents who met all the criteria for the study from taking the pre-demographic survey, 11 respondents agreed to be a participate and were interviewed. The remaining three were contacted but failed to reply to the interview request, declining or refusing to participate, expressing the feeling that the topic was too sensitive and uncomfortable for them to address.

As shown in Table 4.1, Participant A was from Ivory Coast and was between the ages of 26-30 and had been married for 4 months. She had a bachelor's degree and came from a two-family household. Participant B was from Ivory Coast and came from a single mother household. She was between the ages of 22-25 and was single. Participant C was from Ghana and was single. She came from a single mother household and was between the ages of 26-30. Participant C had a graduate degree. Participant D was from Sierra Leone and was single between the ages of 26-30. She had a master's degree and came from a single mother household. Participant E was single from Ivory Coast and from a two-parent household. She was between the ages of 26- 30 years old and had a graduate degree. Participant F was Nigerian, single and between the ages of 26-30. She had a graduate degree and came from a two-parent household. Participant G was from Burkina Faso was between the ages of 22-25. She came from a single parent household and was single. Participant H was from Ghana, single, and between the ages of 26-30. She had a bachelor's degree and came from a two-parent household. Participant I was from Nigeria and was between the ages of 22-25 with a bachelor's degree. She was single and came from a two-parent household. Participant J was from Nigeria, had a bachelor's degree and

was single. She was between the ages of 22-25 and came from a two-parent household.

Participant K was from Nigeria and was between the ages of 22-25. She had a bachelor's degree and came from a single parent household.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Country of Origin	Age	Education	Household Type	Marital Status
A	Ivory Coast	26-30	Bachelor's degree	Two parent	Married
B	Ivory Coast	22-25	Bachelor's degree	Single parent	Single
C	Ghana	26-30	Graduate degree	Single parent	Single
D	Sierra Leone	26-30	Graduate degree	Single parent	Single
E	Ivory Coast	26-30	Graduate degree	Two-parent	Single
F	Nigeria	26-30	Graduate degree	Two-parent	Single
G	Burkina Faso	22-25	Bachelor's degree	Single parent	Single
H	Ghana	26-30	Bachelor's degree	Two parent	Single
I	Nigeria	22-25	Bachelor's degree	Two parent	Single
J	Nigeria	22-25	Bachelor's degree	Two parent	Single
K	Nigeria	22-25	Bachelor's degree	Single parent	Single

The pre-demographic questionnaire provided demographic information about the participants. A total of 61 individuals completed the questionnaire. Within the questionnaire some questions were not answered by the responders which is reflected in the different graphs.

Figure 1 highlights the ages of the 60 participants who answered the pre-demographic survey.

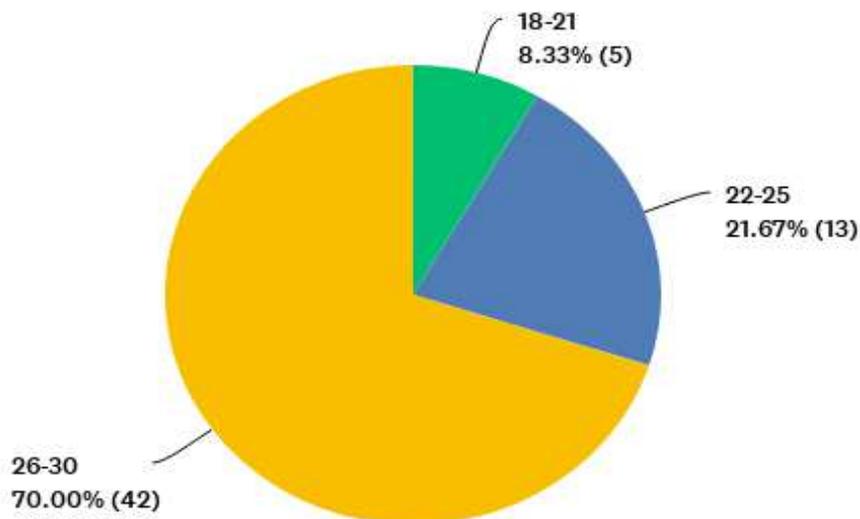


Figure 1. Age of Participants

Within this data the age of the participants was presented based on all the individuals who participated in the pre-demographic questionnaire. Five of the respondents (8.33%) were between the ages of 18-21. Thirteen of the respondents (21.67%) were between the ages of 22-25 and 42 respondents (70%) were between the ages of 26-30. One individual who took the pre-demographic survey did not answer this question. This represented the number of individuals who took the pre-demographic questionnaire prior to selecting the individuals who met all the criteria to move forward with the study. Figure 2 features the gender of the participants who took the pre-demographic questionnaire.

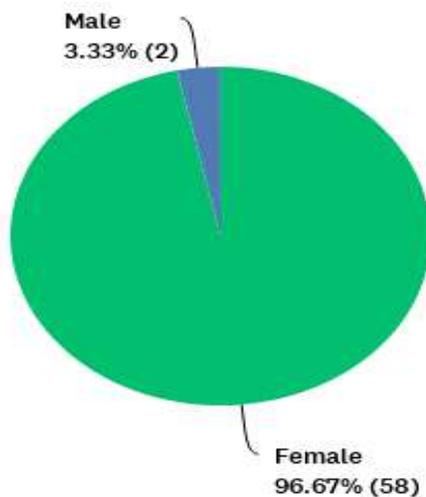


Figure 2. Gender of Participants.

