Perpetrators’ and victims’ perceptions of the role of alcohol and/or drug use in intimate partner violence (IPV)

THESIS

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By

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Abstract

**Background:** The present investigation examined perpetrators’ and victims’ perceptions of the role of alcohol and/or drug use in severe intimate partner violence events.

**Methods:** I conducted a qualitative study involving nine heterosexual couples, where the male was incarcerated for felony level intimate partner violence (e.g., physical assault, threats to kill) and made telephone calls to his female victim. I used telephone conversational data for each couple to examine alcohol and/or drug use attributions for violence; that is, how members of the couple understood alcohol and/or drugs contributing to violence in their relationship. Data analysis occurred in an iterative fashion through audio-tape review, narrative summation, content review with colleagues who were also familiar with the data, and thematic organization.

**Results:** All couples (n=9) discussed alcohol and/or drug use in the context of the violent event that led to the perpetrator’s incarceration; alcohol, methamphetamine (crystal meth), crack cocaine, cocaine, lithium, ecstasy, psychedelic mushrooms, marijuana, and phencyclidine (PCP) use were discussed. Emerging themes included: placing blame on intoxication; the perpetrator’s admittance or denial of use and/or intoxication leading up to or during the violent event; and references to change through rehabilitation. In general, perpetrators placed the blame for their actions on intoxication, specifically citing...
that the alcohol or drugs caused them to act aggressively toward their partners. Victims also blamed intoxication for the perpetrator’s actions, and told their perpetrator that future alcohol and/or drug use would not be tolerated. Only two couples discussed substance use rehabilitation for the perpetrator; anger management and domestic violence rehabilitation for the perpetrator were discussed by other couples.

**Conclusions:** Intoxication as the attribution for the perpetrator’s violent actions, and the lack of tolerance for future alcohol and/or drug use highlights the function of alcohol and drugs in the couple’s comprehension of the violent event. Given the violence inflicted upon victims in the context of alcohol and drug use, integrating substance abuse treatment and batterer intervention and prevention strategies is recommended.
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encouragement, compassion, love, and guidance I would not be here. Thank you for allowing me to become not just your patient, but your friend, “daughter,” and inspiration.

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Keynote Speaker. (May, 2012)

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Making a Difference in Infectious Diseases Pharmacotherapy (MAD-ID) Conference

Topics: H1N1 influenza A; sepsis; Peramivir
Keynote Speaker. (October, 2011)
Lancaster, OH
Fairfield Medical Center Critical Care Symposium
Topics: Mental and physical health after discharge from the intensive care unit; sepsis

Keynote Speaker. (June, 2011).
New York, NY
Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics
Educational Webinar: Sepsis Kills, Minutes Matter
Topic: The chronic and acute physical, emotional, and cognitive effects of sepsis.

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Interviewee. (June, 2011)
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Topic: H1N1 influenza A; sepsis; amputations

Interviewee/Guest. (Filmed February, 2011; Aired July, 2011)
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The Rachael Ray Show/Rachael Ray
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Interviewee. (December 10, 2010)
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Columbus Dispatch/Misti Crane
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Topics: Sepsis; amputations
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Public Health & Human Ecology
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Across nationally representative samples, an estimated twenty-five percent of American women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), with resulting mental and physical health problems (Bonomi, Anderson, Rivara, & Thompson, 2007; Campbell et al., 2002; Cerulli, Talbot, Tang, Chaudron, 2011; Coker, Smith, Bethea, King, & McKeown, 2000; Coker et al., 2002; Golding, 1999; Straus et al., 2009). Among risk factors for IPV, substance use is one of the most consistent correlates of IPV perpetration and victimization (Klostermann & Fals-Stewart, 2006; Moore & Stuart, 2005; Moore, Stuart, Meehan, Rhatigan, Hellmuth, & Keen, 2008; Shorey, Stuart, & Cornelius, 2011 for reviews). Generally, studies have shown that alcohol and/or drug use significantly increases the likelihood of IPV perpetration (e.g., Fals-Stewart, Golden, & Schumacher, 2003; Klostermann & Fals-Stewart, 2006) regardless of whether consumption was by the male partner, female partner, or both (El-Bassel, Gilbert, Schilling, & Wada, 2000; El-Bassel et al., 2003; Golinelli, Longshore, & Wenzel, 2009; Kaufman Kantor & Straus, 1987). However, numerous studies have shown the male partner’s substance use specifically to be associated with IPV perpetration (El-Bassel, Gilbert, Wada, Witte, & Schilling, 2000; El-Bassel, Gilbert, Wu, Chang, & Fontdevila, 2007; Fals-Stewart, 2003; Leonard & Quigley, 1999).

Using population-level data of married and cohabitating couples, Kaufman, Kantor, & Strauss (1987) found the prevalence of IPV to be three times higher in male
binge drinkers than in males who did not drink. Across ethnic groups and social classes, Kantor (1993) identified men’s heavy drinking patterns, particularly binge drinking, to be associated with increased risk of IPV perpetration. Additionally, Lipsey, Wilson, Cohen, & Derzon (1997) reported the risk of IPV perpetration to be almost double for men engaged in greater levels of alcohol consumption, such as heavy drinking or binge drinking, than men who did not engage in such alcohol consumption. When examining treatment-seeking, substance-dependent populations, studies have found the prevalence of IPV to be approximately four times higher in this population compared to non-substance-dependent populations, with almost two in three males engaging in some form of IPV in the year prior to substance use treatment; severe violence was perpetrated by approximately 20-50% of treatment-seeking substance-dependent males (Maiden, 1997; O'Farrell & Murphy, 1995; O'Farrell, Murphy, Stephan, Fals-Stewart & Murphy, 2004; Schumm, O'Farrell, Murphy, & Fals-Stewart, 2009; Stuart et al., 2003). Similarly, in a review of batterer intervention programs, males enrolled in those programs had substance abuse rates that were two to four times higher compared to males from the general population; approximately 25% to 40% of program participants across all batterer intervention programs met the American Psychiatric Association’s criteria for substance dependence, defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use that leads to clinical impairment (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Easton, Swan, & Sinha, 2000; Grant, Harford, Dawson, & Chou, 1994). Furthermore, interethnic couples—the focus of a sizable proportion of couples examined in my master’s thesis investigation—involving
a male with alcohol problems are at significantly increased risk of IPV perpetration compared to intraethnic couples (Chartier & Caetano, 2012).

