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Female Offenders of Intimate Partner Homicide: Victim, Offender, and Case Characteristics

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FEMALE OFFENDERS OF INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE: VICTIM, OFFENDER, AND CASE CHARACTERISTICS

by

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner homicide (IPH) represents between 10% and 16% of all homicides (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, & Rand, 2009; Cooper & Smith, 2011; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2009). Yet, research on gender-specific IPH offending is lacking at the individual offense level, especially when a woman is the offender. The majority of the research assessing gender-specific IPH offending examines motivations, as well as situational and structural variables. For instance, motivations may include self-defense or jealousy and situational variables may include employment status or past criminal histories. Structural variables include macro-level concepts such as poverty, education, or income. The purpose of this study is to examine victim, offender, and case level factors of gender-specific IPH offending to help fill a gap in the literature regarding women offenders at a more individual level.

This study uses data from the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) for the years 2010 through 2014, which is specific to homicide, includes added information on homicide incidents, and incorporates 85% to 90% of all homicides reported in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) (US Department of Justice, 2014). Using feminist conflict theory, I explored the weapons used, relationship status, and demographic data on victims and offenders. The results indicate that many of the offense level factors analyzed are significant in predicting the odds that a woman is the offender in an IPH incident. For instance, a dating relationship and the use of a knife increased the odds of a women being an IPH offender. Future research would benefit from being able to make clearer distinctions between firearm types (handgun versus long gun) and a divorced versus a separated relationship. Additionally, having data available about cohabitation

would be important for understanding IPH incidents that occur when a couple lives together, thus, when they are more invested than when dating, but not as much as when legally married.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

IPH occurs when one person kills their current or ex-intimate (Kivisto, 2015; Swatt & He, 2006; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). Of all homicides, between 10% and 16% involve intimate partners (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, & Rand, 2009; Cooper & Smith, 2011; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2009). Yet, research on gender differences of IPH offenders has not been fully assessed (Belknap, Larson, Abrams, Garcia, & Anderson-Block; 2012; Caman, Katarina, Kristiansson, & Sturup, 2016; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013), specifically at a more micro-level. When studies do look at these differences, micro-level approaches tend to focus on the motivational difference for committing the crime or situational differences for what events surrounded the commission of the crime. Structural approaches tend to focus on macro-level variables (e.g. poverty, education, income) to see how these may impact counts or trends of gender-specific IPH.

Much of the current research examines motivational, situational, and structural differences between men[1] and women (DeJong, Pizarro, & McGarrell, 2011; Swatt & He, 2006), which leaves a gap in understanding the individual victim, offender, and case characteristics of female-perpetrated IPH. This is a problem because when women kill, they most often kill their male intimate partner (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong et al., 2011; Goetting, 1988), and some research has shown that female homicide numbers come closest to male homicide numbers in IPH incidents (Swatt & He, 2006). There is a case to be made that this type of offense is different from both male-perpetrated IPH and other types of female-perpetrated homicide. Yet,

[1] The author understands the difference between male and female and men and women; however, these terms are used interchangeably.

much of the current IPH research tends to focus on men as offenders and women as victims. Understanding that women and men differ motivationally and structurally in IPH and knowing women most often kill intimates suggests that there may be significant differences in their micro-level offending characteristics.

The purpose of this study is to examine victim, offender, and case characteristics of gender-specific IPHs by predicting the odds of a woman offender. The intent is to first bring awareness to the lack of current research showing the differences between women and men offenders of IPH at a more individual offending level. The implications for finding significant gender differences within IPH include possible clarity about an understudied subgroup's offense characteristics, when these factors have previously been assumed to be similar to males. Because women most often commit homicide against an intimate, future policy refinement or development may be informed by the findings of this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States (US), homicide is an ongoing national issue (Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009). Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (2013) statistics show that there were around 14,000 homicides in the nation in 2013. Stockl et al. (2003) found that a little more than 14% of all homicides involved intimate partners. Research on homicide is vast, but most of the accumulated literature on offending to date has focused on men (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Goetting, 1988; Jurik & Winn, 1990; Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2012).

Where IPH is concerned, gender differences at the offending level have not been the focus historically (Belknap et al., 2012; Caman et al., 2016; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013). One study stated that no IPH research where a woman was the offender could be found, even though these authors noted that the offender in an IPH incident could be a woman or man (Smith & Wehrle, 2010). This is a problem because research on IPH has shown that this type of homicide is significantly different than other types of homicide (Smith & Wehrle, 2010; Swatt & He, 2006; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012). This is especially true when considering the offender's gender (Hough & McCorkle, 2017). Limited research on offender gender differences and homicide offending have found men and women to be significantly different (Jordan, Clark, Pritchard, & Charnigo, 2012; Jurik & Winn, 1990). Within IPH specifically, gender differences and offending tend to focus on motivational and situational variables (DeJong et al., 2011; Swatt & He, 2006), along with structural variables. The current study is meant to add to the limited research examining gender-specific differences across more micro-level victim, offender, and case characteristics for IPH cases by predicting the odds for a woman offender.

Age, Race, and Gender Homicide Demographics

Homicide victims and offenders are typically young adults aged 18 to 24 years old, no matter their race or gender (Cooper & Smith, 2011). For instance, studies have found 25% to 33% of homicide victims and 40% to 50% of homicide offenders are under 25 years of age (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox, Levin, and Quinet, 2012). Additionally, the homicide offender tends to be younger than their victim (Fox & Zawitz, 2006). Racially, Blacks are the most likely victim and offender in a homicide incident (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Oliver, 1989). For instance, Gruenewald and Pridemore's (2009) study in Chicago found that 72% of homicide victims and 74% of homicide offenders were Black. Yet, most homicides are intraracial, where Whites kill Whites around 80% of the time and Blacks kill Blacks around 90% of the time (Cooper & Smith, 2011).