Two of the respondents were male (3.33%) whereas 58 (96.67%) were female. There was one respondent who chose not to self-identify as being neither female or male. Therefore, only 60 respondents answered this question concerning gender. Figure 4.3 provides the type of household in which the participants were raised.

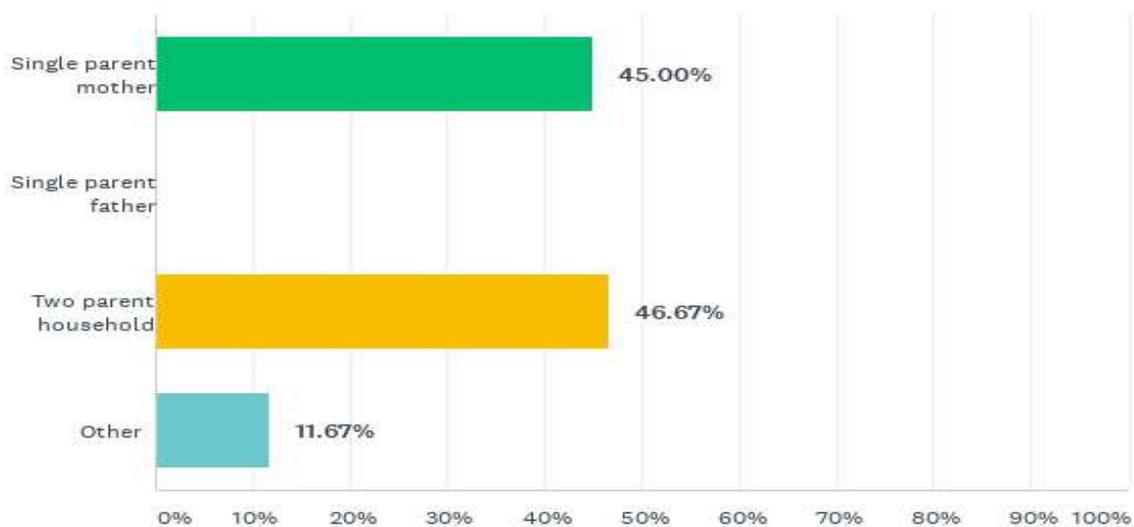


Figure 3. Type of Childhood Household

Twenty-seven of the respondents (45%) came from a single parent household with the mother as head of the household; 28 of the respondents (46.67%) came from a two-parent household; and 6 of the respondents (11.67%) came from a household which they described as other. A total of 61 individuals answered this pre-demographic question. Figure 4 provides information about the participants' marital status.

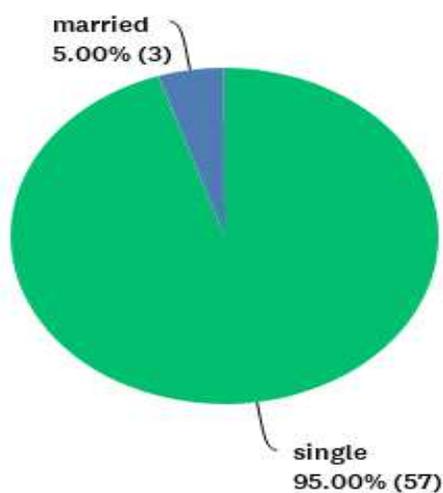


Figure 4. Marital Status

Of the 60 individuals who responded to this question, 57 (95%) were single and three (5%) were married. One individual did not answer this question. Figure 4.5 provides detail on participants' first-generation status in the pre-demographic questionnaire.

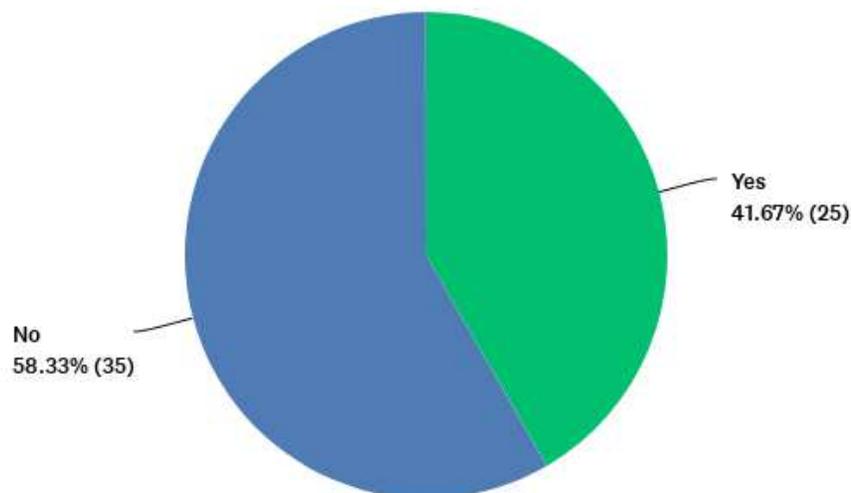


Figure 5. First-Generation Status

Twenty-five of the respondents (41.67%) stated that they were first-generation Americans while 35 respondents (58.33%), stated they were not first-generation Americans. Sixty participants answered this pre-demographic question. One participant did not answer if they were first generation American.

Figure 6 provides detail on country of origin of the participants. One of the respondent's (1.67%) country of origin was Burkina Faso and 4 respondents (6.67%) came from the Cote D' Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Six of the respondents (10.00%) came from Ghana, and one respondent came from Liberia (1.67%). Seventeen of the respondents (28.33%) came from Nigeria and three respondents (5.00%) came from Sierra Leone. Twenty-nine respondents (48.33%) stated that they were not from a West African country. Fifty-seven participants answered this pre-demographic question. Four individuals opted out of answering the question.