Although studies support an association between IPV and substance use, there are mixed theories amongst researchers about whether substance use plays a causal role or simply covaries with IPV perpetration (Begue & Subra, 2008; Klostermann & Fals-Stewart, 2006; Quigley & Leonard, 2006). Some argue that substance use and IPV may be mere manifestations of psychopathology in perpetrators (i.e., antisocial personality disorder) (Krueger et al., 2002) or an inability to cope with a chaotic lifestyle (Gondolf, 2002). However, in their review of empirical data, Murphy & Ting (2010) addressed causality by examining if substance use treatment/intervention was associated with a decline in IPV. Murphy & Ting (2010) hypothesized that if the association between substance use and IPV involved reverse causality (IPV causes substance use) or was a spurious association (i.e., antisocial personality disorder or an inability to cope with a chaotic lifestyle), then the removal of the use of substances would not significantly alter the presence of IPV. From their review of published studies, Murphy & Ting (2010) found consistent evidence of reductions in IPV when perpetrators underwent substance use treatment. In fact, this reduction in IPV held true when examining moderate and severe IPV; IPV occurrences were two to three times lower within the first year following substance use treatment and continued to remain low through the second year when participants maintained sobriety. However, when participants relapsed following treatment, the relative risk of IPV increased two to three fold. Through the use of daily diaries, Fals-Stewart, Golden, and Schumacher (2003) examined the likelihood of male-
to-female aggression on days of males’ substance use in a sample of married or cohabitating male-female couples who had at least one episode of IPV within the previous year and the male partner was seeking substance use treatment; their analysis included an examination of temporality, including whether IPV occurred within hours of substance use. When controlling for antisocial personality disorder in the male partner and relationship distress within the couple, males’ aggression and severe aggression toward their female partner was significantly higher on days of males’ substance use compared to days they did not use, with odds ratios 3.38 and 4.01, respectively. The specific odds ratios for male aggression according to the type of substance they used were as follows: alcohol (OR = 5.99) and cocaine (OR = 3.60). The study also found that IPV perpetration by males was most likely to occur within two hours of alcohol or cocaine use, thereby supporting the hypothesis on temporality.

Caetano, and Nelson (2004) found an increase in IPV perpetration when the perpetrator believed alcohol was an excuse for aggression and held the belief that aggression follows alcohol consumption. When examining whether more or less blame and/or responsibility is placed on an intoxicated person who engaged in aggressive behavior, the findings are mixed—with some studies finding the intoxicated male partner was perceived as more blameworthy and others finding the female partner was perceived as more blameworthy when the male was intoxicated (Begue & Subra, 2008; Paglia & Room, 1998; Senchak & Leonard, 1994; Quigley & Leonard, 2006; Wild, Graham, & Rehm, 1998). In the case of the previous studies, the focus was on male perpetrators. Harrison and Willis Esqueda (2000) examined differences in blame and/or responsibility attribution according to gender; they found that females who consumed alcohol and were also IPV victims generated increased victim blame and derogation from society compared to female IPV victims who did not consume alcohol.

In an analysis of the triggers for felony level IPV in heterosexual couples, Nemeth, Bonomi, Lee, and Ludwin (In press) found that alcohol and/or drug use was consistently present during the violent event and was also a chronic stressor in the couples’ relationship (Nemeth et al., In press). Bonomi, Gangamma, Locke, Katafiasz, and Martin’s (2011) examination of the process of victim recantation in felony level IPV cases further supports the role of substance use in the violent event. Specifically, Bonomi et al. (2011) found that perpetrators tended to both minimize the violence they inflicted towards their victim and the role of alcohol and/or drugs during the violent event—thereby indicating that alcohol and/or drugs played a role in the violence.
Current Study

Despite important existing information on the relationships between IPV and substance use, prior research suffers from methodological limitations, including data collection methods that rely on retrospective self- or partner-reported alcohol use (e.g., Senchak & Leonard, 1994), and/or studies that used hypothetical vignettes to assess people’s perceptions rather than asking people about real life events (e.g., Begue & Subra, 2008; Harrison & Willis Esqueda, 2000; Paglia & Room, 1998; Senchak & Leonard, 1994; Quigley & Leonard, 2006; Wild, Graham, & Rehm, 1998). Relying on retrospective assessment of substance use is problematic in two ways:

1) Potential recall bias, with individuals being unable to accurately recall when and how much alcohol and/or drugs they consumed, particularly in relation to when violence occurred. Some studies have attempted to use daily substance abuse diaries to overcome problems associated with recall bias (Fals-Stewart, Golden, & Schumacher, 2003); and

2) Potential social desirability bias, with a tendency for individuals to under-report their substance abuse (Searles, Helzer, & Walter, 2000; Toneatto, Sobell, & Sobell, 1992).

In addition, it is unclear whether attributions for or responses to substance use-related IPV is similar when using hypothetical vignettes or when people are interviewed about actual violent events that occurred in their life and the role alcohol and/or drugs
played in those events; examination of attributions and responses to actual substance use-related IPV cases is warranted (Katz & Arias, 2001).

The studies by Nemeth et al. (In press) and Bonomi et al. (2011), which used live telephone conversations between IPV perpetrators and their victims, added to our understanding of the role of alcohol and drug use in intimate partner violence. For example, Nemeth et al. (In press) found substance use to be the context in which IPV occurred as well as a chronic stressor for couples. Bonomi et al. (2011) created a novel framework to understand why IPV victims recant which included a concentration on how the couple understood the violent event. However, as Nemeth’s study concentrated on the triggers for the violent event and Bonomi’s study concentrated on the couple’s recantation process, neither study specifically elaborated upon how the couple understood the role of alcohol and/or drugs in the violent event, including attributions of blame.