The more severe a crime is, the larger the offending gap becomes between men and women (Swatt & He, 2006). The majority of homicide victims and offenders are men (Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Fox & Allen, 2014; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2009; Murdoch et al., 2012; Stout, 1991; Swatt & He, 2006). In fact, studies show around 80% to 90% of homicide offenders were men, while around 75% to 80% of homicide victims were men (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Allen, 2014; Jurik & Winn, 1990; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). In comparison, women represent a small population of homicide offenders (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013; Goetting, 1988; Peterson, 1999; Pollock, Mullings, & Crouch, 2006).

Age, Race, and Gender IPH Demographics

Unlike homicides in general for which the offender's age is young (18-24), most studies on IPH do not focus on victim, offender, and case characteristics for gender-specific offending (Caman et al., 2016). The limited research available finds that both male and female offenders of IPH tend to be older (mid- to late-30s) than offenders of other types of homicide (DeJong et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2012; Stout, 1991). In regard to race, limited research has found that offenders are more often White, regardless of gender (Jurik & Winn, 1990; Stout, 1991). Conversely, a study by Titterington and Harper (2005) found that Blacks as a whole were more likely an IPH offender than Whites. Additionally, these authors noted that Black women were more often IPH offenders than Black men. A study in San Diego found that Black women have the greatest chance to be a victim of IPH (Kernsmith & Craun, 2008). Yet, like homicide in general, most IPHs are intraracial (Stout, 1991).

Research has found that women are more often victims of IPH than men (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007; Fox & Allen, 2014; Smith & Wehrle, 2010; Stockl et al., 2013), regardless of their age (Cooper & Smith, 2011). Furthermore, women as victims occur more often in an IPH incident than in any other homicide type (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010); whereas, men are victims of IPH less often than in other homicide types (Stockl et al., 2013). For example, some studies have shown that women are IPH victims between 33% and 42% of the time, and men are IPH victims only around 3% to 5% of the time (Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Fox & Allen, 2014; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010; Smith & Wehrle, 2010). Other research has shown the percentage of women as IPH victims to be as high as 63.7% (Cooper & Smith, 2011). As offenders, however, women most often kill intimate partners (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong

et al., 2011; Goetting, 1998), but men are still the most likely offender in IPH cases (Campbell et al., 2007; Catalano et al., 2009; DeJong et al., 2011; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010).

Homicide Weapons

Minorities are at a greater risk of homicides involving a weapon (Perkins, 2003). Nationwide, firearms were used in 8,454 homicide incidents in 2013 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). A study in Chicago revealed 79% of homicide cases involved the commission of a firearm (Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2009), and overall firearm usage has increased by 33% from 1980 to 2008 (Cooper and Smith, 2011). Handguns are the primary firearm of choice (Sorenson, 2006), and in 2011, nearly 6,400 homicide cases involved the use of a handgun (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). No matter the gender of the offender, firearms were the most common weapon of choice in a homicide (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Sorenson, 2006). Furthermore, Jurik and Winn (1990) found that the use of a firearm in a homicide case was nearly identical between men and women. One study noted that women may use firearms in homicide more often than previous research suggested (Goetting, 1988). Stranger and acquaintance homicide offenders' use a firearm more often than any other types of offenders (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2006).

Other methods of killing used in homicide offenses include sharp objects, such as knives (25%), loss of oxygen, such as strangulation (8.4%), blunt objects (5.3%), personal contact (3.2%), and other types (4%) (Smith, Fowler, & Niolon, 2014). Woman homicide offenders often use a method of killing that is more impersonal and cleaner, such as fire or poison (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2012). Conversely, Jurik & Winn (1990) found that women use a knife more

often than men when offending in a homicide incident that does not involve a firearm. Stranger and acquaintance offenders often use knives and personal contact weapons more frequently than other types of offenders (Cooper and Smith, 2011).

IPH Weapons

Research regarding the weapons used in an IPH typically shows a firearm to be the primary weapon of choice (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Stout, 1991), with one study showing its use in 54.1% of cases (Smith et al., 2014). Firearms being the number one weapon choice for IPH is similar to what the research shows for homicide in general. But there is conflicting research on weapon choice and IPH. Cooper and Smith (2011) found 54.6% of the time, other weapons besides a firearm was used in an IPH incident. Additionally, these authors noted that firearm use in IPH has decreased by 26% from 1980 to 2008. The literature on weapon choice within IPH seems to be unclear, especially when a woman does the killing. Kernsmith and Craun (2008) noted that current research is understudied and unclear in the role the offender's gender plays in weapon choice. Additionally, these authors note that weapon use differs based on the gender of the offender. Cooper and Smith (2011) stated that the victim-offender relationship may also be a major contributing factor where weapon choice is concerned. Men as IPH perpetrators tend to use a firearm most often (Block & Christakos, 1995), but some form of beating (Block & Christakos, 1995; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 2004; Jurik & Winn, 1990) or strangulation (Dobash et al., 2004) is also frequently used. Fox et al. (2012) found that poison and suffocation are used in more than 40% of IPH cases when a women is the offender. Yet, other studies found that a knife is used most often (Jurik & Winn, 1990; Swatt &

He, 2006), with Jurik and Winn (1990) finding it to be the weapon of choice in 52% of cases. All that being said, objects as weapons has been found to be less likely in IPH than in other types of homicide (Cooper and Smith, 2011; Dobash et al., 2004).