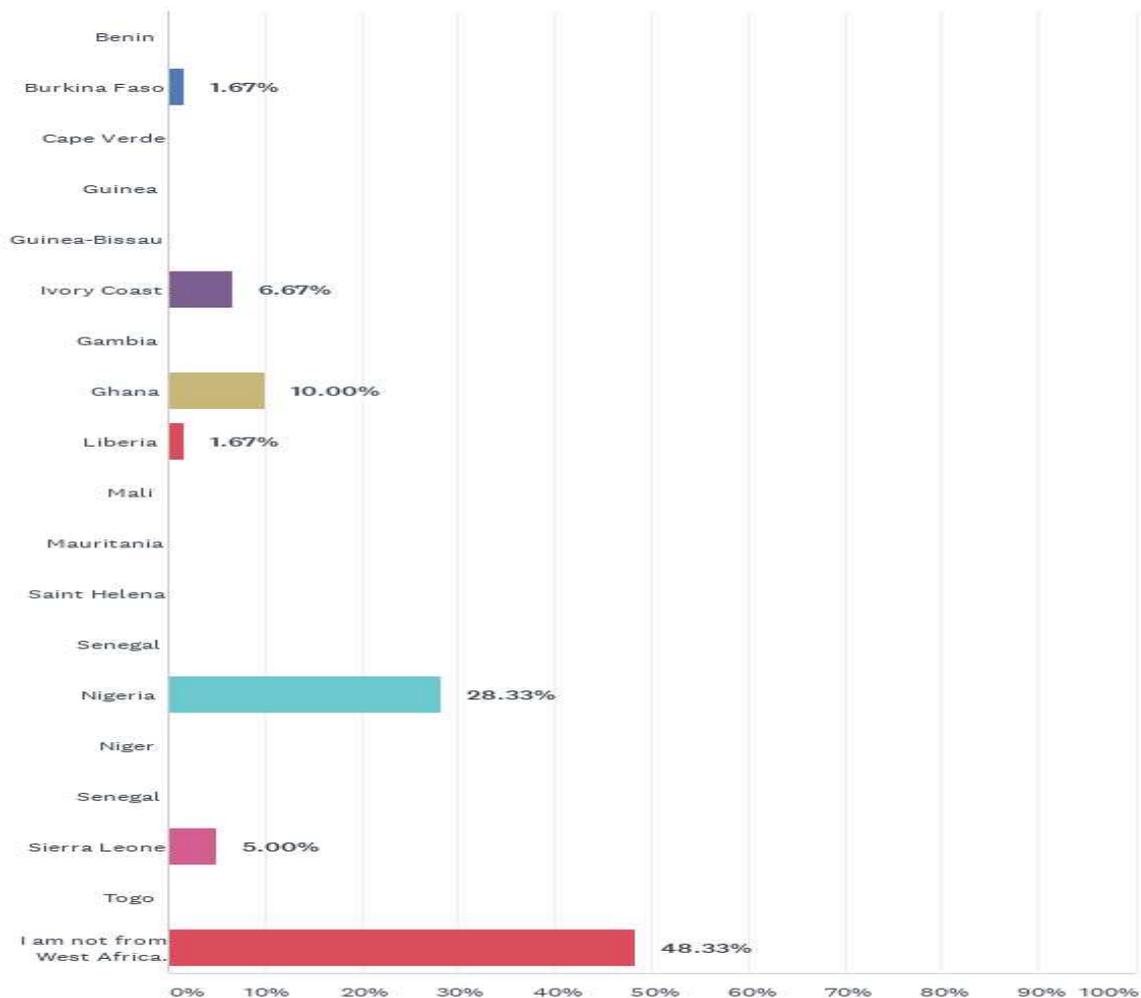


Figure 6. Country of Origin

The participants were also asked about their level of education. Figure 7 provides information on participants' level of education. Two respondents (3.28%) had a high school degree or equivalent (e.g., General Equivalency Diploma). Five respondents (8.20%) had some college but no degree, and two respondents (3.28%) had an associate's degree, and 32 respondents (52.46%) had a bachelor's degree. Twenty respondents

(32.79%) had a graduate degree. This question was answered by all 61 participants who completed the questionnaire.