The present study will overcome problems associated with prior studies by using audio-recordings of telephone conversations between the perpetrator and victim to determine how violent couples understand how substance abuse related to the violent event. The study will avoid problems of social desirability bias by using real-time telephone conversations between IPV perpetrators and their victims that occur in the absence of a study interviewer. The study will potentially avoid problems of recall bias, by using conversations between couples that occurred in very close proximity to the violent event, typically within days and sometimes hours. The study is an extension of Bonomi’s and Nemeth’s prior studies involving data from the couples, with a concentrated focus on nine couples who discussed substance abuse explicitly in relation
to violence that resulted in the perpetrator’s incarceration (Bonomi et al., 2011; Nemeth et al., In press).
Chapter 2: Methods

Study procedures were approved by The Ohio State University’s Institutional Review Board. Subjects included nine heterosexual couples in which a felony-level intimate partner violence offense occurred between the male perpetrator and female victim, and telephone calls were exchanged between the perpetrator and victim during the pre-prosecution period while the perpetrator was detained (Bonomi et al., 2011). All perpetrators were being held at a detention facility in Washington State; during the pre-prosecution period before the perpetrator appeared in court, the perpetrator made calls to his victim. Beginning in 2005, the detention facility began routinely audio-recording telephone conversations of detainees in an effort to increase safety; the audiotapes served as the data source for my thesis. Through an automated message at the beginning of all calls, the parties were made aware they were being recorded. A Washington State Supreme Court decision (State v. Modica: 164 Wash.2d. 186 P. 3d 1062, Wash. July 10, 2008, NO. 79767-6) upheld the legality of audio-recording telephone calls from Washington State detention facilities. For research purposes, the prosecution division has authority to release the audio-recordings, and the research team was given tapes from 17 couples involved in felony-level domestic violence cases (Bonomi et al., 2011). All 17 couples had a history of substance use; however only ten couples discussed the
perpetrator’s substance. Nine of the 17 couples were used in the present analysis, where conversations about the role of drugs and alcohol use occurred; there were other couples who discussed drug and alcohol use, but ultimately nine were used in my analysis because they represented a sufficient number to reach the point of data saturation, where no new themes were identified.

The conversational data—taped during the pre-prosecution period for each couple (which was typically within several days of the violent event and before the perpetrator went to court)—was used to explore the following research question: how did the couple understand the role of alcohol and/or drugs in the violent event. Thematic analysis occurred from February 2012 through July 2012 in an iterative and robust fashion. The analytic steps included:

- From February 2012 through April 2012, I listened to at least one audio-recording per week. During each listening session, I compiled notes about the conversations as it related to the research question. After each listening session, I wrote a thorough summary of the conversations and documented supporting quotes (see Appendix B).

- Narrative summaries were reviewed in an iterative fashion on a weekly basis with my advisor (AB) and by email with two additional colleagues (JN and ML) who were co-authors on other manuscripts using this dataset (e.g., Lee et al., revise and resubmit; Nemeth et al., In press). Specifically, the narrative summaries were reviewed first by my advisor (AB), who was familiar with the couples; discrepancies were discussed and resolved. After this first validity
check, the summaries were sent to my additional colleagues (JN and ML) for review; the colleagues’ comments were reviewed with my advisor (AB) and any discrepancies resolved by revisiting the audiotapes.

- From the narrative summaries, emergent themes were highlighted and compiled in a table. The emergent themes included placing blame on intoxication; denial of use/intoxication; and reference to change through rehabilitation. These themes were noted for the perpetrator, the victim, or both the perpetrator and victim in each couple. Once the emergent themes were identified in the table for each couple, the table was reviewed with my advisor (AB) for accuracy. In situations of discrepancies, I re-reviewed the couples’ data for verification and revisited my interpretations in weekly meetings with my advisor.

- From May 2012 through July 2012, I analyzed, interpreted, and expanded upon emergent themes.
Chapter 3: Results

The sample (n=9) included interethnic and intraethnic couples from differing socioeconomic statuses and marital statuses. Three couples were intraethnic; two African American and one Caucasian. Six couples were interethnic; one couple included a Hispanic male and Caucasian female; an Asian male and Caucasian female; an African American male and Asian female; and three couples included an African American male and Caucasian female. Two couples were married at the time of the violent event and the perpetrator’s incarceration. All couples were involved in a romantic relationship, with some couples referring to each other as fiancés and some being married. Table 1 (see appendix A) depicts emergent themes from the analysis of the following research question: how did the couple understand the role of alcohol and/or drugs in the violent event. The analysis revealed three emergent themes: 1) placing blame on the perpetrator’s intoxication; 2) admittance and/or denial of use and/or intoxication; and 3) reference to change through rehabilitation. Included in the discussion of each theme is an excerpt from at least one couple’s narrative case study. All case studies are presented in full in Appendix B.
Major theme 1: Placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication

Across couples, at least one partner typically engaged in dialogue about the perpetrator’s intoxication from drug or alcohol use prior to and/or during the violent. Of the couples where at least one partner reasoned that the perpetrator’s intoxication from drugs and/or alcohol was to blame for the violent event, three couples were in consensus that the perpetrator’s intoxication was to blame; that is, perpetrators and their victims initially agreed or came to an agreement that intoxication caused the perpetrator to act violently. Couples tended to reason that the perpetrator was a non-violent person except for when he was intoxicated; as one victim stated: “You really good person, you know, when you sober. But that thing, that thing [drugs] make you crazy.”

However, not all of the couples came to a consensus about whether the perpetrator’s intoxication was to blame for his violent behaviors. For one couple, the perpetrator placed the blame on his intoxication and the victim disagreed by stating intoxication was not an excuse for the perpetrator’s actions. For another couple, the victim stated that the perpetrator’s intoxication was an excuse for the violent event, but the perpetrator disagreed and denied being intoxicated:

“And I did indicate that you may have been under-“ (Victim)

“I wasn’t under any-“ [interrupting V] (Perpetrator)

“-you were under [the influence] of drugs.” (V)

“I wasn’t! I wasn’t!” [raised voice] (P)
“Well, I thought you were because I couldn’t, I couldn’t believe you would do that [violence]” (V)

“I wasn’t under any influence at all. I’ve never been [under the influence] in any of the fights. I never have.” (P)

“Yes you have!” (V)

In the case of this victim, and partners from other couples, blaming the perpetrator’s intoxication was an attempt at comprehending why the perpetrator engaged in violence towards the victim. This victim went on to state: “I don’t know, but basically, I guess I was assuming to find an excuse for why, um, you know what was happening between us. I figured that [intoxication] may have been a reason for it.” For victims who viewed intoxication as an excuse, the perpetrator was otherwise depicted as docile, loving, and family oriented. Thus, violent behaviors were viewed out of the norm. One victim stated that her reason for blaming the perpetrator’s intoxication for the violent event was because she could not understand how a person could act violently towards another person, especially a significant other, when sober:

“The reason I forgave you was because I thought you were under the influence.” (V)

“No I wasn’t! I was under the influence of you.” (P)

“I can’t believe someone would attack someone like that in their regular frame of mind. I would never do that.” (V)
Reconstructing intoxication as an excuse for the violent event. A theme that emerged within the broader theme of blaming the perpetrator’s intoxication was the reconstruction of the perpetrator’s intoxication as an excuse for the violent event. Perpetrators engaged in discussion with the victim about using their intoxication as an excuse for their violent behaviors and the reason for why the victim should recant her statement when she went to court. During these discussions, the perpetrator informed the victim that she should recant her statement because he was intoxicated. For example, the perpetrator would tell the victim what to include in her letter to the judge for the recantation, such as: “You got to tell them I was slipped some drugs. I was paranoid...Tell ‘em we went out on a weekend binge” Other times, the perpetrator planned to directly inform the judge and/or lawyers that his intoxication was the reason for why charges should be dropped: “I’m gonna tell the judge it was an isolated incident. I, you know, never drink like that. I don’t have a drinking problem. I had a little too much that day; I got angry. You know, it was an isolated incident.”