Homicide Victim-Offender Relationship

The majority of homicides involve victims and offenders who knew each other (Cooper & Smith, 2011). When there is a known victim-offender relationship, most homicide victims are either acquaintances or strangers (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011; Fox & Allen, 2014), but stranger killings tend to happen more often with an older victim (Fox et al., 2012). In 2011, there were 2,700 acquaintance homicide victims and 1,481 stranger homicide victims (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). Yet, the offender's gender is a major factor in the victim-offender relationship (Fox & Allen, 2014). Men as homicide offenders most often kill victims of the same gender (Stout, 1991; Zimring, Mukherjee, and Van Winkle, 1983), around 70% of the time, with most offenses occurring between strangers or acquaintances close in age (Fox et al., 2012). Acquaintance killings occurred in around 56% of cases, while stranger killings occurred in around 25% of cases (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Allen, 2014). In contrast, women tend to kill men around 75% of the time (Fox et al., 2012), and stranger killings by women offenders are rare (Jurik & Winn, 1990).

IPH Victim-Offender Relationship

Research on IPH is understudied and not well understood in some areas, especially when considering the relationship status between victim and offender (Stockl et al., 2013). IPH tends to have a singular victim and offender (Hough & McCorkle, 2017). When considering intimate and family killings, research has shown these represent between 9% and 22% of all homicides (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Zimring et al., 1983). Not much is understood about women's offender characteristics in IPH, especially considering relationship status. Studies show that women tend to kill intimates (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong et al., 2011; Jurik & Winn, 1990; Stout, 1991; Zimring et al., 1983). Yet, men are still less often the victim of an IPH than women (Cooper & Smith, 2011). The statistics vary, but Cooper and Smith (2011) found women to be an IPH victim around 41.5% of the time; whereas, men were victims only around 7.1% of the time. When a woman is killed in an IPH incident, current or ex-partners are the most likely offender (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2014; Stockl et al., 2013; Stout, 1991). When separation becomes the relationship status, women are at more risk for becoming victims of IPH than are men (Block & Christakos, 1995), and Kimmel (2002) notes that this may occur due to men feeling a loss of control. Additionally, Shackelford (2001) found that women are more often victims of IPH at the hands of their male intimate when the relationship status involves cohabitation.

Motivational, Situational, and Structural Research

With the lack of research and inconsistences present involving offense level comparisons for gender-specific IPH, more needs to be done to better understand this micro-level approach to women's IPH offending. Motivational, situational, and structural factors are the main areas currently studied when discussing the differences between women and men offenders of IPH. Examples of motivational factors include self-defense, control, or jealousy. Examples of situational factors include employment status or past criminal histories. Structural factors include variables such as poverty, income, or education.

Women typically commit IPH in self-defense and fear due to current and persistent victimization at the hands of their victim, who tends to initiate the violence (Belknap et al., 2012; Block & Christakos, 1995; Camen et al., 2016; Campbell et al., 2003; Campbell et al., 2007; DeJong et al., 2011; Dobash et al., 2004; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Jordan et al., 2012; Jurik & Winn, 1990; Smith & Wehrle, 2010; Stout, 1991; Swatt & He, 2006). Women also tend to commit IPH when a relationship is still current or intact compared to a former or ex-relationship (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Jordan et al., 2012; Jurik & Winn, 1990). Women offenders of IPH typically do not have a long criminal history (Block & Christakos, 1995; Jordan et al., 2012; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2012) and tend not to be employed (Caman et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2012; Pollock et al., 2006). Additionally, female IPH perpetrators often have more education and less problems with drug dependency than their male counterparts (Jordan et al., 2012). Kernsmith (2005) notes that because of the self-defense motivation, women may actually use a weapon more often in intimate partner violence (IPV) compared to their male counterparts.

In comparison, men typically commit IPH out of jealousy and separation, due to a loss of power and control (Belknap et al., 2012; Block & Christakos, 1995; Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2004; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Smith & Wehrle, 2010). Male offenders of IPH also tend to be aggressive and controlling, (Block & Christakos, 1995), have longer past criminal histories than their female counterparts (Belknap et al., 2012), and have a previous history of violence specifically (Block & Christakos, 1995; Campbell et al., 2007; Swatt & He, 2006). Additionally, these offenders are more often employed than their female counterparts (Caman et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2012; Pollock et al., 2006). Campbell et al. (2003) stated that substance abuse is a major contributing factor for a male to be an IPH offender, and Jordan et al. (2012) state that men IPH offenders tend to be less educated. Finally, male offenders of IPH do not tend to have previous experiences of victimization at the hands of their victim (Jurik & Winn, 1990).

Without considering gender specifically, IPV overall occurred the most in neighborhoods that were poorer than others (Bonomi, Trabert, Anderson, Kernic, & Holt, 2014). Additionally, Browning (2002) found that similar neighborhood disadvantages increased the amount of IPH in those areas. These drastic motivational, situational, and structural differences between men and women offenders of IPH show the need to better understand micro-level victim, offender, and case level factors across gender. If research has shown motivational, situational, and structural factors differ so drastically, it is possible that other factors may also drastically differ in the perpetration of IPH.

