

**A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF
MIDDLE CHILDHOOD SIBLING RELATIONSHIP
QUALITY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

by

Kendra Nicole Waninger

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Family Studies

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Kendra Nicole Waninger

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ABSTRACT

The ways in which children are affected by intimate partner violence vary. Children often have siblings and are not alone in their experiences, perceptions, or adjustment to living in violent homes. Limited research exists on child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence.

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology that allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of both mothers and children living in homes with intimate partner violence in order to gain insight into the child sibling relationship quality within this environment. Eleven families (11 mothers, 12 children ages eight to twelve years-old) participated in this qualitative, multiple case study.

Using cross-case analysis, themes related to exposure to intimate partner violence and child sibling relationship quality encompassed the diverse exposure of children to intimate partner violence, children's emotional appraisals of the violence, children's behavioral responses to the violence, as well as the warmth and support, and the conflict in the child sibling relationships.

The emotional appraisals and behavioral responses of children regarding intimate partner violence are intertwined with sibling relationships. Children are fearful, intervene during incidents, and display similar behaviors to the abuser. The sibling relationships in these families contain warmth and support, as well as some

level of conflict. Siblings show protection and support for their brothers and sisters during everyday life and during incidents of violence.

This study provides important insight regarding child sibling relationships within the context of intimate partner violence that can be used by professionals providing services to these siblings and families, as well as future researchers examining this topic.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Research Problem

The 1994 Violence Against Women Act recognized that “violence against women is a crime with far-reaching, harmful consequences for families, children, and society” (National Institute of Justice, 1996, p. 1). Intimate partner violence is a devastating social problem in the United States (Black et al., 2011; El-Mouelhy, 2004), where millions of women are affected every year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In addition to these women, it has become widely apparent that our children, one of the nations’ most vulnerable populations, is also affected by exposure to this violence (Dubowitz et al., 2001; Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). These children see, hear, are used as accessories during the violence, are maltreated during the violence, and are present in the aftermath of the violence. They are often at an elevated risk of deleterious behavioral, emotional, social, and physical problems (Edleson et al., 2007; Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008; Grych, Jouriles, Swank, McDonald, & Norwood, 2000; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003; Piotrowski, Tailor, & Cormier, 2014; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003).

Further, research addressing children living within these environments has mostly focused on individual children and has not specifically addressed children and their siblings or how sibling relationships are affected while living in such violent households. In many research designs, attention has been placed on the partner relationship, the parent-child relationship, or on one target child, generalizing with an assumption that violence between intimate partners affects all children similarly (Dubowitz et al., 2001; Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles, et al., 2000; Jenkins, Dunn, O'Connor, Rasbash, & Behnke, 2005; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003). However, children exposed to intimate partner violence often have siblings and are not alone in their experiences or their adjustment to living in these violent homes (Evans et al., 2008; Piotrowski, 2011; Skopp, Manke, McDonald, & Jouriles, 2005; Waddell, Pepler, & Moore, 2001). Children and their siblings are embedded in families where intimate partner violence plays a major role in their lives. They may have differing appraisals and responses to the violence which impacts the developing sibling relationships (Bank, Burraston, & Snyder, 2004; DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Hamby et al., 2011; Skopp et al., 2005).

According to the sibling literature, siblings within a family are unique in how they experience and appraise their situations, and after controlling for genetic effects, variations have been found within and between sibling dyads (Daniels, Dunn, Furstenberg, & Plomin, 1985; Dunn & Plomin, 1991; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). A few studies exist regarding negativity and conflict between intimate partners affecting the individual child's adjustment, as well as the

relationships between child siblings (Erel, Margolin, & John, 1998; Feinberg, Reiss, Neiderhiser, & Hetherington, 2005; Skopp et al., 2005; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). If siblings in non-violent homes have these experiences, then it is plausible that child siblings in homes characterized by extreme conflict and violence may also have different experiences, perceptions, and appraisals of their home environment (Daniels et al., 1985; Dunn & Plomin, 1991; Feinberg et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005).

It is likely that children and their siblings living in homes with intimate partner violence will experience the violence differently from each other depending on the frequency and severity of the violence, family and social supports, parenting, the co-occurrence of child abuse, and individual perceptions and strategies (Humphreys, 2001; Moylan et al., 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Moreover, due to the violence within the home, differing parenting abilities, and individual attributes, the child sibling relationships may be affected in that children may either seek their siblings out for warmth and support, or they may have conflict or distance themselves from both the sibling relationship and the household environment (Edleson, Nguyen, & Kimball, 2011; Feinberg et al., 2005; Lucas, 2002; McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012). Though they provide a starting point for investigating this important issue, findings to date have been limited due to a lack of focus on child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence (Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Lucas, 2002; Piotrowski, 2011; Skopp et al., 2005; Wolfe et al., 2003; Waddell et al., 2001).

The role that intimate partner violence plays in the lives and relationships of the sibling subsystem has just begun to be explored. Skopp et al. (2005) challenged

the assumption that children in homes with intimate partner violence are affected similarly by drawing attention to the sibling differences literature. This literature suggests that siblings within the same family have nonshared environmental influences unique to each sibling (Daniels et al., 1985; Dunn & Plomin, 1991). In their study, Skopp et al. (2005) examined how children in families with intimate partner violence differed in their experiences, and how the unique experiences of each child sibling was related to their adjustment. They found that children within the same household have unique experiences and responses to interparental conflict, and these differences were related to differences in sibling adjustment. Those siblings reporting higher levels of self-blame or perceived threat had greater adjustment problems.

Waddell's (1999) multi-method study of mother and children's perceptions focused on the conflict resolution skills, behavior problems, and supportive and conflictual behaviors of sibling relationships of children exposed to intimate partner violence compared to those who are not exposed. In this study, some siblings exposed to intimate partner violence displayed conflict in their sibling relationships; however, many sibling dyads perceived their sibling relationship as supportive and were able to demonstrate mutually supportive interactions with each other. Additionally, Lucas (2002) conducted a qualitative study regarding child sibling relationships and the role they play in children's responses to intimate partner violence. She found that children are involved in incidents of violence, older siblings protect each other from the physical harm of violence, siblings protect each other from the psychological harm of

violence, both siblings reciprocally care for one another in their daily lives, and siblings show support for each other.

More recently, Piotrowski (2011) studied patterns of adjustment of 47 child sibling pairs exposed to intimate partner violence. Sibling relationship quality assisted in differentiating distinct patterns of adjustment in exposed siblings. There were similarities among older and younger siblings, but few siblings completely matched on adjustment patterns. Using the same data, Piotrowski et al. (2014) looked at child siblings and their mothers to examine child adjustment and sibling relationship quality for child siblings exposed to intimate partner violence. They found a relationship between siblings and internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. Higher sibling hostility, lower sibling warmth, and higher sibling disengagement predicted child adjustment problems.

Based on the findings in the sibling literature and the limited information addressing child siblings within the context of intimate partner violence, further research is necessary. The current study examined the unique ways in which children experience their violent home environments and specifically focused on the nature of the sibling relationship in these homes. Because of the gap in the literature on how the experiences for siblings differ in violent homes and how these differences affect the child sibling relationship, it was necessary to draw on sibling research as a whole to discuss sibling relationships in this context (Skopp et al., 2005). This included integrating information from studies on varying levels of marital conflict and its association with child sibling relationships. However, it is critical to recognize that

the dynamics of marital conflict and of intimate partner violence are vastly different, and generalizations drawn from the conflict literature must be carefully applied to extreme situations such as intimate partner violence (Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005).

A family systems perspective, along with a social learning and cognitive-contextual framework, can be utilized for conceptualizing the complex and diverse nature of the child sibling relationship in the context of intimate partner violence. A family systems perspective illuminates how sibling interactions and relationships develop in the context of multiple family relationships, playing an important role in the development and socialization of children (Bank et al., 2004; Criss & Shaw, 2005). Wide variability and complexity exist in these sibling relationships and experiences, as they are often defined by the rules, power, and incidences of violence within the home (Stormshak, Bellatini, Bierman, & The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1996). Also, social learning theory suggests a process whereby children who are exposed to repetitive violence learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Skopp et al., 2005). As children observe their parents' violent behaviors, they learn and may later model these behaviors in their own relationships with siblings, peers, and parents (Conger, Neppl, Kim, & Scaramella, 2003; Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2000; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003; Whiteman, McHale, & Soli, 2011). Additionally, Grych and Fincham (1990) proposed a cognitive-contextual framework to describe how children's cognitive appraisals of interparental conflict shape the child's functioning. By using

this framework, researchers are able to move beyond the utilization of sole maternal reports of the child's perceptions to analyze multiple appraisals from both mothers and children, gaining critical information regarding the child's cognitive perceptions and meaning they attribute to the violence in their home. The use of the multiple lenses of the family systems, social learning, and cognitive-contextual perspectives assist researchers in exploring child sibling relationships, behavior, and development (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

One major methodological concern that has interfered with the interpretation of findings within the field of childhood exposure to intimate partner violence has been the failure to collect the perceptions of multiple informants regarding the appraisals and perceptions of the child. Often, research has focused solely on maternal reports of the child's perceptions (Sternberg, Lamb, Gutterman, & Abbott, 2006; Wolfe et al., 2003). However, quantitative research has shown that caregivers tend to report less child exposure to intimate partner violence than child self-reporting (Johnson et al., 2002; Skopp et al., 2005). In their longitudinal study of 167 caregiver-child pairs, Johnson et al. (2002) found that slightly fewer than half of the caretakers reported that their child witnessed violent events in the home or community while, at the same time, a little more than three quarters of the children self-reported that they were exposed to violence. The current study addressed this concern by capturing the in-depth perspectives of both the mother and child. Sternberg et al. (2006) discussed that children have differing perspectives from their mothers regarding intimate partner

violence. Researching child appraisals and perceptions, in concert with maternal perceptions to explore the child sibling relationship within the context of intimate partner violence, provides the opportunity to gain unique insight into the dynamics of child sibling relationships (Feinberg et al., 2005; Fischer, Pidcock, Munsch, & Forthun, 2005; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2002; Skopp et al., 2005; Sternberg et al., 2006; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999).

The purpose of the current study was to qualitatively explore how children and their mothers perceive the violence within their home, as well as to begin to understand how child sibling relationships are impacted by an environment of violence. Through gaining the in-depth perspectives of both mothers and children, this study specifically looked at the sibling relationship quality of children who have been exposed to homes with intimate partner violence, and examined the extent to which the sibling relationship within this context serves as a risk or supportive protective resource.

Research Questions

As limited knowledge is present in the field thus far regarding child sibling relationship quality, it is important to continue an examination of these children's subjective experiences and relationship quality by qualitatively exploring:

1. What is the sibling relationship quality between children living in homes with intimate partner violence?
 - a. How do children perceive the intimate partner violence within their home?

- b. How do children, who have lived in homes with intimate partner violence, characterize the quality of their relationship with their sibling(s)?
 - c. How do mothers of child siblings, who have lived in homes with intimate partner violence, characterize the quality of their children's sibling relationship?
2. What is the role of the child sibling relationship in homes with intimate partner violence?
- a. To what extent does the sibling relationship act as a risk or protective factor for children living in these violent homes?

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical orientations are tools assisting researchers in understanding and explaining their research (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, & Klein, 2005; White & Klein, 2002). Research on sibling relationships within the context of their own families is grounded in multiple frameworks for conceptualizing the complex and diverse nature of the sibling relationship. When specifically focusing on the context of intimate partner violence, Wolfe et al. (2003) pointed out there is a lack of theoretical “clarity and guidance” in the literature regarding children’s exposure to intimate partner violence. Many of the existing measures in the field of sibling relationships derive from or are associated with family systems concepts. Using a family systems perspective, social learning theory, and a cognitive-contextual framework provided a deeper understanding of the dynamic process violence may play within the family, as well as how the violence in the parental subsystem affects the relationships and adjustment of child siblings living within this environment.

Family systems perspective. A family systems perspective provided a valuable conceptual framework to view the quality of child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence (Cox & Paley, 2003; Whitchurch & Constantine,

1993; Whiteman et al., 2011). In this perspective, the family is the unit of analysis in order to capture their members' dynamic interactions and patterns (Acock, vanDulmen, Allen, & Piercy, 2005; Copeland & White, 1991). The family systems perspective is a conceptual framework with families viewed as dynamic systems where the whole family unit is greater than the sum of its parts. Families are viewed as a whole with an understanding that there are dyadic and triadic subsystems that are defined by boundaries where, in the context of repeated family interactions, members learn rules for relating to one another within and across boundaries (Cox & Paley, 2003; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993; Whiteman et al., 2011).

All members of the family are intricately interconnected and interdependent in a hierarchically organized system consisting of interrelated smaller subsystems (i.e., parental subsystem, parent-child subsystem, sibling subsystem) assigned to carry out functions in order to maintain the system (Cox & Paley, 2003; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). In families with intimate partner violence, the use of violence in the interactions of family members provides for a family system where members each have their own roles and responsibilities in living with the violence. One example of this organization could include fathers asserting power and authority over all family members, mothers obeying the needs and orders of the father, and older children taking care of and protecting younger child siblings.

Within this framework, families have reciprocal relationships where one member or subsystem affects another member or subsystem (Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005). A bidirectional influence exists among the child sibling relationships and the

parenting relationship where behaviors or actions within various subsystems within the family may impact other family subsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Feinberg et al., 2005; Whiteman et al., 2011). Intimate partner violence within the mother-father subsystem may violate a child's feelings of safety, nurturance, and support. The child within this family system may be overwhelmed with the violence, may face a loss of resources, may experience diminished parenting, and may be exposed to an escalation of violence. This violence may spill over from the mother-father subsystem to the parent-child subsystem or even the sibling subsystem, causing disruptions in relationships (Margolin, 2005).

A family systems perspective can highlight the importance of sibling relationships within the overall family system. Using this framework, researchers can assess and describe sibling relationships, functioning, change, and adaptation. Child sibling dyads are complex, and their relationships are intertwined and affected by the interparental relationship and family interactions (Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999; Stormshak et al., 1996). Stocker and Youngblade (1999) state, "Family relationships, and in particular the marital relationship, are likely to be very important for the development of children's interpersonal skills, their expectations and beliefs about relationships, and the actual relationships they develop with siblings and peers" (p. 598).

One of the main issues researchers using a family systems perspective confront is who should be considered as part of the family. Operationalizing the definition of who is considered to be a part of the family prior to the beginning of the study is

important in studying this issue. By choosing to interview sibling pairs and both parents when looking at each system within the family (mother-father, father-older sibling, father-younger sibling, mother-older sibling, mother-younger sibling), Dekovic and Buist (2005) found increased reciprocity between the sibling dyadic relationship across subsystems in the family. Each member of the family system was able to provide their perceptions and experiences which resulted in rich data. In the current study, all mothers were separated from the abuser, but some children continued to live with or visit with the abuser. Due to the violent nature of the family environments and to protect the safety and well-being of the family, as well as some data collection restraints, within the current study only the mothers and one of their children were interviewed to gain their unique perspectives on the dynamic relationships within the violent home.

Social learning theory. In addition to a family systems perspective, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory has been applied to intimate partner violence research. Bandura relates that children's behavior is shaped through observational learning. This theory explains a process where children who are exposed to repetitive violence learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts in their own social and personal relationships (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). A social learning framework can be used to understand intergenerational processes where adults transmit their practices and beliefs to their children through observations and direct training (Conger et al., 2003).

In one study of 2,245 children and adolescents, Singer, Flannery, Guo, Miller, and Leibbrandt (2004) found that a child's recent exposure to violence was significantly associated with the child's aggressive behavior. Children living in homes with intimate partner violence experience distressing situations, and they may replicate the actions of the abusive parent through interactions with the mother or possibly a sibling in an effort to seek approval (Bancroft, 2004).

As children observe their parent's violent behaviors they learn, and they may later model these behaviors in their own conflict resolutions and relationships with siblings, peers, and parents. These children, especially male children, may learn that behaviors of intimidating, hurting, and demeaning women and men are acceptable. In particular, female children within the home may learn that it is acceptable for men to hurt them as they grow older (Bancroft, 2004). Waddell et al. (2001) described high levels of conflict as children's "daily lessons" for problem solving in relationships. This outcome is consistent with findings that frequent and severe childhood exposure to intimate partner violence leads to an increased risk for behavioral and emotional issues, as well as to an increased risk of becoming a victim or even committing intimate violence once older (Conger et al., 2003; Dubowitz et al., 2001; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000; Krug et al., 2002; Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003; Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005).

Social learning theory is important in the present study as it can assist in understanding the use of violence by children who are exposed to an environment of violence. Those children who do act out physically with their parents, siblings, and

peers may very well be modeling the same behaviors of the abuser. Additionally, in a more positive view of social learning theory, some of the other positive forms of modeling from siblings in those same families with intimate partner violence may be able to be seen. It may be that some siblings who are caretaking and protecting their siblings may be modeling a more positive role. From the knowledge gained through a social learning lens, coordinated community responses can be formed to encourage the cessation of violence in the lives of children.

Cognitive-contextual framework. The cognitive-contextual theory “posits that variations in (a) the context of marital conflict, including parent-child relationships, and (b) children’s cognitive appraisals of their parents’ conflict mediate the impact that marital conflict has on children’s functioning” (Stocker & Youngblade, 1999, p. 599). A cognitive-contextual framework proposes that the dimensions of conflict most closely related to adjustment problems for children include frequency, intensity, and resolution of conflict (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). Grych et al. (1992) called attention to the importance of eliciting perceptions and interpretations of interparental conflict from children. Specifically, in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of children’s perceptions and to better understand how interparental conflict shapes child adjustment, their study assessed 9-12 year-old children’s cognitive and emotional appraisals of interparental conflict, tapping the emotional and behavioral consequences of children’s exposure to conflict (Grych et al., 1992; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). From their study, Grych et al. (1992) found that the child appraisals of conflict properties, perceived threat, and self-

blame were particularly salient in homes with interparental conflict (Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999).

Taking the cognitive contextual framework further, DeBoard-Lucas and Grych (2011) conducted a qualitative study of 34 mother-child pairs of children 7-12 years-old to understand how children think about and perceive intimate partner violence. They found children related common feelings of sadness and anger. These children expressed fears about what happens after an incident, about whether their parent would be hurt, and about the uncertainty of what would happen in the future. In addition to their sadness and fear, these children were involved during incidents between the mother-partner subsystems. The authors found that half of the children left the room during an incident, but more than a third stayed and watched the incident. These children would interrupt, distract, and try to physically separate their mother and abuser. The children also discussed consequences of the violence and responded to why they thought violence occurred.

By using the cognitive-contextual theory, researchers are able to move beyond only utilizing parental reports of the child's perceptions, which may actually underestimate what is occurring in the child's life, and can utilize multiple reporters providing information on the same construct. Researchers can retrieve appraisals of the marital conflict from both child and parent, and they can evaluate how that conflict guides the children's behavioral functioning (Grych et al., 1992). Stocker and Youngblade (1999) utilized Grych and Fincham's (1990) cognitive-contextual framework in an effort to explain the processes by which marital conflict is associated

with children's relationships with siblings and peers. They utilized this theory to answer a process level question by looking beyond the connection of conflict and children's relationships to looking at how these relationships are formed and if there are potential mediators operating between marital conflict and children's relationships with peers and siblings.

Review of the Intimate Partner Violence and Sibling Relationship Literature

Intimate partner violence not only affects adults, but affects children and siblings attempting to navigate their way through the home environment. Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence has been found to be associated with an increased risk of children having adjustment problems (Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000). However, variations exist in children's experiences, and not all children exposed to intimate partner violence experience similar outcomes (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005). Specifically, siblings living in the same home may have differential perceptions and experiences of the violence. These perceptions and experiences may therefore impact the sibling relationship quality and the ability of the siblings to serve as supportive and nurturing protective figures. Additionally, the quality of the sibling relationship and how siblings in the home interact may affect how siblings experience the violence within the home.

Intimate partner violence. Although multiple terms have been used to reflect violence in the home (i.e., spousal abuse, domestic violence, and battering), the term intimate partner violence provides the most comprehensive definition, taking into

account both the context and relationships in the family (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Intimate partner violence is a devastating public health concern worldwide (El-Mouelhy, 2004). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) reported globally 30 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. In the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 24.3% of women have experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). Also, 48.4% of women have experienced at least one psychologically aggressive behavior by an intimate partner in their lifetime. One in 10 women (9.4%) has been raped by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011).

Intimate partner violence, as described by the World Health Organization (2012) “refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (p. 2). This violence can be characterized as a pattern of behavior taking place over time where the perpetrator uses violence as a means to gain power and control (Office of Justice Programs, 2011). Intimate partner violence can be conceptualized broadly with the inclusion of acts that cause physical pain or injury, threats of physical or sexual violence, sexual assault, verbal and emotional abuse, psychological intimidation, denial of access to resources, humiliation, and stalking (CDC, 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The CDC (2014) describes four types of intimate partner violence: physical, sexual, threats of physical or sexual violence, and psychological or emotional abuse. Physical violence consists of biting, shoving, punching, slapping, scratching, and similar

behaviors. Sexual violence is where physical force is used to compel an individual into sexual acts. This includes sexual violence towards individuals who are unable to understand the nature of the act due to disability, illness, or influence of drugs. Threats of physical or sexual violence are characterized by the use of weapons and/or words to communicate the intent to cause injury or harm. Psychological or emotional abuse includes acts, threats of acts, or coercion. This type is characterized by the perpetrator humiliating, controlling, isolating, and denying the victim access to basic resources (CDC, 2014).

Although intimate partner violence has been found to occur across all social, economic, religious, and cultural spectrums (Krug et al., 2002), young women and those individuals who live below the poverty line are disproportionately affected (CDC, 2014; El-Mouelhy, 2004). Intimate partner violence can happen to individuals from any age, race, sexual orientation, marital status, gender, income level, or educational background (Krug et al., 2002). Both women and men have been found to be perpetrators of intimate partner violence; however, the National Violence Against Women Survey estimates that more than 90% of victims of intimate partner violence are women, with the perpetrators being mostly men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). This survey consisted of a representative sample of 8,000 women and 8,000 men, and found that 22.1 percent of women compared to 7.4 percent of men reported they were physically assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Women are 2 to 3 times more likely to report that an intimate partner has pushed or shoved them, and women

are 7 to 14 times more likely to report that an intimate partner has beat them up, choked them, or tied them up (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence. Even though violence within the walls of the family home have always presented multiple challenges to the safety, security, and well-being of children, they have often been the overlooked victims of intimate partner violence (Wolfe et al., 2003). Only in the past few decades are these children attracting attention due to the documented negative effects of being exposed to this type of violence. The majority of women living in relationships with intimate partner violence have children (Bancroft, 2004). In a 2008 national survey of 4,549 American children birth to 17 years old, 6.6% of the children had been exposed to some form of physical assault between their mother and partner in the past year, while 17.9% of the children had been exposed to physical intimate partner violence in their lifetime (Hamby et al., 2011). Overall, a little over a quarter of the children were exposed to at least one form of family violence in their lifetime (Hamby et al., 2011).

It is projected that as many as 10% to 20% of the children in the United States are exposed to intimate partner violence each year (Carlson, 2000), estimated to be as many as 7 to 14 million children in the United States annually (Carlson, 2000; Edleson, Shin, & Johnson, 2008). In their nationally representative sample of 1,615 dual-parent households, McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, and Green (2006) estimated that 15.5 million children (29.4%) lived in homes characterized by at least one instance of intimate partner violence per year. In a population sample of 1,581 domestic violence crimes with police officers as first responders using a

standard protocol, Fantuzzo and Fusco (2007) found that children were present in 43 percent of intimate partner violence incidents, with over half below the age of six.

Additionally, researchers predict that 80 to 90% of children living in homes with intimate partner violence are aware of the violence that occurs (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Hamby et al., 2011). In their national survey, Hamby et al. (2011) found 72.7 percent of the children exposed to psychological or emotional intimate partner violence, and 90.1 percent of the children exposed to physical intimate partner violence directly saw the violence occur. In their study, Fantuzzo and Fusco (2007) found that children had direct “sensory” exposure to the intimate partner violence in 81 percent of the cases. These children are often hearing, seeing, being involved in the violence, and having a general knowledge of the violence within the home (Edleson et al., 2007; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003). In addition, mothers are seeking services for themselves and their children. Across the United States, in one 24-hour period in 2013, 19,431 children lived in emergency shelters or transitional housing, while 5,873 children sought services of non-residential programs (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2014).

Debate exists regarding a universal definition of exposure to intimate partner violence and how to assess this exposure (Edleson et al., 2007). Although multiple legal and multidisciplinary terms have been used to reflect children’s exposure to intimate partner violence (i.e., witnessed, experienced, exposed, observed) it seems that exposure to intimate partner violence provides the most comprehensive way to describe how children experience this violence (Edleson et al., 2008; Holden, 2003).

This exposure to intimate partner violence by children is characterized as “being within auditory or visual range” of physical or emotional fighting between caretakers (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). However, the definition of exposure to intimate partner violence can be extended to not only include the auditory and visual signs of children witnessing the violence, but to include children being directly involved in the incident, intervening in the incident, being victimized during the incident, and observing both the initial effects and the aftermath of the violent behavior (Edleson et al., 2008; Holden, 2003; Kitzmann et al., 2003). Edleson et al. (2007) described exposure to intimate partner violence as “the multiple experiences of children living in homes where an adult is using violent behavior in a pattern of coercion against an intimate partner” (p. 963).

Children who are exposed to this violence are both directly and indirectly affected by environments consumed with yelling, fighting, and arguing (Graham-Bermann & Hughes, 2003; Osofsky, 2003; Sullivan, Nguyen, Allen, Bybee, & Juras, 2000). From his work as a counselor of male batterers, custody evaluator, and child abuse investigator, Lundy Bancroft (2004) found that children not only see and hear the incidents of violence within the home, they hear about the events when talking privately with their siblings, they see the impact on the home, they see the impact on their mother, and they *feel* the violent atmosphere. In 114 telephone interviews with battered mothers in four cities across the country, Edleson, Mbilinyi, Beeman, and Hagemeister (2003) found that mothers report their children are involved in incidents of violence where they overhear the abuse, see the results of the violence, watch the

incidents, are threatened or injured during the incident, are used as tools or pawns during the incident, call someone for assistance during the incident, and try to physically or verbally intervene during the incident.

Empirical evidence illustrates that from the violence surrounding their lives, these children are often placed at an elevated risk of deleterious behavioral, psychological, social, and physical effects (Dubowitz et al., 2001; Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Krug et al., 2002; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2000). Exposure of children to these violent adult relationships has been found to undermine children's social and emotional development, future responses, and adjustment (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al.; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000; Kernic et al., 2003). These children often lack the expected experiences of forming intimate relationships that enable their positive functioning (Kim & Cicchetti, 2004; Osofsky, 2003), and they are at increased risk for emotional and physical harm, insecure attachments, increased stress, interference with normal development, decreased self-esteem and social competence, delays in academic and social skills, behavioral issues, and compromised caretaking abilities (Dubowitz et al., 2001; Farver, Xu, Eppe, Fernandez, & Schwartz, 2005; Kim & Cicchetti, 2004; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Furthermore, due in part to these children learning through continual incidents from the adult caretaker that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts, these children may experience troubles in school and at home, as they may turn to using violence and aggression in their own lives and relationships (Edleson, 2006; Feinberg et al., 2005; Osofsky, 2004).

Children who feel threatened or blamed for the violence may act out aggressively or, on the other hand, they may internalize their feelings and withdraw (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000; Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald, & Swank, 2000; Kitzmann et al., 2003). Research on child adjustment in the context of child exposure to intimate partner violence has frequently utilized Achenbach's Child Behavior Checklist to elicit parent reports of child specific behavior problems and consequences (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). From this, parents have reported both "internalizing" (depression, anxiety) and "externalizing" (disobedience, aggression) behavior problems for their children exposed to intimate partner violence (see Evans et al., 2008, & Wolfe et al., 2003 for a review). Researching these adjustment outcomes, both externalizing and internalizing behaviors, of children living in homes with intimate partner violence is helpful in assessing how children are coping with the stress associated with intimate partner violence (Edleson et al., 2007).

By looking at the context of interparental conflict for 9-12 year old children, Grych et al. (1992) found a significant relationship between the perceptions of children and their internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Similarly, in their study of 317 ten- to fourteen-year-old children from the community and 145 ten-to twelve-year-old children from a battered women's shelter, Grych, Fincham, and colleagues (2000) found that the association between children's appraisals of interparental conflict and internalizing problems for children in domestic violence shelter samples was mediated by children's perceived threat and self-blame. These cognitive

appraisals of interparental conflict appear to be an important aspect in how the exposure contributes to these children's internalizing problems. In their meta-analysis of the effects of exposure to intimate partner violence on children, Kitzmann et al. (2003) found that children exposed to intimate partner violence exhibited higher rates of internalizing behaviors. Sixty three percent of the children exposed had more adjustment problems than those children who were not exposed to the violence. Additionally, in their prospective, longitudinal study on 457 youth, Moylan and colleagues (2010) found children that were abused and exposed to intimate partner violence were at an increased risk for internalizing and externalizing outcomes in adolescence.

Individual children, as well as their siblings, are affected by the violence and conflict within their homes. However, the ways in which these children are affected may greatly vary (Margolin, 2005). Not all children who are exposed to intimate partner violence display negative behaviors and adjustment (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles, et al., 2000; Sullivan et al., 2000; Waddell et al., 2001). Children are affected by the adversity in their lives based on the amount of both risk and protective factors present in their family environment (Masten, Best, & Garnezy, 1990). Rutter (1994) proposed, "violence is a general risk for childhood problems, but specific child characteristics (e.g., feeling responsible for parents' aggression) or family characteristics (e.g., parents' withdrawal and emotional unavailability) may render some children more susceptible to its effects" (as cited in Margolin, 2005, p. 73).

Some children are not overcome by the adversity in their lives, having been termed resilient or competent. Resiliency in children can be thought of as a developmental process where children have successful adaptation despite a significant threat, trauma, or stressor (Cicchetti, 2010). Masten (2001) utilized the term ‘ordinary magic’ to discuss the resilience process in development where children exposed to stressful incidents are no more affected than children not exposed. Margolin (2005) described resilience as “resources available to a child that either shield him or her from the stressor itself, that facilitate sustained adaptation despite exposure to the stressor, or that promote recovery from the stressor” (p. 73). Resilient children face and overcome the stressful situation even though they often experience cumulative risks and significant adversity (Masten et al., 1990).

Children’s reactions may vary due to the frequency and severity of violence they are exposed to, individual attributes, perceptions, and coping strategies, parenting and the parent-child relationship, availability of supportive relationships, co-occurrence of child abuse, and the additional family stressors such as substance abuse, poverty and homelessness, lack of emotional and financial supports, and medical issues (Cicchetti, 2010; Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007; Hamby et al., 2011; Margolin, 2005; Moylan et al., 2010; Osofsky, 2003, Summers, 2006).

When looking at the context of intimate partner violence, the varying cognitive perceptions, emotional appraisals, and behavioral responses of children to the violence are especially important (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Grych, Wachsmuth-Schaefer, & Klockow, 2002; Hamby et al., 2011; Joseph,

Govender, & Bhagwanjee, 2006; Straus, Hamby, & Warren, 2003). Children interpret the violence and ascribe their own representations to the events that occur within these environments (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych et al., 2002; Överlien & Hydén, 2009), which may assist in protecting them from the risk factors involved from the exposure to intimate partner violence. Research suggests children exposed to intimate partner violence demonstrate feelings such as fear, anger, self-blame, and sadness (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Joseph et al., 2006; Lucas, 2002; McGee, 2000). In addition, from their emotional appraisals of the situation children behaviorally respond to the violence. Children may leave the situation to secure their own and their sibling's safety (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Edleson et al., 2008; Hamby et al., 2011; Överlien & Hydén, 2009). These children may become involved in an incident where they try to find assistance or become physically and/or verbally involved to try to stop the violence (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Edleson et al., 2003; Hamby et al., 2011; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Hydén, 2009).