In the cases of when the perpetrator broached the topic of using intoxication for recantation, the victim went along with his requests, but several victims took the initiative of suggesting using his intoxication as the reason for recantation. In one couple, the victim stated that she believed the perpetrator’s intoxication should be made known to the judge so that the perpetrator could possibly receive a lesser sentencing and receive treatment:
“I would plead guilty [to the charges]. And I would admit that I have been intoxicated. You don’t have to name the exact substance, but I would make that an issue because I brought it up [in the police report]. And I think if you admit to it...they will give you a different kind of sentencing. You will get treatment and resources.”

*Placing blame on intoxication (victims’ intoxication).* A minor theme that emerged was the perpetrator placing blame on the victim’s intoxication and specifically using the victim’s intoxication as the reason for why he acted violently. Perpetrators made claims that the reason they engaged in violent behaviors towards the victim was because the victim was intoxicated from drug and/or alcohol use prior to or during the violent event. Specifically, one perpetrator made claims that the victim’s relapse on cocaine made him react violently because he was shocked and angered that the victim had relapsed after twelve years of sobriety: “You were in a drug psychosis and you pushed me into a drug psychosis.”

**Major theme 2: Perpetrators’ admittance or denial of use/intoxication**

A second major theme that emerged was whether the perpetrator admitted to or denied using alcohol and/or drugs or being intoxicated prior to or during the violent. Perpetrators tended to admit to engaging in substance use or being intoxicated prior to or during the violent event rather than denying using substances or being intoxicated: “I, you know, never drink like that. I don’t have a drinking problem. I had a little too much that day; I got angry.” However, for some perpetrators, admitting substance use or
intoxication came after vehemently denying use. Still yet, others refused to admit to using substances or being intoxicated. Specifically, some perpetrators claimed they were slipped drugs, indicating that they had no control over their own intoxication:

“Somebody put that shit [drugs] in my drink ...I must have gotten slipped some crystal meth or somethin’...I’ve never seen no crystal. Somebody must of slipped us some drugs or something.” One perpetrator readily admitted to consuming alcohol, but refused to admit to using crystal meth even though crystal meth was present in his urine analysis which was taken upon incarceration following the violent event:

“I mighta snapped. I mighta been in a drunkin’ rage. They [the police] said I was on crystal [methamphetamine]. So somehow or another I got slipped some crystal and, and, and it’s as simple as that. And I apologize. And I don’t know if you got slipped some crystal. Did they say you had crystal in your system too?” (P)

“I don’t know anything about drugs.” (V)

**Major theme 3: Reference to change through rehabilitation and/or an independent change in the perpetrator’s behavior**

The third major theme that emerged was a request for change in the perpetrator’s behavior, through some type of rehabilitation or treatment. When rehabilitation was suggested, anger management or IPV classes tended to be suggested as opposed to drug/alcohol rehabilitation. In the context of discussing change and/or rehabilitation, only two couples discussed alcohol and/or drug treatment. One perpetrator stated that he
needed both substance abuse and anger management rehabilitation: “I need anger management and drug treatment.” In another couple’s conversations, both the perpetrator and victim discussed the perpetrator’s need for substance use rehabilitation; interestingly, the perpetrator was the first to broach the subject of him needing substance use treatment and he stated that he was reading self-help books: “I got three books today. I got one called Overcoming Addictions by Deepak Chopra...” For this perpetrator, he made claims that he could change his violent behaviors through rehabilitation even though he denied using substances: “I will come out of here [jail] very clean [drug free] and very strong.”

In couples where only the perpetrator discussed rehabilitation or the need for change, the perpetrator typically dominated the conversations, limiting the victim’s ability to contribute to the conversation. When these perpetrators discussed behavior change or rehabilitation, they quickly brought up the subject of needing to change their behavior or undergo rehabilitation, but would quickly change the subject before the victim could interject. Lastly, in only two couples was there a discussion about the perpetrator’s need for rehabilitation by both partners. However, it was only in one couple where both partners expressed the need for rehabilitation for the perpetrator, stated their opinions about rehabilitation, and discussed the types of available rehabilitation. In the other couple where both partners discussed the perpetrator’s rehabilitation, the victim made innuendos about the perpetrator needing substance abuse treatment. After multiple unsuccessful attempts at trying to get the perpetrator to say he needed treatment, the victim made a direct statement about rehabilitation:
“You’ve got to stop [using drugs] too.” (V)

“I’m going to [stop using drugs].” (P)

Reactions to when the victim suggested rehabilitation and/or behavior change for the perpetrator varied. For example, one perpetrator became angry and yelled at the victim:

“I’m not tellin’ them I need anger management classes. I’m not tellin’ them that at all. Because I don’t need it.” [raised voice](P)

“Yea you do!” (V)

“No I don’t! I’m not going to anger management because of some fuckin’ bitch!” [raised voice](P)

Another perpetrator agreed with the victim’s suggestion for him to never drink alcohol again:

“I mean you can never drink again. Ever!” (V)

“Okay” (P)

“I’m serious. I’m not going to deal with it.” (V)

Couples who did not discuss the need for substance use rehabilitation for the perpetrator instead discussed the perpetrator’s need for anger management and/or IPV
courses; that is, it was the perpetrator’s violent actions that needed rehabilitation as opposed to substance use problems:

“\textit{All I wrote in the police report is that he \text{[the perpetrator]} needs help...he needs anger management...You need help. You need serious counseling.}” “\textit{I said, we getting married and starting a family, we will go through marriage counseling and he \text{[the perpetrator]} will get help.}”
Chapter 4: Discussion

My study is the first to use conversational data, free from interviewer bias, from couples involved in IPV to analyze perceptions of the role of alcohol and/or drug use in IPV events. Results indicated that perpetrators’ intoxication from alcohol and/or drug use prior to or during the violent was blamed. Both perpetrators and victims viewed alcohol and/or drug intoxication as a correlate for why the perpetrator acted violently, with couples tending to be in consensus that the perpetrators’ intoxication was to blame. Victims sometimes reasoned that perpetrators were non-violent except for when intoxicated, and used the perpetrators’ intoxication as a way to understand the perpetrators’ violent behaviors. Specifically, perpetrators’ alcohol and/or drug use caused the perpetrators to act out of character and engage in violence. Perpetrators also used their intoxication to their advantage by reconstructing it as an excuse for the violent event and a reason for why charges should be dropped.