Conflict Theory through a Feminist Approach

Feminist theory, which is a subtype of conflict theory, will be used to explain women as IPH offenders. Conflict theory's main idea is that power controls society's conflicts because the powerful and dominant group controls how society views certain standards and values (Simon, 2016). The dominant group as a whole maintains the power and resources in society, and when individuals belonging to this group have less power and resources than the non-dominant group in society, conflict occurs. When homicide offending by a women is considered, many researchers have used feminist theory for an explanation (Hough & McCorkle, 2017). Like conflict theory generally, the main point of feminist theory is that the power distribution between men and women is a major contributing factor in crime due to a patriarchal system (Walby, 1986). It would follow that this system creates societal gender roles that place men and women structurally such that men are expected to be the more powerful and dominant of the two genders. When men perceive that they have lost their power and control over resources within a relationship, conflict, often including violence results.

American culture with its gender inequality is a major explanatory factor when discussing IPH (DeJong et al., 2011). Men tend to be more aggressive (Hough & McCorkle, 2017) and hold a higher status that affects the end game within IPH specifically (DeJong et al., 2011). Through a conflict feminist approach, women's disadvantages in society (e.g. economic, employment, political) may increase her vulnerability and victimization because she is easy to target (Vieraitis & Williams, 2002). On the other hand, when women are the breadwinners, men's loss of their traditional role is likely to lead to conflict, including violence as well (Vieraitis & Williams, 2002). Additionally, these authors note that this victimization occurs due to men assuming power

in their home life when they fail to meet the assumed societal power division in the workforce. In turn, DeJong et al. (2011) note that women may only have a choice to continue her life of victimization or become the offender. Conflict theory, through a feminist theory approach, helps to explain why a woman's motivational, situational, and structural factors may be different when becoming the offender in an IPH situation. Self-defense as the primary reason behind women offending in IPH may, in fact, feel like their last option to rid themselves of a terrible situation. Based on these differential factors and theoretical explanation, micro-level victim, offender, and case factors for female perpetrators of IPH may also be different than it is for their male counterparts.

Current Study

As noted above, more research is needed on female perpetrators of IPH because when women kill, this subgroup most often commits homicide against an intimate (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong et al., 2011; Goetting, 1998). In turn, there is a lack of understanding at an individual level where women commit homicide most, in an IPH. Case level factors for women perpetrators of IPH may vary considerably based on the significant differences between men's and women's motivation to commit the offense, the situations surrounding the crime, and the structural differences in education for example. The purpose of this study is to examine a more micro-level approach to victim, offender, and case characteristics related to the odds for female-perpetrated IPH.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODS

Data

The following analysis was conducted using SHR for the years 2010 through 2014. These years were chosen to ensure a large enough sample size of men and women, and because these were the newest available years. The SHR is a data set compiled by the FBI from police reports involving homicides in the US. The FBI builds the SHR from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and a separate form. The SHR data set is located in the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), housed at the University of Michigan. The current study is quantitative and descriptive in nature, as it makes use of secondary data to predict the odds that an IPH involves a female offender, as compared to a male offender. The unit of analysis for the study is gender-specific IPH incidents from 2010 through 2014.

The SHR was chosen because it has a significant advantage for understanding homicide generally and IPH more specifically. This source of secondary data is nearly nationally representative of the population in the US, with 85% to 90% of all homicides reported in the UCR included in the SHR (US Department of Justice, 2014). The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature on women's offense level factors within IPH. Additionally, this study predicts female offending based on a select number of understudied micro-level IPH victim, offender, and case characteristics, instead of having the focus of this study be mainly on the motivational, situational, and structural differences already studied.

Sample and Study

For the purposes of this study, the cases in the SHR were filtered out to only include the homicide type "murder and non-negligent manslaughter" to ensure that the focus was on homicide. Next, the "offender 1: relationship to first victim" variable was recoded to include two categories: intimate (1) and non-intimate (2). The intimate category for the new *IPH* variable includes boyfriend, common-law husband, common-law wife, girlfriend, husband, wife, ex-husband, and ex-wife; whereas, the non-intimate category includes all other original values, not including the homosexual value. This category was removed because this research is exclusively focusing on the odds of a woman offender, compared to a man offender, who have an opposite gender partner. Additionally changing laws may have affected the accuracy of reporting on this variable. Finally, the *IPH* variable was used to pull out exclusively intimate partners to ensure that all homicides present in the data set reflect an IPH. The total sample of IPHs was determined by a frequency count and comes from the SHR years 2010 through 2014. With this new dataset, the total sample size is 5,697 after removing 563 cases due to missing or unknown data that cannot be interpreted.

Variables

The SHR is a good data set to obtain information on homicide offenses. The current study focuses on specific homicide information for the offender, victim, and case. More specifically, victim and offender demographics were analyzed, along with offense characteristics. The offender variables of interest include the age and race. The victim variables of interest include

age and race. Ethnicity was not included in this study due to potential issues in the accuracy of its reporting. The issues stem from an officer's ability to assess whether a person is visibly Hispanic or not. The case variables of interest include offender weapon and relationship status.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the study is gender-specific perpetrated IPH and is represented using the first offender's sex since the data set is already limited to only IPH as the offense. This can be used as the dependent variable because even though the data set is nearly nationally representative, it is not fully inclusive to be considered a population. Florida, for example, does not submit data to be included in the SHR. The use of the first offender alone is due to an IPH typically involving only one offender, and not many cases were lost this way. *Offender sex* is coded "1" for females and "0" for males. The total number of unknown cases removed was 2.