It is possible that protective factors in children's lives may assist them in having no more problems than children who are not exposed to violence. These include positive parenting, a positive mother-child relationship, protective adults in the child's life, siblings, friends, and a supportive community/social environment (Edleson, 2006; Hughes, Graham-Berman, & Gruber, 2001; Margolin, 2005). In their meta-analysis, Kitzmann et al. (2003) found that thirty seven percent of the children exposed to violence did as well or better than children not exposed to violence. Similarly, by gaining the perceptions of children exposed to intimate partner violence,

Grych, Jouriles, and colleagues (2000) found variability in adjustment outcomes for 228 eight to fourteen year-old children. They found about one third of the children who lived in a domestic violence shelter experienced no internalizing or externalizing behaviors, while a little less than twenty percent experienced mild stress symptoms. These results led Grych, Jouriles, and colleagues (2000) to emphasize the diversity and complexity of these children's responses to living in homes with intimate partner violence.

In summary, some children are overcome by the violence and display a range of difficulties in their behavioral, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and long-term outcomes (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Margolin, 2005; Summers, 2006). However, other children who are exposed to intimate partner violence are able to show remarkable resilience where they demonstrate little to no effects from the violence (Kitzmann et al., 2003; Margolin, 2005; Summers, 2006). These children may have varying perceptions of the violence within the home, may have adaptive coping abilities that protect them from the effects of the violence, and may have protective and supportive relationships with parents or siblings (Edleson et al., 2007; Masten et al., 1990). It may be that these children have a sibling who serves as a protective factor, providing support and nurturance of their sibling throughout their experiences in this violent home (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Waddell, 1999). The child sibling relationship quality may provide additional insight into how these children are able to forge their way through these violent environments.

Child sibling relationship quality. Both the family system and environmental context play important roles in the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children (Bank et al., 2004; Branje, van Lieshout, van Aken, & Haselager, 2004; Noller, 2005). In particular, child sibling relationships are one of the primary relationships in the lives of children which strongly influence a child's development. These child sibling relationships have begun to be explored in more detail, as they have been recognized as a major socializing agent and source of support for children throughout their lives (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 2005; Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Lussier, 2002; McHale et al., 2012).

Childhood sibling relationships consist of life-long connections and interactions that develop in the context of multiple family systems and subsystems (Bank et al., 2004; Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Criss & Shaw, 2005; Herrick & Piccus, 2005; Nixon & Cummings, 1999; Volling & Blandon, 2003). Siblings each have their own roles and experiences within the family context which impact their adjustment (Fischer et al., 2005). The nature of sibling relationships are characterized by the amount of time spent together, friendship, loyalty, companionship, intimacy, a source of entertainment, emotional and social support in the face of adversity, continuity, and love (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Stormshak et al., 1996; Volling & Blandon, 2003; Waddell et al., 2001). As siblings spend time with each other they gain camaraderie, comfort, jealousy, and alliances (Waddell et al., 2001). However, wide variability and complexity exist in child sibling relationships. Siblings may serve as a source of conflict and negativity for their brothers and sisters by way of

quarreling and competition (Bank et al., 2004; Buist, Dekovic, & Prinzie, 2013; Caspi, 2012; Criss & Shaw, 2005; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Noller, 2005; Sheehan, Darlington, Noller, & Feeney, 2004; Stormshak et al., 1996). The underlying dimensions of the sibling relationship include connections consisting of being filled with both warmth and conflict in children's daily experiences with their siblings (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; McHale et al., 2012; Volling & Blandon, 2003).

As Dunn and Plomin (1991) point out, children in the same family may have differential experiences and perceptions of their family environment. Literature on sibling research suggests shared (shared by siblings and resulting in similarities) and nonshared (unique to siblings and resulting in differences) environmental influences (Feinberg et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). Sibling research has found that siblings within a family are unique in how they experience and appraise their situations, and after controlling for genetic effects, siblings have been found to be more divergent than convergent in their adjustment outcomes (Daniels et al., 1985; Dunn & Plomin, 1991; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). These siblings are often able to recognize the differences between them and their siblings, and they experience their relationships differently from each other (Dunn & Plomin, 1991).

Furman and Buhrmester (1985) conducted qualitative interviews with 49 eleven- to thirteen-year-old children to elicit sibling relationship qualities they felt were important. The most commonly assessed sibling relationship qualities were the positive qualities of companionship, admiration of sibling, prosocial behavior, affection, intimacy, and nurturance by a sibling, and the negative qualities of child

sibling antagonism and quarreling. Later, these children's answers were structured into a child completed self-report measure, the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ), to assess a child's perceptions of the quality of the sibling relationship. From Furman and Buhrmester's (1985) study, four underlying dimensions of sibling relationship quality for children were established: warmth/closeness (closeness, intimacy, and companionship with sibling); relative power/status (degree and direction of nurturance and dominance in the sibling relationship); conflict (conflict, quarreling, antagonism, and competition with sibling); and rivalry (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; McHale et al., 2012; Volling & Blandon, 2003). In further studies, Brody, Stoneman, and McCoy (1994) found three styles of sibling relationships: harmonious, typical, and conflicted. Similarly, Stormshak et al. (1996) found three styles of sibling relationships: conflictual, involved, and supportive. The siblings in the conflictual relationships were characterized with high levels of poor adjustment, where those in supportive or harmonious relationships demonstrated better adjustment.

Child siblings have profound influences on each other, where the quality of their sibling relationships changes over time (Brody et al., 1994; Dunn, Slomkowski, & Beardsall, 1994). This sibling relationship quality has been found to be linked to child social and emotional well-being, as well as to adjustment behaviors (Brody et al., 1994; Volling & Blandon, 2003).

Siblings can model appropriate social behaviors for their brothers and sisters, teaching siblings social skills and how to manage conflicts (Caspi, 2012). During middle childhood, children are developing control over their emotions, understanding

others' perspectives, learning social roles, and forming friendships. Children report the highest levels of sibling support, warmth, and companionship during this time. The relationship quality appears to be the most stable during middle childhood, as children interact and are involved with their siblings (Dunn et al., 1994; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Kim, McHale, Crouter, & Osgood, 2006). These child siblings may show signs of camaraderie, warmth, affection, support, protectiveness, and nurturance, but at the same time may present with conflictual behaviors that may include competitiveness, quarreling and rivalry. However, as children age, they may interact less with each other and more with peers, resulting in a reported decrease in the closeness, conflict, and degree of power and status between siblings (Brody et al., 1994; Dunn et al., 1994).

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. Furman (1995) noted that depending on the environmental context in which families live and the type of parenting children receive, child siblings develop varying types of relationships. Usually, the adult relationships in the home are the models for all other family interactions and relationships (Deater-Deckard et al., 2002). Osofsky (2004) stated, “stable and consistent adult behaviors plays a central role in optimizing a child’s development, influencing risks, resources, opportunities, and resilience” (p. 483). From this, it is plausible that sibling relationship quality can be highly influenced by a family environment filled with violence (Deater-Deckard et al., 2002).

Limited information exists on child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence. This gap necessitates examining studies involving high

conflict families for possible overlap. Caution should be taken to distinguish between high conflict and intimate partner violence (Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005). Children exposed to high conflict families often experience yelling and arguments which vary in frequency and could be considered destructive or constructive (Cummings & Davies, 2002), whereas children exposed to intimate partner violence often experience dangerous situations consumed with physical and emotional violence and controlling behaviors (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). The destructive and constructive marital conflict may affect children and siblings differently, and marital conflict may not rise to the same level as intimate partner violence (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Due to the nature of extreme situations such as intimate partner violence, these child siblings exposed to violence may experience different interpretations and relationships than children exposed to marital conflict (Deater-Deckard et al., 2002).

Research on individual children indicates that both the developmental progression and socialization of children may be influenced when there is conflict within the home (Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). Evidence exists that negativity and conflict in exchanges between adult caretakers or other family subsystems is associated with an increased risk for difficulties in adjustment and in relationships for children (Bank et al., 2004; Criss & Shaw, 2005; Erel et al., 1998; Feinberg et al., 2005; Fincham, Grych, & Osborne, 1994; Skopp et al., 2005; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). This spillover of conflict suggests the possibility that children may come to mimic the learned tactics and behaviors in their

own relationships with their siblings and peers (Skopp et al., 2005; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). These child siblings may experience high stress, influencing and even possibly disrupting their sibling relationship (Dunn et al., 1994; Jenkins, Simpson, Dunn, Rasbash, & O'Connor, 2005; Rinaldi & Howe, 2003; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999).

Jenkins and Smith (1990) studied 139 families (62 harmonious marriages, 57 disharmonious marriages). Using maternal reports, they found that children in disharmonious homes were more likely to demonstrate negative behaviors towards their siblings. However, the children who had a warm and comforting sibling relationship served as a protective factor for each other. In their study of 122 sibling pairs (mean ages of 10 and 12 years old) and their married parents, Richmond and Stocker (2003) found that parents may expose each sibling to different levels of marital conflict, causing siblings to have varying experiences, perceptions, and developmental outcomes. Those children who were exposed to higher levels of parental conflict compared to their sibling presented with higher externalizing and internalizing adjustment problems. It was suggested that these parents may display more conflict in front of a sibling who is perceived as resilient, who is younger and therefore home more often, or who becomes involved in the conflictual episodes. In some cases, parents may go as far as eliciting the child's assistance during the conflict, requiring one child to form alliances with a parent which may be similar or different than the alliance that their sibling has formed (Richmond & Stocker, 2003).

In 2011, Piotrowski studied 47 sibling pairs (5-18 years old) exposed to intimate partner violence and their mothers, looking at patterns of adjustment in siblings. Five distinct patterns of adjustment for the exposed siblings emerged: primarily internalizing symptoms, a combination of internalizing and externalizing symptoms, asymptomatic, depressive symptoms with low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms with higher self-esteem (grieving). All five patterns of adjustment were very similar for older and younger siblings, but few siblings matched completely on adjustment. The most frequent match for siblings were the asymptomatic and grieving clusters. Support for differential sibling experiences and nonshared environments were found. Also, the authors suggested that the positive sibling relationships where older siblings had asymptomatic symptoms lend support that sibling warmth can serve as a buffer in stressful family homes. The adjustment of the children and sibling relationships may mutually influence one another. Using the same data, Piotrowski et al. (2014) found that higher sibling hostility, as compared to sibling warmth, lower levels of sibling interaction, and higher sibling disengagement predicted children's adjustment problems.

In examining sibling differences in the home environment with intimate partner violence, Skopp et al. (2005) draws attention to the sibling differences literature which reports that siblings within the same family have nonshared environmental influences (Daniels et al., 1985; Dunn & Plomin, 1991). Although there are some shared characteristics of sibling experiences, the findings in the study by Skopp et al. (2005) of 112 mothers and their 8 to 13 year-old child siblings in the

context of intimate partner violence, suggest that siblings present with unique experiences. The differing perceptions and experiences that child siblings had of the home environment were associated with how the siblings adjusted. Children who expressed higher levels of threat or self-blame for the violence between their parents demonstrated higher levels of internalizing and externalizing problems. Those children who felt that they were to blame for the violence expressed higher externalizing problem behaviors.

Although Feinberg et al. (2005), in their study of 720 two-parent families with same-gender adolescent siblings, found some sibling convergence in antisocial behaviors amongst siblings exposed to parental negativity, they also highlighted some findings that were more similar to Skopp et al.'s (2005) findings. Feinberg et al. (2005) found that in those families with high levels of marital conflict, there were high levels of sibling divergence in adjustment outcomes. This outcome could be due to sibling alliances and differential treatment of children in these situations. Children in homes with interparental conflict, who often lack parental warmth and supervision, may cope differently in their life within this family. Some siblings may demonstrate internalizing behaviors where they are withdrawn or depressed while other siblings may possess externalizing behaviors where they act out behaviorally to seek attention (Feinberg et al., 2005; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Lindsey, Colwell, Frabutt, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2006).

Consequently, the externalizing issues involved from being exposed to intimate partner violence can evolve into siblings replicating the violence and

aggression with their siblings and peers. According to social learning theory, children may imitate the tactics they learn from the parental relationship in their own relationships with their siblings (Bank et al., 2004; Skopp et al., 2005; Waddell et al., 2001). Negativity and conflict within the parental relationship may negatively affect the relationship between sibling dyads and others (Bank et al., 2004; Criss & Shaw, 2005; Erel et al., 1998; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005). Using a systems framework with 60 families with child sibling dyads, Rinaldi and Howe (2003) found marital conflict to be linked to conflict within the sibling relationship. There were bidirectional influences that members of the family had on each other. This was in concordance with Stocker and Youngblade's (1999) study of 136 married parent families with 7 and 10 year-old sibling dyads that found marital conflict was associated with problematic sibling and peer relationships. The association between marital conflict and sibling relationships was mediated by parental hostility and children's feelings of self-blame. In those families with marital conflict, higher parental hostility was associated with more conflict in sibling relationships.

Criss and Shaw (2005) longitudinally assessed 208 families with 10 year-old target children and their siblings to look at the connection between sibling relationships and individual child adjustment outcomes. They found that the negative marital relationship was associated with sibling conflict. Criss and Shaw (2005) described the sibling relationship as a context that trains the sibling for "delinquency," where conflict in the sibling relationship was associated with higher levels of antisocial behavior. Similarly, Feinberg et al. (2005) found that in those families with

high levels of parental or adolescent sibling negativity, there were shared environmental influences, specifically similar antisocial behaviors amongst siblings.

When discussing conflict within the sibling relationship, it is important to recognize the elements involved in their behaviors. In longitudinally studying the psychosocial outcomes of 182 boys from ages 12 to 16 years-old, Bank et al. (2004) found sibling relationships filled with conflict play an important role in negative developmental outcomes for children as they grow, as well as difficulties with peers. Negative sibling relationships increase the risk of behavioral issues for children (Bank et al., 2004), and often have negative effects on all siblings in the family (Feinberg et al., 2005). In their study of sibling interaction of 73 same-gender sibling pairs aged 3 to 8 years-old, Erel et al. (1998) reported that older siblings are more negative to younger siblings. In turn, younger siblings may turn this same negativity onto their younger siblings in time. Siblings may get into trouble together, with the younger sibling often being a follower in order to maintain a relationship with their older sibling because siblings want to model their older brother or sister.

In her dissertation, Waddell (1999) utilized multi-methods to study 10 child sibling dyads (ages 6 to 15 years) from violent homes and 20 comparison sibling dyads from nonviolent homes. Siblings from violent homes demonstrated higher levels of internalizing adjustment problems than those from non-violent homes, but there were no differences for externalizing problems. Interestingly, mothers reported that their children from violent homes presented with lower levels of sibling aggression than those from nonviolent homes. One reason for this finding may be that

mothers living in violent environments tend to underestimate the violence between siblings. It also could be possible that instead of these children turning to the use of violence with each other, they turn to each other for support and protection. These children were also supportive of one another (Waddell, 1999). Waddell et al. (2001) suggested, “The enhanced ability to cope with the stress of family violence, as well as a heightened sense of competence, may serve to protect siblings from some of the deleterious effects of their home environment” (p. 253).

The dynamics of the sibling relationship can be characterized by great variability. There is increased risk of difficulties in adjustment and relationships from the exposure to intimate partner violence. Siblings have differential experiences and perceptions they encounter in this family context, and there is a risk for sibling conflict. However, in addition to the negative consequences, there may be positive behaviors and interactions.

It is important to note not all children who are exposed to intimate partner violence experience similar outcomes and engage in similar behaviors (Dunn et al., 1994; Grych, Jouriles, et al., 2000; Sullivan et al., 2000; Waddell et al., 2001). Many children exposed to intimate partner violence show few to no effects from the violence (Kitzmann et al., 2003; Margolin, 2005), while others show multiple adjustment issues (Skopp et al., 2005). Unique to each sibling are their genetic variation, personality, and differential parental treatment which allows them to perceive the same event in different ways (Daniels et al., 1985). Child siblings within the same home may have different cognitive appraisals of the violence within their home. Some children may

feel they are to blame for the violence or they may feel threatened. This may affect their internalizing behaviors while their sibling in the same environment has different feelings and adjustment outcomes. One child may feel that their own or that of a close family member's safety is being threatened, so they react through the exhibition of depression and anxiety, while the other sibling may perceive the situation differently and therefore reacts differently (i.e. through negative behaviors, seeking support from sibling, peers) (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Richmond & Stocker, 2003).

Furthermore, it may be children and their siblings are affected by adversity in their lives based on both risk and protective factors present in their family environment (Masten et al., 1990). Similar to what has been reported in research conducted with individual children, each child sibling may present with diverse emotional and behavioral responses to violence in the home based on factors such as the frequency and severity of violence, family context and stressors, the presence of supportive relationships, the sibling relationship, the co-occurrence of child abuse, and the uniqueness of each sibling's experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies (Humphreys, 2001; Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Jenkins, Simpson et al., 2005; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Moylan et al., 2010; Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005).

Also, utilizing tenets from social learning theory, child siblings can serve as a model for other siblings in homes with intimate partner violence. Younger siblings may learn and later model aspects of older siblings who are companionate, show support and warmth, and protect their brothers and sisters during incidents of intimate

partner violence. Research has shown that siblings are an important source of support in a sibling's development and adjustment (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; McHale et al., 2012). Siblings may be a protective resource for their brothers and sisters in cases of extreme stress or violence.

In their study of 52 families with an early adolescent and younger sibling, Iturralde, Margolin, and Spies Shapiro (2013) looked at the appraisals (i.e. threat and self-blame) of interparental conflict, anxiety in sibling pairs, and positive and negative dimensions of the sibling relationship quality. They found positive and warm sibling interactions serve as a buffer against the risk posed by inter-parental conflict (anxiety and self-blame). This finding is in concert with previous findings by Dunn et al. (1994) and Jenkins (1992) that siblings who form close, comforting, and supportive relationships in homes with extreme marital conflict show similar levels of emotional and behavioral problems to children from homes without extreme conflict.

In their two-wave longitudinal study following 192 families that were experiencing a stressful life event, Gass, Jenkins, and Dunn (2007) examined whether there was a protective effect of positive sibling relationships on child adjustment when faced with stressful life events. They found that children who had positive and warm sibling relationships at Time 1 were less likely to have internalizing symptomatology following a stressful life event. These positive sibling relationships were viewed as a source of support and protection for their siblings during stressful life events.

Similarly, Bush and Ehrenberg (2003) qualitatively studied experiences of parental divorce during childhood by retrospectively interviewing thirty 18-24 year

olds. They found that siblings provided support and protection by way of stability, caretaking, and helping siblings cope with the stressors involved with a divorce. Using a cognitive-contextual approach, Tucker, Holt, and Wiesen-Martin (2013) studied 216 female emerging adults. They found that those females recalling greater sibling warmth while being present during inter-parental conflict reported lower depression as a young adult.

In a longitudinal study of 137 adolescent sibling relationships during parental divorce and separation, Sheehan et al. (2004) found that children in divorcing/separating families had high levels of both hostility and warmth in their sibling relationship. This concurs with past research with younger school-aged children from intact families by McGuire, McHale, and Updegraff (1996). In studying 83 nine to twelve year-old children living in homes with marital conflict, Jenkins (1992) suggested that a positive sibling relationship could be a coping strategy to lessen the impact of the negative experiences for children. In many families, child sibling relationships may appear to contain higher levels of negativity when there is conflict within the parental relationships (Sheehan et al., 2004). However, in these same families there may be positive exchanges between children, where siblings may serve as the nurturers and protectors of their brothers and sisters, creating a buffer from the distress and negative consequences associated with the home environment (Criss & Shaw, 2005; Kim et al., 2006; Edleson et al., 2011).

Additionally, in her dissertation, Lucas (2002) qualitatively studied nine children (7 to 13 years-old) to explore the experiences of siblings in homes with

intimate partner violence, specifically looking at sibling support and its influences on child adjustment. Siblings provide reciprocal caregiving in daily life. During an incident of violence, siblings function as a system with the oldest sibling protecting the younger sibling physically from the violence, and both children protecting each other psychologically from the violence. Children prevent siblings from seeing the violence, distract siblings, and block them from being involved. Sibling support during incidents of violence includes emotional support (crying together, spending time with siblings), verbal support (hugging, sleeping with, close proximity), and tactile support (talking, verbally comfort).

Although they may have fewer resources available to them, child siblings exposed to intimate partner violence may utilize each other to navigate their way through these difficult home environments (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These sibling relationships can be filled with warmth, support, and closeness which may positively impact a sibling's adaptation and adjustment to the stress in the family home (Cicchetti, 2010; Deater-Deckard et al., 2002). The mere presence of a strong, supportive sibling relationship with low levels of rivalry and aggression may assist children in their ability to cope with the distress in the home environment (Sheehan et al., 2004; Stormshak et al., 1996).

Based on the above findings from the sibling literature and limited information addressing child siblings within this context, it may be that siblings in these environments have unique experiences, interpretations, and adjustments from exposure to intimate partner violence across the life span which may impact their

sibling relationship quality (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Richmond & Stocker, 2003). Investigating the dynamics in a home characterized by violence may present unique findings that will assist in designing the appropriate assistance to provide to these children and families. Further research in this area is necessary to determine the unique ways in which children experience their violent home environments, and to specifically look at how violence in the home affects child sibling relationship quality.

Gender of siblings. It is important to consider gender when studying siblings in the context of intimate partner violence. However, this characteristic has not been well studied, and research has found the effects of the violence on boys and girls to be inconsistent (Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005). In general, research suggests boys exposed to intimate partner violence are more likely to exhibit higher levels of externalizing behaviors (i.e. aggression, hostility), whereas girls tend to exhibit more internalizing behaviors (i.e. depression and anxiety) (Burns & Dunlop, 2002; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Kerig, 1998). Herrera and McCloskey (2001) found that boys and girls exposed to intimate partner violence were equal in their delinquency; however, boys were more often arrested for violent offenses when compared to girls. One reason for girls and boys having varying adjustment outcomes may be they are differentially exposed to conflict or violence in the home environment (Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Jenkins, Simpson et al., 2005; Richmond & Stocker, 2003; Skopp et al., 2005). In a study by Jenkins, Dunn et al. (2005), males were more likely to have been directly exposed to parental conflict over time than girls.

As findings regarding gender have been inconsistent, it is possible that gender may play a role in the degree of outcomes experienced and relationships formed for children living in homes with intimate partner violence (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Skopp et al., 2005; Wolfe et al., 2003). Further research is necessary to better determine the role of gender of children and their siblings living in homes with intimate partner violence.

Current Study

Research indicates that intimate partner violence is associated with a higher risk of adjustment problems for children (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003). However, some children cope effectively with the stress, while others develop internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. It is possible a close sibling relationship may serve as a protective resource for children exposed to stressful home environments (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Jenkins, 1992). Children living in homes with intimate partner violence may provide close and supportive relationships to their siblings that help each other cope effectively with the exposure. Also, there can be conflict between the siblings that can place children at further risk for adjustment problems.

An exploration of children and their sibling relationships during this middle childhood period is important, as intimate partner violence within the home during this developmental period may have serious consequences that place these children at risk for short and long-term adjustment and relationship issues. Children in their middle years broaden their social contexts, and master their skills and emotions. During this

time, they gain self-confidence and begin to engage in activities with peers, adults, and others outside the family (Eccles, 1999). This is an important time in development where siblings interact and provide support to each other (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Children have reported stable relationships with their siblings during this time where they have high levels of sibling support, warmth, and companionship (Dunn et al., 1994; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Kim et al., 2006). Looking at the role of the sibling relationship during this developmental period in these violent homes can help in beginning to understand the extent to which this relationship acts as a risk or protective resource.

The current study qualitatively examined how intimate partner violence impacts the relationship quality of siblings, and to what extent this sibling relationship acts as a risk or protective resource for siblings living in these homes. In order to better understand the sibling relationship quality, it was important to understand how children interpret the violence and relationships within their home, as well as gaining information on how mothers view the violence and sibling relationship quality. The current study extended previous research by using a qualitative approach to specifically gather data from both mothers and their children in order to assess their insights on the exposure to intimate partner violence, and how this environment of violence affects the sibling relationship (Wolfe et al., 2003).

Including children in the current research is a positive step, as there has been limited research obtaining the perceptions of children, much less gaining the in-depth perceptions of mothers and their children (Edleson et al., 2007). The perceptions and

experiences of children may be very different from that of the parent (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2002; Skopp et al.; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). Gaining both the mother and child subjective experiences of their lives in a violent household in the current study provided the opportunity to gain in-depth insight into the appraisals and behavioral responses of children, as well as insight into the sibling relationships within these families.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Rationale

The selection of methodology, participants, and research was guided by a family systems perspective and a cognitive-contextual framework. Child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence can best be understood from qualitative research in order to discover the meaning making by participants and allow for an in-depth exploration of both the mother and child experiences of the violence in the home, as well as their perceptions of the sibling relationship within this environment (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A qualitative methodology provides the researcher opportunity to gain intensive and meaningful narratives of the subjective feelings, beliefs, and experiences of children and their mothers, which may lead to suggestions on how those working with these families in practical settings can assist these families (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This technique allows “researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives” (Berg, 2004, p.7). The qualitative method is particularly useful as, in addition to the prepared semi-structured questions, it allows for flexibility with probing and follow-up

questions to provide further understanding of the circumstances surrounding the exposure to violence and sibling relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A case study design with multiple cases was utilized to gain rich, detailed information of the perceptions of both the mother and children regarding their experiences of violence within the home, as well as the sibling relationship quality (Berg, 2004, Yin, 2013). Case studies are important, as they can draw attention to the unique experiences that families with intimate partner violence undergo, as well as to the individual meanings that the families ascribe to those experiences. These case studies are utilized by focusing on mother and child perceptions to gain insight into the multilayered social phenomena occurring within a real-life context (Yin, 2013).

Further, cross-case similarities and differences of the perceptions of the multiple families are utilized in the cross-case analysis (Berg, 2004; Yin 2013). Using this approach was vital to gain a wider understanding of how mothers and their child siblings make meaning of their relationships and personal experiences within the context of the violent home.

Sample and Recruitment Process

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Eleven families (11 mothers, 12 children) participated in the study. They were recruited from those individuals living at or receiving services from domestic violence shelters in four different counties within the state of Pennsylvania, USA. Due to agency standards, those receiving services at these shelters may or may not be from the county in which

the shelter is located. This geographic region for participant recruitment was utilized to allow for in-depth, face-to-face interviews.

Eligibility criteria for participation in the current study originally included mothers who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past year, and who have at least two children between the ages of eight and twelve years who have lived in the home during the relationship. The abuser could be a biological father, a stepfather, or a mother's boyfriend who was living with the family. Both mothers and their child sibling needed to be willing to participate in the study. No exclusions based on race, class, or ethnicity were used. An incentive for participation included a \$10 gift card to Wal-Mart or Kmart for each mother, as well as a \$5 gift card to Wal-Mart or Kmart for each child. Participants were made aware that if they wanted to stop the interview, they would still receive the compensation. However, no participants chose to end the interview.

Unfortunately, recruitment posed more of a challenge than expected. The researcher was reliant on the shelter staff as a gatekeeper to recruiting participants. The researcher originally contacted 30 shelters, up to 4 ½ hours in distance, where 11 shelters agreed to participate. One shelter dropped out due to organizational issues and six shelters never had any families that were interested or met the criteria. Although not ideal, as the original criteria was to gain the experiences of more than one sibling, due to difficulties with the recruitment of participants, the eligibility criteria was changed to families with at least one child between the ages of eight to twelve years of age who had a child sibling. This change allowed for a larger number

of participants. Ultimately, there was only one case that met the original eligibility criteria with two siblings participating. The other ten cases had siblings in the home, but only one child participated.

Procedures and Confidentiality

The study underwent a full-board review and was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the initiation of the study (see Appendix A). To further ensure confidentiality, upon receiving IRB approval, a Certificate of Confidentiality was applied for and received by Dr. Ruth Fleury-Steiner on this researcher's behalf through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Data collection began after receiving this certificate.

Shelter staff acted as the gatekeeper and provided all mothers who met the eligibility criteria with a recruitment letter asking for participation in the project (see Appendix B). It was made clear in the recruitment letter to mothers that participation in this project would not in any way affect the services that they receive within the shelter. In addition to recruitment letters, the researcher attended meetings with shelter staff to introduce the project and elicit participation. Through the gatekeeper, face-to-face interviews were scheduled with the mother at their convenience, and took place in private areas in the shelter offices or in the transitional living spaces where they were residing. One interview took place at a mother's new townhome with shelter staff available.

The World Health Organization (2007) provides recommendations on ethical and safe research surrounding domestic violence. They relay the importance of

emphasizing sensitivity to the traumatic experiences participants may have suffered. In the present study, it was important to ensure that interview questions were formed and asked in a supportive and non-judgmental manner.

Face-to-face interview sessions began with the researcher thanking participants for taking part in the study. From when the researcher first met the family, the researcher spent ample time building rapport with both mothers and their children to allow them to become comfortable in taking part in the study. The researcher briefly described the study to the participants and answered any questions. The Research Participant Consent Form for Mother and Children (see Appendix C) was presented and read aloud to the mother for her acceptance for her and her child to be interviewed for the study. A copy of the interview questions was provided to the mother at that time. Also, mothers were provided with a list of helpful resources available within the area. The Child Assent Form (see Appendix D) was presented and read to the child for their acceptance to be interviewed for the study.

Although the information is in the informed consent and assent, the researcher verbally explained to mothers and their children that all identifying information would remain strictly private and confidential, except for issues surrounding child abuse and neglect or imminent risk of harm to self or others. There was no disclosed current child abuse or neglect or risk of harm from any of the mothers or children interviewed. Therefore, no reports for child abuse or neglect were made during this study. No information was provided to the shelter staff regarding any of the interviews.

All of the mothers consented for both the mother and child interviews to be audio-tape recorded. All children assented for their interviews to be audio-tape recorded. The audio-tape recording began prior to the first interview question. Mothers and children were interviewed separately to gather individual perspectives. The order of who was interviewed when was left up to the discretion of the family. In the majority of the cases, the mother was interviewed first followed by the child. The researcher began by using the prepared semi-structured qualitative interview protocol regarding the violence within the home and the nature of the child sibling relationship. The researcher allowed mothers and children to talk openly regarding their experiences, using probing questions and follow-up to gain additional information from the participants as the interviews continued.

The researcher remained alert to any signs of distress on mothers or children during the interview. A few mothers were tearful at different points of their interviews. The researcher asked shelter staff to check in with one mother at the end of the interview to see if she needed anything additional. One child who discussed her sibling relationship did not talk much when asked about the violence in her home and became tearful. When the interview was complete, the researcher had a shelter worker check in with child to see if she needed anything additional.

In order to gain a complete understanding of how intimate partner violence affects the well-being of children and their siblings, the dimensions of individual child adjustment needed to be addressed. In addition to the detailed interviews, mothers completed a quantitative behavior checklist to provide additional information about

individual child behaviors and outcomes. One mother chose not to fill out this checklist. The researcher offered to each mother to read the checklist aloud. Only one mother chose to have the researcher read the quantitative measure aloud to her to ensure her understanding of the questions and how to answer. The remaining nine mothers filled out the checklist on their own.

Interviews with mothers averaged almost 70 minutes. The longest interview with a mother took 114 minutes and the shortest took 41 minutes. Interviews with children averaged 29 minutes. The longest interview with a child took 41 minutes, whereas the shortest took 19 minutes.

In addition to the audio recording, the researcher took comprehensive field notes to ensure the accuracy of data and to note observations during the interview. In one case, the audio recording had stopped for a short period of time without the researcher knowing so for that section of the interview, the researcher relied on the comprehensive field notes. After all of the interviews were completed with each family, the researcher wrote researcher reflection notes based on that interview observations and researcher reactions and impressions.