Perpetrators tended to admit to using alcohol and/or drugs or to being intoxicated prior to or during the violent event. However, for some perpetrators, admitting to alcohol and/or drug use or intoxication came after much denial. Additionally, some perpetrators refused to admit to using drugs and/or alcohol or being intoxicated. Typically,
perpetrators who refused to admit to using drugs and/or alcohol or to being intoxicated were adamant about being sober even in instances when evidence, such as a urine analysis, indicated otherwise. In some cases, these perpetrators denied their own use and/or intoxication and instead blamed the victim’s alcohol and/or drug use or intoxication for the violent event. Furthermore, some perpetrators admitted to using certain substances (i.e., alcohol), but denied using other substances (i.e., crystal meth) even though urine analyses were positive for such substances; these perpetrators used excuses, such as being slipped drugs, for why certain substances tested positive in their system.

As couples discussed the perpetrator’s substance use, discussion of the perpetrator’s need for rehabilitation also occurred. Perpetrators’ reactions to rehabilitation varied from resistance (anger and yelling) “I’m not going to anger management because of some fuckin’ bitch!” to agreement “I need anger management and drug treatment.” Although substance use was prevalent in these couples, few couples discussed the need for perpetrators to receive drug and alcohol rehabilitation specifically. Instead, discussions of rehabilitation focused on perpetrators receiving counseling, anger management, or taking IPV courses.

Results from my study are in agreement with the widespread cultural belief that substance use, especially alcohol consumption, causes aggressive behaviors (Paglia & Room, 1998; Roizen, 1983). Field, Caetano, and Nelson (2004) found an increase in IPV perpetration when the perpetrator believed alcohol was an excuse for aggression and held
the belief that aggression follows alcohol consumption. Although past research suggests mixed views on whether more or less blame and/or responsibility is placed on an intoxicated person who engaged in aggressive behavior (Begue & Subra, 2008; Paglia & Room, 1998; Senchak & Leonard, 1994; Quigley & Leonard, 2006; Wild, Graham, & Rehm, 1998), my study suggests less blame and/or responsibility is placed on the perpetrator and more blame and/or responsibility is placed on intoxication. This is supported by couples directly blaming perpetrators’ intoxication and/or using perpetrators’ intoxication as an excuse for recantation. Furthermore, the perpetrator’s intoxication was sometimes offered as a primary reason that the victim should recant her statement in court, suggesting that the violence was not intended. That is, intoxication caused the perpetrator to act out of character. Perpetrators tended to admit substance use prior to or during the violent event, lending support to Fals-Stewart, Golden, and Schumacher’s (2003) finding of increased male partners’ aggression toward their female partner on days of the male’s substance use, and that IPV perpetration by male partners most likely occurs during or within several hours of alcohol and/or drug use. Specifically, male partners in my study tended to inform their female partners that they were intoxicated, which caused them to not act normally, such as: “I don’t know what the hell I was doing. I was not myself.” “I was messed up. I was upset.” “alcohol makes me more angry.”

Researchers acknowledge the need for substance use and batterer intervention programs to become integrated (Dalton, 2009; Fals-Stewart & Kennedy, 2005; Klostermann, 2006; stuart, 2005; Stuart, Temple, & Moore, 2007; Thomas & Bennett,
validating again that substance use plays an important role in IPV perpetration. In a study of batterer program directors’ views of substance use and IPV, Dalton (2009) found that most directors believed IPV and substance use are related. Contrary to past research’s call for substance use treatment and batterer intervention program integration, couples in my study did not perceive substance use treatment as an integral part of the perpetrator’s rehabilitation; rather, couples primarily discussed anger management and intimate partner violence courses. In fact, only two couples discussed the perpetrator’s need for substance use rehabilitation even though the perpetrators’ intoxication from drug and/or alcohol use was blamed for the violent event by the majority of couples. This suggests that couples possibly perceived substance use merely as an excuse for the perpetrators’ violent behaviors rather than a serious issue that required attention. Additionally, perpetrators who readily admitted substance use spoke neutrally or positively of substance use, indicating that substance use was a normal part of their life and relationship with the victim.

My study was not without limitations. The sample comprised of incarcerated perpetrators of felony-level IPV. Prior to the start of each telephone call, perpetrators and their victims were made aware that the telephone conversation was being recorded and could be subject to use in court. Thus, couples may have censored their conversations, especially when discussing illegal substance use. Perpetrators may have admitted to using “less harmful” drugs (i.e., alcohol), but denied using “harmful” drugs (i.e., crystal meth) for fear of repercussions from the legal system and, possibly, from the victim. However, I was still privy to elaborate, detailed discussions of substance use by the
couples. Although a breadth of substances was discussed by the couples in my sample, couples’ substance use may not be as extensive when not involved in felony-level IPV. Thus, the breadth of substances discussed in my study may not be consistent with substances used in less severe IPV. In fact, less severe IPV cases involving alcohol and/or drugs may never reach the police and/or jails.

Previous studies examining perspectives of substance abuse in cases of IPV rely on retrospective self- or partner-reported alcohol use (e.g., Senchak & Leonard, 1994), and/or hypothetical vignettes to assess about perceptions rather than asking people about real life events (e.g. Begue & Subra, 2008; Harrison & Willis Esqueda, 2000; Paglia & Room, 1998; Senchak & Leonard, 1994; Quigley & Leonard, 2006; Wild, Graham, & Rehm, 1998). Reliance on retrospective accounts of substance use introduces potential recall and social desirability biases (Searles, Helzer, & Walter, 2000; Toneatto, Sobell, & Sobell, 1992). My study avoided problems of social desirability bias, by using real-time telephone conversations between perpetrators and victims that occurred in the absence of a study interviewer. My study also potentially avoided problems of recall bias, by using conversations between couples that occurred in very close proximity to the violent event, typically within days and sometimes hours. Moreover, my study used qualitative methodology, which allowed an in-depth examination of how couples understood the role of alcohol and/or drugs in the violent event.