Independent Variables

The independent variables were split into three subgroups: offender, victim, and case variables. The offender variables included the offender's age and race. *Offender Age* is numeric, ranging from 1 to 99, with 99 representing "99 years old or more." The youngest offender in this group was 15 years old, and this was included, as dating relationships are part of IPHs. The oldest offender in the sample was 96 years old. The total number of unknown cases removed was 22. *Offender Race* was coded into 3 categories: White (1), Black (2), and Offender Other (3). The other value incorporates all other known values: "Asian," "American Indian or Alaska

Native," and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander." This was done because most offenders are either White or African American, and the combination of the other races still comprises a small sample of offenders that are so varied that explaining any finding would be nearly impossible to do correctly. The total number of unknown cases removed was 65. For analysis purposes, *Offender* Race was recoded into 2 dummy variables with *White* as the reference group. The first dummy variable was *Offender Black* (1), with Offender White and Offender Other as "0." The second dummy variable was *Offender Other* (1), with Offender White and Offender Black as "0."

The victim variables included age and race. The first victim was the only one used, as not much data was lost by limiting the analysis to the first victim alone. Additionally, most IPHs have only one victim. *Victim Age* is a numeric variable represented from 1 to 99 years old, with 99 including "99 years old or more." The youngest victim that was included was 14 years old, as this is the lowest value that can be meaningfully assessed as at least a dating relationship. The oldest victim in the sample was 97 years old. The total number of unknown cases, 1 year olds, 3 year olds, and 4 year olds removed was 18. *Victim Race* was recoded the same way as the offender race variable. This was done because most victims of homicide are either White or Black, with all others representing a small sample. The total number of unknown cases removed was 78. Dummy variables also needed to be created, and this was done in the same manner as the offender's race.

The case variables included offender weapon and relationship status. The measure of *Offender Weapon* was divided into 7 categories. "Firearm, type not stated," "handgun – pistol, revolver, etc.," "rifle," "shotgun," and "other gun" were combined under one category labeled

Gun (1). These different types of guns were combined because all of them are firearms, and no absolute distinction could be made between all the values to fit into handguns and long guns for the use of two firearm categories. The "knife or cutting instrument" category was recoded as *Knife* (2). "Blunt object – hammer, club, etc.," was recoded *Blunt Object* (3). "Personal weapons, includes beating" (e.g. hands, fists, and feet) was recoded to *Personal Contact* (4). The "strangulation – hanging" category was recoded as *Strangulation* (5). "Asphyxiation – includes death by gas" was recoded as *Asphyxiation* (6). All other values were combined into a new variable named *Weapon Other* (7) because all other weapons represents a small proportion, even when combined. The total number of unknown cases removed was 424.

Dummy variables were created with *Gun* as the reference group. The first dummy variable was *Knife* (1), with Gun, Blunt Object, Personal Contact, Strangulation, Asphyxiation, and Weapon Other as "0." The second dummy variable was *Blunt Object* (1), with Gun, Knife, Personal Contact, Strangulation, Asphyxiation, and Weapon Other as "0." The third dummy variable was *Personal Contact* (1), with Gun, Knife, Blunt Object, Strangulation, Asphyxiation, and Weapon Other as "0." The fourth dummy variable was *Strangulation* (1), with Gun, Knife, Blunt Object, Personal Contact, Asphyxiation, and Weapon Other as "0." The fifth dummy variable was *Asphyxiation* (1), with Gun, Knife, Blunt Object, Personal Contact, Strangulation, and Weapon Other as "0." The final dummy variable was *Weapon Other* (1) with Gun, Knife, Blunt Object, Personal Contact, Strangulation, and Asphyxiation as "0."

Relationship Status, represented through the victim-offender relationship variable, was coded into 3 categories. The first category included "common-law husband," "common-law wife," "husband," and "wife" to represent Married relationships. The second category included

"boyfriend" and "girlfriend" to represent Dating relationships. The third category included "ex-husband" and ex-wife" to represent Divorced or Separated relationships. Note that no other values were present any longer because the data set only has intimate relationships. Dummy variables were created with *Married* as the reference group. The first dummy variable was *Dating* (1), with Married and Divorced or Separated as "0." The second dummy variable was *Divorced or Separated* (1), with Married and Dating as "0."

Analytic Strategy

To help differentiate the women's micro-level offending characteristics of IPH from the men's, bivariate chi-square analyses and a multivariate analysis were conducted. Frequencies were first used to initially assess the data for any errors and to get an overall look at the data. Descriptive statistics follow to collect basic information. Next, associations were run to check for any relationship patterns that may influence the results. The associations were assessed using the chi-square test for all discrete variables to help assess if there are differences based on the gender of the offender in cases of IPH. These steps needed to be taken to ensure that there is confidence when the final multivariate statistical analysis is run. Variance Inflation Factors were run to test for multicollinearity. The VIF scores for the variables in the model were between 1.017 and 3.501, well below the conservative VIF score of 4 suggested by Fisher and Mason (1981). Thus, no significant problems with multicollinearity were present. The multivariate analysis—binary logistic regression—was used to assess the odds that a woman was the perpetrator of the IPH compared to a man, based on the independent variables. The purpose of the binary logistic regression is to help assess gendered differences of intimate partner homicide, not causality.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all the variables present in the model. The total sample of cases in the model was 5,697. There were 4,467 IPH incidents involving men as the offender and 1,230 IPH incidents involving women as the offender. IPH offenders were most often men (78.7%), with women representing 21.3% of the perpetrators. The most common offender and victim race for an IPH incident was White at 63.3% and 67.4% respectively. Black offenders represented 33.4% of the cases; whereas, the other races represented 3.4% of cases. Black victims represented 28.7% of IPH occurrences, and other races represented 3.9% of the victims in the sample. Other offender and victim races included in the data were "Asian" and "American Indian or Alaska Native."