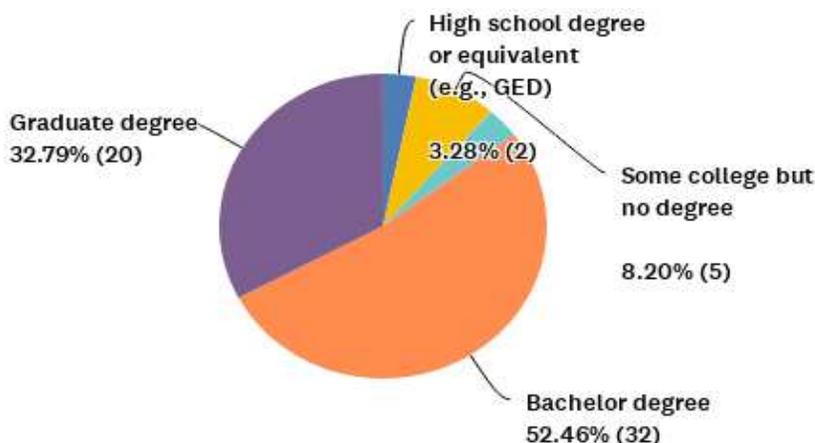


Figure 7. Level of Education

Frequency of themes. The frequency of the themes and categories are provided in Table 1. The researcher analyzed and coded 600 statements, which led to 36 themes. The themes were then grouped into categories. Two themes linked to the category of IPV effects on children, one theme was associated with being prepared and knowing how to identify signs of abuse. Two themes were linked to first-generation American thoughts. The three themes were linked with relationship influences, and one theme was related to cultural privacy. Three themes were connected with the importance/ preserving culture; two themes were linked with the government roles; three themes were linked to the strength of commitment to cultural/religious customs which encourage tolerance of abuse. Four themes were related to the category of types of abuse, and four themes were linked to the category of education/resources from outside source. Two themes were

linked to the category of religion, four themes were identified to be linked with cultural traditions, three themes were linked to the category of family dynamics, and three themes were linked to the definition of intimate partner violence.

Table 2

Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes (Frequency)
Definition of Intimate Partner Violence (20)	Intimate Partner (11) Family (7) Close friends (2)
Family Dynamics (22)	Education from Family (2) Lesson taught by family members (9) Household Type (11)
Cultural Traditions (15)	Engagement/Marriage (11) Holidays (1) Baby Showers (2) Naming Ceremonies (1)
Religion (6)	Muslim (3) Christian (3)
Education/Resources from Outside Sources (12)	School (4) Media (3) Non-profit Organizations (4) Friends (1)
Types of Abuse (19)	Physical Abuse (6) Emotional Abuse (8) Spiritual Abuse (1) Verbal Abuse (4)

Strength of commitment to cultural/religious	Loss of Voice (9)
customs which encourage	Norms (10)
tolerance of abuse (21)	Excuses made for community (2)
Government Roles (6)	Services provided (4)
	Grants (2)
Importance/ preserving culture (22)	Connecting with Roots (11)
	Understanding values of culture (9)
	Cooking the foods (2)
Cultural Privacy (11)	Dealing with family issues internally (11)
Relationship Influences (21)	Intimate relationships (10)
	African men vs American Men (5)
	Sharing culture with significant other (6)
First-Generation American Thoughts (16)	African culture vs American (11)
	Being too American or not African enough (5)
Being prepared and knowing how to identify	Not knowing the signs (3)
signs of abuse (3)	
Effects of IPV on children (4)	Life choices (2)
	Personal issues (2)

Major Findings

This study highlighted the main influences that women associate with IPV and abuse. The influences were IPV definitions, family dynamics, cultural traditions, religion, education/resources from outside sources, types of abuse, strength of commitment to cultural/religious customs which encourage tolerance of abuse, government roles, importance/preserving culture, cultural privacy, relationship influences, first-generation

American thoughts, being prepared and knowing how to identify signs of abuse, and effects of IPV on children. Many women spoke of the importance of preserving culture, not shedding light on negative aspects of the culture (IPV) and showing the beauty of their respective countries.

Family dynamics. Participants stated that the husband was considered the *head honcho* and given the utmost respect within the household. This is similar to the findings of Tenkorang et al. (2013, p. 772), which stated: “Within these cultures, the role of a woman is subservient, as she is required to obey her husband and treat him with the utmost respect.”

Types of abuse. Participants stated that physical and emotional abuse is very prevalent. Emotional abuse was present in some of these relationships described by the participants for example, being spoken to in a derogatory fashion and degrading the wife due to dinner not being ready and served on the table, was a form of verbal abuse. The participants highlighted being forced to have sex and physically being harmed. Participant B stated, “If he wants to have sex with you, you just have to do it right then and there.” Participant C said, “In my culture specifically, the male partner is the leader in the family, the leader in the household. And so, there’s a lot of reliance on what the male in the family thinks of what should be done.” All participants spoke about the control in the household and the trauma associated with this abuse, which leads to normalizing the behaviors. Participant D stated “that the main responsibility is to take care of the household and have dinner served when the husband arrives home. The women discussed not ever hearing the term intimate partner violence. Participant C stated, “I’ve never heard of that term before, but intimate means somebody that you are

pretty physical with.” They discussed IPV as being a close relationship with an individual who physically or verbally is abused. One woman defined IPV as “being sexually abused and being treated as property.” Another woman described IPV as “an abuse that is more spiritually based.”

Findings by Research Question

The themes discussed by the participants were analyzed and reviewed as it is related to the research questions. The words of the participants in quotes are provided to highlight their experiences.

Research question 1. What is the relationship between country of origin and the type of abuse reported (emotional vs. physical vs. sexual)?

- (a) What is the relationship between social media and the frequency of abuse reported?
- (b) What is the relationship between age and the offender type (offender types to include husband/wife, cohabitant, boyfriend/ girlfriend, stranger, etc.) reported by the victim?

Within the study, the quantitative method was not employed using the Intimate Partner Violence, and Sexual Violence Victimization Assessment Instruments for Use in Healthcare Settings (Basile et al., 2007) which included the Abuse Assessment Screening (AAS). The AAS was a 5-item assessment scale for IPV that measures the presence and frequency of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The AAS was supposed to be given to the women at the end of their in-depth one-on-one interview by a third party. The 11 women who completed the interviews decided to opt-out of completing the AAS. This

left no data to be collected for the assessment. The AAS was intended to assess the presence of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse for each participant. (See Appendix II).