Child and Mother Measures

Child semi-structured qualitative interview. Appendix E outlines the semi-structured qualitative interview protocol for children. Interview questions were derived from a combination of the work by Grych et al. (1992) on children's perceptions of interparental conflict, and by Furman and Buhrmester (1985) and Brody et al. (1994) on child sibling relationships. In order to elicit the child's

perspective, this semi-structured open-ended qualitative interview allowed for the exploration of the child's experiences and perceptions. Children were asked to describe the relationship they had with their mother, siblings, and the abuser, and then they were asked about their mother and abuser's relationship. Children were asked about incidents of violence within their homes, how the child and his/her siblings feel about and deal with incidents of intimate partner violence (what do they do/say?), and the child's perceptions of the sibling relationship.

Mother semi-structured qualitative interview. In addition to the child reports on their experiences within their families, mothers also reported on their experiences. Appendix F outlines the semi-structured qualitative interview protocol for mothers. Interview questions were derived from a combination of the work by Grych et al. (1992) on children's perceptions of interparental conflict, and by Furman and Buhrmester (1985) and Brody et al. (1994) on child sibling relationships. In order to elicit the mother's perspective, the semi-structured open-ended qualitative interview explored mother's experiences and perceptions. Mothers were asked about violence in the home, the sibling relationship, the exposure to intimate partner violence by the child siblings (what have they seen/heard/done/said?), how the children feel about the violence within the home, what the mother has done during the times children have been exposed to the intimate partner violence, and how the children are affected by the violence and how their sibling relationships are affected by the violence. The protocol first asked basic demographic family information. The researcher then asked mothers

to talk a little about their relationship. The first open-ended content question was “Tell me a little about your relationship with...”

The researcher proceeded with questions to assess the frequency of physical violence within the lives of the mothers during the year prior to coming to the shelter. A 24 question scale was created from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979; Straus et al., 2003) and the Violence Assessment Index (VAI; Dobash et al., 1998) to measure the frequency of physical violence in the lives of the mothers during the year prior to coming to the shelter. Both the CTS and VAI have demonstrated reliability and validity (Dobash et al., 1998; Lindsey et al., 2006; Straus et al., 2003).

All items in the combined VAI and CTS scale were ranked on an 8-point continuum from acts of violence that occur the least to most often, “never” to “every day.” Examples of items include: “shout and scream at you,” “push, grab, or shove you,” and “hit, or try to hit you with an object.” See Appendix F for the full scale items outlined in the mother’s semi-structured interview. For several mothers, asking these very specific questions towards the beginning of the interview allowed mothers to reflect on the questions and then open up with detailed accounts when asked open-ended questions about their relationship. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess the internal reliability of the scale items on the combined CTS/VAI. Overall in the current study, the 24-item scale showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .885. This value is in the acceptable boundaries.

Child Behavior Checklist. At the completion of the qualitative interview, mothers completed the Child Behavior Checklist for their child. The Child Behavior

Checklist (CBCL/6-18) is a 113-item questionnaire to be answered by caregivers regarding social competencies, internalizing behaviors (withdrawn, anxious, depressed behaviors), and externalizing behaviors (delinquent and aggressive behaviors) of children between ages six and eighteen (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001; Semrud-Clikeman, Bennett, & Guli, 2003). Mothers were asked to rate their children as to how well the item describes the child on a three-point rating scale from 0 (not true), to 1 (Somewhat or sometimes true), to 2 (Very true or often true). The CBCL is the most commonly utilized and recognized empirically derived measure to assess these domains of child adjustment (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001; Skopp et al., 2005). The CBCL has a history of reliability and validity. In addition, this measure has been extensively tested and normed for use on a wide variety of populations (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001; Richmond, Stocker, & Rienks, 2005; Semrud-Clikeman et al., 2003; Skopp et al., 2005).

For the current study, the internalizing and externalizing scales of the CBCL were used. The internalizing scale contains 32 items from the Anxious/Depressed, Withdrawal/Depressed and Somatic Complaints subscales ($\alpha = .83$). The externalizing scale contains 35 items from the rule breaking and aggressive behavior subscales ($\alpha = .86$). A total score was computed which includes all scores ($\alpha = .96$). Raw scores were converted to age-standardized scores (T-scores having a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10). T-scores less than 60 are considered in the *normal range*; scores 60-63 represent *borderline* scores, and scores greater than 63 are at a level of *clinical* significance (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

Data Analysis

In the current study, data collection and qualitative analysis consisted of an iterative process where the researcher moved between the literature, the individual family cases, and the cross family cases to examine the sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. Data analysis began with data collection and continued as each interview was transcribed. Each participant was assigned a unique identification code to ensure participant confidentiality. All transcripts and computer documents were voided of any identifying information and only contained the unique identification code. All physical data (hand written field notes and audio-tape recordings) are stored in a locked cabinet while electronic data is locked in an office. All computer files are password-protected and encrypted. Data is kept separate from consent forms and is void of any identifying information.

As each qualitative interview was audio-tape recorded, the first step in data analysis included listening to and transcribing the audio-tapes, producing a verbatim electronic Word version of the information of the interviews, including all “umh” and “like” wording. Punctuation was added by the researcher to capture the essence of the participant’s comments. During transcription, assigned pseudonyms were used for each participant as well as for those individuals that the participant mentioned during the interview. Pseudonyms were used in place of names on the transcripts. Transcriptions were double-checked by the researcher for accuracy. Field notes from interviews on verbal and non-verbal cues provided additional insight into each

participant's experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they ascribed to those experiences.

Data was analyzed using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) constant comparative method of analysis which allows for the reduction of data into a set of emergent themes that captures the stories of both mothers and children in this study. The researcher utilized the rich descriptions from the words of the participants themselves to illustrate how they make meaning of their experiences. The analysis included using the interviews of both mothers and children with comprehensive field notes, participant background information, the Child Behavior Checklist, researcher reflection notes (based on researcher observations, feelings, and impressions), and the researcher's reflexive journal (ongoing notes on decisions and ideas during the research process).

To begin the inductive process of reducing the data (Creswell, 2003), the researcher read the transcripts of both the mothers and children over and over, one case at a time. The researcher made notes in the margins of the transcripts regarding overall ideas and possible categories. Key paragraphs and phrases were then highlighted in the transcripts. In an attempt to facilitate understanding of the perceptions of the participants and meanings they assign to the intimate partner violence and sibling relationships, the researcher wrote what was termed "interview recaps" for each family case.

To make the data more manageable, the data was closely examined and organized through coding each transcript by hand, line by line, to identify key

passages and to gather the most robust concepts in order to make comparisons (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding is critical because it is the transitional process between the collection of data from the participants and extensive data analysis (Saldana, 2009). Saldana discussed a first cycle and second cycle coding process where the researcher uses the coded portions of data to further manage, refine, and add focus to the qualitative data. Researchers can compare the discrete parts of the data for similarities and differences, generating emergent categories and subcategories of meaning from those found to be conceptually similar in nature (Saldana, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process is often referred to as open coding where the researcher identifies concepts and looks for the properties and dimensions of the concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In the current study, open coding was initially used for each interview to determine concepts and categories of meaning. Codes were written on paper and corresponding pieces of data were attached. A codebook was developed to record the codes for each family case individually, and then later for all families together. Axial coding was then applied in search of conceptual relationships between and among categories and their related concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding is “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). The goal here was to develop and relate categories, finding linkages and relationships between categories and subcategories. Selective coding was then used to integrate and refine categories

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through open, axial, and selective coding, the data for each case was then reassembled to determine the overarching patterns and themes emergent from the data. In addition, the researchers' reflection notes and reflexive journal were used throughout this process to refer to the detailed notes about each family case as these overarching patterns and themes were defined.

Through the coding process individual family cases were first developed, and then the researcher looked across family cases. The researcher used the individual family cases to identify the shared themes and differences across all of the family cases in the study. Through this examination of all cases, the researcher was able to categorize similarities and differences, and look for patterns. Within the text, the identified themes are highlighted by direct statements from mothers and their children.

In addition, the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL/6-18) quantitative measure was entered into the SPSS statistical package. The data was statistically analyzed in SPSS for descriptive purposes.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to enhancing the credibility of findings in qualitative research, when the findings reflect the participant's meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yin (2013) relayed an increase in trustworthiness of case study research when multiple sources of data are utilized. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as pieces to trustworthiness. Credibility is how well the study conclusions reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences. In this study, credibility was addressed through the use of a reflexive

journal (journal with ongoing notes on decisions, ideas, and thoughts during the research process), triangulation (both mother and child perceptions of the violence and the child sibling relationship, a child behavior checklist, and comprehensive field notes—notes taken on observations and key ideas and statements made during interviews), participant background information, consultation with experts in the field, and checking in with peers (regular meeting with peers to discuss aspects of the study). These consultations included a human development and family studies professor, a psychologist working with children and families who had conducted research on siblings of children with cancer, and a clinical research associate in developmental psychology and prevention science.

Transferability is used to determine if study results are relatable to other contexts and can be transferred to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was enhanced in this study by utilizing thick, rich detailed descriptions of contexts, participant perspectives, and data collection methods. Dependability, whether results are consistent over time and across research, was addressed in this study through consultation with a peer debriefer (comment on all aspects of study), researcher reflexive journal, and checking in with peers. Confirmability is whether the findings reflect the participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba). Confirmability was addressed through using the voices of participants, keeping a reflexive journal, and checking in with peers. Additionally, one peer reviewed the de-identified data for three family cases separately from the researcher and there was discussion regarding the similarities and differences in themes and sub-themes.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity addresses the need to acknowledge one's own biases in their work (McGraw, Zvonkovic, & Walker, 2000). Limitations existed throughout this study due to researcher bias. The researcher is extremely familiar with child siblings living in homes with intimate partner violence from past work history. On the one hand, this may be a positive, as familiarity could lend understanding and insight to the study. However, on the other hand, this familiarity could have led the researcher to make assumptions throughout the interviews and analysis. This researcher attempted to maintain an active awareness of how she conducted the interviews, her use of follow-up questions, and how she worked with the data. During a few of the child interviews where the children were discussing the violence by the abuser, the researcher did ask clarifying questions instead of making assumptions based on past experiences of interviewing children.

This researcher is a Caucasian female who grew up in a middle class home. I have been married for 12 years and have two elementary-aged children. I have been involved in the social work field for 18 years. Several of my work experiences have affected my thoughts and feelings about children, siblings, and families. The first four years of my work were spent investigating child abuse, where cases of intimate partner violence were often present. I was first on the scene when a report of child abuse or neglect was made. I then spent time as a forensic interviewer of children that were sexually assaulted. Additionally, I counseled survivors of crimes, and then conducted psychiatric evaluations in the emergency department and trauma support on a medical floor. My most recent experience involved volunteering for a domestic violence

agency where I ran a children's play group for a few years. In this position, I had a great opportunity to spend time with children exposed to intimate partner violence, getting to know them and interacting with them in a play arena.

My work experiences had a direct impact on my life in providing me with an understanding of other families in our community and how I live my life and raise my children today. Even today, when I talk about the work I did, people say to me, "I could never do that job." I always felt this was an interesting question, but I am not sure I ever really had a great response to that statement. My best answer, which may sound cliché, is that I wanted to help children, siblings, and families who needed some intervention. I worked with these families to the best of my ability to try to provide them with support. Although I am no longer working in that capacity, I do know that I still want to be in a position where I can lend support to children and families, and I hope that this research study is one way this can be done.

Due to past work experiences, some of the thoughts, feelings, and/or actions of clients may have been grouped together in my mind in order to complete my job duties. However, during this research I made a strong effort during interviews, as well as during data analysis to really listen to the words and stories that participants were sharing. I sympathized and was supportive of participants throughout their interviews, but at the same time I tried to remain in a researcher role and refrain from any counseling or casework.

Data Presentation

Data is presented through detailed, thick description in a way that captures the individual thoughts and experiences of the family participants regarding the violence within the home and the child sibling relationships. Family data across cases are presented with individual family data presented in the appendix. The researcher utilized individual family cases to identify the shared themes and differences across all of the family cases in the study. To protect the confidentiality of all participants, all information and quotations regarding family cases is void of any identifying markers. There is an emphasis on the voices of the mothers and children within the following text.

Chapter 4

MAJOR FINDINGS ACROSS CASES

This chapter presents the major findings from interviews with participants regarding the perceptions of intimate partner violence and child sibling relationships across all family cases. Individual family cases are presented in Appendix G. Multiple perspectives (social learning, family systems, and cognitive-contextual) are utilized throughout this study to explore the ways in which intimate partner violence impacts child sibling relationships. The data presented below emerged from the iterative process of reading, coding, and categorizing both the mother and child transcripts.

The case study approach allows for the exploration of conceptual themes, including the major similarities and differences among the eleven families interviewed. Considering all eleven families, several themes relevant to understanding the children's exposure to intimate partner violence, as well as their sibling relationship in this context emerged from rich, qualitative findings. The themes related to exposure to intimate partner violence and child sibling relationships fell into two broad categories: (a) Children's Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence, and (b) Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence.

Throughout these findings across cases, the rich and detailed experiences and perceptions of each of the mothers and their children are provided through quotations directly taken from interview transcripts. It is important to note that although the themes are presented separately, there is an interconnectedness of these themes in the everyday lives of these children who are living with intimate partner violence. To provide context, the first section provides the sample characteristics and then the perceptions of the mothers and children are shared about the intimate partner violence and the sibling relationship.

Sample Characteristics

The present sample consists of 11 families; 36.4% are African American (n=4), 54.5 % are Caucasian (n=6), and 9.1% are Hispanic (n=1). All mothers identified as the same race as their children. The eleven mothers interviewed in the study were between the ages of 26 years-old and 45 years-old ($M=34.9$, $SD=6.7$). Table 1 contains demographic characteristics for the mother. Mothers have between 2 and 4 children living with them. Alcohol and/or drug use is indicated for 81.8% of abusers (n=9). Three mothers (27.3%) indicated some drug use history. Mothers were with their partners ranging from 2 to 24 years ($M=10.4$, $SD=6.9$). Income is described as low for most families. The abuser is the father of the interviewed children for 58.3% of the children (n=7). Table 2 contains relationship characteristics.

Table 1: Mother Demographic Characteristics (n=11)

	n	%
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	6	54.5%
African-American	4	36.4%
Hispanic	1	9.1%
Age (mean = 34.9)		
26-30 years	3	27.3%
31-35 years	3	27.3%
36-40 years	3	27.3%
41-45 years	1	9.1%
46-50 years	1	9.1%
Educational Level		
Some High School	4	36.4%
High School	2	18.2%
Some College/Technical School	5	45.5%
Annual Income		
Unsure/No Income	3	27.3%
Less than \$6500	3	27.3%
\$6501 - \$10,000	2	18.2%
\$10,001 - \$15,000	1	9.1%
\$40,000 – \$55,000	2	18.2%

Twelve children were interviewed in this study; 16.7% were male (n=2), and 83.3% were female (n=10). Children that were interviewed were between the ages of 8-12 years old with the average age of the interviewed child being 10 years old. In the majority of cases (n=7), the interviewed child is the oldest of the siblings in the home. One additional case had both the oldest and second oldest siblings in the family interviewed. See Table 3 for interviewed child characteristics.

Table 2: **Relationship Characteristics**

	n	%
Alcohol and/or Drug Use		
By Abusers	9	81.8%
By Mother	3	27.3%
Relationship during the Violence Period		
Married	2	18.2%
Living Together	7	63.6%
Not Living Together (Involved)	2	18.2%
Length of Relationship		
2-5 years	4	36.4%
6-10 years	2	18.2%
11-15 years	3	27.3%
16-20 years	1	9.1%
21-24 years	1	9.1%
Length Away From Relationship (n=10)*		
1-3 months	4	40.0%
4-6 months	3	30.0%
6-9 months	2	20.0%
9-11 months	1	10.0%
Present Living Situation		
Domestic Violence (DV) Shelter	4	36.4%
DV Shelter/Transitional Housing	5	45.5%
Own Housing	2	18.2%

*One mother has been away from the relationship for 3 years, but has continual domestic violence regarding co-parenting.

Table 3: Interviewed Child Characteristics (n=12)

	n	%
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	7	58.3%
African-American	4	33.3%
Hispanic	1	8.3%
Sex of Child		
Male	2	16.7%
Female	10	83.3%
Age of Child (mean = 10)		
8 years	2	16.7%
9 years	4	33.3%
10 years	1	8.3%
11 years	2	16.9%
12 years	3	25.0%
School Grade of Child		
3 rd Grade	2	16.7%
4 th Grade	3	25.0%
5 th Grade	3	25.0%
6 th Grade	1	8.3%
7 th Grade	3	25.0%
Abuser's Relationship		
Father	6	50.0%
Mother's Partner	6	50.0%
Current Living Arrangement		
Living with Mother (No Visitation with Abuser)	8	66.7%
Living with Mother (Visitation with Abuser)	3	25.0%
Living with Abuser (Visitation with Mother)	1	8.3%

There were 10 male and 19 female children living in these homes. All eleven cases in this study have at least one child in the 8-12 years age range of development. Almost a third of the family cases (n=3) have at least two siblings in this age range

(Carter, Ryan, and Myers). One family (Wilson) has a sibling who is just shy of being 8 years-old. On the other hand, two of the cases (Hall and Gomez), have dyadic mixed-sex siblings where the pre-adolescent child was interviewed and their sibling was an adolescent brother. Then, three cases (Franklin, Strom, and Maddison) have a nine or ten year-old child that was interviewed who has one or more siblings who were in their pre-school or toddler years. Two additional cases (Campbell and Allen) have an interviewed child with a toddler sibling as well as a 5 or 6 year-old sibling. Table 4 contains sibling characteristic information. Table 5 contains individual family information.

Table 4: **Sibling Characteristics** (n = 11 families)

	n	%
Total Number of Siblings Living in Households		
Two	6	54.5%
(Sister-Sister)	2	
(Mixed Sex Siblings)	4	
Three	3	27.3%
(Same Sex Sisters)	1	
(Same Sex Brothers)	1	
(Mixed Sex Siblings)	1	
Four	2	18.2%
(Mixed Sex Siblings)	2	
Interviewed Child's Status Amongst Siblings (n = 10 children)*		
Child Oldest Sibling	7	70.0%
Child Middle Sibling	1	10.0%
Child Youngest Sibling	2	20.0%
Children in Family in 8-12 Year-Old Age Range (n = 11 families)		
One Child	8	72.7%
Two Children	3	27.3%

* One family had both children interviewed and was not included in sibling status.

Table 5. Individual Family Information

Family (Mother)	Race	Abuser Father	Children In Home	Alcohol/ Drugs By abuser	Violence in Home	Sibling Relationship		CBCL**		
						Warmth	Conflict	Int	Ext	Tot
Wilson (Tamyra)	AA	No	12yo Niesha 7yo Shandra	Yes (and mother)	Phys/Emot (8 years)	Yes	Moderate	CL	N	N
Myers (Lacy)	WH	Yes	9yo Cassie 8yo Alex	Yes	Phys/Emot (9 years)	Yes	Minimal	N N	N N	N N
72 Carter (Latanya)	AA	No	12yo Zahra 9yo Jamila 7yo Deon 4yo Ashanti	Yes	Phys/Emot (2 years)	Yes	Moderate	N	CL	N
Campbell (Jaleesa)	AA	No	8yo Tanisha 6yo Tameca 2yo Tychell	Yes	Phys/Emot (2 years)	Yes	Severe	N	N	N
Maddison (Amy)	WH	Yes	10yo Hannah 4yo Rachel	No	Phys/Emot (5 years)	Yes	Minimal	N	N	N

Ryan (Pam)	WH	Yes	12yo LB 8yo Lance 6yo Landon	Yes	Emot (13 years)	Some	Severe	N	N	N
Allen (Ebony)	AA	No	11yo Keisha 5yo Tiffany 2yo Jayden	No	Phys/Emot (1 year)	Some	Moderate			
Hall (Paige)	WH	Yes	15yo Tony 12yo Skye	Yes (and mother)	Phys/Emot (24 years)	Some	Severe	N	B	B
³³ Gomez (Ariana)	HIS	No	16yo Daniel 11yo Isabel	Yes (and mother)	Emot (20 years)	Yes	Minimal	N	N	N
Franklin (Jen)	WH	Yes	9yo Katy 4yo Sarah 2yo Abby 2yo Derrick Jr.	Yes	Phys/Emot (5 years)	Yes	Minimal	N	N	N
Strom (Tina)	WH	Yes	9yo Natasha 3yo Nicholas	Yes	Phys/Emot (13 years)	Yes	Minimal	B	N	B

*Highlighted child was interviewed

**Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for highlighted child. Internalizing, Externalizing, & Total Problem Behaviors;
CL=clinical range, B=borderline range, N=normal range

Child Behavior Checklist. The child behavior checklist was completed by mothers for eleven of the twelve children who participated in the study.

Age. For children who were between ages 6-11 (n=8) 87.5% scored in the normal range on Internalizing, Externalizing and Total scales on the CBCL, 12.5% (n=1) scored in the borderline range on Internalizing and Total scales, and 12.5% (n=1) reached a level of clinical significance on the Externalizing scale. For those youth who were between ages 12-18 (n=3), 66.7% scored in the normal range on Internalizing, Externalizing and Total scales on the CBCL, 33.3% (n=1) reached a level of clinical significance on the Internalizing scale, and 33.3% (n=1) scored in the borderline range for the Externalizing and Total scales.

Gender. All males (n=2) scored in the normal range on Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total scales. For females, 77.8% (n=9) scored in the normal range, 11.1% (n=1) scored in the borderline range, and 11.1% (n=1) scored in the clinically significant range on the Internalizing scale and results were similar for the Externalizing scale. On the Total scale, 77.8% (n=9) of females scored in the normal range, and 22.2% (n=2) scored in the borderline range.

Sibling conflict level. Of those identified as having minimal sibling conflict (N=6), 83.3% scored in the normal range and 16.7% scored in the borderline range on the Internalizing and Total scales. All of those identified as having minimal sibling conflict scored in the normal range on the Externalizing scale. Of those identified as having moderate sibling conflict (n=2), 50% scored in the normal range and 50% scored in the clinical range on the Internalizing and Externalizing scale. All of those

identified as having moderate sibling conflict scored in the normal range on the Total scale. Finally, of those identified as having severe sibling conflict ($n = 3$), all of them scored in the normal range on the Internalizing scale. On the Externalizing and Total scales, 66.7% scored in the normal range and 33.3% scored in the borderline range.

Diverse Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in the Adult Relationship

To provide context, this first section describes the diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship from the mother's perspective. Mother participants were asked open-ended questions about their history with their partners. This information provided an in-depth understanding of the intimate partner violence in the home, as well as the circumstances under which the abuse occurred. Most of the mother participants were talkative and provided detailed information about the violence in their homes. A few mothers were not overly descriptive or were hesitant to provide too many details, especially when talking about incidents where children were exposed.

The researcher was concerned that mothers may not want to talk about their relationship. However, combined CTS/VAI quantitative questions were asked of each mother following the initial probing question regarding the relationship. Several mothers seemed to open up a bit more, providing detailed information on their relationship after being asked the CTS/VAI questions. For the mothers who were already describing their experiences in detail, the CTS/VAI questions were asked when a natural point to inquire occurred.

Overall, sum total scores on the combined CTS/VAI range from 33 to 100 with a mean of 68.45 ($SD = 22.15$). Higher scores indicate more use of the conflict tactics in the home. As expected, the two families reporting primarily emotional abuse as compared to physical abuse had the lowest scores. Regarding individual items with an 8 point scale, shouting and screaming at the mother had the highest frequency with a range from 4 to 8, mean of 6.72 ($SD = 1.19$). Seven of the eleven mothers (63.7%) reported this behavior happening 5 or 6 times a week to every day. Two behaviors, forcing mothers to do something against their will and forcing mothers to have sex or some kind of sexual activity, were reported by over fifty percent of the mothers as occurring one or two times a week or more. Pushing, grabbing, or shoving the mother and threatening the mother with a fist were reported by over fifty percent of mothers as occurring two or three times a month or more. Additionally, over seventy percent of mothers reported that the abuser would shout at or threaten the children two or three times a month or more (range 1 to 8, $M = 4.45$, $SD = 2.06$).

The family systems framework suggests that all family members, as well as the relationships within the family, are affected by the intimate partner violence (Stocker & Youngblade, 1999; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993; Whiteman et al., 2011). Intimate partner violence played a large role in the family subsystem for multiple years in the families interviewed, affecting both the mothers and children. All mothers provided a description of the violence that occurred in their home. Reported length of violence by mothers is from 1 year to 24 years, with the average being 10 years. The majority of mothers interviewed ($n = 9$) experienced both physical abuse (incidents of

kicking, hitting, pushing, punching and throwing/breaking things to even more violent use of guns and knives) and emotional abuse (incidents of name-calling, screaming, yelling, and threatening) from their abusers. The other two mothers mainly disclosed emotional abuse with no physical violence.

Common to all mothers interviewed was a sense that fighting, described as screaming, yelling, and arguing occurred frequently, often with children present. This often included the abuser calling mother names and possibly throwing things. Lacy Myers shared, “He can get nasty and then he would throw stuff...He has called me fat and ugly, and then he called me a (spell out) B-I-T-C-H, he has called me nasty names.”

In other disclosed incidents by participants, the violence was more severe. Jen Franklin described a harrowing car ordeal by her abuser, “He threatened to drive the car over the bank and then, as I was driving down the highway, he threw it into park.” In another family, Paige Hall recollected of the twenty-four year tumultuous relationship she had with her abuser that he,

Caught me on fire, held a gun to my head, punch me, choke me, threw me down a flight of stairs, head butted me in the face, um, slapped me, um, used my hair like a yo-yo and smashed my face on a door.

Similarly, Tina Strom shared a physical incident when she was pregnant, “He grabbed me by my throat, slammed me against the wall, hung me by my neck off the floor, hit me until my glasses fell off. When I tried to fight for myself, he bit me...I could not use my thumb for a week.”

Two of the families interviewed portrayed mainly emotional abuse with incidents of controlling behaviors, threatening, stalking, and name-calling. Pam Ryan explained that the violence in her relationship is “more the mental abuse...It was the controlling...It was more the mind games, the manipulation, the controlling.” Likewise, Ariana Gomez described stalking by her abuser, “He keeps stalking me, calling me, texting.”

A third of the mothers interviewed (n=4) provided verbal descriptions of sexual violence by their abuser. Interestingly, when answering the quantitative CTS/VAI questions, five additional mothers divulged that sexual activity was forced upon them by their partner. However, these five mothers did not provide a verbal description of this occurring. Of the four that did provide a verbal account of the sexual violence, Lacy Myers discussed staying in the situation with her abuser, feeling that she had to be involved sexually, “He pushed (pause) certain kind of stuff on me...sexual kind of stuff.” Tamyra Wilson shared, “Anything you got from me that I don’t want you to have, you took it...And, this, and you forcing me to F...I don’t want you on me...You think just because I been with you for this long that you deserve it?”

The violence became so much that two of the eleven mothers divulged they considered suicide as an option. Pam Ryan disclosed, “To be honest, it got to the point where suicide seemed like a pretty good out.” Paige Hall recounted what occurred from her own drug use and physical violence from her abuser, “I threatened to commit suicide. Um, the physical violence in the house was astronomical.”

Additionally, several of the mothers discussed fighting back to protect themselves and their children. Paige Hall shared that in one severe incident when she was backed into a corner she stabbed her abuser. Tamyra Wilson divulged she “may have been just as abusive, but when you are in a situation like that you have to protect your own self.”

Mothers in the current study revealed detailed descriptions of the violence in their homes. Incidents ranged from screaming and name calling to incidents with throwing and hitting to more severe incidents with kicking, choking, threatening the lives of the mother and/or children, and sexual violence. Even though they have been through these violent incidents, all mothers in the current study took steps to get themselves and their children away from the abuse to ensure their safety.

Alcohol and drug usage. Substance abuse often co-occurs with intimate partner violence, where all members of the family system can be affected on multiple levels. In this study, all but two mothers reflected on their experiences with drug and alcohol use in their relationship. Although children were not specifically asked about drugs or alcohol, there were three children that very briefly brought up alcohol use by their mother’s abuser. None of the children mentioned drug usage.

One mother, Latanya Carter, described her abuser as a drug user who was also a drug dealer. Latanya revealed she and her abuser usually argued about his drug use, which often led to verbal and physical violence. Nonetheless, Latanya said she enjoyed living a comfortable lifestyle from the drug dealings. “It was perfect because

I was looking at it like, you know, materialistic stuff. Um, I would always have a car, a house, and the money, the food, the, you know, everything.”

In another case, Tamyra Wilson shared how the violence often occurred due to the drug and alcohol use by her abuser. “As a matter of fact, the majority of time we was arguing because he was drunk or high or just on doin’ him.” Similarly, in the Campbell family, the abuser was often drunk during a violent incident; “so, when he’d get drunk and stuff he want to, you know, start picking.” Also, Lacy Myers shared how the drug and alcohol use by her abuser affected the entire family system. The abuser had been arrested in the past for buying drugs with their child present, causing both police and child welfare intervention.

Three mothers disclosed their own drug and alcohol use. Tamyra Wilson explained her drug use as an escape, “With him, it was like, oh my God, I got to smoke. I just didn’t want to feel the way I was feeling.” There was extensive substance abuse in the Hall family by both mother and abuser. The children were witness to drug use and paraphernalia, and were once taken away from the mother-partner subsystem due to this drug use. Paige Hall shared, “I relapsed. Um, I wasn’t paying attention to my kids. In those two weeks my kids went through a living hell.”

Overall, mothers disclosed the prevalence of physical, emotional, and sexual violence within their lives. Many discussed violence as ongoing for several years with incidents of yelling and arguing, while others revealed more physical and dangerous incidents of violence. Substance use by the abuser was common in these cases, and a

few mothers also revealed their substance use histories. All of the mothers discussed how they and their children have been exposed to and affected by this violence.

Children's Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

Children and mothers were both able to provide descriptions and details regarding children's diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. In many cases, the child's perspectives concurred with the mother's accounts of the violence to an extent, with the child usually sharing less information. Several mothers shared a lot of details regarding the exposure, while other mothers only described brief glances to which the children were exposed. Similarly, some children were engaged in the interview and shared a lot, while others were not overly descriptive or only spoke briefly about the violence. The demeanor of several of the children changed when the discussion turned to speaking about the abuser, where some children started to not remember or not know things that happened. Previous research suggests that children are able to discuss their experiences and exposure to intimate partner violence (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). However, in some cases children may not always be overly detailed in their descriptions (Georgsson, Almqvist, & Broberg, 2011).

Children have diverse experiences and perceptions of intimate partner violence. Those children living in homes with intimate partner violence are faced with traversing the everyday living in their homes that has the potential to explode at any time. In their cognitive contextual framework, Grych and Fincham (1990) discussed how children cognitively appraise interparental conflict. These appraisals allow

children to perceive the conflict and make meaning of the violence in their lives with their siblings and families (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed a model of stress where individuals appraise their environmental stress and consequent coping. Children exposed to intimate partner violence have feelings such as fear, anger, hostility, and sadness, and at the same time may respond to the violence through withdrawing, going towards the violence, and sometimes becoming physically or verbally involved. These appraisals and responses, in addition to supportive sibling relationships can assist in children's functioning.

The children in the present study are impacted differently from the intimate partner violence. They have been exposed to varying levels of violence, have cognitively and emotionally appraised the violence, and then made determinations on how they would respond. Three major themes emerged regarding children's perceptions of the intimate partner violence: (a) "I've seen him hit my mom," (b) "Sometimes it was tough," and (c) Children's behavioral responses. These themes and associated sub-themes play out differently for every family; however, there are also some commonalities. Both mother and child perceptions and appraisals of the intimate partner violence are discussed. It is important to note that, although each theme is discussed separately to provide details regarding the various aspects of children's lives, these children were all siblings living in a context of violence where they have emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence.