The mean age for IPH offenders was 42.5 years old, with a standard deviation of 15. The youngest and oldest offenders were 15 and 96 years old respectively. IPH victims mean age was 40.8 years old, with a standard deviation of 15.1. The oldest victim in the group was 97 years old, and the youngest victim in the sample was 14 years old. Firearms were the most likely weapon used in an IPH (56.3%). Knives were the second most likely chosen weapon of choice in 26% of all IPH incidents in the model. All other weapon types or methods of killing represented a much smaller percentage: blunt objects (5%), personal contact (7.4%), strangulation (2%), asphyxiation (1.7%), and other weapons (1.7%). The weapons included in the other category where "poison – does not include gas," "explosives," "fire," "narcotics or drugs, sleeping pills," and "drowning." Close to half of the IPH incidents happened in a Married relationship (46.9%),

with a dating relationship being the largest category (49.2%). Divorced or separated relationships represented only 3.9% of IPH cases.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, N = 5,697.

	Proportion/Mean (SD)
Offender Characteristics	
Offender Sex (Female)	.2128
Offender Sex (Male)	.7872
Offender White	.6326
Offender Black	.3338
Offender Other	.0336
Offender Age	42.495 (15.041)
Victim Characteristics	
Victim White	.6742
Victim Black	.2868
Victim Other	.0390
Victim Age	40.832 (15.127)
Case Characteristics	
Firearm	.5625
Knife	.2598
Blunt Object	.0495
Personal Contact	.0739
Strangulation	.0204
Asphyxiation	.0173
Weapon Other	.0166
Married	.4692
Dating	.4923
Divorced or Separated	.0385

Note: N ranges from 5,836 to 6,260

Association Statistics

Table 2 shows the Pearson chi-square, percent present, and total between the *Offender Sex* and all other discrete independent variables contained in the current model. A chi-square that is significant means that the variables are statistically dependent and a relationship exists. If the

variables are not significant, no relationship exists because the two variable are statistically independent. The *Offender Black* chi-square was significant and showed 42.2% of women who committed IPH were Black and 31% of the men were Black. Female-perpetrated IPH was more often committed by Blacks than male-perpetrated IPH. *Offender Other* was not significantly associated with gender-specific IPH. *Victim Black* was significant, showing that 43.8% of women IPH victims were Black and 24.6% of men victims were Black. Female-perpetrated IPH was more likely to involve Black victims. The next significant chi-square was *Victim Other*. Women as victims were another race besides White or Black only 2.5% of the time and men as victims were another race only 4.3% of the time. Male-perpetrated IPH was more likely to involve victims of other races.

Knife, Personal Contact (e.g. hangs, fists, feet), *Strangulation, Asphyxiation,* and *Weapon Other* as a method of killing in IPH were significant. The *Blunt Object* chi-square was not significant. Knives were used by women 44.2% of the time, compared to men using knives only 21% of the time. Female-perpetrated IPH more often involved the use of a knife than male-perpetrated IPH. Blunt objects (4.2%), personal contact (2.0%), strangulation (0.3%), and asphyxiation (0.5%) were rarely used killing methods by women. Conversely, men used these killing methods more often than women: blunt objects (5.2%), personal contact (8.9%), strangulation (2.5%), and asphyxiation (2.1%). Women used other types of weapons to kill an intimate partner 2.9% of the time; whereas, men used these weapons 1.3% of the time. Other weapons were used more often by women IPH offenders than men IPH offenders. Finally, both *Dating* and *Divorced or Separated* were significant. Women killed partners they were dating 59% of the time, compared to 46.7% of the time for men. Women IPH offenders more often

killed when the relationship status was dating than men IPH offenders. Though rare by percentage, men killed far more often when the relationship status was divorced or separated (4.1%) compared to women (2.9%). In this relationship status, men killed 203 times out of 241 cases.

Table 2: Comparison of Victim, Offender, and Case Characteristics Across Gender-Specific IPH Offenders, N = 5,697.

	Chi-Square	**Female-Perp IPH % (n)**	**Male-Perp IPH % (n)**
Offender Characteristics			
Offender Black	59.155***	42.2% (559)	31% (1509)
Offender Other	.006	3.3% (44)	3.4% (164)
Victim Characteristics			
Victim Black	187.499***	43.8% (578)	24.6% (1194)
Victim Other	8.775**	2.5% (33)	4.3% (208)
Case Characteristics			
Knife	276.314***	44.2% (554)	21% (961)
Blunt Object	1.776	4.2% (53)	5.2% (236)
Personal Contact	67.820***	2.0% (25)	8.9% (406)
Strangulation	23.640***	0.3% (4)	2.5% (115)
Asphyxiation	14.712***	0.5% (6)	2.1% (95)
Weapon Other	14.299***	2.9% (36)	1.3% (61)
Dating	64.704***	59% (786)	46.7% (2295)
Divorced or Separated	4.554*	2.9% (38)	4.1% (203)

Note: N ranges from 5,834 to 6,258
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Binary Logistic Regression Statistics

Table 3 shows the odds that the offender of an IPH was a woman based on the micro-level victim, offender, and case variables present in the model. The total sample size for the model was 5,697 cases, with 4,467 men and 1,230 women. The total number of missing cases in the analysis was 563. Some significant variables were found at the victim, offender, and case

level in the model. The two variables significant at the offender level were *Offender Age* and *Offender Black*. The odds of a woman being the perpetrator of IPH decreased by a factor of .910 for every one unit increase in offender age. The odds for female-perpetrated IPH was 56.8% lower when the offender was Black compared to White. The *Offender Other* race variable was not significant. There were also two significant variables at the victim level: *Victim Age* and *Victim Black*. The odds of a female-perpetrated IPH increased by a factor of 1.100 for every one unit increase in victim age. At the same time, the odds for a woman offender of IPH was higher by a factor of 4.387 when the victim was Black compared to White. *Victim Other* was not significant in the model.