The AAS was intended to provide guidance to completing a quantitative aspect of the study. Careful consideration of the demographic data made possible a fuller understanding of the personal factors that might influence the screening experiences of each participant. Furthermore, the descriptive data aided in comparing the results of this study to those of previous quantitative and mixed-methods studies. However, participants stated that they had not experienced any forms of abuse and decided not to answer the AAS. This left no further data for analysis.

Research question 2. How do cultural traditions and experiences of first-generation born American women of West African descent impact their perception of IPV?

Cultural traditions. Participants stated that a traditional African wedding, regardless of West African country, is very important. Marriage is a central ritual in African culture and more important than the traditional American wedding in America. It is important for a daughter to be married and to have two families join. The traditional wedding is a rite of passage, and religion is an important part of traditional weddings in determining the types of clothes that are worn. Participants spoke about the countries being mainly Muslim and Christian.

Participant A spoke about her experience with her own traditional wedding. She described her 3 to 4-day long wedding celebration as being divided into two segments: a Muslim and Christian celebration to honor both sides of her family. For her Muslim wedding, Participant A described the wedding this way:

The first day is where the woman is put into a room and isn't allowed to speak for that day and is visited by other women in the family and just kind of observes, and they're praying for her and watching over her and giving her blessings.

Traditions are a strong influence on the lives of the participants. Culture and tradition is attached to the love amongst one another and the connection between families. Coming from a rich history allows these participants to want to preserve it and guard it from being destroyed or taken away from them. The acceptance of abuse and tolerance for it has become normalized within the African community. Participants spoke about seeing abuse repeatedly to the point of it being integrated within the community. Participant A stated, "It's something that has been going on for a very long time, and people have just adapted to it, but it shouldn't be a part of a culture." Participant B stated: "A lot of women don't have a voice, and I feel like it's because in our culture the man is viewed as head honcho, bow down to him, whatever he says goes." Similarly, Participant C stated:

We have our family branches set up and the respect that needs to be given to the males of the family as the leaders. So, it's kind of an ingrained thing that we don't really think about because we're so used to it, so we kind of just accept that it happens and that it's only the role of the man or that's just being a guy, but it's not acceptable.

Maintaining the family order is essential within the West African culture.

Relationship influences. The participants believed that the culture influenced their interpersonal relationships and with whom they entered into relationships. They also spoke of the importance of preserving culture by thinking ahead to their future children.

Multiple participants spoke about dating within their culture because it was easier.

Participant A stated:

I think continually visiting Ivory Coast, the family is still there, so making sure that my kids know. Allowing the kids to spend as much time as they can. Being there and learning some of the things that we've learned and experienced is very important to him and me. It influences my relationships by just knowing where I come from.

Participant B discussed the desire to want to marry within the culture because of cultural differences with Americans. Participant B stated:

At first, I was like, "Oh no, I only want a West African man, he has to be a first-generation just like me because we're just going to get along. And then, over time, I realize a lot of them are controlling and still have that same mentality from our parents. And then it was a struggle dating Americans as well because some of them don't have the same values or beliefs. They don't know what respect is, or they're not considerate.

But Participant C stated:

I am dating someone with a very similar background. And I usually date someone with a similar background. So, I feel like we both come from the same place of understanding and the same traditions and the same upbringing. I don't have to explain too much because the background is there, and the understanding is there already.

Participant J's statement was similar to Participant C in stating:

They make it feel like it's imperative to marry within your country but not marry outside of your race. It's okay... I mean, it's not okay to do if you do; it's whatever, but shouldn't, and it's keeping it in the country, and if you want to be a star pupil, keep it within the tribe. It's bringing anybody else home is almost a taboo outside of your tribe.

There is an exception for some families that the daughters marry within the culture and, more specifically, the tribe. If they do not, they may bring shame and disappointment upon the family.

On the contrary, some participants discussed not wanting to date within their culture and choosing to teach their significant other about the culture due to the abusive nature of African men. Participants believed that some of the men still held on to harmful, offensive aspects of the culture. Both Participants D and H hesitated in dating from within their culture. Participant D discussed: "Even with dating, it's very rare that I date African men because that stigma does pop up sometimes. I'm learning not to use it as a sole factor." But Participant H stated:

My feelings pushed me away from dating within my culture. So, most of the guys I dated, they ended up just being American and not really knowing if they had any West African background or any African background for that fact.

Both Participants D and H hesitated in dating from within their culture.

Research question 3. Do attitudes toward intimate partner violence differ for first-generation born American Women of West African descendants living in the United States?

Intimate Partner Violence is normalized in some of the West African countries.

Participant I discussed, "I never really learned about abusive relationships growing up because my parents were in . . . They'll yell at each other sometimes, but they were never in any type of physical altercation." Participant B stated:

The kids know what's going on. They may think the kids are young or don't really understand, but I wish this was talked about more because it affects them. So, for example, with me growing up I noticed my mother being emotionally abused by my father, and now that I'm older I realize, okay, just certain opinions or perspectives on different things like relationships or even just going out, I'm kind of scared just based on what I saw with my parents.

Participant J discussed not knowing signs of abuse within the relationships and needing to be educated on what to look for. Whereas Participant C was taught:

That's just the way that it's kind of has been. I was told to mind my business. Whenever I saw something that made me question what was going on between like my older family members, I was pretty much told to be quiet and mind your business.