Given the findings from my study, incorporation of substance use treatment and batterer intervention programs may be warranted. Most treatment options only focus on either substance abuse or IPV, but not both. Further, Klostermann (2006) argues for the
integration of IPV intervention into substance abuse treatment programs as opposed to integrating substance abuse treatment into IPV intervention programs because of problems with participant retention in court-mandated IPV intervention programs and a general lack of efficacy. However, Klostermann (2006) found that substance abuse treatment programs are not without flaw. For example, even though IPV perpetration appears to decrease as a result of substance abuse treatment, this reduction appears to depend on perpetrators’ abstinence from substance use (Klostermann, 2006; Murphy & Ting, 2010). Finally, couples therapy is a third option for substance using, IPV perpetrators and their victims. Specifically, Behavioral Couples Therapy (Klostermann, Fals-Stewart, Gorman, Kennedy, & Stappenbeck, 2005) was designed to teach couples relationship building skills as well as address substance abuse. One focal point of Behavioral Couples Therapy is the reduction of IPV even if relapse occurs by teaching couples, particularly the non-substance using partner, skills to avoid or defuse situations that have the potential for IPV perpetration. Although Behavioral Couples Therapy has shown promising results for IPV reduction, more studies are needed to determine effectiveness by addressing prior research’s limitations (Klostermann, 2006).

In considering an integration of IPV and substance abuse programs, as suggested by Nemeth and colleagues (In press), cross-referral, open communication, and collaboration between organizations is imperative.
References


Lee, M. A., Bonomi, A. E., Carotta, C., Ludwin, J., & Nemeth, J. (revise and resubmit
“I don’t know what possessed me”: Offenders’ use of minimizations with their victims following a violent event, *Violence Against Women*.


Appendix A: Emergent Themes Table
Table 1. Emergent Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References to change through rehabilitation</th>
<th>Perpetrator’s denial or admittance of AOD use/intoxication</th>
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<tr>
<td>HND</td>
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AOD=Alcohol and/or other drug use
Vic=Victim
Perp=Perpetrator
Denied=Perpetrator denied engaging in substance use prior to and/or during the violent event
Admitted=Perpetrator admitted to engaging in substance use prior to and/or during the violent event
*Perpetrator denied using one type of substance, but admitted to using a different substance
**Perpetrator admitted to substance use, but denied being intoxicated

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<th>Placing blame on perpetrator’s intoxication</th>
<th>Reconstructing intoxication as excuse for violent event</th>
<th>Placing blame on victims’ intoxication</th>
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Vic=Victim

Perp=Perpetrator
Appendix B: Couples’ Narrative Summaries
At the time of Terrell’s incarceration, Terrell and Raven were in a relationship. In the beginning of the couple’s conversations, Terrell admitted to using marijuana prior to the violent event and reported marijuana being identified in his urine analysis “the prosecutors have filed charges on me, but she is arresting me ...for unclean urinary analysis...marijuana” (Terrell). Additionally, Terrell expressed an interest in rehabilitation by stating that he was reading Overcoming Addiction. (reference to change through rehabilitation) Terrell informed Raven that he was working with his parole officer (from a previous conviction) to have him receive treatment instead of jail time. (reference to change through rehabilitation) Raven expressed support for Terrell to receive treatment, as follows:

“As long as I’ve known you and as long as this [violence] has been goin’ on, the drug habit, the abuse...it’s just too much. You can hate me, you can never speak to me again. You can, whatever, but this is not me getting back at you...I would just really like if your life got better.” (reference to change through rehabilitation)

As the couple’s conversations progressed, a shift occurred; Terrell began denying drug use and intoxication, and began blaming Raven’s alcohol use. At one point, Terrell blamed Raven’s intoxication for the violent event while he claimed innocence: “I came in peace. You were drinking. You were volatile.” (placing blame on victims’)
intoxication) Although Raven admitted to drinking prior to the violent event, she repeatedly tried to get Terrell to re-admit to being under the influence of drugs, as follows:

“And I did indicate that you may have been under-“ (Raven)

“-I wasn’t under any-“ [interrupting Raven] (Terrell) (denial of use/intoxication)

“-you were under [the influence] of drugs.” (Raven)

“I wasn’t! I wasn’t!” [raised voice] (Terrell) (denial of use/intoxication)

“Well, I thought you were because I couldn’t, I couldn’t believe you would do that [violence]” (Raven) (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication)

“I wasn’t under any influence at all. I’ve never been [under the influence] in any of the fights. I never have.” (Terrell) (denial of use/intoxication)

“Yes you have!” (Raven)

As the conversation continued, Raven began to explain why she continued to say that Terrell was intoxicated during the violent event; Terrell remained resistant:

“The reason I forgave you was because I thought you were under the influence.” (Raven) (reconstructing intoxication as excuse for violence)

“No I wasn’t! I was under the influence of you.” (Terrell) (denial of use/intoxication)

“I can’t believe someone would attack someone like that in their regular frame of mind. I would never do that.” (Raven) (reconstructing intoxication as excuse for violence)
Towards the end of the couple’s conversations, a second shift occurred as Terrell once again began to express interest in receiving treatment “I will come out of here [jail] very clean [drug free] and very strong.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) Raven continued to support Terrell receiving treatment and encouraged him to admit to being intoxicated so that he could receive treatment, as follows:

“I would plead guilty [to the charges]. And I would admit that I have been intoxicated. You don’t have to name the exact substance, but I would make that an issue because I brought it up [in the police report] (reconstructing intoxication as excuse for violence). And I think if you admit to it…it will give you a different kind of sentencing. You will get treatment and resources.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) (Raven)

“Yeah” (Terrell)

Finally, at the end of the couple’s conversations, Raven admitted to using intoxication as an excuse for Terrell’s violent behaviors: “I don’t know, but basically, I guess I was assuming to find an excuse for why, um, you know what was happening between us. I figured that [intoxication] may have been a reason for it.” (reconstructing intoxication as excuse for violence)
Sierra and Bobby were in a relationship at the time of the violent event and incarceration. Sierra was a former drug user who had maintained 12 years of sobriety until immediately prior to the violent event; she relapsed by using cocaine. The couple spent a significant portion of their conversations discussing the violent event and the antecedents. Drug use by Sierra and Bobby was the focus of these conversations. Even though Sierra and Bobby are both reported as having used drugs during the violent event, both denied it initially. However, as the couple’s conversations continued, Sierra and Bobby both admitted to using substances. Sierra admitted to relapsing on cocaine, and Bobby admitted to drinking alcohol; both denied using methamphetamine (crystal meth):