There were six case level variables that were significant: *Knife, Personal Contact, Strangulation, Asphyxiation, Weapon Other*, and *Dating*. The odds of a female-perpetrated IPH was higher by a factor of 2.203 when a knife was used compared to a firearm. The odds of a woman being the IPH offender was lower when personal contact, strangulation, and asphyxiation were the method of killing by 80.2%, 85.5%, and 74.6% respectively, compared to a firearm. The odds of a woman offender in an IPH incident was higher by a factor of 2.778 when other weapon types were used, which included "poison – does not include gas," "explosives," "fire," "narcotics or drugs, sleeping pills," and "drowning," compared to firearms. Finally, the odds of a female-perpetrated IPH was higher by a factor of 1.266 when the killing happened in a dating relationship, compared to a married relationship. Both the use of a *Blunt Object* and a *Divorced or Separated* relationship were not significant.

The chi-square model statistic, 1031.92, was significant at the .000 level. The model summary R squares were .166 (Cox & Snell) and .256 (Nagelkerke). This value should be

interpreted with caution, as the interpretation differs from the R square present in a linear regression (Clifford et al., 2017). The chi-square value for the Hosmer and Lemeshow test was 11.211 and was not significant.

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting The Odds Of A Woman Offender (1) Compared To A Man Offender (0), N = 5,697.

Variables	B	SE	Exp(B)
Offender Characteristics			
Offender Black	-.839	.156	.432***
Offender Other	.361	.304	1.434
Offender Age	-.094	.005	.910***
Victim Characteristics			
Victim Black	1.479	.156	4.387***
Victim Other	-.399	.311	.671
Victim Age	.095	.005	1.100***
Case Characteristics			
Knife	.790	.080	2.203***
Blunt Object	-.128	.176	.879
Personal Contact	-1.617	.230	.198***
Strangulation	-1.933	.524	.145***
Asphyxiation	-1.369	.456	.254**
Weapon Other	1.022	.236	2.778***
Dating	.236	.083	1.266**
Divorced or Separated	-.069	.206	.933
Constant	-1.776		

Note: Cell entries are given as B = coefficients, SE = standard error, Exp(B) = odds ratio.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The results of this study are important when considering previous literature. Much of the prior work has not specifically discussed the odds of a woman being an IPH offender based off select micro-level offender, victim, and case characteristics. The current study revealed that these factors play a role in women's IPH offending.

Important descriptive statistics show that around 33% of IPH incidents involved a Black offender; whereas, nearly 30% involved a Black victim. These figures show that both Black offenders and victims are overrepresented because Blacks only represent around 12% to 13% of the US population (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery Jr., 2011). The mean age of IPH offenders (42.5 years old) is consistent with limited IPH literature stating that these offenders tend to be older than offenders in other types of homicide (18-24 years old) (DeJong et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2012; Stout, 1991). As a whole, firearms (56.3%) and knives (26%) were the majority of the weapons used by the offenders in the sample. Firearms (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Sorenson, 2006) and knives (Smith et al., 2014) as the top two weapon choices overall is consistent with previous homicide literature. IPH literature is inconsistent regarding weapon usage, but many studies agree that a firearm is most often used overall (Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Smith et al., 2013; Stout, 1991). Finally, nearly half of all cases in the sample were IPH incidents that involved a dating relationship.

Important association statistics revealed that close to half of all women offenders in the sample were Black, which was significantly more than men offenders. Additionally, close to half of all the women victims in the sample were Black, which was significantly more than men victims. These association statistics are supported by homicide literature showing that Black

offenders and victims are overrepresented (Cooper & Smith, 2011), compared to the Black population percentage. Women IPH offenders used knives at a much higher percentage than their male counterparts. The statistical significance found in gendered knife usage is consistent with an IPH study done by Swatt and He (2006). Finally, women IPH offenders killed their intimate partner in a dating relationship nearly 6 times for every 10 incidents, which was significantly more than men IPH offenders who killed when in this relationship status.

The last association statistic made it seem like both women and men rarely killed in a divorced or separated relationship, compared to the other statuses present in the model. This finding is somewhat strange because prior research has found that men may often kill because of a loss of control due to separation (Belknap et al., 2012; Block & Christakos, 1995; Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2004; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Smith & Wehrle, 2010). However, when an IPH involved this relationship status, men killed significantly more often. Even though the percentage is low (4.1%) for men killing in a divorced or separated relationship compared to other statuses, there were only 241 IPH cases that involved a divorced or separated partner relationship. However, of the 241 cases, men killed roughly 84% of the time. It is also possible that there was poor coding on this category. For instance, a recent separation may not have been coded as such, or they may have only counted if the couple was legally separated. Not much is understood about how relationship status affects gender-specific IPH offending, but the descriptive and association statistics would suggest that this sample of offenders most often kill when in a dating or married relationship.