Participant I stated:

So, I don't think, if I had experienced a physical altercation with somebody that I'm with, I don't think I would have any idea on how to handle that. I don't know if I would probably have to tell my dad, I don't even know what I would do. So, I think intimate partner violence is definitely one of those things that maybe we need to start talking about in communities. Because I'm pretty sure that it's a strong possibility, it could have happened to me; it just so happened it did not.

And so, it's definitely happening. It's definitely happening to a lot of people, and I think a lot of women in my shoes don't know what to do about it. Or don't have anybody to talk to you about that. So, I definitely think those are one of the subject areas that I wish I knew more about. I've spoken to people who were probably verbally abusive, and I don't think I knew how to handle them. And I don't think it made sense to talk to my dad about it, and I think that his input would have been significant.

In contrast, Participant B stated:

If something were to happen, I don't think I would be even comfortable going to them just because we've never had that type of dialogue before. Furthermore, addressing that if she were ever in a situation dealing with IPV, the level of comfortability to discuss circumstances with her parents wouldn't exist.

The women looked for resources and ways that the community could assist. Participants spoke about the importance of attaining an education. Education is vital in being aware of the abuse. Many of the participants learned about IPV through the media. Participants believed there should be room for community centers or more programs that offered support to people who are immigrants from West African countries. A cultural liaison or someone who could go out into communities and these spaces was needed to inform and provide education on what partner violence is and what kind of actions and signs to be aware of as they relate to IPV.

Summary of Results

Chapter 4 presented the analysis and findings based on the research questions that guided this mixed methods study. It detailed the data gathered by the researcher in

conducting semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews with first-generation American born women. The participants shared in detail about their culture, experiences, and the importance of preserving who they were as descendants of Africans.

The researcher characterized themes into major categories, which included intimate partner violence definitions, family dynamics, cultural traditions, religion, education/resources from outside sources and types of abuse. The other themes were as follows: strength of commitment to cultural/religious customs which encourage tolerance of abuse, government roles, importance/preserving culture, cultural privacy, relationship influences, first-generation American thoughts, being prepared and knowing how to identify signs of abuse, and effects of IPV on children. Upon the completion of the interviews, none of the participants completed the AAS; therefore, no quantitative data could be analyzed. Chapter 5 will provide the implications of the findings and provide recommendations for the future.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study focused on providing insight and guidance to first-generation American-born women and understanding the cultural aspects that influence them. Culture is an essential part of West African women's lives, as demonstrated by the interviewed women. The study aimed to highlight the cultural norms and differences and determine the types of IPV prevalent within different countries in West Africa. The goal of this study was to help federal, state, and local authorities assist overlooked populations. This is intended to provide insight into the mindset and a better understanding of culture and norms when working with West African communities.

According to a study conducted by Abramsky and colleagues (2011), IPV was the main factor among all women due to a lack in education, substance abuse, childhood abuse, and being abused in different phases of their lives. The association between IPV and women was most significant when both the woman and her partner had the risk of being abused themselves as children and then developing a learned behavior (Abramsky et al., 2011). The young women interviewed expressed being conflicted between behaviors observed around them within the culture and developing their mindset of what was right and wrong. They found it challenging to honor and respect some of their traditions when realizing that certain aspects of their culture, such as IPV, were harmful. For example, despite the prevalence of violence against women, some countries in West Africa, such as Ivory Coast and Ghana, do not have laws to prevent intimate partner abuse or do not punish those who commit it. In those countries, IPV is dealt with behind closed doors and within the family, or not addressed at all.

Within the 19th and 20th centuries, legislation was created to protect women from being battered (Cusack, 2015). Looking at the differences between the genders and understanding the victims' circumstances can shed light on how they behave in a precise manner (De Waal et al., 2017). The study's findings add to the literature on the mindset of first-generation born American women and provided insight into West African countries' attitudes as a whole. The participants were comparing similar and different cultural aspects of their countries of which they were descendants. This chapter presents the limitations of the research, suggestions for future research, and recommendations for further research on first-generation American born women who are descendants of West Africa.

Many researchers have conducted research related to specific West African countries. Research shows the attitudes of different West African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. While this research highlighted attitudes and the mindset of first-generation women, the research was limited in addressing the quantitative question posed and was not addressed by the research due to a lack of participation post the in-depth interviews. The results of the study provide no answers to the quantitative research question introduced in Chapter 1 due to the participants' decision to opt-out of the AAS.

This research used semi-structured interview questions based on the literature introduced in Chapter 2 to address the qualitative aspect of the study. The results of the study do provide answers to the qualitative research questions introduced in Chapter 1.

Implication of Findings

This study expands upon existing literature that explores IPV and the effects on women in certain West African countries. This study can expand understanding of West

African countries that are not highlighted in media or first world countries. The findings contribute to existing research, which has already been conducted regarding African and intimate partner violence. This additional information can be used by other researchers to continue to learn about attitudes and norms in West African countries. Contribution and connection to literature from this study expands information on countries such as Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, where there is limited research concerning IPV. It is also important to note that the intention of this mixed-methods study was not to generalize the information but to share the participants' lived experiences and give them a voice.

When examining the attitudes of first-generation born American women, we see that there is a lack of awareness of the travesty of IPV and that learned behaviors of normalizing things are common. Often parents ignore the effects of IPV on their children, which participant B highlighted in terms of how it has affected her growing up. It also influences the choices and decisions she made as an adult. Without full understanding, they are affected by witnessing abuse in their childhood and this is reflected in their adult life behaviors.