"I've seen him hit my mom." All children in this study were embedded in a family context filled with emotional and/or physical violence. One prominent theme

that emerged from the data is that, although the exposure to intimate partner violence is unique for each child, there is a common chaotic and violent environment that children and siblings were exposed to and have to navigate in these families. Mothers relayed their children have “seen a lot” and have “been through a lot.” For all eleven cases, both mothers and their children described that siblings have been present and exposed to intimate partner violence in some way. This exposure includes seeing, hearing, being involved, and having knowledge of the violence.

The chaotic and violent environment children experience in homes with intimate partner violence can begin to be described by ten year-old Hanna Maddison, “My dad just sometimes, like, um, throws stuff or something,” and “He screams really loud to my mom sometimes.” Nine year-old Katy Franklin discussed the disarray in her home that she has been exposed to, “He starts yelling and, there are so many things...When he gets angry he starts, like, getting abusive, and, like, punching holes in the walls, or, like, going all crazy.” He would be “Cursing...Smashing things...Throwing things.” Nine year-old Natasha Strom similarly shared about the violence in her home and her responsibilities to her sibling,

Sometimes they, like, hit. Sometime they hit each other, and, um, he pins her down and starts, and starts, like, hitting her and stuff. So she hits back and tells me to go get Nicholas and keep him away from them.

Nine year-old Jamila Carter was quick to point out that her mother’s abuser hit and choked her mother only one time, “One time, choked her, that’s the only time I saw it.” She also disclosed “arguing and fighting.” Eight year-old Tanisha Campbell

described one tumultuous incident, “He bit her in the arm one time...They was fighting...He trashed all the house...He got mad and smashed stuff up on my mom’s head...He just hit her.” In addition to sharing about the physical violence and fighting, twelve year-old Niesha Wilson conveyed a dangerous incident from her mother’s abuser:

He was pretending he was going to drop my mom down the steps...I mean he had her by her shirt and he was pretending he was doing something and he was going to drop her, but he didn’t...He let her go and then he got really angry and he punched a hole in the wall.

Additionally, twelve year-old Skye Hall disclosed, “I’ve seen him hit my mom once...He pushed her against the counter...My dad sat there and laughed at her...thinking it was funny.”

Mothers sometimes provided further details about their children’s exposure to the violence. For example, although her son disclosed very little, Pam Ryan said there is a “normalcy of disrespect in her home” where the children see “the nasty verbal abuse, on both sides.” Lacy Myers expanded on her children’s responses, relating that her children have been exposed to violence by her abuser, “They have seen him throw stuff...Break, smash things off the wall...yelling, screaming, saying not nice things.”

Comparable to her daughter, Tina Strom conveyed her children have seen “hitting, yelling, screaming, fighting.” Likewise, Latanya Carter shared her children have been exposed to verbal abuse and profanity, and her nine year-old witnessed “physical” incidents. Tamyra Wilson questioned what her children have not seen and heard, “The question should be, ‘What haven’t they heard? What haven’t they seen?’”

This included the children being exposed to her physically being knocked down, as well as verbal abuse such as, “fuck you bitch. Suck my dick. You a piece of shit.”

Only one child and a few mothers in the present study discussed serious life-threatening acts. Nine year-old Cassie Myers divulged, “My dad says he, he’s going to kill my mom.” Amy Maddison disclosed her abuser threatened suicide in front of the children with taking pills and getting a knife from the kitchen. Jen Franklin stated her abuser threatened her and her 4 year-olds life, “And then he started, um, (clear voice), you know, trying to drive us into other cars, and, um, throwing coffee on me, and, um, threatening to kill us.”

Although no children disclosed child abuse or neglect in this study, four mothers discussed concerns about the negative treatment of the children from their abusers. Tina Strom said her abuser has hurt her young son, “He hit him so hard he had a hand print that covered his mouth to his ear...Nicholas would have busted lips.” In addition, Paige Hall was concerned about the belittling language her abuser uses with their daughter, such as calling her “a stupid bitch,” and a “cunt dumpster.”

All children and their mothers in the current study discussed children being exposed to seeing or hearing violence in their homes. Some children were explicit and discussed in great detail what they have witnessed, while others divulged only a glimpse of their exposure. Children in the current study were exposed to verbal and emotional violence while other children also witnessed physical violence.

“Sometimes it was tough.” The cognitive contextual framework posits that children’s emotional appraisals of interparental conflict are associated with the child’s

adjustment (Grych & Fincham, 1990). From being exposed to intimate partner violence, children present with complex emotional appraisals, which can be critical to how children and siblings adjust within these violent homes (Grych et al., 1992). Mothers were asked to provide how they perceived their children felt during and about the violence. Additionally, children were asked about their feelings. Regarding the violence that occurred, both mothers and children indicated, “They wasn’t very too happy about it” or “I didn’t really like it.” Presented are the varying but connected perceptions of the emotional appraisals of the children from the perceptions of both mothers and children. It is important to note that most children report engaging in multiple emotional appraisals. These appraisals of violence include six sub-themes: (a) “I was scared,” (b) Sadness and Distress, (c) “I wish he would get hit by a car,” (d) Self-Blame, (e) “We would have a good day,” and (f) Coping.

“I was scared.” Children in the current study demonstrated a variety of emotions relating to their exposure to intimate partner violence. Foremost, families highlighted that children held a strong sense of fear, feeling threatened, or being worried during and because of the violence. All eleven families (n=6 mothers, 8 children) discussed this as a common emotional response to the violence in the home. Nine year-old Cassie Myers expressed she is “worried” for her mother because her father has threatened her mother’s life. Likewise, eleven year-old Keisha Allen indicated she was scared during incidents and would ask her siblings if they were afraid. “I say, ‘Are you scared?’” Also, twelve year-old Niesha Wilson shared, “I was scared.” Additionally, nine year-old Katy Franklin communicated her fear, “When I

am around him, I don't really feel comfortable because I am afraid that he is going to get mad at something...or, like, do something." Also, eight year-old Alex Myers conveyed his fear, "Because he scares me."

Ariana Gomez said her daughter worried about her mother and would ask, "Are you ok mommy?" Tamyra Wilson conveyed her daughters have told her on several occasions, "Mom, I was scared." Also, Tina Strom shared the fear from her nine year-old daughter:

I started to see Natasha emulating the same behaviors that I was when approaching Sam. Head down, tail tucked between her legs, cowering, waiting patiently to be responded to, afraid to make a move, afraid to talk back, afraid to ask questions.

Sadness and distress. In addition to the fear, children in the present study notably conveyed the emotion of sadness about the violence, and sometimes crying during or about an incident. The majority of families indicated children or their siblings were sad (n=3 mothers, 7 children) and would cry (n=5 mothers, 4 children) regarding an incident of violence in the home. Lacy Myers felt her children were unhappy, as "There were no smiles...It was just dazed." Ten year-old Hannah Maddison said, "I feel like worried, sad sometimes." Also, twelve year-old Niesha Wilson stated of her seven year-old sister, "She'll cry in my arms."

Several children appraised their sadness more in-depth, and discussed unfairness in relation to their sadness. For example, nine year-old Jamila Carter related she is "sad" and afraid because "he didn't have the right to do nothing...He shouldn't put his hands around girls' necks." Similarly, eight year-old Tanisha

Campbell shared that she and her sister would “cry” when their mother’s abuser hit their mother. She further stated she was “real sad” because “nobody should be hitting on nobody, and it’s not fair.” Also, twelve year-old Skye Hall disclosed she would be “sad” about the violence because “I didn’t think my mom really deserved being hit.”

Several mothers discussed distress symptoms in their children due to the violence. Tamyra Wilson related her younger daughter has nightmares and does not want to be touched, while her oldest daughter has headaches, and is “not as bubbly” as she had been. Pam Ryan shared her middle son has bedwetting issues. Similarly, Tina Strom said her toddler has trouble sleeping, and her oldest daughter has withdrawn from activities, has food and sleeping issues, does not like to be hugged any longer, and has severe issues with chewing at and picking her fingers raw.

Children in the current study were sad and distressed by the violence to which they were exposed. Additionally, they expressed feelings of annoyance, hostility, and anger.

“I wish he would get hit by a car.” The majority of families (n=8 mothers, 6 children) related children feeling annoyed, hostile, angered, and displeased with the relationship and the abuser. Tamyra Wilson shared the displeasure of her twelve year-old, “Niesha, she is just disgusted about the whole thing. But, she definitely don’t want me to go back to Dwayne and, you know, she had enough.” Also, Latanya Carter shared her nine year-old expresses severe anger towards the abuser by telling her siblings, “I wish he would get hit by a car, I wish he leave and don’t come back.”

Nine year-old Cassie Myers expressed she felt “mad” about the violence in her home “because he keeps, all, all they do is argue...It gets annoying sometimes (Laugh).” Nine-year old Jamila Carter has warned her mother of the abuser, “Don’t go nowhere near him.” Along the same lines, Jen Franklin related her nine year-old daughter, Katy, would get upset with Jen and say “Mommy, he always does this...I hate him...I told you this would happen. I told you. He does this every time.” Katy herself shared, “(I) feel like it is best for Derrick to stay away from us. For him to try to be happier and not scream.” Differently, eleven year-old Isabel Gomez placed the blame on her mother’s abuser and shared her wishes for her mother, “That she’s happy and that she doesn’t deserve those people anymore.”

Both mothers and children discussed the annoyance and anger of children regarding the violence in the home. A few children also had feelings of blame.

Self-Blame. Although research points to children taking on the blame for the violence in their homes (Grych et al., 1992), only three children and two mothers discussed children blaming themselves. Nine year-old Cassie Myers relayed her father told her she is to blame, “My dad says that I’m to blame...That I’m to blame because they’re fighting.” Eleven year-old Keisha Allen tearfully described her feelings of self-blame for an incident. Keisha shared, “They would argue over something stupid” such as Keisha asking the abuser for something at her mother’s direction. Also, Paige Hall shared the “guilt and shame” which led to her children having self-blame,

I think a lot of times they do blame themselves because, and that's partly my fault...I would say things to them, like, 'Well, if you guys would have just picked up your toys,' and 'If you guys would have just did this then daddy and I wouldn't fight.'

“We would have a good day.” Interestingly, three children and one mother discussed the aftermath of a violent incident, relating a transition to a “normal” family environment. Eight year-old Tanisha Campbell shared what happens after an incident, “We’d wait until they’re done fighting. Then we’ll come back inside and, if, and watch TV...Then they would calm down...We would have a good day.” Also, nine year-old Natasha Strom described what happens after an incident, “What we kind of do is just like just, um, we watch movies and stuff and like, pretend it wasn’t even like real or it didn’t happen.” Pam Ryan conveyed what happens after the violence with her children, “It was just normal. It was just normal for them. It’s like nothing.” Some children saw the aftermath of the violent incident as a return to the way their family normally acts.

Coping. Discussing how children cope with violence within their homes may be useful in looking at ongoing adjustment and relationships (Edleson et al., 2007). Mothers in this study conveyed their children engage in different coping strategies regarding the violence in the household. All twelve child participants in this study were involved in counseling, and many of their siblings were in counseling. To cope with the violence in the family context, mothers mainly related their children engage in activities that keep them distracted (i.e., play with toys and games, go outside, visit family or friends, talk to their mother or sibling, or participate in reading or writing

activities). Additionally, mothers explained a few children withdraw from the situation or worried, and a few children coped with the violence by acting out.

Furthermore, when there is violence in the home, sometimes children try to tune-out or ignore the incidents as a strategy to distance themselves from the violence or the effects of the violence. Some families (n=5) indicate that children ignored the violence. Tamyra Wilson discussed how her 12 year-old tuned out the violence, “Niesha has gotten really good at acting like, you know, she ain’t paying stuff no mind.” In addition, eleven year-old Isabel Gomez shared her complacency, “We’re kind of used to it...I really don’t listen. I just walk away.” Isabel’s mother similarly conveyed, “They just ignore it. Ignore, like, they just got tired of listening to us argue.” Also, twelve year old LB Ryan shared his powerlessness and how he copes, “There was nothing that I could probably do...Because, uh, they wouldn’t listen...I will just deal with it.” How children cope with the violence within their homes may affect their ongoing adjustment.

Overall, children presented complex emotional appraisals of the violence within their homes. These children were afraid and saddened by the violence, angered at the violence and at the abuser, and a few felt to blame for the violence. Mothers also discussed how their children would cope with the violence. Children use their emotional appraisals of the violence to determine how to behaviorally respond to an incident (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych et al., 1990).

Children’s behavioral responses. Children behaviorally respond to the violence within their home in varying ways. From their appraisals of the violence in

the home, children may observe an incident and then decide to intervene or they may withdraw from an incident and hide. Mothers and children discussed these behavioral responses. It is important to note that in most of the cases, the children and mothers discussed several different ways in which children respond to the violence. This could include a child withdrawing from one incident, and becoming involved during a different incident. The behavioral responses to violence fell into five sub-themes: (a) “I would go in the room,” (b) “Leave my mom alone,” (c) Withdrawal, (d) “Tell your mom she’s stupid,” and (e) Modeling Behaviors.

“I would go in the room.” Often, children navigate the violence in the family system by first going to the incident to see what is happening. Five children described going to an incident of violence. For example, twelve year-old Niesha Wilson described being awoken by the violence and then moving to the incident; “I would go in the room and just see if everything was OK. I would go back down and make sure my sister did not wake up.” Also, eight year old Alex Myers shared, “We would come down and see what they were doing.” From there, children made appraisals of the violence in their homes. Families related some children would “stand right there” observing the violence or becoming involved, some withdrew, and others engaged in an activity or watching television while the violence occurred.

“Leave my mom alone!” In addition to going to an incident, children may become involved. In an attempt to minimize the consequences or to stop the violence, some children may decide to intervene by being verbally or physically involved or gaining the assistance of others. Ten families (n=9 mothers, 8 children) discussed

how children verbally intervened in an incident to referee the violence. Nine year-old Natasha Strom described saying, “Stop fighting.” Similarly, nine-year old Katy Franklin conveyed intervening verbally, “I would try to stop it...Like, yelling, or like, telling him, umh, like, ‘Don’t touch her.’” Likewise, eight year-old Tanisha Campbell verbalized she would “scream” and order the abuser to “get off” her mother. Also, eleven year-old Keisha Allen said she voices, “Leave my mom alone!”

Additionally, five families (n=4 mothers, 4 children) described how children physically intervene in a violent incident. Eight year-old Tanisha Campbell conveyed, “We was trying to hit him because he had hit my mom, mommy in the face...He fell on us.” Similarly, eleven year-old Keisha Allen described that in one incident with the abuser, she “hit him” and “he hit me back.” Then, Keisha’s mother “hit him.” Also, twelve year-old Skye Hall voiced of her father during an incident, “I punched him...right in his (pause)” (referring to his private parts).

Furthermore, sometimes children may perceive the violence as rising to the point that they need additional assistance. Several children (n=6) took action to intervene in the mother-partner subsystem by seeking help from extended family, friends, or the police. Eight year-old Tanisha Campbell shared an incident where she sought help, “So, he, he trashed all the house and stuff, that’s when, um, I started crying and running downstairs to go get somebody.” Along the same lines, nine year-old Katy Franklin and her mother discussed a preset safety plan for Katy to hide the phones and to seek help if anything happened with the abuser. However, this plan was never implemented due to fear of the abuser’s behaviors. Another plan that was

implemented, but did not result in police intervention came from twelve year-old Niesha Wilson. “She (mother) told us to go down the street to the payphone and call 911 and I did, but they didn’t believe me if I didn’t put her on the phone because at the time I couldn’t remember the address.”

In sum, children intervened during violent incidents by being verbally or physically involved, as well as gaining the assistance of others. Children spoke out or yelled to the abuser and their mother, struck the abuser, and gained assistance in an effort to protect themselves and their mother.

Withdrawal. Even though children may intervene during violent incidents, other times they may withdraw from the violence to seek their own safety and the safety of their siblings. As described below in more detail, the majority of families (n=9) have a child, usually the older child, who makes attempts to remove their siblings from the violent situation. Children discussed withdrawing from the violence with their sibling where they engaged in a distracting activity or hid under a bed or in a closet. In addition, a few mothers discussed their children crying and distancing themselves from a violent incident.

“Tell your mom she’s stupid.” Children can become involved in an incident of violence in a different way than physically and verbally lashing out at the abuser. Six families (n=5 mothers, 4 children) discussed several ways in which they were drawn into the violence and how they responded. Pam Ryan explained how her abuser encouraged her children to call their grandmother “fatty.” Likewise, Paige Hall described how her abuser encouraged the children to call their mother bad names:

“Tell your mom she’s a Maggie moron. Tell your mom she’s stupid. Tell your mom to stop being retarded.” Along the same lines, twelve year-old Niesha Wilson related both her mother and abuser asked for the children’s opinions on who they thought was right. Then, both twelve year-old LB Ryan and nine-year old Katy Franklin discussed how the abuser consistently told the children “bad” things about their mothers.

Modeling Behaviors. In some families the violence between the mother and partner may be modeled, and the children may then model similar behaviors as the abuser. No children discussed these modeling behaviors, but the majority of mothers (n=9) discussed their concerns that they see similarities in behavior between the abuser and their children. Some concerns revolved around the children acting out behaviorally, being angry, having a temper, being disrespectful, and lashing out physically. Paige Hall said twelve year-old Skye is “bossy, controlling” like mother’s abuser. Amy Madison shared of ten year-old Maddison, “She does, sometimes she does get a temper like C.” Also, Lacy Myers stated her son would “flip out” because “That is how he (father) would react to things.” Lacy continued to say of her son, “That is all he has known with his father...It is learned behavior because he gets, the way he was treated by him (father).”

Several mothers conveyed their children would talk similar to how the abuser would talk. Jen Franklin related nine year-old Katy spoke similarly to Jen as her abuser did, “She’ll order me: ‘I need to be in bed’ or, you know, I need to, she tells me what I need to do...Um, Just like he would...I think it is just what she knows and sees that it works.” Katy has also written degrading things about Jen to Jen’s computer

friends. Pam Ryan similarly said her children were “parroting back what their father is saying.” Also, Anna Gomez voiced that eleven year-old Isabel “picked up some things from him” in that she called her mother “dramatic.” Likewise, Tina Strom stated nine-year old Natasha would “emotionally and verbally treat me the same way as Sam does.” Many of the children in the current study presented as similar to the abuser and sometimes participated in similar violent actions.

Overall, children and their mothers discussed children’s emotional appraisals of the violence which affect how children behaviorally respond to the violence. Both children and mothers discussed children withdrawing, observing, directly verbally or physically intervening, seeking support, and indirectly intervening as a result of intimate partner violence in their homes. Mothers also discussed the similarities in behaviors that they see between the abuser and one or more of their children.

Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

The exposure of children to intimate partner violence, along with their emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence, plays a significant role in the sibling relationship. How children interact with their siblings is reflective of their family context which is filled with violence. Both sibling warmth and support (engaging in mutual activities, spending time with siblings, communication, concern for siblings) and sibling conflict (fighting, arguing, hostility) have been found to represent important aspects of the sibling relationship quality (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). From the descriptions of both the mothers and children in this study, all of the

child participants demonstrate sibling relationships characterized by some level of sibling warmth and support. However, at the same time all families have related that siblings have had some level of sibling conflict. A few sibling relationships rise to a different level where they contain severe aggression and conflict.

Although some families have other children that were not living in their homes, the focus of this section is only on the siblings living in the home with the mothers at the time of the interview. The following results show sibling warmth and support that is separate from sibling conflict. However, it is important to acknowledge that there is a link between both of these aspects of the sibling relationship quality who were all living in homes with intimate partner violence.

Sibling warmth and support. Key to all of the sibling relationships in the present study is the provision of warmth and support to some extent. Overall, most families (n=8 mothers, 8 children) reported relationships between siblings that were close and/or where siblings can get along fairly well. One child even shared that they love their sibling. Nine year-old Cassie Myers said of her 8 year-old brother, “Sometimes I love him.” In addition, a few mothers described how they feel that the violence in the mother-partner subsystem has strengthened the sibling relationship. For example, Latanya Carter shared, “I think it made them closer...It just seemed like it made them more closer, and more open to talk to each other.”

Conversely, a few families described mainly aggression in the sibling relationship (Campbell, Hall, and Ryan families). However, even these families were able to describe some instances where the siblings could ultimately get along. For

example, Jaleesa Campbell related of her two daughters, “Um, them two, are they close? Um, other than the fighting, yeah, they very close.” Along the same lines, in the Allen family, both mother and child stated the children do not get along, but they were also able to discuss other aspects that lend to warmth and support in the sibling relationship, such as occasionally interacting well or getting along.

Drawing from some of the work on sibling relationship quality by Furman and Buhrmester (1985) and Volling and Blandon (2003), mothers and children in this study were able to describe this warmth and support by way of (a) “We play games,” (b) “We talk about things,” (c) “I help her,” and (d) Siblings as supportive and protective. These sub-themes are presented individually below; however, it is important to recognize that these dimensions of the sibling relationship often occur simultaneously which lead to the overall warmth and closeness in the relationship.

“We play games” Companionship in a sibling relationship often involves enjoyment in shared activities, playing with siblings, and spending time together. This lends to the warmth and closeness in the sibling relationships. For most of the families in the present study, both the mother (n=8) and interviewed child (n=10) described some level of interacting in activities and spending time together. For example, 12 year-old Niesha Wilson shared what she and her 7 year-old sister do together. “She is fun, cool, she likes to play... We try to, uh, make games and read. But we are always together. We play games.” Also, 9 year-old Cassie Myers said she and her 8 year-old brother, “Play... Listen to music... Go on the computer... Play video games.” Comparably, 9 year-old Natasha Strom indicated she and her 3 year-old

brother were companionate, “We play cops and robbers sometimes. Um, we really like to dance a lot... We like to watch SpongeBob together... We love to go to the playground together.”

Somewhat differently, in the Ryan family, 12 year-old LB discussed “playing” with both of his brothers and spending time with the brother closest in age biking, participating in outside adventures, and playing with Legos and characters. However, Pam Ryan related that playing with characters and using imaginations only occurs in two of the three sibling subsystems.

Most mothers and children in the current study discussed children engaging in shared activities and play with their siblings. However, in two families, both the mother and child described very little companionship. These families have mixed-sex siblings where the interviewed child is pre-adolescent, and the sibling is an older brother. The adolescent brothers were not warm or companionate with their younger sibling sisters. Twelve year-old Skye Hall said “nope” when asked if she and her adolescent brother do anything together. She further stated, “My mom has to fight with him just to get him to take me somewhere.” In the Gomez family, both mother and 11 year-old Isabel indicated that Isabel tried to initiate playing a video game with her older brother, but the adolescent brother always declined. Isabel shared, “I try to play with him and he says, ‘No, you don’t know how to play. You’re going to ruin my mission.’”

“We talk about things.” In addition to companionship, communication between siblings lends to warmth and closeness in the sibling relationship. As

children talk, they share ideas and thoughts. Children in this study communicated with their siblings about things such as life events, school, and friends. In addition, some families divulged that the siblings also discuss the violence in the home. These discussions included siblings checking in with and comforting each other during the violence, and talking together about the violence after an incident.

Eight families discussed siblings communicating about life events, school, and friends. In one example of communication in the sibling relationship, 9 year-old Cassie Myers spoke about she and her brother, “We mostly talk...About the stuff from the future...We talk to each other when we play...We also talk about school.” Along the same lines, nine year-old Katy Franklin related of what she talks to her sister about, “We talk about things that, like, people that make us mad, or, like, something that makes us mad.” Additionally, Tamyra Wilson shared of her daughter’s communication, “Sometimes they be talking about boyfriends...They have their own little conversations about certain kids in school, in their class.”

Mothers and children also discussed child siblings communicating about the violence in the home. Communication in the sibling relationship is intertwined in the sub-theme of siblings as supportive and protective. Communicating during or about the violence in the home suggests a supportive relationship between siblings that may very well assist siblings in their future development and adjustment. In five families, both the mother and child indicated that siblings do talk about the violence to some extent. In another case, only the child disclosed talking about the violence with their siblings. These conversations between siblings vary greatly amongst families. During

an incident, Katy Franklin said she communicated with her younger siblings; “I would tell them that it was going to be ok.” Also during an incident in the Campbell home, Tanisha would warn her siblings of the violence; “I would tell them that they (mother-partner subsystem) was fighting.” Additionally, both older siblings talked about the violence and warned their mother that they were going to tell their biological dad. Latanya Carter related that all four of her children would sit together to discuss the violence in their home. The girls mostly talked negatively about mother’s partner, that they did not like him, and they wished he was hurt or would leave.

Children in the current study communicated regarding life events and school, as well as the violence within the home. Children also helped their siblings.

“I help her.” Helping and teaching behaviors in the sibling relationship included siblings helping their brothers and sisters adjust to a situation, caring for a sibling, trying to teach siblings, doing things for siblings, and helping siblings when they are unhappy or sad. The majority of families in this study (n=9 mothers and 11 children) indicated some level of siblings helping and teaching siblings in activities such as learning (i.e., homework, reading to a sibling, and writing), sharing, and helping with food, drinks or other things for their sibling. For example, Niesha Wilson spoke of her helping her sister, “I help her with her homework. Sometimes I help her get ready for school...I just show her how to cook and I just teach her how to be independent when it is time to be independent.” Likewise, Keisha Allen shared of helping her sister and brother, “I help her work or help her carrying something...I help him put on his clothes, um, brush his hair...Or put on his shoes...And brush his teeth.”

In addition to teaching or helping siblings with activities, siblings helped each other when they were unhappy or sad. Siblings often show empathy and concern by way of being present and finding out a sibling's needs, verbally comforting a sibling, and cheering up, caring for, and making a sibling feel better. The majority of families (n=10 mothers, n=9 children) emphasized that children helped their siblings when they were unhappy or sad. For example, Tamyra Wilson shared of her daughters, "Niesha would ask her (Ms. Honey) what's wrong...She (Ms. Honey) can be very caring, and she would constantly say, 'Well, what is wrong? What is the matter? You want to do this?'...They try to comfort each other." Another mother, Amy Maddison, shared what her daughter does, "Tells her to stop being unhappy, like, stop crying...She tries to make her feel better." Ten year-old Hannah Maddison explained what she does for her sibling, "I give her something that she likes." Similarly, nine year-old Jamila Carter said of her reaction, "I give her a hug and I say, 'Are you ok?' and I give her a kiss and then she's not mad no more."

A bit differently, in the Gomez family, the mother said the older brother helps his younger sister if she is unhappy or sad, but the sister said they just leave each other "alone." Interestingly, within these families where siblings were helping siblings when they were unhappy or sad, are included two of the three families where there is aggression and conflict between siblings. The other family with aggression and conflict in the sibling relationship related that the children really "don't care" if the other is unhappy or sad.

In some homes, children that help and teach their siblings take on a new dimension. Due to a parent's reliance on older children or a parent's inability to care for their own children, these children gain a caretaking role for their younger siblings where they move from helping to being responsible for jobs such as feeding, homework, bathing, and other daily activities. Sibling roles were extended from a helper in the sibling relationship to actually becoming a surrogate caretaker for their siblings when the parents were unavailable. Five of the eleven families in this study discussed what appears to be a caretaking role with their siblings. In four of these families, the child that is providing the caretaking is the oldest daughter in the family. These girls range in age from eight to twelve years-old. These siblings were impacted differently from the violence in that the younger children needed someone to lean on, and the older sibling took on the role to protect and care for her younger siblings.

Jen Franklin described not being available to her children, saying that she was "emotionally distraught and not really all together." From this, 9 year-old Katy took on a "motherly role" where she showed support for her younger siblings and provided meals and help with daily activities. Similarly, Jaleesa Campbell voiced she also was not emotionally available to her children. Eight year-old Tanisha had to take on the care; "Tanisha had to, you know, help me out and do things. Help me, you know, do things for her siblings."

Latanya Carter did not disclose being emotionally withdrawn from her children, but said her daughter does take care of things when she is not around. Latanya stated of twelve-year old Zahra, "She's just always the big sister." Zahra

takes “control of the household when I’m not around...She’s basically, like, the strong one out of all of them.” Similarly, Tina Strom indicated nine year-old Natasha is also a caretaker for her younger brother. Tina explained that Natasha talks with and takes care of Nicholas “as if she’s the adult and he’s her son.”

One family discussed the caretaking role a bit differently. In the Hall family, the mixed-sex sibling pair seems to have been required to take care of themselves and each other due to the mother-partner subsystem not being available due to both drug use and intimate partner violence. At times, there was also an older brother involved in this reciprocal caretaking. Paige Hall divulged that the children were lacking a parental figure. She tearfully explained, “With my using and then my ex- (excuse me) using also, my kids weren’t even, they didn’t have parents. They were basically taking care of themselves.”

Siblings as supportive and protective. Siblings in the current study were companionate, communicated about daily life and the violence in the home, and helped each other when needed. Overall, the majority of the family cases in this study described a sibling as being supportive and protective from the violence in the household. Children were unable to hide the violence from their brothers and sisters. However, they took many steps to protect their siblings, ensuring that their siblings were safe and secure during an incident. Children in these families can often become the one supportive and protective person in the sibling’s life that may make a difference in future development and adjustment.

In the present study, both mothers and children disclosed that siblings show support and protection of each other. The sibling often becomes the protector of their brother or sister, which becomes a vast responsibility. The protection in this study seems to play out in two related ways: protection during everyday life and protection during an incident of intimate partner violence.

Everyday life. Most mothers (n=7) described siblings protecting their brothers or sisters during everyday life. There was not a specific question presented in the interviews regarding this topic, but families brought up this during their descriptions of the children's sibling relationships. Mothers avidly described how their children stepped up for each other.

Ebony Allen shared of her daughter, "Keisha ain't going to let nobody hurt her (Keisha's sister)." In the Myers home, the siblings showed protection for each other, "If some other person was picking on them, they would be very protective. It is like a sibling thing." Even in the face of severe sibling conflict, siblings can still protect each other. Paige Hall related:

I have seen that regardless of what he does to her, what he says about her, and how much he says that he hates her, you let somebody else say that, you let somebody else pick on his sister and he will mess them up.

Similarly in a household with severe conflict in the sibling relationship, Pam Ryan stated of her three sons, "They get protective of each other." Mothers discussed children being protective of each other in their daily lives, and also discussed children showing support and protection for siblings during an incident of violence.

During the intimate partner violence. Both mothers and children were asked if children did anything for their siblings during an incident of intimate partner violence. The majority of both mothers (n=9) and children (n=9) reported that during a violent incident, siblings took the other siblings away from the violence, they stayed together in the situation, and/or they made sure everyone was safe. One mother related her two children always went to her during a situation, and another family specifically voiced that the children did not talk or leave the room during an incident.

Twelve year-old Niesha Wilson took physical action to shield her sister from the violence. Tamyra Wilson shared, “Niesha takes Shandra, like, ‘let’s go make these cookies,’ or ‘let’s go draw a picture,’ or ‘let’s color,’ or ‘let’s do these crossword puzzles or something.’ Niesha takes Shandra away a lot.” Niesha confirmed her mother’s view, “I try to move her and try to make her come with me.” Similarly, nine year-old Natasha Strom revealed how she was protective of her younger brother during an incident of violence, “Most of the time I keep him away from them, and I just, like, distract him and stuff...I bring him in my room...We just play, like, we totally go out of that zone.”

Children hiding together during an incident of violence also occurred. Eight year-old Tanisha Campbell described holding hands with her six year-old sister to go and hide during an incident. She stated, “We would try to hide in, in our closet, room, or we’ll try to hide in a bathroom, or, um, downstairs in a closet, or downstairs in the bathroom.” Similarly, 12 year-old Skye Hall recalled crying during an incident of violence and running with her adolescent brother to hide “underneath his bed.”