“I mighta snapped. I mighta been in a drunkin’ rage. (placing blame on perpetrators’
intoxication) They [the police] said I was on crystal [methamphetamine]. So somehow
or another I got slipped some crystal (denial of use/intoxication) and, and, and it’s as
simple as that. And I apologize. And I don’t know if you got slipped some crystal. Did
they say you had crystal in your system too?” (Bobby)

“I don’t know anything about drugs.” (Sierra)

As the couple further discussed the violent event, Bobby repeatedly denied using
crystal meth “I must have gotten slipped some crystal meth or somethin’.” “I’ve never
seen no crystal. Somebody must of slipped us some drugs or something.” Once it
appeared as though Bobby had convinced Sierra and himself that they were drugged, Bobby began to use this as a reason for why the charges should be dropped and he should be released from jail:

“You got to tell them I was slipped some drugs. I was paranoid.” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence) “Tell ‘em we went out on a weekend binge” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence) “We were outta our minds for three days on drugs.” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence) “You were in a drug psychosis and you pushed me into a drug psychosis.” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence) Because Bobby dominated the conversation, Sierra was not given the opportunity to respond to these statements except for saying “mmhmm” or “yeah.”

After Bobby believed he had convinced Sierra to use their intoxication as an excuse for the violence, Bobby attempted to express remorse and regret for his actions, and that treatment was needed:

“I hope we don’t ever have to do that dope again or whatever we was on. Whatever that shit we was on baby, I don’t wanna do that shit ever again. It makes us fight.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) “Man, look what drugs did to us.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) “I need anger management and drug treatment.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) Sierra responded with “yeah” “ok” after Bobby made these statements.
Brittany and Travis were married at the time of the violent event and Travis’ incarceration. At the time of the violent event, Brittany was pregnant, but the pregnancy was lost as a result of the violent event and injuries sustained. Drug use was a frequent topic of conversation for the couple and appeared to be a source of tension. Both Brittany and Travis reported drug use; cocaine and alcohol. Brittany informed Travis that she does not like it when Travis uses drugs and/or alcohol with his friends and not her. However, Brittany frequently discussed wanting to abstain from drug use. When discussing abstinence from drug use, Travis’ response was usually silence or he changed the topic: “I'm done with drugs. I’ve been goin’ to church.” (Brittany) “[silence]” (Travis) After several covert attempts to get Travis to admit to needing treatment or that he plans to stop using, Brittany used a more direct approach by telling Travis he needed to abstain from drug use. When Brittany used this approach, Travis responded positively: “You’ve got to stop [using drugs] too.” (Brittany) (reference to change through rehabilitation) “I’m going to [stop using drugs].”(Travis) (reference to change through rehabilitation)
VLA

Stacy & Sean

At the time of Sean’s incarceration, Stacy and Sean were in a relationship and had an infant son. Throughout the couple’s conversations, Sean attempted to degrade Stacy by comparing his occupation (manager at a grocery store, 50 hour work week, tax payer) to hers (stripper at local strip joint, 23 hour work week, non-tax paying) by implying that her occupation was demeaning and stating that it was to blame for his violent behaviors. Specifically, Sean informed law enforcement that Stacy’s injuries were not the result of his violent behaviors, but because she was a stripper, had a previous assault record, and several driving under the influence (DUI) convictions. Stacy informed Sean that her statement from the police report requested an intervention and treatment for Sean’s violent behaviors: “All I wrote in the police report is that he [Sean] needs help…he needs anger management.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) Throughout their conversations, Stacy repeatedly informed Sean that he needed to receive treatment for his violent tendencies: “You need help. You need serious counseling.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) However, Sean was resistant to receiving help. For example, when Stacy suggested Sean tell the Judge that he wants to receive treatment for anger problems, Sean engaged in denial and became upset, as follows:

“I’m not tellin’ them I need anger management classes. I’m not tellin’ them that at all. Because I don’t need it.” [raised voice](Sean)

“Yea you do!” (Stacy) (reference to change through rehabilitation)
“No I don’t! I’m not going to anger management because of some fuckin’ bitch!” [raised voice](Sean)

As the couple continued to discuss the violent event, Sean admitted to consuming alcohol prior to the violent event. Because Sean denied knowledge of Stacy’s injuries, Stacy described the severity of her injuries. At one point Stacy reported feeling as though she thought she was going to die during the violent event and that her injuries could have resulted in a hospitalization; Stacy claimed Sean’s intoxication was the reason for this:

“You were so drunk, that’s what could have happened.” [referring to her injuries being so severe it could have required hospitalization] (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) In response to these claims, Sean reported feeling mellow from drinking alcohol, but not being intoxicated: “I was calmed down and mellow. I had a few drinks. I don’t know what made me snap.” (admittance of use/denial of intoxication) However, shortly after making this statement, Sean changed his stance on the influence of alcohol on his behaviors “alcohol makes me more angry” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication), and began to reconstruct intoxication as the reason for his violent behaviors:

“I’m gonna tell the Judge it was an isolated incident. I, you know, never drink like that. I don’t have a drinking problem. I had a little too much that day; I got angry. You know, it was an isolated incident.” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence)
Amar & Rachel

Amar was married to Rachel, and the couple had an infant son, Greg. The couple was of a higher socioeconomic status, and Amar worked at a multibillion dollar, multinational corporation. Throughout the conversations, Amar was concerned about the social and financial repercussions of his incarceration for felony level domestic violence. Specifically, Amar feared losing his job and house. Together, Amar and Rachel fabricated a story about Amar missing work due to illness so that Amar’s employer would not learn of his incarceration. As the couple discussed the violent event, Amar expressed insecurities about his relationship status with Rachel and repeatedly brought up the topic of Rachel’s affair. Amar expressed regret for not respecting Rachel’s request for Amar to go home separately because their argument was escalating. Amar cited Rachel’s affair and her provocation as the reason for why he engaged in violent behavior. However, Rachel cited Amar’s alcohol use as the reason for the violent behavior and demanded that Amar was to never consume alcohol again: “I mean you can never drink again. Ever!” (Rachel) (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) “Okay” (Amar) “I’m serious. I’m not going to deal with it.” (Rachel) (reference to change through rehabilitation) Although the couple discussed Amar’s alcohol use, the couple did not want law enforcement to know about his use prior to the violent event: “Ok. So no one knows I was drinking?” (Amar) “I don’t think so.” (Rachel) The couple worked together to create a new version of the violent event which did not include Amar’s alcohol use.
Specifically, Rachel claimed most of the events prior to and during the violent event were “a blur,” and that Amar did not commit a crime because he reached over to correct the steering wheel (Bonomi et al., 2011):