Another participant thought verbal abuse was justified based on the interactions between her parents. She grew up witnessing them *attack one another* with their words but never becoming physical in arguments. Since there were not any physical altercations, Participant I believed the verbal abuse was not abuse until she went to college and realized that it was. College is a source of information and learning about the poor behaviors seen growing up.

Participant I described taking a domestic violence abuse class and learning that the behaviors she had witnessed were a form of abuse and now she does not allow it to

affect her own adult life. She is very guarded with her reactions to things because she believes she has learned some of the behaviors her parents exhibited. She does not want to inflict or tolerate that type of hurt and violence on her future partner.

Limitations

This study included 11 participants who fit a selective participation criterion. The criteria for participation was that the participants must be first-generation American born women of African descent from West African nations (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Saint Helena, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) between the ages of 18 and 30. Out of the 18 qualified respondents, 11 respondents agreed to participate in the study and be interviewed. The 11 participants were from Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Burkina Faso. The deficiency of participants from Benin, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Saint Helena, Senegal, Niger, and Togo, may have limited the perspectives of those individuals as they are a part of West Africa. However, it does not lessen the importance of the information shared by the participants.

Another limitation of this study was a lack of participation in the quantitative AAS. The 11 participants did not want to complete the assessment upon completing their interviews, which in turn provided no data to report for the assessment. The assessment was offered to those participants who completed the interview, which limited the pool of participants. The study was not inclusive to all West African women as it was limited by age, gender, and also being first-generation American born. The researcher found that

many young women could not participate in the study because they were not born in the United States but arrived in the US before age 5.

Recommendations

This study demonstrates that first-generation women of West African descendants living in the United States are prideful in their culture but are also proud to be American. They embrace both sides of their culture and take the time to acknowledge IPV issues as it relates to their West African culture. They can acknowledge the presence or absence of abuse. The IPV they have experienced has shaped them as people and what they look for in relationships. Aside from just the IPV, they make sure they do not experience that within their own adult lives. Women have decided to date outside of their culture, based on fear of experiencing the IPV within their relationships, while others have embraced being with someone from a similar background.

When a person can accept who they are as the first generation, such as the researcher, they are able to find their place in society and learn from both cultures. They assume parts of their culture that are good and pass it on to the next generation with a sense of pride. Being able to connect to the roots is important to these women. Yet, understanding their learned behaviors or observing early signs of IPV in the homes affect many women. Being proud does not mean being naive to issues that the West African communities deal with amid the situations they face.

Resources. Knowing where to find resources were discussed as lacking for many West African women when trying to get help. Participants discussed that their parents did not have any resources to turn to, which led them to stay in abusive relationships. By establishing more community-based programs for West African women suffering from

IPV, communities will be able to connect to West African women because they will work with people who understand the culture and the importance of preserving their privacy. They will be able to advocate and provide the necessary support to help the women get out of the abusive home. The program leaders will serve as facilitators for women with local and federal law enforcement.

The program can provide educational and cultural training to local officials. Overall, the community program would provide direct support, counseling services, housing resources, and other resources they may need to start a new life away from the abusive partner.

Police cultural development. Often local and even federal law enforcement personnel are not aware of cultural issues that arise in many communities. To date, IPV continues to be a problem in the United States and around the world. The main issue is that IPV is viewed and handled differently depending on the person's level of understanding of the situation and culture of the victim's country of origin. To one person, a specific type of behavior is not associated with IPV. As a nation, we must continue to educate people on the effects of IPV on the family and relationships. In educating, we must also factor in religious and cultural differences. This makes it difficult when trying to determine the best way to help law enforcement.

An offender under the law and in the eyes of the federal government will be tried in federal court if the victims are from multiple states or the offender travels from state to state to commit the sexual act. The Department of Justice is responsible for providing victims of the crime with a victim specialist throughout their case. The victim will also have an opportunity to give a victim impact statement in federal court.

Victims need to have support and individuals that they can rely on because, as we know frequently, the victims can blame themselves. The law can determine what can be done and identify the limits of a sentence. Laws are essential in keeping people safe and giving justice to individuals who have been harmed.

In certain cultures, women deem IPV as acceptable and think of it as a way of life due to gender role expectations. This also prevents women from seeking any assistance or help. Women sometimes rely on their husbands as the supporter and do not consider everything that is being done to them as abuse. Providing law enforcement with cultural training will help in their interactions with families and be able to better refer cases to different organizations that can provide additional support, as often police are the first line of defense.

Anonymous Big Sister program. The participants spoke about the lack of support from people within the West African community when people try to leave abusive relationships. There needs to be a connection between West African women who have already left abusive relationships and are able to assist the women trying to leave these situations. Being able to share stories and give examples is essential. This program would give these women and their children a safe space to express themselves and learn of the different resources available to them.

Future Studies

The study's findings have implications for future research on first-generation women of West African descendants who are affected by IPV and are living in the United States. Some suggested topics are listed below.

1. Although women from five West African countries participated in this study, future studies should focus on the other West African countries that were not represented within this study and the effects of IPV in those countries. Exploring other West African countries and discovering the mindset regarding IPV will provide a holistic view of West Africa and the culture.
2. Women were the focus of this study; future studies should involve men and IPV. Although more women tend to be more forthcoming when speaking about IPV, it would be beneficial to hear the perspective of first-generation West African men through qualitative research and their experience with IPV.
3. Within this study, the goal was to employ a mixed-method approach by conducting the AAS to gather quantitative data. The participants declined to complete the quantitative part of the study but completed the qualitative segment. Future studies can focus on the quantitative aspect of this study and gather more quantitative data.