Additionally, Ariana Gomez said her adolescent son and eleven year-old daughter would “stick together” during a violent incident. Likewise, Isabel Gomez said of her and her brother, “We just sit down and watch a movie.” Nine year-old Katy Franklin related she and her siblings did not leave the violent incident, but the siblings stay together. Her mother added that Katy sometimes also took the children away from the violence, “She would often gather the kids up for me. Um, try to keep everybody calm.”

Mothers and children in the current study described a warm and supportive relationship between siblings. This warmth included descriptions of close relationships where siblings played with and spent time with each other, communicated about life events and the violence in the home, helped each other when needed, and provided protection and support for their siblings in daily life and during a violent incident. In addition to this warmth and support, mothers and children also described sibling conflict between brothers and sisters.

Sibling conflict. Another key dimension of the sibling relationship is sibling conflict (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Richmond et al., 2005). Sibling conflict includes teasing, annoying, getting angry at, arguing, and having physical fights with siblings. In the present study, this sibling conflict ranged from minimal conflict to moderate conflict to severe conflict with aggression. For the sibling relationships with severe conflict, mothers were the primary reporters of the sibling conflict, where the children only provided small glimpses of conflict.

A little less than half of the families (n=5) discussed minimal sibling conflict, where siblings argue and bicker along with “I hate you” comments at times and some minimal hitting. Three of these families include older sisters (9 and 10 years old) with preschool or toddler siblings. Three mothers echoed similar sentiments. Amy Maddison said of her two daughters, “They sometimes fight, but most siblings are like that, I guess.” Another mother, Lacy Myers, explained her children bicker, don’t want to play together, and say “I hate you” at times, “It’s like a constant sibling thing.” And Ariana Gomez said her children tease each other and argue, “That’s what happens to every family, I think, when it comes to brothers and sisters.”

Ten year-old Hannah Maddison agreed with her mother’s account that there is some minimal conflict with her younger sister; “we’re mean to each other, like, because sometimes she hits me and stuff, but I don’t hit her back.” Another child, Isabel Gomez, explained of her sibling relationship, “I hate him...He’s annoying! He teases me a lot.” Nine year-old Natasha Strom explained she and her younger brother would hit each other; “I think I kind of took it out on Nicholas....And he got all mad and he hit me...I tapped him on, I hit him back on the leg and stuff.”

The Myers family has an additional layer added to the sibling conflict. Lacy Myers stated 9 year-old Cassie blames 8 year-old Alex, as the violence between the mother-partner often involves the abuser arguing and fighting with Alex, who is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Lacy said of Cassie, “She kind of blames her brother for leaving because, because Cassie doesn’t have, doesn’t have the disability, she doesn’t have issues, so (B) kind of favored her a little bit more.”

Three additional families (Wilson, Allen, and Carter) also related conflict. However, this conflict seems to rise to a more moderate level which includes increased arguing, physical fighting, and jealousy in the relationship. Tamyra Wilson was concerned about the conflict between her 12 and 7 year-old daughters; “They sometimes get really selfish with each other and like, I don’t care, I mean, like really mean.” The older sister usually just argued and bickered, whereas the younger sibling “will lash out physically.” Although, on one occasion when the younger sister pushed the older sister, breaking her glasses, the older sibling did physically strike back. Similarly, Ebony Allen voiced her concerns that her 11 and 5 year-old daughters did not get along, were jealous, and fought a lot. Eleven year-old Tiffany said, “We don’t really get along...She hits me... (I) hit her back.” Along the same lines, Latanya Carter conveyed of her 12 and 9 year-old girls, “They sisters, they bump heads... You know they get to arguing, they get to fighting sometimes.” She further shared of her 9 and 7 year-old mixed-sex siblings, “Fifty five percent of the time they arguing and fighting...A lot of times they get physical because Jamila will literally, like, throw the first punch.”

Another three families (Campbell, Ryan, and Hall) described more severe levels of conflict in the sibling relationship where two have possibly risen to the degree of sibling abuse. These relationships include demeaning comments to siblings, instigating, and constant physical fighting to the point that children were being hurt and their mothers did not want to leave their child siblings alone.

For example, Jaleesa Campbell, with two of her three daughters in the middle childhood age range, described the relationship between her 8 and 6 year-old daughters as “horrible.” She continued, “They likes to fight all the time. I mean, sometimes it’s normal, sometimes it’s not...Sometimes they can’t even be in the same room with each other...I know siblings’ is going to fight, but the way they fight, that’s ridiculous to me.” She further said the girls “interact” the violence that they have seen in the mother-partner subsystem with each other and peers.

Similarly, Pam Ryan revealed that all three of her boys were aggressive, with the most severe aggression coming from twelve year-old LB. Of the sibling aggression, Pam said, “I get scared.” She described the physical fighting, “It’s hitting, it’s kicking, it’s biting, it’s pinching.” There is nasty and demeaning name calling which is much like what the children have witnessed in the mother-partner subsystem, such as “You’re stupid. You’re an idiot. I hate you.” Pam relayed that the aggression between siblings is increasing, and she is concerned as there is a size difference between the boys. Pam recounted one incident,

Lance called LB a baby...LB picked up a rock and he threw it...It hit him (Lance) in the face and I think he broke his nose and he had a shiner...And that’s the anger, that’s the point that Lance can, the anger he can provoke out of LB.

LB discussed fighting with Lance, “Sometimes I hit him, sometimes he hits me, sometimes he kicks me, punches, bites...I kind of just push.”

Also communicating about severe sibling conflict, Paige Hall discussed the resentment and “hate” 15 year-old Tony feels towards twelve year-old Skye: “they do

at this moment take it to extremes.” Skye conveyed, “I hate it!” when asked about being Tony’s sister. She further said Tony yelled and screamed, and would tell her that he wished she was never his sister. Paige shared that Skye “instigates the crap out of Tony...When she’s mad she bites.” Tony “is physically aggressive with his sister. Very, very badly.” Paige believes Skye and Tony need the turmoil in their lives, “They have to have somebody yelling and screaming. You know, let’s instigate, mom, till she freaks out, and dad when he freaks out. Let’s instigate each other. It is familiar to them, so that’s what they do.” Paige further voiced her unease about the sibling relationship,

I think they know what buttons to push and I’m concerned that how violent it gets, and I get concerned because my daughter says things like, ‘He’s going to wind up dead someday.’ And I’m concerned that he’s going to push her to the point where Gary pushed me the day that I stabbed him.

Conclusion

The major themes in this cross-case analysis illustrate how mothers and children perceive the child sibling relationship in the context of intimate partner violence. Mothers and children described their experiences of intimate partner violence within their homes. This violence included sexual, physical, and emotional abuse of the mother. Substance use was also a part of the lives of many families.

Children had diverse perceptions of the intimate partner violence of their homes which included children being exposed to the intimate violence, emotionally appraising the violence, and behaviorally responding to the violence. Children in the current study were able to provide descriptions of the violence to which they were

exposed. This included seeing, hearing, being involved, and having knowledge of the violence.

The emotional appraisals of these children predominantly included them being afraid or worried, sad, angry, and annoyed with the intimate partner violence within the home. A few children felt to blame for the violence while a few others described a transition of their family returning to “normal” at the conclusion of an incident. Mothers described that most children coped with the intimate partner violence by engaging in distraction activities, where a few children withdrew from the situation and a few aggressively acted out.

The behavioral responses of these children to the violence within their homes included children going towards an incident of intimate partner violence to determine what was occurring, children intervening verbally or physically or gaining the assistance of others during an incident of intimate partner violence, children withdrawing from the violence to seek their own and their siblings’ safety, children being drawn into the violence by the abuser, and children modeling the abusers violent behaviors in their own relationships.

Child sibling relationships within these violent homes play a significant role. Both sibling warmth and support and sibling conflict represent the relationships in the current study. Mothers and children discussed the relationships that children had with their siblings. Most families discussed a warm and supportive relationship between siblings, while a few families described mainly aggression in the sibling relationship. For the majority of families, children and mothers described close relationships where

brothers and sisters were companionate where they spent time together and played, were communicative where they discussed daily living as well as the violence within the home, were helpful to each other through teaching and getting things with some taking on a caretaking role, and provided protection and support for their sibling during everyday life as well as during incidents of intimate partner violence.

In concert with these warm and supportive relationships, mothers and children also described sibling conflict in the sibling relationships. Many of the families discussed minimal sibling conflict where siblings argued and bickered. However, a few families had more moderate conflict in the sibling relationship, and three families described more severe conflict with aggression in the sibling relationship.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence has been recognized as a major issue over the past few decades (e.g., Edleson et al., 2007; Hamby et al., 2011). However, most research thus far has focused on describing the impact of intimate partner violence on an individual child's functioning, with findings that children exposed to intimate partner violence are at increased risk for adverse emotional, behavioral, social, and physical problems (Edleson et al., 2007; Evans et al., 2008; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Wolf et al., 2003). These studies rely heavily on quantitative measures with the mother and/or teacher as the informant (Överlien & Hydén, 2009; Sternberg et al., 2006; Wolfe et al., 2003). Limited studies focus on intimate partner violence from a child's perspective (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Mullender et al., 2002), with few studies focusing on a child's perspective while utilizing qualitative methods (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Hydén, 2009).

Furthermore, most studies in the field center on one child sibling within a family, assuming that violence between intimate partners affects children similarly (Edleson et al., 2007). However, siblings are unique in how they cognitively appraise and behaviorally respond to life situations (Bank et al., 2004; Daniels et al., 1985;

Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). Siblings may live in the same home, but they often have differing perceptions and experiences of the violence which may cause siblings to be impacted differently (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007).

Only a few studies have taken a deeper look into the family subsystems of the sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence (Lucas, 2002; Piotrowski, 2011; Skopp et al., 2005; Waddell, 1999). The purpose of the current qualitative, multiple case study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. This research focused on how child siblings and their mothers, who have lived in these violent homes, characterize the intimate partner violence and the quality of the sibling relationship. Additionally, the study aimed to uncover the extent to which sibling relationships act as a risk or protective factor for children living in these violent homes.

An important contribution of the current study is that it takes the scant research regarding sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence further by qualitatively gaining the multiple experiences and perceptions of both mothers and children about the violence and the child sibling relationship. The rich descriptions shared from both mothers and children illuminate the diversity of experiences and perceptions of child siblings living in homes with intimate partner violence. Children and their mothers discussed the violence in their homes, how children felt about this violence, how children responded to this violence, what children thought of and how they got along with their siblings, how children communicated and helped their

siblings, and what children and their siblings did during incidents of intimate partner violence. Exploring these multiple perspectives allowed for a deeper understanding of the violence the children have been exposed to, how they have appraised the violence, how they have behaviorally responded, and the dynamics of the sibling relationships within this context.

The case study approach in this study was critical in order to illustrate how the child siblings were embedded in a context of intimate partner violence where individual child siblings have unique cognitive appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence that can impact the sibling relationship. As described in the individual case studies, these families experienced the violence differently. Some children discussed being exposed to emotionally abusive incidents with arguing while others discussed witnessing threatening and physically violent incidents. However, some important similarities amongst family cases were present.

Due to the significant stress of the violence in their lives, some may assume that these children were destined for negative effects. However, the majority of children in the present study appeared to have appropriate behaviors and adjustment. In the parent report of children's adjustment behaviors, only two girls were reported as having clinically significant problems in adjustment (one in internalizing problem behaviors and one in externalizing problem behaviors). All of the children in the current study who were living in these homes were most definitely affected by the violence to which they have been exposed, but siblings can also provide support and protection for each other from the intimate partner violence. In several cases, older

female siblings took this further by providing caretaking for their younger brothers and sisters. Both mothers and children were able to share thoughtful information regarding how children live their everyday lives, how they perform in school, who they like to play with, how they interact and care for their siblings, as well as how the violence in the home impacts them.

Theoretical Implications

Multiple lenses for understanding intimate partner violence and child sibling relationships were utilized in the current study. Social learning, cognitive-contextual, and family systems perspectives assist in exploring the ways in which intimate partner violence impacts child sibling relationships (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). The family system ideally provides a supportive and protective system for children and their siblings to grow. Within this system, the sibling relationship is an important subsystem for development and learning. The family systems framework suggests that these sibling and family relationships are important in a child's development and can be impacted by the intimate partner violence within the mother-partner subsystem (Stocker & Youngblade, 1999; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993; Whiteman et al., 2011). Social learning theory illuminates how observational learning influences a child's development in the context of intimate partner violence (Edleson, 2006). Children who are exposed to this violence may observe this behavior and then repeat the behavior in their own sibling and peer relationships, possibly contributing to adjustment issues. This reproduction of behaviors was apparent in several families in different ways. The cognitive contextual

framework highlights the cognitive appraisals of children regarding conflict in their homes. Children actively process and try to make meaning of the violence. These appraisals are important in influencing their behavioral responses and adjustment outcomes (Grych et al., 1992).

Current Study

For the present study, themes relating to child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence fell into two broad categories: Children's Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence, and Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence. Three themes emerged from the data along with sub-themes in the category of Children's Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence: (a) "I've seen him hit my mom" (children's exposure to the intimate partner violence); (b) "Sometimes it was tough" (children's emotional appraisals of the intimate partner violence); and (c) Children's behavioral responses to the intimate partner violence. Two themes emerged from the data along with sub-themes in the category of Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence: (a) Sibling warmth and support and (b) Sibling conflict.

Violence in the Home

Mothers in the current study provided detailed descriptions of their diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the home. These descriptions included emotional abuse with yelling, arguing, name-calling, and threatening, as well as physical abuse with incidents of kicking, hitting, punching, throwing, and some more dangerous incidents with guns or knives. These narratives were consistent with

research on interviewing mothers about their experiences of intimate partner violence (McGee, 2000).

In addition to the violence, drugs and alcohol were described mostly by mothers as a factor in the majority of homes, with a few mothers disclosing their own drug use. Although alcohol and drug use and intimate partner violence is a complicated issue, research tends to point to a connection between the two (Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Kyriacou et al., 1999). The violence in conjunction with drug and alcohol use has affected the family system in many of the family cases in the present study. This dual exposure to children in the home includes violence occurring due to the drug or alcohol usage, as well as some children being taken or sent away from the parents due to their drug usage.

Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

In the current study, children were able to talk about their lives and provide somewhat detailed information about their sibling relationships. They shared valuable glimpses into their exposure and appraisals of the violence in their home, as seen in some past research (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). However, when asked about the violence, several children were not always able to or were reluctant to provide an overly detailed narrative of their experiences of the violence, sometimes providing one sentence or quick and to the point answers (Georgsson et al., 2011). Regardless, the children's insights regarding the sibling relationships and the violence were valuable and provided sufficient detail. Gaining the qualitative perspectives of these children was a significant aspect of this study, in

order to learn more about children's relationships with their brothers and sisters in the context of their exposure to intimate partner violence.

In addition to the children's reports, mothers were able to provide their perceptions of the violence and the sibling relationships, which enhance the findings in this study. For the most part, the mother and child responses regarding the exposure to violence in the home were somewhat similar, with children providing less information. Some research asserts that mothers seem to minimize the extent of the children's exposure to intimate partner violence (McGee, 2000). One explanation for mother's minimizing the violence their children have been exposed to could be due to maternal perceptions. Some mothers may not perceive or realize the extent to which their children have been exposed until they leave the relationship (McGee, 2000).

Also, in their own words in the current study some mothers emphasized that their children did not see severe violence. Jaleesa Campbell stated that her children have seen "fighting" and "punching walls," but "nothing severe." However, when probed further if her daughter had seen the abuser hit her, Jaleesa responded yes, and then further clarified that her children had seen the abuser punch her. Similarly, Latanya Carter shared, "They would see us argue and stuff like that and they probably, like, hear, a fight in the room, but to like, actually like see it, no." Though, when further probed with open-ended questions, Latanya did reveal that her children have seen arguments with profanity, as well as her 9 year-old seeing physical violence. The opportunity to further probe mothers and to allow mothers to speak open-endedly may

provide additional insight into the differences that have been seen in the perceptions of mothers and their children regarding children's exposure to intimate partner violence.

As discussed, all children in the present study were exposed to intimate partner violence between the mother-partner subsystems. Children in the present study experienced what Fantuzzo and Fusco (2007) referred to as sensory exposure (children seeing, hearing, or being injured during an incident). As in previous research (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Jouriles et al., 2000), the exposure of children to intimate partner violence in the current study was unique for each child with mothers and children describing varying degrees of exposure. This also includes variations in how siblings experience the violence (Skopp et al., 2005). At the same time, the children in the present study seemed to experience a common violent environment, being exposed to physical violence, emotional violence, and often both physical and emotional violence. These children and siblings exposed to violence were required to navigate their way in these families on a daily basis. For the most part, mothers and children concurred that the violence in the mother-partner subsystem children were exposed to included screaming, throwing, fighting, arguing, yelling, controlling, hitting, choking, biting, and pushing. These children in the present study heard, saw, and were aware of the incidents of violence when they happened, as well as the aftermath.

Moreover, research has shown children exposed to intimate partner violence, as well as child abuse, are at higher risk for experiencing both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors as compared to children exposed to only intimate partner violence (Kernic et al., 2003; Moylan et al., 2010). Interestingly, none of the

children interviewed in the present study disclosed child abuse from their parent. However, some mothers related concerns that child abuse has been perpetrated by the abuser. This lack of reporting of child abuse is an inconsistent result when compared to research that indicates the rates of co-occurring child abuse and child maltreatment range from 30-60 percent (Appel & Holden, 1998; Hamby et al., 2011). In the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) of 4,549 children and adolescents, Hamby et al. (2011) found that over half (56.8%) of the children experienced both intimate partner violence and child abuse over their lifetime.

The difference in findings may be due to several factors. First, children interviewed in the current study were already involved with the domestic violence shelter when the researcher conducted interviews, and they were all receiving counseling. For the majority of children, they had limited to no contact now with the abuser. Maternal concerns regarding child abuse and ongoing custody issues were present in the cases where children had regular contact with the abuser. Children in this study may have already discussed their concerns with counselors prior to the interview, and did not feel that they were relevant now that they were outside of the situation. In the interviews, it may be that children did not want to discuss anything happening to them personally by the abuser. The nondisclosure of child abuse by children could also be related to the study protocol. Children and mothers were aware that this researcher was a mandated reporter of child abuse and neglect, as described in the consent and assent procedures, and they may have withheld this information for that reason.

Children's Emotional Appraisals and Behavioral Responses

Children living in the same home experience intimate partner violence differently from their siblings. Children are able to report the violence, and describe their own unique ongoing perceptions, appraisals, and behavioral responses to the violence (Edleson et al., 2007; Överlien & Hydén, 2009; Skopp et al., 2005). Överlien and Hydén (2009) argued that children are active constructors of their social worlds where children interpret the violence, and then they act on these interpretations. They are “competent informants” who have their own story to tell that may be different than their mother or caretaker (Överlien & Hydén). This approach is in line with the cognitive-contextual framework, which describes how children actively process the violence they are exposed to and try to make their own meaning of the mother-partner subsystem and violent family interactions. The emotional and cognitive appraisals of the children affect how children immediately respond to the situation, as well as shape their future efforts to cope and function (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Grych et al., 1990). Children in the current study appraised the violence in their homes through being fearful, sad, feeling threatened and/or angry. In an effort to manage the immediate stress of this violence several children sought out what was occurring in the home, as well as then intervening in the violence or withdrawing from the situation, often in an effort to secure their and their sibling's safety.

Drawing from the cognitive-contextual framework, the current study included the perceptions of both mothers and children regarding children's emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence. These appraisals and responses were

intricately related to the child sibling relationships. Siblings were often in the same location or sought each other out for support during a violent incident. These children communicated and comforted each other during these violent incidents, as well as during everyday situations that may not have included violence.

Emotional appraisals of the intimate partner violence. Children's emotional appraisals of the violence in the home can have short and long-term effects on all aspects of children's lives and adjustment (Edleson et al., 2007). These appraisals can affect children's eating, sleeping, education, concentration, and issues with their daily living. In the present study, six subthemes emerged from the data regarding children's emotional appraisals of intimate partner violence: "I was scared" (fear, feeling threatened, and being worried); Sadness and Distress; "I wish he would get hit by a car" (annoyance, anger, hostility, and displeasure with relationship and abuser); Self-blame; "We would have a good day" (aftermath and return to "normal"); and Coping. Most mothers and children discussed more than one of these themes during their interviews.

Fear. For the present study, fear overwhelmingly stood out as a common emotional appraisal for children. Children, as well as their mothers frequently used the word "scared" and "afraid" in referencing how the children felt about the violence. Violence between the mother-partner subsystems can certainly be frightening where children become worried about their mother and siblings, or they may even perceive a threat to themselves (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011). Some children in this study feared for their own well-being, but they also feared for their mother's safety or that

she may even be killed. These findings are in line with previous research where children expressed fear for their mothers' safety, as well as fear for what would occur after an incident (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Joseph et al., 2006; Lucas, 2002; McGee, 2000). Children and mothers in the current study further explained the fears of children within the context of children and their siblings being afraid when watching or intervening in the violence, and siblings being afraid together when they would leave the room together to hide and hug each other, cry, or talk.

Fear is a normal response when we feel threatened (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These children have experienced violence that has continued for years in many cases. The violent nature of the home environment can cause children to be afraid for their and their loved one's safety, as well as the unknown of what the future may bring. The findings in this study highlight how upsetting intimate partner violence in the home can be to children (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007). When working with these families, professionals should recognize a child's fear as an important component regarding the violence in the home.

Sadness and anger. Feelings of sadness and anger from the exposure to intimate partner violence can affect the lives of children. Over half of the children in the current study expressed sadness regarding the violence, while several children discussed siblings or themselves being angry due to an incident of violence. The children and mothers in the current study reflected that children were sad about the violence, as well as sad about having to be in the shelter due to the violence. This finding is similar to previous studies where one-third to most of the children expressed

sadness, crying, or anger as common emotional responses to the violence and the abuser (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Lucas, 2003; McGee, 2000). Also, almost three quarters of mothers and half of the children in the current study described feelings of anger, annoyance, hostility, and displeasure with the abuser. These children and mothers mostly expressed that the abuser made children angry, the children did not like the abuser, and some children wanted the abuser to hurt. Children may cognitively appraise that they have been through this ongoing violence, and they are tired of the violence occurring. They may also feel that the violence is wrong, and that no woman deserves to be abused.

Self-blame. Edleson et al. (2007) suggested that based on their perceptions, children cope differently and have various understandings of conflict that occur within the mother-partner subsystem. At times, the child may blame themselves for incidents of violence. Notably in the current study, as was found in DeBoard-Lucas and Grych (2011), only a small number of children and mothers indicated that children blame themselves for incidents of violence between the mother-partner subsystems. It is possible that since children in the present study were already involved in counseling at the time of the interview, they may have been taught that the violence in the mother-partner subsystem was not their fault, and they were not to blame.

Prior research has shown that those children exposed to intimate partner violence who have positive coping skills and do not blame themselves for the violence have an increased chance of enhanced adjustment outcomes (DeBoard-Lucas and

Grych, 2011). Work with children regarding issues surrounding self-blame should be continued.

Coping. Children's emotional appraisals of violence guide their efforts to cope (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011). Edleson et al. (2007) explained that coping strategies children utilize can assist in how they are affected by the intimate partner violence. In the current study, mothers reported on how children cope. Mother's responses regarding a checklist of children's behaviors showed the majority of the children in the study had normal internalizing and externalizing behaviors. During interviews, mothers stated that children mostly utilized engagement in distracting activities, such as playing with toys and games, spending time with friends, and reading activities. This is congruent with prior research on children's perspectives where children reported that they and their siblings would listen to music, talk, play with toys or pets, and read as coping strategies (Lucas, 2002; McGee, 2000). Additionally, almost half of the mothers in the current study discussed children would be emotionally disengaged during an incident by tuning-out or ignoring the violence in their effort to cope. As avoidance is a common coping strategy, this may be the case in this violent context (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A few of the children even spoke about a transition to a "normal" family environment after an incident, which may also be a coping strategy for children to not think about or focus on the negative aspects of the violence.

Children can present to professionals with various coping strategies. It is important for those working with children to support and help children enhance their

coping strategies, as they are what allow children to endure the ongoing intimate partner violence and other stressors within their home.

Behavioral responses to the violence. From their unique cognitive appraisals of the intimate partner violence in the home, children behaviorally respond to the violence (Edleson et al., 2007; Överlien & Hydén, 2009; Skopp et al., 2005). As the questions provided to children were not incident specific, children in the current study discussed using varying behavioral responses to the violence, and mothers and children cited children utilizing different responses in different incidents. Sibling relationships were linked to the behavioral responses of children, where siblings were in the same homes and may have intervened with a sibling during an incident, may have withdrawn and hid with a sibling during an incident, may have both been drawn into incidents, and may have modeled the abuser's violent behaviors.

In the current study, five subthemes emerged from the data regarding children's behavioral responses to intimate partner violence: "I would go in the room" (going to the incident to check on things); "Leave my mom alone" (intervening physically, intervening verbally, and gaining assistance of others to help); Withdrawal (leaving the incident, taking siblings from the incident); "Tell your mom she's stupid" (being drawn into the violence by the abuser); and Modeling behaviors (similarities of child and abuser).

Some research has found that children try to leave the room or get away from violent incidents, possibly checking on and directing younger siblings (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Edleson et al., 2008; Hamby et al., 2011). To some extent, this

past research reflects the current study, as some children did report leaving the situation, and the majority of children revealed that siblings would leave the incidents together. However, this reveals the complexity of children's behavioral responses during incidents of intimate partner violence, as children have multiple methods in which they behaviorally respond. Some children in the current study would go to the violent incident to see what was occurring and then decide whether to withdraw, watch, or intervene to help themselves, their mother or their siblings.

Intervening. Common to families in the present study, children and their siblings were verbally involved, physically involved, and helped in gaining the assistance of others during incidents of intimate partner violence. The most frequent intervention by children was that they were verbally involved in an incident, talking to or yelling at the abuser. The majority of children in the current study verbally expressed themselves to try to make the abuser stop hurting their mother or family.

Findings here are slightly higher than the NatSCEV, indicating children intervened during incidents of intimate partner violence by yelling at the abuser to stop in 49.9% of the families (Hamby et al., 2011). Slightly higher percentages found may be due to the small sample size in the current study, or the fact that the present study qualitatively assessed if there was any involvement during an incident which could include just talking, saying things, or yelling.

Other ways children can be involved in an incident of intimate partner violence includes being physically involved. In the present study, one-third of mothers and one-third of children reported that children physically intervened during a violent

incident. These children, both older and younger siblings, hit and pushed the abuser or stood in front of the abuser to physically distract them. One child described jumping on the abuser's back, while another child related that she slapped the abuser on the face. These findings are in concert with previous research suggesting between 23 to 41 percent of children may physically intervene during a violent incident (Edleson et al., 2003; 2008). Again, in spite of the possible threat to themselves, these children were taking extraordinary measures to try to prevent the abuser from hurting their mother or family.

Another way to intervene in an incident of violence is to seek outside assistance from relatives, friends, or the police. In the present study, half of the children, usually the older sibling, would gain assistance, or had a safety plan to gain assistance if needed. This includes children obtaining help from extended family members and friends. A few children discussed plans and attempts to gain police assistance, but none of these attempts ended in police involvement. There is support in the intimate partner violence research that suggests children intervening by gaining assistance for them and their family. Prior research suggest between 15-48% of children may decide to gain outside help during an incident (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Edleson et al., 2003; Edleson et al., 2008; Hamby et al., 2011).

Even with the threat of consequences from the abuser, the children in the current study perceived and appraised the violence, and based on their history in the violent home, the present violence in the home, and future thoughts about the violence, they decided they must physically or verbally intervene, or gain assistance

from others during incidents of intimate partner violence. McGee (2000) discussed how children utilize the strategy of intervening in incidents of intimate partner violence as a way of protecting themselves, their siblings, or their mother.

It is critical to share with community advocates and professionals that children are not only observing these incidents of intimate partner violence, but are involved in a variety of ways. These children place themselves at increased risk when they intervene in a violent incident between the mother-partner subsystem, where they can be hurt during the incident or even draw the attention of the abuser to themselves. One child in the present study reported being fallen on by the abuser when she was involved, and another child reported the abuser being mad at her when she intervened.

It is central that future research look at children's adjustment outcomes, behaviors and coping from this type of intervention in violent incidents so that we can provide appropriate services to our children. Lee, Kotch, and Cox (2004) found that children who directly intervene in a violent incident had higher levels of behavioral problems than those who had not. Georgsson et al. (2011) pointed out those children who report being involved in an incident of intimate partner violence did not describe their involvement as being effective. This consequence can play a role in the child's cognitive and behavioral adjustment, as they have cognitively appraised the situation to be one in which they should help, but when they do intervene their assistance was not helpful.

Drawn into the violence and modeling abuser behaviors. It is not uncommon for the abuser to draw children into the violence by asking them to be involved

(Edleson et al., 2007; Mullender et al., 2002). In the present study, almost half of the mothers and one-third of the children reported children being drawn into the violence where the father would encourage the children to call their mother and other family member's names, would constantly talk about the mother to the child, threatened to hurt the child during the incident, or asked the child for their opinions regarding the violent incident. These abusers are modeling behaviors for their children by involving them in the violent incidents and by putting down and degrading the mother in front of the children. Social learning theory highlights how children may begin and possibly continue to use violence in their sibling and future personal relationships (Bandura, 1977). Kernic et al. (2003) found children exposed to intimate partner violence demonstrated increased problems in acting out and aggression, and difficulties with social competence. Further, these children have been found to be at increased risk of aggression in their own intimate relationships in both adolescence and adulthood (Ehrensaft et al., 2003). The children in the current study were reported on the whole to have normal adjustment behaviors. However, several mothers did relate concerns with their children acting out aggressively. In one of the homes where there was ongoing emotional abuse, as well as severe conflict in the sibling relationship the mother discussed how the abuser would encourage his sons to call their mother names. In another case where the mother was concerned about the aggression in her daughter, the child revealed that the abuser and the mother would ask for the sibling's opinions on who was right or wrong in the violent incident.

In the present study, all but two mothers discussed concerns regarding similarities seen between the abuser and their children. This included children aggressively acting out with their siblings and children verbally lashing out at their siblings and their mother, sometimes parroting very similar words as the abuser. The home environment serves as a model for children to develop appropriate adjustment and social skills. For those children exposed to intimate partner violence, the model may be violence and control where children may learn that violence and aggression is acceptable, has a place within family interactions, and is an effective way to resolve conflict. From this, children may become more willing to utilize emotional violence or aggression in their own sibling and personal relationships (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Fosco et al., 2007; Wolfe et al., 2003). These behaviors may solely present as normal sibling conflict, possibly with some aggression. However, in other homes, this may rise to a higher level of sibling aggression and conflict, and possibly abuse (Bandura, 1977; Edleson, 2006; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Skopp et al., 2005).

Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

Warm and supportive sibling relationships play a central role in a child's positive development and adjustment (Bank et al., 2004; Brody, 2004; Buist et al., 2013; Fuhrman & Buhrmester, 1985; McHale et al., 2012). In the current study, sibling relationships were complicated, as the sibling interactions and relationships developed in a violent home environment between the mother-partner subsystem (Bank et al., 2004; Criss & Shaw, 2005). All eleven families discussed some level of

sibling warmth and support by way of companionship, communication, helping, teaching, caretaking, support, and protection, but they also discussed some level of sibling conflict by way of minimal arguing to more physical levels of aggression. Siblings appear to have unique interactions that include cooperation, companionship, nurturance, and hostility. The nature of the sibling relationship can be that both hostile and conflictual behaviors are present, but then there are also warm and affectionate behaviors (Noller, 2005; Sheehan et al., 2004).