Regarding offender and victim characteristics in the bivariate logistic regression, women offenders tend to be younger than their IPH victims. Following this line of thought, women IPH

offenders tend to kill older intimates. These findings makes sense as the median age for the first marriage for men (28.7) is higher than women's (26.7) median age of first marriage (Payne, 2012). The likelihood of a woman killing her partner is lower when she is Black, compared to White. This does not follow the general conclusion found in much of the homicide literature where Blacks are the most likely homicide offenders (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Oliver, 1989). Additionally, a study by Titterington and Harper (2005) found that Black women were more likely than Black men to commit IPH, and that Blacks overall where more likely to commit IPH than were Whites. This research also did not support this study's finding that the chances a woman was an IPH offender was less when the offender was Black, compared to White. Conversely, limited IPH research supports this finding by stating that IPH offenders are most often White regardless of gender (Jurik & Winn, 1990; Stout, 1991). A conflict-feminist approach may explain this through a gender power struggle where women have two choices: offend or continue their victimization (DeJong et al., 2011), regardless of race.

Other victim characteristic show that women have a greater chance to be an IPH offender when their victim is Black compared to White. Unlike the finding for offender race, this revelation follows the idea in general homicide that Blacks are the most likely victim of homicide (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2006; Oliver, 1989). In contrast, limited IPH research states that the most likely victim in an IPH incident is a Black women (Kernsmith & Craun, 2008). But because this data set was limited to women killing men and vice versa, the racial factor may actually be partially supportive of this studies finding.

Investigations of gender and weapon use in IPH has been unclear and produced mixed results (Kernsmith & Craun, 2008). Therefore, this study's findings are relatively new. Case

level characteristics revealed that women's chances to be an IPH offender were higher when knives and other weapon types or methods of killing were used compared to a firearm. The other weapon category includes poison (not including gas), explosives, fire, drugs, and drowning. Limited IPH research supports these findings, where some studies state women frequently use knives (Jurik & Winn, 1990; Swatt & He, 2006), while another study found that women use other methods such as poison often (Fox et al., 2012). It may also be possible that knives and other weapon types or methods of killing are used by women because they are more comfortable using these items over a firearm. Conversely, women were less likely to be an IPH offender when personal contact, strangulation, or asphyxiation was the method of killing compared to firearms. This finding, along with blunt object not being significant, is not all that surprising because most of these methods of killing could only be accomplished by overpowering the victim; a situation that is unlikely for women compared to men.

Finally, research on gender-specific IPH and relationship status is not well understood to date (Stockl et al., 2013), especially considering women offenders. Women were more likely to offend in an IPH incident when in a dating[2] relationship compared to a married relationship. This finding is a relatively new concept, with most prior studies only mentioning that women tend to kill intimates most often, if they kill at all (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong et al., 2011; Jurik & Winn, 1990; Stout, 1991; Zimring et al., 1983). This finding, along with divorced or separated not being significant, does make sense though because most women offend in a current relationship (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Jordan et al., 2012; Jurik & Winn, 1990). A conflict-

[2] Divorced or separated was originally run as the reference group but was discarded due to a minimal amount of cases in this category compared to the total sample (about 240 cases compared to a total sample of 5,697.

feminist approach explains that a major factor in women's victimization occurs when men assume power and control in the home or their relationship because they lack this power and control in their everyday lives in society (Vieraitis & Williams, 2002). Additionally, these same men trying to establish power and control in their relationship may have problems doing so when the relationship status is dating because the nature of this type of relationship breeds less control. This is supported by an idea by Kimmel (2002) who noted that women's risk of IPH may be increased when their male partners feel a loss of control. Therefore, men may use more violence against their partner, and the result could end up that women either continue to be victimized or kill in self-defense as a reaction to having limited control over their partner.

CHAPTER SIX: LIMITATIONS

As with any dataset, the SHR has limitations. The first is that although it is nearly nationally representative with around 85% to 90% of homicides from to UCR making it into the SHR (US Department of Justice, 2014), there are a few places, e.g., Florida, that the SHR does not cover. With coverage as complete as it is, researchers normally find no major impact from the missing data on their findings; however, it is possible that one or a few jurisdictions can significantly influence results as an outlier. Thus, it is important to check for effects of skewness and kurtosis. Finally, the overall scope and depth of the SHR can be an issue, as the ability to tell context is not possible. For example, it is not possible to tell if intimates were cohabiting. Additionally, there is no way to tell a meaningful difference between divorced and separated. Cohabitation and divorced versus separated would be key variables within IPH. For differentiation between women and men as offenders of IPH, being able to absolutely differentiate a handgun and a long gun may also have been beneficial.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is important to note that the current study found that there are gender-specific differences in IPH offending when considering more micro-level factors. In turn, continued research is needed to fill in gaps that were outside the scope of the current study. Future studies would benefit from more clearly coded data. For instance, the ability to undoubtedly know the difference between handgun use and long gun use. There have been some who argue that women living in rural areas are more likely to fight back than are women in urban or suburban locations. Thus, another possible way to examine the current data would be to find a way to separate urban and rural areas, perhaps by large and small law enforcement jurisdictions or by county population. Additionally, future studies would benefit from being able to tell how cohabitation plays a role in relationship status and women's offending. Cohabitation is a key variable when discussing IPH because it changes the dynamics of the relationship, especially in a dating relationship. Next, a clearer distinction between divorced and separated would be important because these two status are slightly different and in turn could produce different results. Finally, future studies could explore different data sets, such as NIBRS, to both see how similar the results are and to examine more in-depth data.

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