Conclusion

Intimate partner violence is prevalent worldwide and must be highlighted and addressed as a leading nation. Abuse can be taxing on the family and destroy the family structure. There are unspoken rules and taboos on speaking about IPV within society, especially in minority communities and among immigrants. The mission of various federal and state agencies is to combat violence against citizens within the United States and abroad. While the primary objective is prosecuting criminal actions, the rehabilitation of victims is significant.

According to Federal Laws and Attorney General Guidelines, the FBI (2016) is responsible for ensuring victims are identified, notified of their rights, and provided the assistance to help victims cope with the impact of crime.

The victims' rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s resulted in the creation of many programs designed to assist victims of crime and the passage of laws at the local, state, and federal levels, establishing certain rights for victims. Most crimes investigated by the FBI involve violations of the United States Federal Criminal Code. According to federal law, victims of federal crimes are entitled to certain rights and services. (Rights of Federal Crime Victims, 2016)

According to the Victim Specialist Unit, their nationwide goal and objectives are to “inform, support, and assist victims dealing with the aftermath of the criminal justice system with pride and resilience in 56 field offices across the country and international offices” (Victim Services, 2016, p. 1). Using those services and expanding upon them within the community on a local level can aid and assist these women and help them move on with their lives.

Although IPV is an issue, there is a slow movement in making human rights and public changes due to the inaccessibility of the information. The challenges are even greater when dealing with immigrants and cultural aspects. Intervention is essential in reducing IPV as well as mental health issues within women. Being abused as a child is associated with IPV experiences as an adult and produces a higher tolerance for it. Machisa et al. (2017) stated that an effective response for abused children is needed to reduce long term mental health that is associated with IPV. According to Kalunta-

Crumpton (2017), religious leaders, family values, and maintaining a cultural identity is vital to Nigerian women.

Women must be aware of available resources, and laws are essential in creating progress. Overall, all women from all ethnic groups share similar experiences when it comes to IPV. Psychological abuse, a lack of interaction with family members due to distance, as well as only speaking to immediate family members, has influenced how West African women report abuse. It is crucial to understand traditions and the cultural mindset to begin implementing change.

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Appendix A
Invitation Letter

My name is Fleur Williams and I am a doctoral student at Nova Southeastern in the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. The purpose is to gain insight into first-generation women of West African descent living in the United States and identify the key risk factors for victimization. The proposed study aims to highlight the cultural norms and differences as well as determining the types of IPV they are prevalent within this group. The goal of this proposed study is to help federal, state, and local authorities with assisting overlooked populations and to better understand culture when working with these communities in the field.

The purpose of this email is to solicit potential subject referrals through Greek letter organizations. Although I am using Greek letter organizations to solicit referrals, this study is not about Greek life. I am writing to see if you would be willing to pass along this email to members of your chapter or anyone that you know who fit the criteria above. You are under no obligation to forward this information along. If you would like to participate and also meet the criteria above please complete the survey via the link below.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me

at fa428@mynsu.nova.edu.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z5Z2RYX>

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Fleur Williams

Appendix B
Abuse Assessment Screen

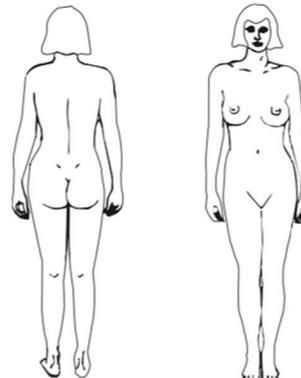
Abuse Assessment Screen

Instructions: Circle Yes or No for each question

1. Have you ever been emotionally or physically abused by your partner or someone important to you? YES NO
2. Within the last year, have you been hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by someone? YES NO
If YES, who? (Circle all that apply)
Husband Ex-Husband Boyfriend Stranger Other Multiple
Total no. of times _____
3. Since you've been pregnant, have you been slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by someone? YES NO
If YES, who? (Circle all that apply)
Husband Ex-Husband Boyfriend Stranger Other Multiple
Total no. of times _____

Mark the area of injury on the body map. Score each incident according to the following scale:
SCORE

- 1 = Threats of abuse including use of weapon _____
- 2 = Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain _____
- 3 = Punching, kicking, bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain _____
- 4 = Beating up, severe contusions, burns, broken bones _____
- 5 = Head injury, internal injury, permanent injury _____
- 6 = Use of weapon; wound from weapon _____



4. Within the last year, has anyone forced you to have sexual activities? YES NO
If YES, who? (Circle all that apply)
Husband Ex-Husband Boyfriend Stranger Other Multiple
Total no. of times _____
5. Are you afraid of your partner or anyone you listed above? YES NO

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Journal of the American Medical Association, 1992, 267, 3176-78.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)?
2. Where is your family from in West Africa?
3. What are cultural traditions (relationship) based on your family's country of origin?
4. What are marriage norms and traditions?
5. How important are preserving tradition and culture as a first-generation American born?
6. What feelings do you have towards IPV as it dealing with your culture?
7. What were you taught about IPV growing up? And by whom?
8. What have you been told about IPV growing up? By whom?
9. How do both cultures merge for you being west African and American?
10. How does your West African culture influence your intimate relationship?
11. How can local, state and federal agency provide assistance to west African women living in America?
12. How do you plan to preserve your culture?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?