Understanding Intimate Partner Violence: The Importance of Context

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Overview
- Describe historical underpinnings of contextual approach
- Present Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) contextual framework
- Discuss preliminary efforts to examine framework
- Highlight additional ongoing projects based on this framework

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Theories
- Feminist Theory (See Walker, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1978)
- Family Systems/Power Theory (See Straus, 1976; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980)
- Social Learning Theory (See Bandura, 1971; Mihalic & Elliott, 1997)

Limitations of Current IPV Theories
- Mixed support for certain theories
- Focus on static, historical variables that are difficult to change
  - E.g. childhood abuse hx; beliefs about women
- Limited treatment utility
- Assumes homogenous groups
- Divisiveness among researchers & treatment providers
Contextualizing IPV: An Alternative Theoretical Approach

- Developed by Bell & Naugle (2008)
- Based on pre-existing, empirically validated models of human behavior
- Parsimonious framework
- Identifies potentially changeable, testable variables
- Framework as whole untested

Contextual Framework of IPV

(Bell & Naugle, 2008)

- Motivating Factors
- Behavioral Repertoire
- Antecedents
- Target Behavior
- Discriminative Stimuli
- Verbal Rules
- Consequences
**Contextual Framework of IPV: Motivating Factors**

- **Motivating Factors:** E.g. Drug/Alcohol Use, Emotional Distress, Physical Distress, Relationship Satisfaction
  - Antecedents
  - Discriminative Stimuli
  - Behavioral Repertoire
  - Consequences
  - Verbal Rules

**Contextual Framework of IPV: Discriminative Stimuli**

- **Discriminative Stimuli:** E.g. Presence of Partner, Presence/Absence of Others, Presence/Absence of Children, Location, Availability of Weapons
  - Antecedents
  - Discriminative Stimuli
  - Behavioral Repertoire
  - Consequences
  - Verbal Rules

**Contextual Framework of IPV: Behavioral Repertoire**

- **Behavioral Repertoire:** E.g. Emotion Regulation, Coping, Problem-Solving, Conflict Resolution Skills
  - Antecedents
  - Discriminative Stimuli
  - Verbal Rules
  - Consequences

**Contextual Framework of IPV: Verbal Rules**

- **Verbal Rules:** E.g. Beliefs about Violence, Relationships, Women, Beliefs about Non-Violent Conflict Resolution Strategies, Alcohol/Drug Expectancy Beliefs, Cultural Beliefs
Contextual Framework of IPV: Consequences

- Motivating Factors
- Antecedents
- Discriminative Stimuli
- Behavioral Repertoire
- Target Behavior
- Consequences:
  - Reduce Distress
  - Avoid Argument
  - Partner Compliance
  - Praise From Others
  - Partner Leaves Relationship
  - Police Involvement

Measuring Contextual Factors: A Semi-Structured Interview Approach (Bell & Cornelius)

- Purpose: Identify contextual factors associated with episodes of IPV perpetration
- Relationship Violence Contextual Interview (RVCI):
  - Based on Bell & Naugle (2008) contextual framework
  - Centered around most recent IPV incident
  - Interview both individuals within couple
  - Each interview section examines separate unit of model (e.g. antecedents, motivating factors, consequences)

RVCI: Participants

- Undergraduate students recruited from Intro. to Psychology Research Pool
- Total of 30 couples to complete measure
- Eligibility: 18 years or older; report IPV perpetration during prescreen & interview
- Compensation: Course credit

RVCI: Methodology

- Prescreened using original Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979)
- Those reporting IPV invited to participate with partner
- Each partner within couple completes separate interview
- Interviews conducted by trained research assistants
**RVCI: Methodology**

- Session length: 1 ½ - 2 hours
- Complete interview and series of self-report measures assessing:
  - IPV incidents (including physical, psychological, and sexual assault)
  - Relationship satisfaction, dependency, & jealousy
  - Emotion regulation/Anger management skills
  - Social skills/Problem-solving skills
  - PTSD, depression, substance use/dependency
  - Trauma history
  - Beliefs about partner violence
  - Social desirability

**RVCI: Case Example #1**

**Target Behavior:** Shoved partner

**Behavioral Repertoire:**
- Below Average Rational Problem-Solving
- Lack of Emotional Awareness

**Antecedents:**
- Hx of childhood abuse (D)
- Argument with partner (P)
- Mutual yelling (P)
- Mutual ignoring (P)

**Consequences:**
- Escaped from partner (R)
- Partner distressed (R)
- Felt distressed (P)

**Motivating Factors:**
- ETOH & Drug Use
- Low Relationship Satisfaction
- High Frustration, Anger, Stress

**Discriminative Stimuli:**
- Party – Alone upstairs with partner
- Evening

**Verbal Rules:**
- Partner will not retaliate with physical aggression
- Physical aggression will result in escape from partner

**D = Distal**
**P = Proximal**
**R = Reinforcing**

**RVCI: Case Example #2**

**Target Behavior:** Pushed partner

**Behavioral Repertoire:**
- Avoidance Style
- Impulsivity/Carelessness

**Antecedents:**
- Hx of childhood abuse (D)
- Recent stressor (P)
- Argument with partner (P)
- Partner refused request (P)
- Mutual yelling (P)
- Mutual ignoring (P)
- Mutual insulting (P)

**Consequences:**
- Partner complied (R)
- "Won" argument (R)
- Established/Maintained control (R)
- Partner stopped ignoring (R)
- Reduced distress (R)
- Stopped yelling & insults (R)

**Motivating Factors:**
- High Relationship Satisfaction
- Moderate Anger, Stress, Frustration

**Discriminative Stimuli:**
- In apartment
- Alone with partner
- Noon

**Verbal Rules:**
- Physical aggression way to express anger
- Physical aggression way to solve problems
- Partner will not retaliate with physical aggression

**D = Distal**
**P = Proximal**
**R = Reinforcing**

**Where Do We Go from Here?**

- Current study first step in series of studies examining IPV using contextual framework
- Identify key contextual variables
- Conduct similar study using community sample
- Utilization of daily diary methods to prospectively examine IPV context
Where Do We Go from Here?

- Other ongoing projects using framework:
  - Emotional distress, temporal stressors, and IPV (Ramsey & Bell, Ongoing)
  - Alcohol expectancies and IPV (Kendra & Bell, Ongoing)
  - Emotion regulation skills, substance use, & experiential avoidance in relation to IPV (Ramsey & Bell, Ongoing)

Emotional Distress, Temporal Stressors, & IPV (Ramsey & Bell, Ongoing)

- Proximal Antecedent: Temporal Stressors
- Motivating Factor: Emotional Distress
- Reinforcing Consequence: Emotional Distress

Alcohol Expectancies & IPV (Kendra & Bell, ongoing)

- Targeting verbal rules associated with IPV perpetration
  - Rules about the consequences of alcohol use, including aggressive behavior
- Alcohol Expectancies Literature
  - Mixed findings on relationship between alcohol expectancies & IPV perpetration

Alcohol Expectancies & IPV (Kendra & Bell, ongoing)

- Further research needed to clarify relationship, controlling for:
  - Trait aggression
  - Alcohol consumption rates
- Victim expectations about consequences following partners’ alcohol use
  - Better predictor than perpetrators’ assessment?
  - Risk detector?
Emotion Regulation, Experiential Avoidance, & IPV (Ramsey & Bell, ongoing)