“No one really knows what happened anyway, it was all kind of a blur. I don’t know what happened.” (Rachel)

“I know, I don’t know either, (deep sigh) it’s not looking good.” (Amar)

“Well, I don’t know if you really committed a crime. You just put your hand on the (steering) wheel and pulled me back on the road. I almost got hit by the one car and you pulled me back. Nothing wrong with that really.” (Rachel)
Donna & Tom

Donna and Tom had been in a relationship for over 20 years and were married for a portion of their relationship. The couple had a school-aged son, Jeremy. The conversations between Donna and Tom were emotionally intense, for Donna spent much of their conversations yelling at Tom. Donna continuously raised her voice at Tom when discussing the severity of the violent and injuries she sustained. When not talking about the violent event and her injuries, Donna and Tom discussed money and Tom’s accusation that Donna stole money from him, which appeared to have triggered the violent event. Due to her injuries, Donna feared losing her job and her home. Throughout the conversations, Tom minimized the violent event and Donna’s injuries. Tom used his substance use as a mechanism to minimize the violent event and remove blame from himself: “Man, Donna. I was messed up. I was upset.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) Later in their conversation, Donna attempted to determine why Tom engaged in violent behaviors and brought up his substance use, as follows:

“I said, ‘were you stressin’ that bad?’” (Donna)

“For what?” (Tom)

“For dope or –” (Donna)

“No! No! Please! Come on! Who told you- I ain’t done nothing.” (Tom) (denial of use/intoxication)
Jessica & Jason

Jessica and Jason were in a relationship and had an infant daughter, Bridgett. The couple’s conversations were filled with discussion of the purchase of and use of drugs; Lithium, cocaine, crack-cocaine, ecstasy, psychedelic mushrooms, and phencyclidine (PCP). Drugs appeared to have a normative role in the couple’s relationship, for the couple openly discussed their drug habits, where the drugs were located in their residence, and their intent to purchase drugs. When Jessica and Jason began discussing the violent event, Jason was upset because of the police report made by Jessica. In the police report, Jessica supposedly made claims of psychedelic mushroom use by Jason prior to the violent event. Both Jessica and Jason denied Jason’s use of psychedelic mushrooms, but Jessica claimed Jason used “sherms” or PCP, which Jason denied:

“You said [in the police report] that I wouldn’t let you go anywhere. I left and came back. I was on mushrooms. You went to Kent, uh—“ (Jason)

“-on mushrooms?” (Jessica)

“Yea. Psychedelic mushrooms. You took me to Kent, I passed out and when I fell asleep you grabbed my daughter and took off.” (Jason)

As Jessica and Jason continued to discuss the violent event, they began to argue over Jason’s use of psychedelic mushrooms:
“I was takin’ psychedelic mushrooms.” (Jason)

“-Do I know those words!? I said Sherms [PCP]” [raised voice, interrupting] (Jessica) (denial of use/intoxication)

“Well, it said psychedelic mushrooms.” (Jason)

“-whatever the fuck that means.” [raised voice, agitated] (Jessica)

“Ok. And the Sherms, I didn’t take no goddamn Sherms.” (Jason) (denial of use/intoxication)

“Well, my fault. I thought you guys were. Who knows what you took because you don’t tell me the goddamn truth anyway.” (Jessica)

“I do.” (Jason)

“No you don’t because then you would have told me you were doing E [ecstasy].” (Jessica)
Mai was a female of Asian descent and was engaged to Mike. At the time of the violent event and the phone calls made between the couple while Mike was incarcerated, Mai was pregnant. Mai appeared to be determined to get Mike out of jail and had written a letter recanting her statement of the violent event. As the couple discussed Mai’s letter, Mike informed Mai of specific details that should and should not be included. A significant concern of Mike’s was making sure the legal system believed Mai when she said she decided to recant and was not pressured by Mike. Mai reassured Mike by informing him of a conversation in which she explained to a co-worker of Mike’s parole officer that she wanted to be with Mike and see him get treatment: “I said, we getting married and starting a family, we will go through marriage counseling and he [Mike] will get help.” (reference to change through rehabilitation) Mike told Mai he liked what she said and to make sure she wrote that in her letter for recantation. As the couple continued to discuss Mai’s letter for recantation, Mike encouraged Mai to place the blame on his substance use: “Tell ‘em I was mad my man for getting’ high. The crack smokin’. All that. Everything.” (reconstruct intoxication as excuse for violence) Mai agreed to include this information in her letter, but at the very end of the couple’s phone conversation, Mai began to express concern and dislike of Mike’s substance use: “You really good person, you know, when you sober. But that thing, that thing make you crazy.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication)
Kelsey & Ryan

Kelsey and Ryan were in a relationship at the time of Ryan’s incarceration. At the very beginning of the couple’s conversations, Ryan stated that he wanted a Christian home “no cigarettes, nothin’ like that” and that he planned to reform his violent ways. (reference to change through rehabilitation) In fact, Ryan said that he wants to enroll in domestic violence classes and see a counselor with Kelsey. (reference to change through rehabilitation) As the couple began to discuss the violent event, Ryan claimed he did not know what happened or why he engaged in violent behaviors. Kelsey offered Ryan’s alcohol consumption as the reason for his behavior: “You was drinkin’. You was upset.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) As the couple continued to discuss the violent event, Ryan agreed that he had been drinking, but made claims that he was unknowingly drugged: “Somebody put that shit [drugs] in my drink.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) Ryan took his claim even further by saying that it was because he was drugged that he engaged in violent behaviors: “I don’t know what the hell I was doing. I was not myself. Please don’t hold that against me.” (placing blame on perpetrators’ intoxication) Because Ryan believed he was drugged and this caused him to engage in violent behavior, Ryan encouraged Kelsey to tell the Judge that his intoxication was the reason why the violent event occurred: “Say he[I] was drunk [to the judge].” (reconstructing intoxication as excuse for the violence) Kelsey agreed to use Ryan’s intoxication as a reason for the occurrence of the violent event.