Based on individual characteristics, family characteristics, and environmental factors, siblings in the same family can experience and appraise intimate partner violence quite differently (Jenkins, Dunn et al., 2005; Skopp et al., 2005). Children may or may not share the same exposure as their siblings, as some children may be more involved in the violence or may be present more often during an incident. Even when the exposure to the violence is shared, the siblings may have different perceptions given their individual differences. Children's exposure to the violence, emotional appraisals, and behavioral responses in the current study were intertwined with the sibling relationships within the context of intimate partner violence. Children and mothers spoke about siblings being together when the violence was occurring. Sometimes children would watch or intervene in the violence with their sibling, while other times children would take their siblings away from the violence to support and protect them. Regarding the violence, discussion surrounded siblings providing support and protection for each other, as children were sometimes scared, crying, and

sad regarding the violence. Other siblings were angry and talked together about the ongoing intimate partner violence.

Sibling warmth and support. Regardless of the considerable intimate partner violence in the mother-partner system affecting the lives of the children in the present study, a clear pattern emerged from the data relating to siblings being a main source of warmth and support. Siblings play a significant role in the lives of their brothers and sisters. In the current study, the key dynamics of children's connection to their siblings, leading to warm and supportive relationships include four themes: "We play games" (sibling companionship), "I help her" (sibling teaching and helping behaviors), "We talk about things" (sibling communication), and Siblings as supportive and protective.

Companionship. In the present study, almost three quarters of mothers and most of the children in homes with intimate partner violence explained that children were companionate. The children interact in activities, spend time together, play games, listen to music, go places together, and read together. These companionate relationships with positive engagement and intimacy assist children in moving closer together and developing prosocial sibling relationships (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Kramer, 2010; McHale et al., 2012; Volling & Blandon, 2003). In these violent homes, cultivating the companionship may assist siblings in strengthening the sibling relationship, as well as possibly coping with the violence. Professionals can work directly with children and siblings regarding their companionship within the context of

the violence to which they have been exposed by continuing to encourage these interactions in joint activities.

The two cases in the present study where both mothers and children describe the siblings as not being companionate or close were comprised of sibling dyads made up of preteen younger sisters and older adolescent brothers. This limited companionship is indicative of the research that points to a trend in the decline in companionship and involvement with siblings during adolescence (Volling & Blandon, 2003).

Teaching, Helping, and Caretaking. Teaching, helping, and taking care of a sibling can be beneficial to all children (Brody, 2004; Kramer, 2010; Lucas, 2002). In the current study, most of the mothers and children reported siblings help their brothers and sisters with activities such as homework, reading, cleaning, and carrying or getting something for their sibling. Children are in a prime position to teach their sibling new skills and educational points, help siblings adjust to new experiences, care for siblings, promote cooperation, provide support and protection to siblings, and try to teach siblings how to behave (Kramer, 2010; Volling & Blandon, 2003).

The current study found that most mothers and children revealed that children participated in empathic and comforting behaviors when siblings were unhappy or sad. Volling and Blandon (2003) discussed empathy in the sibling relationship to include children being pleased by their sibling's progress, wanting siblings to succeed, showing concern and sympathy, and trying to comfort a sibling. While this is true of sibling relationships, in the present study in the context of intimate partner violence,

the children and mothers mostly discussed empathy in the context of helping or teaching a sibling. This process included sympathy and comfort when a sibling was unhappy or sad and showing concern for their sibling. Asking more in-depth questions about empathy in the sibling relationship in future studies of siblings and intimate partner violence may yield additional information about empathy.

Some families have children that take on a sibling role that is more involved than solely helping and teaching. Almost half of the families in the present study discussed children being a caretaker for their siblings. Most of these families have a child caretaker who is the oldest daughter, ranging in age from eight to twelve years-old. Mothers described these daughters as “motherly” and being able to take “control” of the household. They were responsible for ensuring their siblings needs, such as feeding, homework, bathing, and other daily activities. One family described a reciprocal caretaking relationship where mixed sex siblings were required to take care of themselves and each other due to the drug use and violence in the home.

The sibling roles here extend from a helper in the sibling relationship to actually becoming a surrogate caretaker for their siblings when the parents were unavailable. Parentification is often a term used to describe this caretaking (Earley & Cushway, 2002). Lucas (2002) similarly described older female siblings as parentified, where they take charge during an incident of intimate partner violence, are involved in parenting younger siblings, and also provide caretaking for their mother.

Siblings who take on the role of caretaker for their younger siblings may also be providing a model for their brothers and sisters that reinforce positive and nurturing

behaviors (Whiteman et al., 2011). In addition to providing support and safety to their younger sibling, this caretaking by siblings who were exposed to intimate partner violence may promote responsibility, resourcefulness, and caring. This caretaking then may lead to increased social competence and positive adjustment (Edleson et al., 2011).

Communication. Communication between siblings exposed to intimate partner violence includes children sharing with each other about their lives and feelings, as well as siblings discussing the violence. Almost three quarters of the children in the current study engaged in communication about life events, school, and friends. Additionally, half of the children and almost half of the mothers in this study discussed children talking about the violence in the home to some extent. This finding is similar to Lucas (2002) who found that siblings provided verbal support and comfort during an incident of violence. In the present study, these conversations between siblings vary greatly amongst families, from children communicating comfort to their sibling that everything would be okay, to warning the sibling that the violence was occurring, to discussing their dislike of the abuser. Siblings may turn to each other as a source of emotional comfort and support (Jenkins, 1992; Kim et al., 2006). These conversations amongst siblings both during and away from the violence may serve to strengthen the sibling relationship, with siblings aiding each other when they were struggling with fear, anger, or sadness regarding the violence.

Siblings as supportive and protective. Many children are able to withstand the extreme stress of the environment of intimate partner violence and bounce back from

the adversity, while others display negative adjustment patterns (Cicchetti, 2010; Kitzmann et al., 2003). Masten et al. (1990) explained that many children have been successful even though they faced great adversity. Protective factors “are those variables that buffer children from adversity” (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007, p. 151.). These protective factors include individual factors (temperament, intellectual skills), family or interpersonal factors (parent-child relationship), and community factors that provide support for children (Masten, 2001).

Research indicates that children in violent homes maintain better adjustment if there is one non-abusive supportive parent available to them (Osofsky, 2003). In homes with intimate partner violence, an adult supportive figure may be unavailable. Although older siblings are not usually primary caretakers of their younger siblings, a supportive, warm, and caring sibling may help to make a difference in their siblings’ adjustment. Sibling support and warmth have been identified as playing a positive role in homes with conflict and stress (Bush & Ehrenberg, 2003; Dunn et al., 1994; Gass et al., 2007; Iturralde et al., 2013; Jenkins & Smith, 1990). In homes with violence, siblings may fulfill a supportive and protective role with their brothers and sisters, providing relief from the stress and violence by providing caretaking, support, and safety (Bush & Ehrenberg, 2003; Edleson et al., 2011; Lucas, 2002; Piotrowski, 2011).

In the current study, almost two-thirds of mothers described siblings protecting their brothers and sisters during everyday life. These siblings stood up for each other and would not allow others to harm their brothers and sisters. They provided this

support and protection of their siblings even when they themselves may have had conflictual relationships with their sibling. Further, most mothers and three quarters of children similarly discussed experiences of siblings being protective of one another during a violent incident between the mother-partner subsystem. Siblings, usually the older female sibling, would take control and pull their siblings away from the violent incident to comfort them, hide with them, and to distract them with activities. Mothers and children described the fear and sadness children felt during incidents of intimate partner violence, as well as the responses siblings had together when standing together or intervening in the violent incident, or when they withdrew from the violence together to hide in a closet or under a bed. The children would hold one another when crying, support each other with comforting words, and overall be there as a support during some of the most fearful times of their lives.

The exposure to the violence, as well as the emotional appraisals and behavioral responses of children in the current study play a significant role in the sibling relationship. Sibling warmth and support in the relationships include siblings being companionate, siblings communicating, siblings helping, teaching and caretaking, and siblings being protective of their siblings. Mothers and children described warm, protective, and supportive sibling relationships, which may help children from developing behavioral and emotional problem behaviors.

Professional and community services to child siblings exposed to intimate partner violence could build on the strengths of the warmth and support of siblings during these stressful and violent incidents. Services for these families with siblings

should focus on the dynamics of the sibling relationship, ensuring a focus on how siblings care for and protect each other in these home environments. Future research should delve more deeply into both siblings' experiences regarding their home environments to provide a full picture of the needs of siblings.

Sibling conflict. Warmth and conflict co-exist (Buist et al., 2013). In conjunction with sibling warmth and support in the current study, varying levels of sibling conflict exist for all families. This conflict ranges from minimal to moderate to severe with concerns the conflict may be abusive. Aggressive sibling interactions have been termed violence, conflict, maltreatment, hostility, and rivalry (Caspi, 2012). Aggressive siblings engage in competition, conflict, violence, and abuse. Although aggression in sibling relationships has been typically expected or seen as normal by many families (Caspi, 2012; Hamby et al., 2011), it is important to note that aggression can be in the form of mild to extreme, and at times, this aggression may rise to the level of abuse.

Sibling conflict or aggression can be damaging, but at the same time it can increase social competence and problem solving skills (Caspi, 2012). Mild conflict in warm and supportive relationships has been found to be associated with positive social competence and prosocial behaviors (Caspi, 2012; McHale et al., 2012; Stormshak et al., 1996; Volling & Blandon, 2003). In the current study, almost half of the families described minimal conflict, such as verbal arguments, yelling, teasing, and minimal pushing. At the same time, all of these sibling relationships with minimal conflict contained fairly high levels of sibling warmth and support.

In three of the five cases that reported very minimal conflict in the sibling relationship, the older siblings were nine and ten year-old females, while the younger siblings were toddlers or preschoolers. In two of these three families, the older sister appeared parentified and provided a caretaking role, and in the third case the older sister did some teaching for her younger sibling. These parentified children with caretaking roles may naturally be more “motherly” where they were in a position to care for and be close to their sibling, and thus not participate in the more conflictual acts between siblings.

Conversely, negativity and violence within the mother-partner subsystem can spill over into other family subsystems, specifically the sibling relationship (Conger et al., 2003; Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 2003; Whiteman et al., 2011). Criss and Shaw (2005), as well as Feinberg et al. (2005), found that in families with negative marital relationships, children were engaged in higher sibling conflict and antisocial behaviors. Children in homes with intimate partner violence may be at increased risk for poor sibling relationships because of the violence in the mother-partner subsystem and children modeling that relationship.

In the current study, almost a third of the families described more moderate conflict where there was arguing and some physical contact. These siblings participated in constant arguing and bickering, were mean to each other, were jealous, and were more frequently physical with each other, sometimes to the point of a punch.

Additionally, almost a third of the families discussed high levels of sibling conflict with physical aggression and verbal fighting. It is important to note that

although children described some information about physical incidents with siblings, mothers appear to be the primary reporters of children experiencing the more severe sibling conflict. Children may be less likely to share their externalizing or aggressive behaviors. This difference stresses the importance of gaining the multiple perspectives of both mothers and children to gain a complete picture of the sibling relationship.

In one of these families where there is high sibling aggression and quarrelling with constant physical fighting in the sibling relationship, the siblings in the home also seem to demonstrate all aspects of sibling warmth and comfort. The oldest sister has a caretaking role with both of her younger sisters in daily activities and during violent incidents. However, there is also physical aggression between the close in age siblings. It may be that being exposed to intimate partner violence in combination with providing a high level of care for her siblings may be overly stressful, where the sibling strikes back.

The other two families discussed some aspects of warmth and support, but also disclosed physical aggression that may very well border on sibling abuse. One mother was worried about her children's resentment, biting, blowing up, being "badly" physically aggressive, instigating, being angry, yelling and screaming. The other mother was afraid of the physical hitting, kicking, biting, punching and jealousy with her three boys. This mother reported more of a negative sibling relationship than her son. These male siblings continued to participate in some warm and supportive

behaviors with protection of each other in their daily lives, but they were also highly physically aggressive.

Children exposed to intimate partner violence have shown more difficulty with behavioral and emotional functioning, as well as with cognitive functioning and attitudes (Edleson et al., 2011). Children exposed to intimate partner violence tend to exhibit higher aggression and antisocial behaviors, as well as increased fearful and inhibited behaviors when compared to children not exposed to violence (Edleson et al., 2003). A family system absorbed in conflictual interactions with violence, negative parenting, possible child abuse, and coercion, may serve to model and support the sibling conflict, as well as possible sibling violence or abuse (Bank et al., 2004; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 2005; Caspi, 2012; Criss & Shaw, 2005; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999; Stormshak et al., 1996; Volling & Blandon, 2003).

Summary

In homes with intimate partner violence, children's emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to violence are intertwined with the sibling relationships. The rich descriptions shared by both mothers and children in this qualitative, multiple case study illuminate the diverse feelings during and about the violent incidents in their homes, as well as the dynamics of the child sibling relationship where siblings were involved in intervening in the violence, and comforting and protecting siblings.

All of the children in the current study have been exposed to an environment of intimate partner violence. Children uniquely appraised and attributed their own meaning to their home situation. They shared that they were fearful and sad, as well

as displeased and angered by the abuser and the violence in their homes. However, at the same time, these children also responded to incidents of violence. When needed, they gained assistance from others for the safety of their mother, their sibling, and themselves. Also, the children, sometimes along with their sibling, physically or verbally intervened during an incident to try to stop the violence. Families described siblings standing by each other and comforting each other during an incident. Additionally, families shared that children were protective of their siblings and took siblings away from an incident of violence to protect, distract, and comfort them.

The sibling relationship quality surrounding intimate partner violence in the current study helps to illustrate that even though children may experience both conflict and warmth in the sibling relationship, the sibling can be present for their brothers and sisters to support and protect them from the negative and harmful effects of exposure to the violence. Families described companionship, communication, helping, teaching, and comforting as parts of the sibling relationship in these violent homes. Siblings with and without conflict served to protect their brothers and sisters in everyday life and during incidents of intimate partner violence. The siblings can draw on the warm and supportive sibling relationship when in need.

The current study recognizes the importance of the sibling relationship in the context of intimate partner violence. As one of the few studies that qualitatively examines siblings in this context along with gaining the perspectives of both children and their mothers, this study provides important insight regarding siblings that can be used by professionals and community organizations that work with and provide

services to these siblings and families. Further research on sibling relationships within the context of intimate partner violence with larger sample sizes, perspectives of mothers and more than one sibling, and longitudinal research is needed to further explore these sibling relationships and to see how they support and protect siblings from the risks of emotional, behavioral, and social problems associated with exposure to intimate partner violence.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study contributes to the scant research on child sibling relationships within the context of intimate partner violence. However, limitations of the current study must be presented and provide future direction for research. First, future research on child sibling relationships within this violent context can attempt to utilize samples from domestic violence organizations, as well as samples from the community. The current study utilized a sample from those families living at or receiving services from domestic violence shelters so it is necessary to be cautious in the generalizability of findings, as shelter samples are not representative of all families experiencing intimate partner violence (Wolfe et al., 2003). Children from shelters represent a small percentage of children exposed to intimate partner violence whose mothers sought help, as many families do not seek shelter services. In addition, children from domestic violence shelters may be exposed to the most severe violence, and have issues in everyday life due to intimate partner violence, as well as issues in their lives that are related to the stressful transition to shelter life, including a lack of resources and supports, housing issues, and school changes (Edleson et al., 2007;

Jouriles et al., 2000). Research participants from shelters are often living under transient circumstances, are concerned about the safety, security, and future for themselves and their children, and have concerns about their confidentiality and uncertain futures (Edleson et al., 2007). More positively, the domestic violence shelters can offer both mothers and children a safe space to talk about the violence, as well as ongoing counseling and supportive services. Reaching to the community samples, in addition to shelter samples could provide further light onto the child sibling relationship quality in the context of intimate partner violence.

Second, the present study must be looked at in the context of the qualitative nature of a small group of families involved with domestic violence shelters, as findings are unable to be generalized to the population. The current study consisted of a small sample size of 12 children and 11 mothers where all mothers and children were involved with the counseling and services offered by domestic violence shelters. The length of time these families were living in the shelter and/or away from the violence varied. Two families were only residing at the shelter for one month whom may have had more immediate crisis needs than other families in the study. Five families from the same shelter and one family from a different shelter were residing in those shelters' transitional housing programs for three to eleven months where they received ongoing services and housing. The other two families were living in their own housing and receiving services from the shelter at the time of the interview. Those families not participating in the study or those who have been away from the

violent situation for a longer period of time and receiving services may be qualitatively different than the families that participated in the current study.

Next, interviewing multiple informants regarding child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence will further the knowledge on this important topic. Edleson et al. (2007) stated that one limitation in research is not collecting the perceptions of multiple informants regarding children's perceptions of the intimate partner violence. The present study attempted to address this issue by gaining both the mother and child perceptions of the intimate partner violence. However, due to trouble with recruitment, the researcher was unable to collect data from multiple siblings in the same home, except in one case. By not gaining the perspectives of at least two or more siblings for all of the cases in the present study, important aspects of the sibling relationship may have been omitted.

For future research, qualitatively considering the perceptions of the mother, as well as multiple siblings in the family, other caretakers, and teachers regarding the intimate partner violence and the sibling relationship in the home is necessary to gain a complete picture of the child sibling relationship quality within the family context. The current study only begins to focus on child sibling experiences and relationships in this context. To delve deeper into the lives of child siblings in the context of intimate partner violence, it is important to continue to look at multiple facets of the child siblings' life, such as both individual child adjustment as well as sibling adjustment, utilizing multiple informants and multiple methods (Edleson et al., 2007).

A fourth limitation in the present study is that the eleven families were only interviewed at one point in time. Longitudinal studies will be critical to assess the actual experiences and ongoing effects of intimate partner violence on children and their siblings over time (Edleson et al., 2007). Sibling relationships are dynamic and change over time. Gaining qualitative longitudinal studies to assess the sibling relationships over time in these families is important to discover the development of the sibling relationship over time, as well as the short and long term impact of the violence on the children and the sibling relationship (Edleson et al.).

In addition to attaining additional qualitative research regarding the child sibling relationship in the context of intimate partner violence, quantitative measures may also be useful, especially looking at the siblings outcomes over time. Overall, research must include the appropriate available tools that gauge the experiences of everyday family life, spread light onto the larger family context issues of intimate partner violence by utilizing family context measures, assist in learning about the individual child's and sibling's internal and external behaviors and social competencies using child adjustment tools, and assess the qualities of the child sibling relationships that may serve as a protective factor for child siblings to thrive in this context (Edleson et al., 2007; Semrud-Clikeman et al., 2003). Learning more about family context, individual child behaviors, as well as emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence, and child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence is essential to gain a fuller understanding of the unique

characteristics surrounding the world of these child siblings exposed to intimate partner violence.

Lastly, an important aspect of research should be to shape studies that address the lack of diversity in previous samples regarding race, age, and gender. The present study was unable to examine similarities or differences relating to the age, race, or gender of siblings. First, the current study interviewed more Caucasian participants than African American and Hispanic participants. Also, the age of siblings varied in this study. Some households had adolescent male siblings with younger female sisters, while others had middle childhood aged female children with preschool or toddler siblings, and still others had more than one sibling within the middle childhood range. In addition to the differing sibling ages of siblings in the current study, there were also differences in gender. Of the 12 children interviewed in the current study, only two were male. Overall in the families interviewed, there were more female siblings than male siblings with there being almost twice as many females in the homes as there were males.

Due to the predominance of girls within families compared to boys and the differing ages of the children in the homes, there was not enough data available to draw conclusions based on the gender or the siblings. Future research looking at similar age ranges, gender, and race of siblings in homes with intimate partner violence would be beneficial to make comparisons.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Research participant Pam Ryan, the mother of three boys, hoped that this study on child sibling relationships in the context of intimate partner violence would help other families. She shared,

I just hope that what I gave you will help other families in situations...The more people I think that look at it and the dynamics of the household and the interaction between the siblings, the better.

Both mothers and children in the current study discussed the violent incidents occurring in their homes. The first step in working with those affected by intimate partner violence is to provide mothers and children a safe and secure environment. As a community, we need to raise awareness on the impact of intimate partner violence on both children and mothers and begin the process to create public policy and laws to eradicate this violence.

Some areas in our country presently impose criminal sanctions on those perpetrators of abuse who expose their children to intimate partner violence. Pushing for public policy initiatives that includes legal ramifications for children being exposed to intimate partner violence may be useful and should be further investigated. However, it is important that we are careful in implementing these policies so that they do not unduly persecute or blame mothers for not protecting their children when they themselves are abused (Edleson, 2006). We also must look closely at the possible outcomes of any such policy, such as an increase in the number of families involved with child protective services and the criminal legal system. Implementing policy

regarding these initiatives would have to be closely scrutinized and proper funding would be fundamental (Edleson, 2006).

The children in the current study explicitly discussed how they have been exposed to intimate partner violence and provided a glimpse into how that has affected their lives and relationships with their siblings. However, there is a lack of evidence for the benefits of universally screening children's exposure to intimate partner violence (Wathen & MacMillan, 2013). Further research should investigate screening children's exposure, as well as screening these children's emotional and behavioral adjustment to ensure a child's overall health and well-being (Hamby et al., 2011). Screening children for exposure to intimate partner violence can be implemented not only during medical visits, but also in the educational setting where children spend a major portion of their time. Teachers and counselors within these settings would know the children well and could provide a support system to these children.

All screening necessitates readily available and funded community based referral services. Collaboration between the healthcare field, educational settings, counseling and mental health facilities, child protective services, social service agencies, and criminal justice agencies is critical (Edleson, 2006; Wathen & MacMillan, 2013). The current study suggests the importance of the warmth, support, and protection in the sibling relationship in families with intimate partner violence. These children spend time together within these situations, often trying to be with their sibling while at the violence, intervening in the violence, or withdrawing from the violence together to provide comfort and support. Training professionals working

with these families regarding the consequences of children and siblings exposed to intimate partner violence, and child sibling relationships in this context would be needed to ensure that we are truly providing coordinated community services (Jaffee & Crooks, 2005).

Several mothers in the current study discussed the distress and coping strategies their children are utilizing to deal with their exposure to the violence. Improved family based intervention and prevention programs are necessary to address the needs of children exposed to intimate partner violence (Feinberg, Solmeyer, & McHale, 2012). Prevention programs aimed at preventing intimate partner violence, as well as preventing the negative outcomes of children's exposure to intimate partner violence should be fully funded in parenting classes, divorce classes, pre-school and elementary schools, and social and community service agencies (Hamby et al., 2011). Children in the current study, and others in their same situations could have benefited from these prevention programs within their own community. Providing supports and prevention across families, the educational system, and the community can assist in developing awareness and strengths for our children (Summers, 2006).

Children and mothers in the current study expressed the unique experiences, emotional appraisals, behavioral responses, and sibling dynamics in relation to living in homes with intimate partner violence. Enhancing the support programs and interventions that we provide to families, parents, individual children, and siblings are essential to address the issues surrounding intimate partner violence (Kramer, 2010). Foremost, it is important for those working with families to look at the strengths of the

individual, siblings, and family as a whole to enhance positive outcomes and to strengthen sibling relationships (Kramer, 2010; Summers, 2006). Together, mothers and siblings, as well as professionals, can learn more about the importance of fostering the sibling relationship.

The children in the current study demonstrated both warmth and conflict in their sibling relationships. In addition, the study highlighted how siblings support each other from the violence by providing warmth, communication, caretaking, help, and protection. Mothers were knowledgeable and were able to report about their children's exposure to the intimate partner violence, as well as their sibling relationships. Parent education programs should include the dynamics of children's exposure to intimate partner violence, as well as focusing on both warm and conflictual child sibling relationships in this context. Providing parents with the knowledge of how children are affected by the violence and how children may be using their siblings for support in these incidents may be beneficial to mothers. Teaching parents about the social and behavioral competencies and skills of their children and siblings can enhance the sibling relationship quality (Kramer, 2010, Waddell, 1999). As conflict was present in all homes in this study, these programs should help to train parents to address the conflict between their child siblings and to promote effective coping strategies, constructive problem solving, and conflict resolution skills (Feinberg et al., 2012; Howe & Recchia, 2006; Kramer, 2010). Programs should be designed with the understanding that child siblings living in the

same home may have varying perceptions, appraisals, and responses to intimate partner violence, which could impact the sibling relationship (Skopp et al., 2005).

Along with parent education, designing programs that specifically work with and support child siblings is important. The current study found children exposed to intimate partner violence have diverse experiences. A varied response from our community is critical to address these differences (Edleson, 2006). As well, it is important to realize the differences in sibling appraisals and responses to violent incidents, and to focus on sibling relationships as positive influences on children's adjustment (Caspi, 2012; Skopp et al., 2005). Interventions and programs should target the needs of children with an emphasis on all of the sibling relationships in the home, as well as the individual children's emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence that are intertwined with the sibling relationships.

Providing individualized assessment and care to children and siblings to explore their unique experiences and insights is an important part of the process of helping these siblings and families. Knowledge gained from these children can assist in developing a coordinated community response to provide effective and diverse prevention, intervention, treatment, and the cessation of the perpetuation of this violence in the lives of individual children and siblings (Edleson et al., 2007; Grych, Fincham et al., 2000).

Research shows that having one supportive person in their lives can have a positive effect on the child's emotional, physical, and psychological adjustment (Cicchetti, 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). This is especially true for families where

the mother is unable to leave the relationship and is unavailable to her children; ensuring that the child has this one supportive person in their lives may make a vast difference in their outcomes. As seen in the current study, siblings comfort, support, and provide protection for their siblings during incidents of intimate partner violence. Those working with families can utilize these findings to delve further into the sibling subsystem in these homes, as they can provide a supportive, protective resource for their brothers and sisters. Working with both the mother and the siblings to cultivate this supportive sibling relationship may assist the child in their adjustment to the violence in their home. In addition, the current study also found that several older female siblings were in a caretaking role for their younger siblings. Taking this caretaking relationship into account when working with child siblings can be crucial to children's adjustment. Promoting the sibling relationship as a supportive relationship in coping with the distress of exposure to intimate partner violence can be one avenue to assist these children as they navigate through the impact of the violence (Waddell et al., 2001).

A coordinated response and future research is critical so that professionals can work appropriately and efficiently with child siblings and their families from homes with intimate partner violence. Teaching professionals that the quality of the sibling relationships may be affected by the violence can enhance services to child siblings and their families. Advocacy to help empower women as they are making changes in their lives, as well as advocating for policy changes to gain the correct and affordable counseling for children and their siblings is essential.

As intimate partner violence is embedded in the lives of these children, we are tasked with assisting them in order to increase positive adjustment. However, to not have these children exposed to these violent home environments in the first place would be desirable. As a nation, the commitment towards the eradication of intimate partner violence in the lives of these child siblings should be primary. Violence in our culture does not have to and should not continue to be accepted.

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Appendix A
Human Subjects Protocol Approval

dlb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL
University of Delaware

Protocol title: A Qualitative Exploration of Middle Childhood Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

Principal Investigator
Name: Kendra Waninger
Contact Phone Number: 215-538-1146
E-mail address: waninger@udel.edu

Advisor (if student PI):
Name: Ruth Fleury-Stoiner, Ph.D.
Contact Phone Number: 302-831-8560
E-mail address: rfs@udel.edu

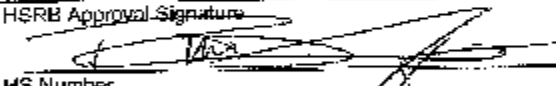
Other investigators:

Type of review: Exempt Expedited Full board

Exemption Category: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Minimal Risk: ___ yes ___ no

Submission Date:

HSRB Approval Signature 	Approval Date 6-29-09
HS Number HS 09-070	Approval Next Expires 5-19-10

Investigator Assurance:
By submitting this protocol, I acknowledge that this project will be conducted in strict accordance with the procedures described. I will not make any modifications to this protocol without prior approval by the HSRB. Should any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, including breaches of guaranteed confidentiality occur during this project, I will report such events to the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board immediately.

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Have you experienced intimate partner violence
within the past year?

Do you have two children under the age of 18 years old
(where at least one is between the ages of 8 and 12)
who have lived with you during this relationship?

If so, I want to hear what you have to say!!!!

As a doctoral student at the University of Delaware, I am conducting a research study
that
will look at the experiences of mothers and their children living in homes with
intimate partner violence. A specific focus will be on the relationship between child
siblings.

I am looking to interview both mothers and their children.

Interviews will take place in the shelter at your convenience.

Mothers and children will be interviewed separately in a private room.

All information you and your children tell me will be kept private.

Participation in the study does not in any way affect the services that you
will receive from the domestic violence shelter or other organizations.

You will receive a \$10 gift card for your time.

Your child will receive a \$5 gift card for their time.

Your experiences matter - please take the time to share them!!!

If you would like to participate or just have questions, please contact me directly on my phone at 302-593-6926 or by email at waninger@udel.edu. You can also notify the shelter staff that you would like for me to contact you at the shelter to further discuss the study.

I hope you will consider joining this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix C

Research Participant Consent Form for Mother and Children

Research Participant Consent Form for Mother and Children
Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence
Kendra Waninger, University of Delaware

Description and Procedures of Research

You and your child(ren) are being asked to join a research study. This study will look at the views of mothers and children living in homes with intimate partner violence. The focus will be on child sibling relationships. Results from this study will be published for research purposes. They will be presented to professionals and to the public through educational programs.

You were selected because you are a: (1) mother who has experienced intimate partner violence within the past year, and (2) you have child siblings (birth to eighteen years old) who lived in the home during your relationship where at least one child between the ages of 8 and 12 years-old is willing to participate.

Mothers and their children will be recruited from those individuals living at or receiving services from domestic violence shelters. It is expected that 10-12 mothers and their children will participate in this study. Whether you participate or not, the services you receive from the domestic violence shelter or other organizations will not be affected in any way.

Children in the study must have their mother's permission to participate. You and your child(ren) will be asked to take part in an in-depth interview that will be audio-taped if you agree. You and your child(ren) will be asked about your children's relationships with each other, what happens in your home, the violence in your relationship, and your children's exposure to intimate partner violence. You and your child(ren) will be interviewed individually in a private room at the shelter at your convenience. You will be interviewed by Kendra Waninger, a doctoral student in the Department of Human Development & Family Studies at the University of Delaware. In addition to your interview, you will be asked to complete a short survey about your children's behaviors. Your interview is estimated to take approximately 60-90 minutes, while your child(ren)'s interview is estimated to take approximately 45-60

minutes. You, as the mother, and shelter staff will be contacted if your child becomes upset and is in need of additional resources.

Confidentiality

All information, including your or your children's names, your partner's name, and the names of any other person, place or organization that you or your children mention in the interview will remain strictly private and confidential, and will not be mentioned in the research reports. You and your child(ren) will receive a unique identification code which will be used on all forms, notes, tapes, and computer documents instead of your names. The information that your child(ren) provides will not be shared with you. Reports on the study may use some quotes and situations, but these will not include any identifying information. No one other than the researcher will have access to your or your children's name and interview information. All records will be stored in a locked cabinet and all computer files will be password-protected and encrypted. The interview data will be kept indefinitely.

Initials _____
(page 1 of 4)

We will do everything we can to keep others from learning about your participation in this study. To further help us protect your privacy, we have obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). With this Certificate, we cannot be forced (for example by court order or subpoena) to disclose information that may identify you in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings.

You should understand that a Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you or a member of your family from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your child or your involvement in this study. Note however, that if an insurer or employer, learns about your participation, and obtains your consent to receive research information, then we may not use the Certificate of Confidentiality to withhold this information. This means that you and your family must also actively protect your own privacy.

Finally, you should understand that we will in all cases take actions necessary, including reporting to authorities, to prevent serious harm to yourself, your child(ren) or others such as in cases of child abuse or neglect. In addition, parents or legal guardians have the right to information regarding a minor child. The Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent the researchers from disclosing voluntarily, without your consent, information that would identify you as a participant in the research project if the researchers suspect that your children are being abused or neglected, or if you or your children intend to hurt yourselves or others. We are required to notify the proper authorities if we suspect that your children are being abused or neglected, or if

you or your children intend to hurt yourselves or others. This includes reporting any recent act or failure to act which presents a serious risk of harm to a child or results in the serious physical, emotional, or sexual harm of a child.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You and your child(ren) can refuse to participate in this research study with no penalty. Participation has no effect on the services provided by shelters or organizations. You and your child(ren) can choose to not answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. In addition, you and your child(ren) can agree or refuse to be audio-tape recorded during the interview. If you agree, you or your child(ren) can request to have the tape recording stopped at any time.

Benefits and Risks

Through completing the interview, research participants can gain insight into their experiences and their children's sibling relationships.

On the other hand, talking about issues surrounding intimate partner violence may bring up uncomfortable topics or sensitive memories. Some of the questions you will be asked are very personal and may cause you or your children embarrassment or stress. We will share the questions with you before you decide whether or not you and your child(ren) will participate in the study. Also, you and your child(ren) do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. Before the start of the interview you will be provided with referral phone numbers and information that may be helpful if you would like further assistance or counseling for yourself or your children.

Initials _____
(page 2 of 4)

Compensation

An incentive for participation will include a \$10 gift card for each mother, as well as a \$5 gift card for each child participant.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research project contact Kendra Waninger, MSW, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Delaware, Phone: (302) 593-6926 or her advisor, Dr. Ruth Fleury-Steiner, Ph.D., Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Delaware, Phone: (302) 831-8560. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson, Human Subjects Review Board, 210 Hullihen Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716, (302) 831-2137.

I have read the consent form and agree to participate in the research study. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Signature Participant Name Date

Researcher's Signature Date

I have read the consent form and agree to have my child participate in the research study. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Child's Name Child's Age Mother (Guardian) Name Relationship to Child

Mother (Guardian) Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Initials _____
(page 3 of 4)

I have read the consent form and agree to have my child participate in the research study. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Child's Name Child's Age Mother (Guardian) Name Relationship to Child

Mother (Guardian) Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

I have read the consent form and agree to have my child participate in the research study. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Child's Name Child's Age Mother (Guardian) Name Relationship to Child

Mother (Guardian) Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Audio-Tape Recording:

Yes, I agree to have my interview audio-tape recorded. _____
Initials

No, I do not agree to have my interview audio-tape recorded. _____
Initials

Yes, I agree to have my child's interview audio-tape recorded. _____
Initials

No, I do not agree to have my child's interview audio-tape recorded.

Initials

Initials _____
(page 4 of 4)

Appendix D

Child Assent Form

Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence
Child Assent Form

Kendra Waninger, University of Delaware

My name is Kendra Waninger. I go to the University Delaware and I am doing a research study. I am asking you, your mom, and your brothers and/or sisters to join. Eight to twelve year-olds who are at the shelter can be in the study. I am doing this study to find out about brothers and sisters. I also want to find out about what moms and children think about violence in their home.

I will ask you questions about your home and your brothers and/or sisters. The interview will take about 45 to 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-tape recorded if that is okay with you. You can ask to turn the audio-tape recorder off at any time. Some kids do not like to talk about these things. If there are any questions that you do not want to answer, you do not have to. If you want to stop, you may say so at any time.

You can tell anyone you want about the study. I will not tell anyone what you said or that you took part in the study. However, if you tell me that you are not safe, I will have to tell someone so that they can help you.

If you do not want to be in the study, nothing bad will happen to you. Your mother knows about this study, and she said it was okay for you to join in if you want, but you do not have to-it is up to you. Please ask any questions you have. If you decide to be in the study, you will receive a \$5 gift card.

If you or your mother have any questions about this research study, contact Kendra Waninger, MSW, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Delaware, Phone: (302) 593-6926 or her advisor, Dr. Ruth Fleury-Steiner, Ph.D., Department of Human Development & Family Studies, University of Delaware, Phone: (302) 831-8560. If you or your mother have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, 210 Hullihen Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716, (302) 831-2137.

This research project has been explained to me and I agree to participate in this project.

Child Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Audio-Tape Recording:

Yes, I agree to have my interview audio-tape recorded.

Initials

No, I do not agree to have my interview audio-tape recorded

Initials

Appendix E

Child Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview

Child Semi-structured Qualitative Interview Protocol

Participant ID# _____

Date of Interview: ____/____/____

Time Started: _____

I am going to ask you some questions about your relationship with your sibling(s) and what happens at your home. Remember, all of the information that you tell me will be confidential. You can tell other people what we talked about today, but I will not.

If there are any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer, please let me know and we will move on to the next question.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

You told me that I can use the audio-recorder so I am going to turn it on now and we will begin.

(If permission was not given for the audio-recorder-- I will be taking notes while I ask you questions to make sure that I am able to get all of your important information).

DEMOGRAPHICS

Let me start by asking some questions about you.

1. *How old are you?*

2. *What grade are you in?*

3. *What kinds of things do you do?*

Possible Prompts:

What do you like? What do you dislike?

What it is like to be you?

4. *Tell me about school?*

Possible Prompts:

Favorite/least favorite subjects? How do you do in school?

Have you always done this way?

5. *Tell me about your friends?*

6. *What do you do when you feel happy?*

7. *What do you do when you feel sad or angry?*

RELATIONSHIPS

Now that you told me about yourself I want to ask you some questions about your family.

8. *You are staying at the shelter now. Who is staying here with you?*

a. *Tell me about your mom.*

Possible Prompts:

What is she like?

What kind of stuff do you do together?

How does your mom care for you?

How does your mom care for _____ (sibling)?

b. *Let's talk about _____ (sibling)? What is it like being _____'s brother/sister? (Ask for each sibling).*

Possible Prompts:

What is _____ (sibling) like?

What kind of stuff do you do together?

What kind of stuff do you tell each other?

How do you and _____ (sibling) get along?

What happens when you are getting along?

*What happens when you are not getting along?
Do you or _____ (sibling) ever help each other?*

Explain.

*What do you do if _____ is unhappy or sad?
What does _____ do if you are unhappy or sad?*

CHILDREN AND EXPOSURE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

I want to ask you some questions now about what happens at your home and why you are here at the shelter.

9. *Tell me about where you lived before you came to the shelter.*

Possible Prompts:

*What was it like living there?
Who lived with you?
Tell me about _____ (mom's boyfriend, father,
etc.)*

*What is he like?
What kind of stuff do you do together?
How does he care for you?
How does he care for _____ (sibling)?*

10. *What happened to make you come to stay at the shelter?*

(Ask questions for each sibling)

Possible Prompts:

*What did you see?
What did you hear?
Where were you? Where was _____ (sibling)?
What did you do? What did _____ (sibling) do?
Did anyone come?
Neighbor/family/police?*

*Has something like this ever happened before?
Tell me about that.*

a. *How do your mom and _____ (mom's boyfriend, father, etc.) usually get along?*

b. *What happens when your mom and _____ (mom's boyfriend, father) do not get along?*

Possible Prompts:

Where are you?

*What have you seen or heard?
What has _____ (sibling) seen or heard?
Does your mom know that _____ (you or sibling)
have seen or heard this happening?
What does your mom do?*

- c. *What do you and _____ (sibling) do when your mom and _____ are (arguing or fighting)?*

Possible Prompts:

*What do you say to each other?
Do you or _____ ever try to make each other do things?*

*Leave? Hide?
Do you help each other?
Tell me about a time when this happened.
Do you or _____ ever get involved or try to stop what is happening?
How? (Yell? Fight? Call police? Call someone else?)*

- d. *Does _____ (mother's boyfriend, father, etc.) do anything to you or _____ (sibling) when this is happening?*

Possible Prompts:

Hurt? Ask you to be involved? Threaten you? Explain.

- e. *What usually happens after an (argument or fight) between your mom and _____?*

Possible Prompts:

*What does your mom do?
What does _____ (mom's boyfriend, father, etc.) do?
What does _____ (sibling) do?
What do you do?
Where do you go?
Do you talk to _____ (sibling) about what happened?
What do you say? What does _____ (sibling) say?*

11. How do you feel about what happens between your mom and _____?

Possible Prompts:

*Sad? Angry? Upset? Worried? Don't care?
Does this affect how you eat? Sleep?*

a. Do you ever feel that you are to blame for what happens?

Possible Prompts:

*Tell me about that.
Do you tell anyone you feel you are to blame? Who?
What do you say? What do they say?*

b. Do you ever feel threatened or afraid when something happens between your mom and _____?

Possible Prompts:

*Tell me about that.
Do you tell anyone you feel threatened or are afraid?
Who?
What do you say? What do they say?*

c. How about _____ (ask for each sibling)? Does _____ ever feel threatened or that he/she is to blame when something happens between your mom and _____?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

12. We talked about _____ (siblings in study), but we did not talk about _____ (adult siblings/siblings not living in home) yet? Tell me about him/her.

What do they do when something happens between your mom and _____?

Do you talk to _____ about what happened between your mom and _____?

Tell me about that.

13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about _____ (sibling) or about what happens in your home?

14. Do you have any questions for me?

Well, that is all of the questions that I have for you today. I thank you very much for talking with me and answering my questions.

Time Ended _____

Appendix F

Mother Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview

Mother Semi-structured Qualitative Interview Protocol

Participant ID# _____

Date of Interview: ____/____/____

Time Started: _____

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about your children's relationship and what happens at your home. Remember, all of the information that you tell me will remain confidential.

If there are any questions that make you uncomfortable or do not want to answer, please let me know and we will move on to the next question.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

You told me that I can use the audio-recorder so I am going to turn it on now and we will begin.

(If permission was not given for the audio-recorder-- I will be taking notes while I ask you questions to make sure that I am able to get all of your important information).

Throughout this interview I am going to be asking you questions about your relationship with the person you came to the shelter because of. Is there a first name or nickname that I can use for this person? (If participant is not comfortable providing his name: is there a name that we can refer to him as?)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Let me start by asking some basic information about you.

1. *How old are you?* _____
2. *Before coming to the shelter, what was your relationship with _____?*
Possible Prompts:
Married? Divorced? Dating? Living together? Remarried?
3. *What is your relationship with him now?*
Possible Prompts:
Future plans for relationship? Separation, reunification, divorce?
4. *What is the highest level of education that you achieved?*
5. *What is your yearly household income?*
6. *What is your racial and ethnic background?*
7. *How many children do you have?*
8. *What are their names, ages, gender, racial and ethnic background*
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
9. *Is _____ the father of _____? (Ask for each child).*
Possible Prompts:
If _____ is not the father of _____, who is their father? What is your relationship with that man?

10. Which child(ren) will be participating in this study?

RELATIONSHIP AND VIOLENCE

Now I would like to talk to you about your relationship with _____.

11. Tell me a little about your relationship with _____?

Possible Prompts:

How long have you been/were you together?

How long married? Dating? Living together?

Describe your relationship.

How do you get along?

What happens when you get along?

What happens when you do not get along?

12. What happened between you and _____ that made you come to the shelter?

a. I have some very specific questions about physical abuse that some women have experienced. Here is a card with time periods of Never, Once, Once a month or less, 2 or 3 times a month, 1 or 2 times a week, 3 or 4 times a week, 5 or 6 times a week, and every day. When I read the statement I would like for you to tell me how often in the year before coming to the shelter did _____ do what the statement says.

How often in the year before you came to the shelter did

-
1. *Shout and scream at you*
 2. *Throw something at you*
 3. *Push, grab, or shove you*
 4. *Drag you or pull you by your hair*
 5. *Threaten you with a fist, hand, or foot*
 6. *Restrain you from leaving the room*
 7. *Slap you on the face, body, arms, or legs*
 8. *Hit you with a fist*
 9. *Hit, or try to hit you with an object*
 10. *Punch you on the body, arms, or legs*
 11. *Punch you in the face*
 12. *Kick you in the body, arms, or legs*
 13. *Bite you*
 14. *Twist your arm*

15. Burn or scald you
16. Choke you or hold his hand over your mouth
17. Try to smother or drown you
18. Force you to do something against your will
19. Force you to have sex or some kind of sexual activity
20. Threaten you with a knife or gun
21. Threaten to hit the kids
22. Shout at or threaten the kids
23. Stab you
24. Shoot you
25. Is there anything else that happened that I did not mention?

- b. How long has this violence been happening? (Years, months, weeks?)
- c. Has there been drugs/alcohol involved during these violent incidents? Explain.
- d. Tell me about a typical violent incident with _____.

Possible Prompts:

What events lead up to this?

Do you think that this is happening more often than before?

Are things becoming more severe? More violent? More threatening?

What happens after the incident?

Does anyone come? (police, neighbor, family?)

- e. Tell me about the worst or most severe violent incident with _____.

Possible Prompts:

What happened? When? Who was present?

- f. Was there violence in any of your past relationships?

Possible Prompts:

Explain. Was this person the father of any of your children?

CHILDREN AND THE SIBLING RELATIONSHIP

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your children and their relationship.

13. Tell me about _____? (Ask for each child).

Possible Prompts:

What is he/she like?

What kind of stuff do you do with _____?

How does she/he behave?

How do you take care of _____?

Do you treat _____ and _____ the same? different?

14. Describe the relationship between _____ and _____ (describe for each sibling).

Possible Prompts`:

What kinds of things do they do together?

What kinds of things do they tell each other?

How do _____ and _____ get along (describe for each sibling and for the siblings as a group)?

What happens when _____ and _____ are getting along?

What happens when _____ and _____ are not getting along?

Do _____ and _____ ever help each other? How?

What does _____ do if _____ is unhappy or sad? (Ask for each sibling).

Would you consider your children's relationship to be close? Explain. (Ask for each sibling pair and for the siblings as a group).

CHILDREN AND EXPOSURE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Children are often present to see and/or hear when adults are fighting or are involved in a violent incident. Now, I would like to talk about the violence within your home and how this affects your children.

15. During the violence, what are your children doing? (Ask for each child).

Possible Prompts:

What has _____ seen?

What has _____ heard?

What has _____ done?

Ever get involved/try to stop what is happening?

(Yell? Fight? Call police? Call someone else?)

What happens after the violence?

What do you do?

What does _____ (partner) do?

What does _____ (child) do?

a. We talked earlier about the most severe incident of violence. What were your children doing during then? (Ask for each child)

Possible Prompts:

What did _____ see?

What did _____ hear?

What did _____ do?

b. Does _____ do anything to your children during the violent incident? (Ask for each child).

Possible Prompts:

Hurt? Ask them to be involved? Threaten?

c. Does one child see or hear more violent incidents than the other? Explain

d. Do you see any similarities in behavior between _____ (partner) and _____? (Ask for each child).

Explain what you see/feel.

16. How do your children feel about the violence that happens in your home?

Possible Prompts:

Blame themselves for what happens?

Feel threatened when something happens?

Worry that you are upset or sad?

Have trouble eating? Sleeping?

- a. *What do your children do to cope with the violence in your relationship?*

Possible Prompts:

Talk to you? Talk to each other? Talk to friends?

Withdrawal? Worry?

Act out? Aggression?

Mothers often take steps to try to protect their children during violent incidents.

17. *What do you do during the violence when you know your children are present in the room or in the home?*

Possible Prompts:

Try to move the kids out of the room? Home?

Take action to avoid the violence when your children are present?

Try to get _____ to stop the violence?

- a. *How do you think the violence in your relationship with _____ affects your relationship with your children?*

18. *How do you think the violence in your relationship with _____ affects the relationship between _____ and _____? (ask for each sibling pair and for the siblings as a group)*

Possible Prompts:

Relationship the same? Changed?

Siblings move closer to each other?

Show support/help each other?

incident? *Try to protect each other during violent*

home? *Try to shield each other from violence?*
Talk to each other during incident?
Talk to each other about the ongoing violence in

Siblings move farther apart?
Argue/disagree with each other more after an incident?
Blame each other for what is happening?
Physically get into altercations with each other?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

19. *We talked about _____ (child siblings), but we did not talk about _____ (adult siblings/siblings not living in home). Tell me about them. What do they do when something happens between you and _____? Do _____ (children in study) talk to _____ (adult siblings/siblings not living in home) about violent incidents?*
20. *Is there anything else you want to tell me about your children's relationship or what happens in your home?*
21. *Do you have any questions for me?*

Well, that is all of the questions that I have for you today. I thank you very much for talking with me and answering my questions.

Time Ended _____

Appendix G

Individual Family Cases

This appendix presents the family-level data regarding sibling relationships within the context of intimate partner violence. The family cases are presented using the voices of both the mothers and children interviewed. These family cases document the varying and sometimes similar voices of mothers and their children, as they share their experiences of the intimate partner violence and the sibling relationship. The following categories and underlying themes are discussed for each family case: (a) Diverse Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in the Adult Relationship; (b) Children's Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence, and (c) Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence.

Wilson Family

At the time of the interview, the Wilson family had been living in a domestic violence shelter for four months. The mother, Tamyra Wilson, is a 32 year-old African American woman attending technical school, and working towards her medical assistant degree. She was not sure of her income. She entered the shelter because of her relationship with her partner, Dwayne. Tamyra and Dwayne were living together for ten years, but presently have no relationship.

Tamyra has two daughters: Niesha, an African American twelve year-old female whose father passed away when she was four years old, and Shandra (Ms. Honey), an African American seven year-old female whose father is Dwayne. Both girls refer to Dwayne as being their daddy. Dwayne does have phone contact with both children. Tamyra and Niesha participated in the study.

Niesha is a 7th grade honor roll student who likes art and reading. Tamyra described Niesha as an intelligent child who loves animals, is “admirable” and “respectful.” Tamyra shared that Shandra is rambunctious, sassy, bossy, and a daredevil. She “is a tomboy and girlie girl all mixed up in one.” Shandra is on the honor roll, but also has behavioral issues.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Tamyra seemed nervous at the beginning of the interview, but opened up more with detailed contextual information as the interview continued. She was talkative and expressive in describing her family’s experiences. Tamyra did seem somewhat guarded in her responses regarding her children’s exposure to the violence in her home, but she did provide details.

The ten year mother-partner subsystem in the Wilson family has been overwhelmed with intimate partner violence and drug use. The relationship started out “good,” but two years into the relationship, verbal violence began with ongoing arguing. Two years later, physical violence began. Tamyra admitted to using marijuana in her relationship with Dwayne. She stated that she smoked marijuana to avoid her feelings regarding the relationship and violence. Dwayne also smoked

marijuana and was an “alcoholic.” Several of the violent incidents revolved around this drug and alcohol usage where the mother-partner subsystem argued because of the partner’s drug and alcohol issues. Often, Dwayne would get an attitude which led to an argument that “turned out to be an all-out brawl.”

Tamyra could not pinpoint the most severe incident in her relationship, as she felt, “they were all the worst.” She described the abuse as “excessive” as Dwayne had a “whole issue with keeping his body parts to himself.” Tamyra said that Dwayne had “kicked me down the steps a couple times, he made me mess this arm up with some glass. Umh, he hit me with something across my eye.” Dwayne had also forced sex on Tamyra when he was drunk.

Fighting back against the abuse for protection also occurred. Tamyra described that her own “mouth is vicious” and that she can say mean, nasty things to get to Dwayne. She stated that there was always a “fight,” and Dwayne’s “only retaliation, ‘cause he couldn’t banter with me verbally was to hit me or push me down the steps, or kick me or slap me or whatever.” Tamyra shared that after ten years, the “craziness outweighs all the...good stuff.” Tamyra felt that Dwayne’s issues were interfering in Tamyra’s ability to care for her kids, and the children were seeing too much violence. Tamyra expressed, “I’ll be damned if he is going to kill me in front of my kids like his dad did to his mom.”

In recalling her own history, Tamyra disclosed that when she was younger her stepfather abused her mother, her, and her siblings. Upon recalling the abuse in her

own childhood and what her own children have seen in her relationship with Dwayne, Tamyra reflected,

That's why I left Dwayne, because I don't want my kids to be around all that. Just waking up in the middle night and got moms arguing with their dad, and, you know, she all up in the fetal position, bent over, he knocking the shit out of her. Like, really. Where is that good? You know, when is that cool?

Children's diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Twelve year-old Niesha could recall the violence and discussed her emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence. Tamyra also provided information about her children's experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Niesha was communicative and provided details about her exposure to the violence between Tamyra and Dwayne. Both Tamyra and Niesha shared a similar account of the children's exposure, including seeing, hearing, and being involved in the violence. Although Tamyra did not mention this, Niesha explained that there was also violence in another recent relationship in which her mother was involved.

Tamyra divulged her daughters have been awoken, listened to, watched and walked in on the verbal and physical violence between her and Dwayne. She disclosed, "Yeah, they were there for a lot of stuff that they shouldn't of been there for." During a violent incident, the girls were "probably sitting, listening, watching." Tamyra revealed, "My kids were seeing too much." Tamyra did not want to provide specific incidents that her daughters were exposed to, but offered one glimpse into what her children have experienced: "Why was you (tsk), knowing my kid's bedroom

was right there, knock me all the way down the steps? Why would you do that?”

Tamyra summarized that the siblings, especially Niesha because she is older and pays more attention, have seen a “whole lot” and they have also heard a lot of profanity with Dwayne calling Tamyra mean names.

Niesha disclosed Dwayne handled his anger by drinking. Of Dwayne and her mother, Niesha shared, “They were having issues. He was abusing her....verbally, sometimes physically.” Niesha saw Dwayne push and “fight” with her mother, “One (pause) time (pause) he was pushing my mom (pause) around...He would push her or they would fight.” Niesha further stated that she and her sister would be in their beds, and the violent incidents would awaken Niesha. Similar to her mother, Niesha discussed the incident on the stairs saying that both she and her sister witnessed Dwayne “pretending” to drop their mother down the steps.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Twelve year-old Niesha seemed a bit nervous towards the beginning of the interview. She was quiet, held her head down or to the side, and fidgeted. However, at the same time, she easily discussed her life experiences and provided fairly detailed information regarding her relationship with her family and with her sibling.

When there is violence in the home, sometimes children try to tune-out or ignore the incidents. When asked about Niesha witnessing the violence, Tamyra related that Niesha pretended to disregard the violence. Reporting on her own feelings of the violence, Niesha said, “I don’t like it.”

Both Tamyra and Niesha relayed that the sisters have been fearful during a violent incident. Tamyra shared the girls told her they were “scared.” They further said to their mother, “I am glad we left and, you know, I am glad Aunt Sharise was home.” Similarly, Niesha discussed being scared, crying during an incident, and how she held her crying sister in her arms. Niesha informed that she did not feel threatened “because I know my mom won’t let anything happen to us.”

While living in their home, the siblings coped with the violence by playing with toys or at their cousin’s home. Both girls have been in counseling at the shelter, and Tamyra said they cope by writing in their journals. Niesha would “jump into her books.” Tamyra reported that Shandra is very sad about her family being broken apart, while Niesha is “disgusted” with the relationship and does not want her mother to return to Dwayne. Shandra has had nightmares seeing monsters, has acted out at school, and does not want to be touched. Additionally, Niesha has had headaches. Tamyra expressed her worry that Niesha is not as cheerful or lively as she used to be, “But I can tell that her whole spirit is not broken.” Now, every so often the girls and their mother would hug, cry and talk about the violence.

Behavioral Responses to the Violence. The Wilson siblings behaviorally responded to the intimate partner violence in varying ways. Twelve year-old Niesha reported that when she was awoken, she went to the violent incident to make sure everything was okay. She then checked on her sister. Along the same lines, Tamyra conveyed the siblings were usually present for the violence, “You know, a couple of

times they do when they know it getting ready to get heated, and it's going to be some storms. They stand right there, you know.”

Tamyra explained her children were verbally involved during an incident, expressing they were not leaving without their mother. Both girls verbalized to

Tamyra:

Like, ‘Awe mom, can we go?’ Niesha is like, ‘Awe, mom, can we go now?’ And Ms. Honey be crying. She will say, ‘Dad can you please just stop?’ So, Ms. Honey be crying to her dad is what got me out of so many fights with him so many different times.

Contrary to her mother, Niesha reported that she and her sister did not really say anything during an incident between the mother-partner subsystem.

Niesha did divulge of her mother and partner that “they try to ask for our opinions to see which one of them is right, but we wouldn’t answer sometimes.”

When asked if she would ever answer, Niesha said “sometimes.” Similarly, Tamyra disclosed that while the girls have been standing in front of their mother and Dwayne during an incident, they sometimes took sides against each other:

And, they are verbally, they are involved verbally. Like, if me and their dad be arguing, they be like, ‘Yo, Daddy.’ Niesha would say, ‘Well, mommy is allowed to feel like that’ and Shandra will say, ‘Well, daddy is allowed to feel like that.’

Other involvement by the siblings included calling for help. Of being involved, Tamyra questioned, “Why do my kids got to run out of the house and go to the corner and call 911 because you locking me in and you know me claustrophobic and you not going to let me out?” Niesha also relayed this incident, but to her recollection this incident occurred between her mother and another boyfriend. Niesha

related that she was sent to the payphone to call the police. However, Niesha could not recall her address, so the dispatcher did not trust her and did not send the police.

Tamyra expressed her worry about Shandra acting out, “Ms. Honey has her behavioral issues due to this violence.” Tamyra also spoke of similarities in behavior between Dwayne and both girls:

Like, as far as being angry and I am going to hit you because I am mad you are not doing what I want you to do and you not giving me that. Yeah, they both have a tendency to do that.

The girls “do lash out, like in anger. And Shandra has been ridiculous with it for this whole past year.”

Child Sibling Relationship Quality within the Context of Intimate Partner Violence. The dyadic same-sex sibling relationship of twelve year-old Niesha and seven year-old Shandra in the Wilson family is characterized by warmth and support, and moderate sibling conflict. Both mother and Niesha discussed the sibling relationship.

Sibling Warmth and Support. The Wilson sibling relationship contains comfort, companionship, and teaching. Tamyra shared of the girls, “They know that they sisters. And they know that they only have each other.” She described her daughters as being companionate, getting along, having things in common, spending time doing things together, and talking to each other about boyfriends and kids in their class. She says they have a close relationship, “It took for me to be in this whole situation for me to even realize that they had the relationship they had.” Niesha likewise shared a sibling relationship filled with warmth. Niesha stated that her sister

is sometimes “fun” and “cool” where they “are always together,” making up games and reading. She also said she and her sister often talk to each other about peers and life issues.

Tamyra also spoke about Niesha being physically protective over Shandra. Niesha has not really been a physical person, but Tamyra related on two occasions Niesha has been in an actual physical fight with other girls to protect her sister.

Additionally, both Tamyra and Niesha described Niesha as being a helper and playing a teaching role with her younger sister. Niesha described helping Shandra when their mother is busy, “I help her with some words, and I try to teach her other stuff that is above her level so she can know more.” She continued to share that she assisted her sister with homework, getting dressed, learning how to cook, and learning to be “independent.” Niesha also explained that her younger sister is also a helper by telling Niesha when she missed something or if she did something wrong.

Verbal communication is an important piece of the sibling relationship if something was ever amiss with either of the siblings. Tamyra said of the girls, “They try to comfort each other.” Niesha inquired about her younger sister’s well-being. If Shandra did not respond, Niesha would say, “I am here if you want to tell me what is wrong.” Tamyra also discussed the younger sister, Shandra, being concerned and asking Niesha, “What is wrong? What is the matter? You want to do this? You want to do that? You want to go talk about it? Such and such. I will give you my thing if you tell me what is wrong.”

Similarly to her mother's account, Niesha also talked about verbal communication when her sister Shandra is unhappy or sad. Niesha expressed,

I try to figure out what is wrong with her. And then if she doesn't talk to me maybe she will write it down. And if not, I know that she might not want to talk about it so I just wait a couple minutes or whatever...I wait for her to come back around or something or we'll go in a different room and she will tell me what is wrong with her.

Niesha related her younger sister would do the same for her. She shared that Shandra "just knows" when something is upsetting Niesha, "I could just be sitting there and not showing any expression that something is wrong, and she (Shandra) knows."

As described by both Niesha and Tamyra, Niesha provided a nurturing and protective role for her sister during an incident of intimate partner violence. During a violent incident, the siblings stayed together, either in the same room as the violence, or in another room. Niesha consoled a crying younger sister and provided for her well-being.

Niesha also communicated with her sister to provide comfort regarding the violence. Of one incident, Niesha related her sister was scared, "She was saying things to me, but I told her it would be ok...We were standing with each other...She was hugging me so I was holding her." Niesha shared sometimes during an incident, "We be shocked and sometimes my sister will, she will say 'Niesha, what is happening' and I will be like, nothing, Ms. Honey, it is ok." The verbal communication between the sibling subsystem was further described by Tamyra, "She (Niesha) done listened to the whole argument and come sit on the top and say, did you hear that? And Shandra, she didn't even hear Niesha say, did you hear that?"

Furthermore, Niesha would take physical action to shield her sister from the violence. Tamyra said that during an incident, Niesha tried to take Shandra away from the violence. Niesha tried to get Shandra to come and bake or color with her. Tamyra shared,

Niesha takes Shandra away a lot, and sometimes Shandra won't even go nowhere. She is like, no I am staying right here, because I want to listen to mommy and daddy, so you can go ahead out. And I'll be to her, like no, go with your sister, I'll be down in a minute.

Niesha verified her mother's account that Niesha tried to make her younger sister leave the room, "but sometimes she (Shandra) is like frozen in the situation." However, Niesha is persistent in trying to remove her sister from the situation, continually trying to make her sister leave the situation.

After a violent incident, there would be interaction between the siblings. Niesha reported she does not really like to talk to her sister about the violent incidents. However, after an incident when Shandra is emotional, Shandra would go to Niesha. Niesha recounted, "She (Shandra) cries, and she'll cry in my arms."

Tamyra reflected on the sibling relationship in the context of violence, "It (the violence) has been a strain on them and I know, that umh, sometimes they have a tendency to think that they better than each other." However, for the most part, Tamyra believes that the siblings have become closer due to the violence.

Sibling conflict. In addition to the sibling warmth and support in the Wilson sibling relationship, there also appears to be moderate conflict. Twelve year-old Niesha mostly described a warm and comforting sibling relationship. However,

Niesha articulated that some of the time, seven year-old Shandra can be “really aggravating” because she is not able to sit still, always wants her own way, and cannot make up her mind. When upset with Shandra, Niesha related she ignored Shandra or talked to her mother about the situation.

In contrast, even though Tamyra sees a lot of positives in the dyadic sibling relationship, she is worried about the sibling conflict where the girls can be hurtful to each other. Tamyra stated, “they don’t get along a lot, a lot, to the point that I have to tell them, umh, ok, you know, you all not each other’s friends, you all don’t have time to be friends with nobody else.” Of the girls, Tamyra conveyed, “Sometimes they can be really mean to each other.” Once, Shandra taunted her sister by saying, “You just mad because your dad’s dead.” This meanness is mostly verbal arguing and bickering, but seven year-old Shandra also lashed out physically at Niesha. Shandra is “extra aggravated” lately and always has something to say back. In return, Tamyra said,

I don’t think Niesha does a lot of mean stuff to Shandra. But she gets really, she ain’t ignoring anything. She is like, leave me alone, you know what I mean? Get away from me. Aw, mom, she is bothering me.

On one occasion Niesha was physical with her sister, “Shandra pushed her (Niesha’s) head into something and broke her eyeglasses or something. It takes a lot to provoke Niesha to be physically violent, but once she gets there, it is like...” Tamyra is very concerned about the relationship between her daughters, “It’s just that the arguing comes over the kids, so darkly over the good things and the good times.”

Myers Family

The Myers family entered the shelter nine months prior to the interview, and was residing in the shelter's transitional housing program. Lacy is a 40 year-old Caucasian woman attending college. She has been involved with the Office of Vocational Rehab, receives \$700 a month in assistance, and also receives SSI for her son. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with B. Lacy and B were living together for nine years. They are now separated and have a relationship surrounding the children.

Lacy has four children. Two of the children live with their father (who is not the batterer), 18 year-old twins Sarah and Mary. The other two children live with Lacy at the shelter: Cassie, a nine year-old Caucasian female, and Alex, an eight year-old Caucasian male. B is the father of Cassie and Alex, and has limited visitation. Lacy, Cassie, and Alex participated in the study.

Lacy discussed Cassie as being more on an adult level than her own age and being outspoken. Cassie adjusts well in school, is in girl scouts, and enjoys computers, video games, and coloring. Lacy relayed that Alex has high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder, where he has sensory and social skill issues, up and down moods, and limitations in expressing emotions. He enjoys board games and recess at school. Lacy described Alex as having a short temper, being argumentative, being aggressive, and would "flip out."

Diverse Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in the Adult

Relationship. Lacy was very nervous about letting the children be interviewed,

especially Alex. Lacy was extremely talkative right from the start. She provided a lot of information about the relationships in the home. However, Lacy did not always provide a clear description, sometimes straying from her story and never making it back to her point. She was tearful and crying during different parts of the interview.

Lacy described a relationship with B that was “co-dependent,” “threatening,” and “controlling.” The relationship started out “nice,” but when B started to use drugs he would easily “flip out,” getting “nasty” and throwing things at Lacy. B drank alcohol then told Lacy that she was “no good” because she did not drink with him. For the past few years, B closed Lacy off from her family, including her twin daughters. Lacy said three years ago, child protective services (CPS) were involved with the family because B was arrested for having Alex present with him during a drug purchase. Lacy left B at that point, but returned to him after he attempted suicide. Lacy disclosed that CPS felt Lacy also used drugs, which she denies. Lacy, B, and both children received counseling and had a family advocate during that time.

Lacy shared that in the past eighteen months, B has “flipped out” more often at both her and their eight year-old son. Many incidents involved B and Alex arguing, because B is unable to deal with Alex’s behaviors related to his disability. B would then “flip out” on Lacy when she spoke up in support of Alex. She shared, “He (B) would start flipping out on me and I am like, and then I’d flip on B, and then the fight would start and I would just shut down.” B “totally starts throwing stuff” at Lacy, screams at her, and “would not say nice things to me.” Lacy walked away, but “then he starts back again.”

Lacy disclosed that B owns a gun, makes “his own bullets,” and has threatened, “If you say anything, I am going to hunt you down and shoot you.” Lacy has tried to leave before, but she really had no place to go, “He knew he had me in a trap.” Tearfully, Lacy admitted that B forced sexual acts on her which she felt obligated to do because she lived there. She would get “panic attacks” because “it was like, ‘Oh, you, you have to do it.’”

She did finally leave for the shelter. Alex had not wanted to go to school so B cursed at both kids to get on the bus. B “flipped out” and “threw a salt shaker at him (Alex) and said he was going to kill him.” B then tried to prevent Lacy from leaving by ripping her car keys from her.

In her childhood, Lacy’s mother was abused by a boyfriend . Her mother was controlling and an alcoholic, and would take off for days, leaving her kids behind. Lacy described herself consistently getting involved with men who are controlling. She was married for three years to her twins’ father, who was controlling, had a short fuse, and threatened Lacy’s life.

Children’s Diverse Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence. Nine year-old Cassie and eight year-old Alex were able to generally recall the violence, discuss their emotional appraisals, and communicate their behavioral responses to the violence. Lacy was also able to provide specifics regarding her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the Violence. Lacy mostly described the children’s exposure. Both Alex and Cassie provided minimal details on their exposure. Nonetheless, both mother and children seemed to describe some similar accounts of the children’s

exposure. Lacy communicated a home environment where the children have seen B's violent and controlling behaviors, his alcohol use, and have heard the negative things B said to them. Lacy shared that many incidents revolved around B getting "nasty" with Alex, telling Alex he was "worthless." This led to Lacy standing up for her son, exacerbating the incident. She shared, "They would argue back and forth and I would get upset," telling B not to argue with their son. On the contrary, Alex did not disclose B being nasty with him.

Lacy explained the children are present during an incident, and have been exposed to B throwing and breaking things, as well as "yelling," "screaming," and name calling. She said, "They've seen the way that I got treated and the things that, you know, he would say to his own kids." B has also "threatened me in front of them." Lacy tried to remove the children from the situation, but B followed them and continued arguing. In relation to one older twin sibling, B threatened Lacy in front of Alex saying, "If she (older twin sibling) comes in the house, I will beat the crap out of you. You can take your stuff, and I will throw it out."

Cassie shared a somewhat similar account as her mother, but with fewer details. She said her home life was "sometimes terrible," and her "Daddy was mean." He argued with her mom, and "Sometimes he throws... Sometimes he throws salt shakers at people, like my brother." Cassie also said her father was "quite mean" to both her mother and her brother. Her father would say "mean things" to her mother which "hurts her feelings." Alex concurred, saying, "They always scream at each other. I don't know why... They always talk bad words. It's not good."

Although she did not provide a detailed description, Cassie disclosed she has seen her father hit her brother and mother. She said, “My dad hit my mom” with his “handy.” Also without providing particulars, Alex divulged, “My dad wasn’t good because he beats my mom.” Lacy did not describe being hit by B, but did talk about having things thrown at her, being pushed, and being sexually assaulted. .

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Cassie was cooperative and wanted to participate in the interview. She was very interested in the tape recorder, and why the researcher did not ask questions in the exact order as on the protocol. Cassie was talkative, but not overly detailed with answers. She easily talked about her mother and brother, but her demeanor slightly changed when asked about her father. She played with her fingers and seemed more reserved. Cassie provided general information in her description of her life at home with a few details.

Alex wanted to participate and was cooperative. Alex provided very short and direct answers without much elaboration for all questions. A few times, he was difficult to understand. His demeanor was generally pleasant until we started to talk about his father. He immediately folded his arms and squirmed a bit in his seat. His answers became shorter and he “forgot” or did not know certain answers. Alex was also distracted by the audiotape recorder, asking about the recorder at different points.

Lacy stated the children have communicated that they were unhappy when they were living with their father. Lacy said, “They would say that they were sad.” Cassie confirmed her mother’s statement, saying she felt “Sad...Very, very sad.” She

also felt “worried” that her father threatened her mother’s life. Alex also expressed that he was afraid of his dad, “Because he scares me...I don’t like it.”

Cassie discussed anger and being “mad” because she was annoyed her parents continuously argued. Additionally, Cassie disclosed she felt to blame for incidents between her mother and father. Cassie’s father would tell the siblings they were to blame for the incidents. Cassie explained why he would say that, “Because they think we’re really bad and we know it...He always says that.”

Lacy said that for Alex, the violence in the home “made him depressed.” She further stated both children were depressed, not happy, did not smile, and were “dazed.” They would tell Lacy, “I don’t feel like talking.” During an incident, Lacy related that Alex felt threatened, where Cassie was “upset” and “absorbed” the violence. There has been anticipation on a daily basis where the children were “tense” with wondering “Who is going to start yelling today?”

While in their home, Lacy talked to the children to help them cope. Entering the shelter was a struggle for the family. The children are in several programs to cope with all that has happened. Both see the counselor at the shelter. Alex attends a camp for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder one day a week. Lacy shared she “can see a difference” in Alex’s behavior now that he has been at the shelter. Both children seem to have a “peace” where they “smile” and “they are just happier.” Lacy relates, “There is a lot more calmness.”

Behavioral responses to the violence. Lacy, Cassie, and Alex discussed the behavioral responses to the violence by the children. Lacy described incidents within

the family that often included the involvement of the children. Alex would be involved in arguing and yelling with B, which then led to an incident with B and Lacy. Alex would actively yell at his father, “He (Alex) would start screaming at him (B)...And then he (B) would start screaming at him. That’s what, just, it would just start up again. It would be a constant cycle.” Eight year-old Alex did not disclose any yelling at his father.

Both Lacy and Cassie explained Cassie would be present during an incident. Lacy said Cassie would “be in coloring,” and Cassie related she would “Sit there and watch TV (laugh).” Lacy shared trying to remove the children from an incident, but B would follow them and continue again, extending the children’s exposure.

Sometimes during incidents, abusers involve the children (Edleson et al., 2003). In addition to the yelling and issues between B, Lacy, and his son, Lacy described B threatening Alex during an incident, “He is like, well, ‘I am going to punch your head in.’” As described by Cassie, B would also tell the children they were at fault for the incidents between him and Lacy because of their poor behaviors.

Alex stated that during an incident, he and his sister go to their parents, “We would come down and see what they were doing.” Cassie revealed she has been verbally involved during an incident where she told her parents, “You’re driving me crazy. Stop arguing.” Her dad told her in response, “Mind your own business.” However, normally, Cassie shared, “I stay out of it.” The children also communicated with Lacy about an incident. Lacy said Alex has told her, “I don’t like my daddy’s

moods...Mom, we have to go. We need to go. Let's go mom." Lacy says Cassie has said, "Oh whatever" or "He's not nice. He's not being nice today."

Lacy related similarities in behavior between Alex and his father, indicating Alex would "flip out" much like his father. She shared, "It is hard for him...Because of how his dad treated him." Lacy stated her concerns about Alex's "short temper," throwing things, and argumentativeness. Alex has been in school detention and suspension due to "flipping out."

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. The sibling relationship within the Myers family demonstrates warmth and support, as well as minimal sibling conflict. The focus is on the mixed-sex sibling relationship between Cassie and Alex. The older siblings do not see the younger siblings often. Lacy shared her older twins do not really talk to the younger siblings about the violence. However, 18 year-old Mary has said, "You know, your dad is mean." Cassie and Alex argued back, "You are not allowed in my house...My dad said so. If you come in there he's getting a gun and shooting you."

Sibling warmth and support. The sibling subsystem in the Myers family consists mostly of warmth and support. Lacy related that some days Cassie and Alex have a close relationship. Alex looks at Cassie as his friend, worries about what Cassie does, and wants Cassie to do what he wants her to do, "He kind of like wants her to be his little tree. Like, you do what I want to do." Alex wants to be with Cassie, even if she is playing with a friend. Lacy said the children spend time together playing Pokémon, "stuffed animal world," and "imagination world" together. Cassie

confirmed her mother's account stating, "Sometimes he wants to play with me."

Cassie shared that she and her brother listened to music, used the computer, and played video games. Alex commented that with his sister, he would "play outside in the rain."

Lacy shared that the siblings get along but have their "ups and downs." Cassie similarly communicated she "loves" her brother, "when he doesn't aggravate me."

Alex focused on a closer relationship, saying he and Cassie got along "good."

Communication between the siblings usually surrounds their play situations. Cassie conveyed she and her brother talk about play, life, and school.

Although the children did not share this, Lacy discussed a protection the siblings show for each other, where they are "protective" of each other if either sibling is being picked on. Additionally, Lacy reported Cassie and Alex "want to help each other." Both Lacy and Cassie stated Cassie helped Alex with homework. Lacy shared the children would ask each other if they can get the other a drink or food, "Cassie, you want a yogurt? I will go get it for you Cassie. (Laugh). Like, he will, and Cassie will be like, You want a drink Alex? I'll get it for you."

Cassie would hug Alex if he is unhappy. Lacy has heard Cassie say, "Come here bud, I will give you a hug." Comparably, Cassie related the last time Alex was unhappy Cassie "was making him laugh." Due to having trouble with emotions, Alex does not really do anything when Cassie is upset or sad, and he might even laugh. However, Cassie related this on a positive note saying, "He actually laughs at me" and this makes her feel "happy (laugh)."

Lacy felt that the violence in her relationship with B has had an “effect” on her children’s relationship. Lacy related the children do not talk about the violence, but Cassie said they would talk. Cassie would ask her brother, “Why do my mom and dad argue?” Alex would respond to Cassie saying, “I don’t know.”

Sibling conflict. Lacy, Cassie, and Alex discussed some minimal conflict in the sibling relationship. Lacy relayed that lately, while at the shelter, some of the conflict has improved. This is because the family gets to do things together that they were never able to do with B.

Cassie pronounced that it was “not fun” being Alex’s sister because he “bothers” her and wakes her up. Both Lacy and Cassie expressed that Cassie gets agitated by Alex. Lacy said, “He expects her to do everything, play with me, play with me, play with me.” In return, Cassie would sometimes be “conniving” with Alex by telling him she would play with him if he lets her use his MP3 player. Then, when done with the player, Cassie tells Alex, “Well, I’m not playing with you.”

Bickering occurs between the two children where Alex is very argumentative. Lacy reported Alex would “get mad” at Cassie, “He’ll get angry with her. They’ll fight, like, you know, ‘I hate you.’ Like, he’ll start saying stuff.” Then Cassie would respond, “Well, I hate you too.” On one occasion, Alex expressed his feelings by hitting Cassie. However, Lacy said this is not the norm. It is usually just a “bickering thing.” Likewise, Cassie shared that she and Alex sometimes have words with each other, “Sometimes we argue, sometimes we don’t.” Alex disclosed that when he is not getting along with Cassie, “I get mad and mad.” Neither Cassie nor Lacy discussed

physical aggression, but Alex said of his sister, “She bites me,” and “She kicks me.” He also said his sister “takes stuff away from me.”

As Lacy explained, many of the mother-father incidents in the relationship involved Alex. This made for a more difficult sibling relationship, as Cassie was aware of this and blamed Alex for the incidents and having to come to the shelter. Lacy described that Cassie would say to her brother, “If it wasn’t for you Alex, we wouldn’t have to be stuck here.” Lacy shared, “It all starts between me and him (B) because of Alex. That is not her. She’s never had problems.” B tends to favor Cassie, so when B fought with Alex and Lacy, Cassie saw it as being Alex’s fault.

Carter Family

The Carter family entered the domestic violence shelter eleven months prior to the interview. At the time of the interview, the family was living in their own housing and utilizing services from the domestic violence organization. The mother, Latanya, is a 30 year-old African American woman who was receiving \$1200 a month in assistance, including food stamps. She completed the 11th grade. She went to the shelter because of her relationship with Kesh. Latanya and Kesh were involved in a relationship and living together for about four years before the family entered the shelter. They have no relationship at present, but Latanya sometimes questions her decision of leaving due to financial instability and her love for Kesh.

Latanya has four children: Zahra, a twelve year-old African American female, Jamila, a nine year-old African American female, Deon, a seven year-old African

American male, and Ashanti, a four year-old African American female. Kesh is not the father of any of Latanya's children, and no longer sees them. Latanya and Jamila participated in this study. Latanya never had Zahra available to participate.

Latanya described Zahra as "girlie" with good behavior who takes on a caretaking role with her siblings. Latanya said that Jamila is feisty, uses her mouth, and rolls her eyes. She is a fighter at both school and home. The mother described Deon as a sweetheart who is smart, does well in school, is a good boy, and likes money. He is "outnumbered" with the girls in the home. Latanya related that Ashanti is just like her mother, being feisty and loud, and wanting what she wants.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Latanya's interview took place in her apartment with shelter staff available, if needed. Three of the children were present at the end of the interview, and interrupted once. Latanya expressed interest in being involved and was very happy to talk about her children. However, she was somewhat hesitant to share detailed information regarding the specifics in her relationship. Latanya was tearful when asked about specific incidents of violence. Also, she seemed more guarded, spoke more quietly, and shared less when asked about what her children witnessed.

Latanya described a mother-partner relationship characterized by violence and drug abuse. Latanya portrayed a "perfect" beginning to the relationship because Kesh, as a drug dealer, was able to provide her and the children with material items that kept the family system comfortable. Two years into the relationship Latanya noticed increased arguing between her and Kesh due to his infidelity and getting another

woman pregnant. Latanya said incidents mostly occurred during arguments over Kesh getting high. She related, there would “be a lot of yelling” and Kesh “might do something like push me or mug me to tick me off.” Latanya divulged she would sometimes “provoke” Kesh and fight back. In one incident, both Latanya and Kesh had been arrested. Latanya explained, “It just got kind of tiresome always having to physically fight your male partner,” and so she stopped fighting back, as she “got tired of fighting” and knew she was not able to “beat him.” In what Latanya felt was the most severe incident, Kesh punched Latanya in the face, making her lose her tooth, messing up her appearance and self-esteem. That day, “he was punching. He punched me, I think it was like, twice in my mouth and I fell to the floor, but my mouth started bleeding already.”

Latanya said that in her past relationship with Zahra’s father, there had been arguing and fighting, but it was not as “serious to where he beat me up and, oh, I’m still crying and stuff like that.” Additionally, Latanya stated her own mother was abused when she was a child by her brother’s father. He was a drug lord, and there were several robberies that took place in their home, one where her mother was shot, and another where the family was tied up.

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Nine year-old Jamila could generally recall the violence, discuss her emotional appraisals, and communicate her behavioral responses to the violence in her home. Latanya also provided details regarding her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the Violence. Both Latanya and Jamila seemed to provide only a small glimpse of the children's experiences. Nonetheless, they conveyed somewhat similar accounts of the violence witnessed by the children. Regarding the violence between her and Kesh, Latanya said her children "never really witnessed too much of the physical. It was just a lot of the verbal and they know mommy can curse." Latanya related that the children would see Kesh and Latanya argue at times, but they more likely "heard us argue a lot," as they would be in a different room. Latanya recounted, the kids have heard "a lot of profanity, and you know, a lot of stuff that was going on with us." Although, Latanya admitted that Jamila has seen more than the other children, as she always wants to be with her mother. Latanya stated, "Jamila has seen me and him, um, like, you know, physical before...she has seen, like, him grab me by my neck at one time, I mean like, to push me in the room."

Jamila provided a minimal account of her exposure to the violence between her mother and Kesh. She was quick to say that she witnessed only one violent incident and provided minimal details regarding that incident. When asked about what it was like living in her prior home with Kesh, Jamila quickly responded, "It was ok, but he only hit my mom one time. And, um, that's the only one I saw. And he choked her." Prompting her further, Jamila reaffirmed that she only saw that one incident and did not see what she termed the "other times." Jamila described her mother and Kesh as getting along okay, but "they would get mad at each other" and "they would start arguing and fighting." When asked what fighting meant, she responded, "arguing."

Jamila acknowledged that she heard Kesh yell, but when asked further about what she has seen or heard between her mother and Kesh, Jamila said that she did not see other incidents and that she did not remember. Jamila stated, “If I’m in the same room, he won’t do it.” Jamila did not discuss any drug or alcohol issues.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. The researcher was building rapport with Jamila when Latanya took Jamila out of the room to speak. When Jamila returned she seemed less open, but still wanted to participate. She easily spoke about herself and her siblings and was engaged in the interview. However, when discussing the violence in her home she seemed uncomfortable, did not remember things, and used minimal words in her descriptions.

Children can have varying emotional appraisals of the violence between the mother-partner subsystem. Jamila expressed that she felt sad during an incident, and knows that her twelve year-old sister, Zahra, was also sad. Jamila related that she was afraid during the choking incident “because he shouldn’t be choking her.” Jamila further contributed that she did not feel at fault for the violence between the mother-partner subsystem, “but I did feel that it was his fault...because he shouldn’t have a right to put his hands on girls.”

Latanya acknowledged that the violence in the home “didn’t make them (the children) happy.” She reported that all three of the girls have expressed negative emotions about Kesh, but seven year-old Deon has not. Twelve year-old Zahra has made it known that she is not fond of Kesh, four year-old Ashanti has said, “I don’t

like Kesh, he ugly,” and Jamila “is mostly the one that would say a lot of bad stuff.” This includes Jamila hoping Kesh would be hurt or would just leave.

The aftermath of a violent incident may also be upsetting. Both mother and nine year-old daughter spoke about the aftermath of the violence. After an incident, Latanya said that all four of her children would come to Latanya “crying and stuff into the room.” Twelve year-old Zahra would lie next to her mother and rub her back. Latanya stated, “She (Zahra) wouldn’t say nothing. She would, you know, just be there.” Latanya related that four year-old Ashanti once asked Latanya if she hit Kesh back. Jamila contributed that after an incident she would talk to her mother. Jamila would tell her mother to stay away from Kesh, and “I wish we could just be by ourselves so you would be happy.” Now at the shelter, the children are in counseling.

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Latanya and Jamila discussed behavioral responses to the violence by the children. From their appraisals of the violence, children may decide to intervene verbally to stop the violence. Jamila disclosed that she did this during the choking incident, “I told him to let her go or else I’m going to call the police.” Jamila did not call the police, as Kesh let her mother go. Additionally, Jamila related that during an incident her sister, Zahra, would say, “Let go of my mom’ and if he don’t she’d say, ‘I’m just going to call the cops.’”

Children can also take action to intervene in an incident of violence in the mother-partner subsystem by calling for help. Jamila reported that she has called her grandmother before to take the children to her home. Latanya also discussed the children intervening in the violence. She related that during one incident, twelve year-

old Zahra called her father to come to the home to help. In other incidents, four year-old Ashanti has called Latanya's brother. Ashanti once told her uncle, "They was fighting, and my mom was crying, and I just hold my mom."

Latanya also discussed one way in which Zahra would respond to Kesh. Latanya said Zahra "would hit him with the silent treatment for, like, a week, won't say nothing to him...kill him with kindness."

In some families, the violence between the mother and partner may be modeled, and the child may then present with similar aggression. Crying, Latanya relayed that she is concerned because she has seen similarities in behavior between Jamila and Kesh. Jamila is always fighting and "resorting to violence" with her siblings and others. Latanya said, "And she can fight. I've seen her fight now." Jamila has a temper and is disrespectful, much like Kesh.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. All of the children in the Carter family system seem to have a sibling relationship characterized by sibling warmth and support. In addition, a few of the sibling dyads display moderate sibling conflict. Discussed are the nine and twelve year-old same-sex siblings, the nine and seven year-old mixed sex siblings, and then some information on the four year-old sibling.

Sibling warmth and support. Both Latanya and nine year-old Jamila described multiple dyadic sibling relationships filled with affection and companionship. Latanya felt that Jamila and twelve year-old Zahra have a "pretty good relationship." Latanya described that Jamila and Zahra play together and go

everywhere together (i.e., library, store, movies). The two older girls would do “sisterly stuff” and communicate about other people. Jamila added to her mother’s account that she would play games, dance, and play dress-up with her sister Zahra. Jamila informed that she and Zahra help each other, tell each other “nice things,” and would greet and hug each other.

Latanya said Zahra would help Jamila, as well as the other two younger siblings. Latanya shared, “Zahra, she’s the one, like, you know, if somebody’s feeling sad or upset or anything, you know, she’ll make it better for her sisters and her brothers. That’s how she is.” Jamila concurred with her mother and said if either she or Zahra are unhappy, the other would give a hug and a kiss and ask if they are okay.

Latanya acknowledged that nine year-old Jamila and seven year-old Deon always play together. However, different from her mother’s view that Jamila and Deon do not get along, Jamila said that her brother, Deon, is nice and they play games together. Jamila expressed that they get along, “I would say good because we don’t really fight a lot because he is not much of a fighter.” If Deon is unhappy or sad, Jamila would give Deon a hug and kiss. If Jamila is unhappy, Deon “asks me if I’m ok and then he gives me a hug and kiss, and then says it’s ok.”

Overall, Latanya believes of all her children, “I think they all have a good relationship.” Latanya said the three older siblings would “help each other out.” Deon and Zahra get along, and all of the siblings would spoil four year-old Ashanti. Jamila related that she and Ashanti get along well. Jamila said Ashanti is “nice to me.” However, Jamila also reported some negatives with Ashanti’s behaviors.

During an incident of intimate partner violence, the siblings show support and protection for each other, especially twelve year-old Zahra. Latanya revealed that during an incident, Zahra would “always keep Ashanti in the room or something like that. Or, she’ll get Ashanti and the other kids dressed and go to McDonalds or anywhere.” Jamila concurred in saying that if Kesh and their mother were arguing, Zahra would “make us leave the room,” saying “get out.” The siblings would then go into a different room. Jamila also added that Zahra and she would help each other during an incident by saying, “stay away from him and don’t go nowhere near him.”

Although Jamila denied talking to her siblings about the violence in the mother-partner subsystem, Latanya disclosed her knowledge that the children do communicate regarding the violence. Of the violence, Latanya said, “I know they talk about it because I hear them talking about it one time.” Describing the kids sitting in a circle talking, Latanya disclosed that the children would talk about Kesh and the violence. When asked about her children’s relationship and the violence, Latanya believe that her children have become closer and more communicative.

Sibling Caretaking. Some children take on a caretaking role for their younger siblings. Latanya disclosed that the oldest girl, twelve year-old Zahra, to some extent, has a caretaking role with her three younger siblings. Of her relationship with her siblings, Latanya reported that Zahra acts like a “big sister,” taking control of the siblings and house when Latanya is not available. Zahra would “keep all of them together if something goes wrong.” This caretaking role seems to continue when there

is an incident of intimate partner violence, as Zahra would take steps to remove the children from the situation.

Sibling conflict. Some of the sibling dyads in the Wilson family display moderate sibling conflict, specifically same-sex siblings nine year-old Jamila and twelve year-old Zahra, as well as mixed-sex siblings nine year-old Jamila and seven year-old Deon. Latanya noted that she does not always get in the middle of her children's arguments or fights. Latanya conveyed that Jamila and Zahra "bump heads," and would argue and fight sometimes. Jamila is the one that would physically fight, while Zahra tries not to physically fight unless she has to. Jamila described a similar account of her relationship with Zahra. Jamila disclosed that she and Zahra would "argue a lot," and Zahra is "nice as long as people don't get on her bad side." Jamila disclosed that she and her sister would hit each other, but not often.

Different from Jamila's account of there being no issues between nine year-old Jamila and seven year-old Deon, Latanya reported that Jamila and Deon do not get along. They fight and argue the majority of the time. Jamila would be physical with Deon by punching, "Like, literally punch him in the nose or something like that. You know, he's like scared and stuff."

Although Latanya did not discuss concerns between four year-old Ashanti and nine year-old Jamila, Jamila disclosed that Ashanti is sometimes difficult. Jamila said of Ashanti, "sometimes she tries to take her anger out on me so I decide to take it out on her to." Ashanti would scream loud at and kick Jamila. Jamila said that she does not kick her sister back when in an argument.

Campbell Family

The Campbell family was living in a domestic violence shelter's transitional housing unit at the time of the interview. The mother, Jaleesa Campbell, is a 26 year old African American woman who was working as a cashier and making about \$6400 per year. Jaleesa completed the 11th grade. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with Romy. Jaleesa and Romy were in a relationship and living together for two years, but presently have no relationship.

Jaleesa has three daughters: Tanisha, an African American eight year-old; Tameca, an African American six year-old; and Tychell, an African American two year-old. Tanisha and Tameca's father is Reggie Smith, who they see for visitation. Tychell's father is Romy, who Tychell would see for visitation. Jaleesa and Tanisha participated in the study.

Jaleesa described Tanisha as a "sweetheart" who listens well and helps her mother out with caretaking for her younger siblings. Tanisha can also be bossy, has a "mouth," and fights with Tameca. Jalees says Tameca is "feisty," does not share, talks smart to others, and is a "fighter." Tychell is tall, cute, active, and talkative.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Jaleesa's interview took place in her transitional housing apartment, which is attached to the domestic violence organization. The home was loud with the television and children in an adjoining room. Two year-old Tychell interrupted the interview often, while the older girls interrupted a few times. Jaleesa was cooperative and informative

during the interview; however, she did not appear overly descriptive of her or her children's relationship and experiences.

Intimate partner violence seems to have played a large role in the Campbell family system for several years. The present interview mostly focused on the violence that penetrated Jaleesa's two year relationship with Romy; however, Jaleesa also divulged that there was violence and "fighting" during her seven year relationship with her two older daughters' father, Reggie. This fighting with Reggie included: "getting put out all the time, shoved out, one time I got dragged down the, down the hallway, right down the steps." Jaleesa presently has no relationship with Romy or Reggie, except for interactions about the children.

The physical violence between Romy and Jaleesa, in conjunction with the drug usage by Romy has affected the family system. Jaleesa related that the relationship started by her and Romy being in love. Jaleesa did, however, note that she began to see changes about two to three months into the relationship with increased arguing about money. Then, Romy advanced to more physical force with Jaleesa by pushing and hitting Jaleesa. Alcohol and marijuana use by Romy seems to be a co-existing factor in the violence, as Romy was often under the influence during violent incidents. During a typical incident, Romy would be drinking and would start to "pick" at Jaleesa. He would swing at her, leaving "bruises. Um, a couple times I had bloody noses, my eye would be black." She further reported that Romy has busted her nose or lip, and she always had bruises on her arms and legs.

Jaleesa began to fight back to protect herself, as the severity of violence increased after two year-old Tychell was born. Jaleesa said that they would “fight all the time,” and with Romy’s intoxication, Romy progressed to picking up bottles and objects to hit Jaleesa with. The worst incident included Jaleesa bleeding and Romy cutting himself:

He fought real bad. Um, I was bleeding real bad. Then he started, after we fought he grabbed a knife. He tried to cut, actually he cut his self so he had to go to the hospital because he was cut real bad in his skin. Um, he was so upset. Um. Me, I had to go to the hospital because I had, well, I thought my nose was broke, but they said it wasn’t. It just wouldn’t stop bleeding so they calmed it down.

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Eight year-old Tanisha was able to recall the violence, discuss her emotional appraisals, and communicate her behavioral responses to the violence. Jaleesa also provided details regarding her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Jaleesa and Tanisha conveyed that the older same-sex sibling pair have been exposed to the intimate partner violence between the mother-partner subsystem. No information was shared regarding two year-old Tychell being exposed to any violent incidents. Jaleesa first related that both Tanisha and Tameca have seen the fighting and Romy punching walls, but they did not see anything too “severe.” However, when asked further, Jaleesa acknowledged, “So, I could say that, the severe actual fighting they’ve seen was just him punching me and stuff like that. Me bleeding and stuff like that, they’ve never seen that.” Although Jaleesa did not elaborate on what the children had seen or heard, Jaleesa disclosed that

the two older children were present during the most severe incident where she went to the hospital. Additionally, in other incidents, the girls have been physically near Jaleesa when Romy has pushed her. One specific incident was when Romy pushed Jaleesa into the sink with the girls' present, and the sink broke when Jaleesa fell.

Tanisha concurred with her mother's account of the violence in the home. Tanisha reported seeing Romy hit her mother, "When they get in an argument, sometimes he would get mad and, hit her." Tanisha has seen Romy argue with her mother, punch and hit her mother, and she has seen the aftermath of violent incidents. Once, Tanisha was at home upstairs during an incident where Romy bit her mother. Tanisha recalled what happened when she came to her mother that day, "He was punching her in her arm and hitting her in her face. He was, um, doing all kinds of stuff to her and my mom was fighting back." Tanisha also recollected one incident between Romy and her mother where he hit her mother in her stomach when she was pregnant. Additionally, Tanisha disclosed that when her mother was with her father, Reggie, Tanisha had witnessed him hitting her mother.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Eight year-old Tanisha began the interview with her fingers in her mouth frequently, but this subsided. She was involved in the interview and provided her perceptions of her family environment and sibling relationship. A few times throughout the interview she would shake her head instead of saying yes or no. Like her mother, Tanisha was not overly descriptive in her narrative.

While describing the violence within her home, Tanisha seemed to have a calm voice and did not display being upset. Tanisha reported an unpredictable home environment where both she and her sister, Tameca, would be playing in their room and they would suddenly hear something, a “bang.” This bang was an extension of their emotional journey, as they felt many things during and after the violence.

Jaleesa acknowledged that her daughters were not “happy” about the violence in her relationship. Of Romy, Jaleesa recalled, “Tanisha once said that she didn’t like him.” Children can often be sad and worried in homes with intimate partner violence. Tanisha stated that she is “sad” about the violence in the mother-partner subsystem, and does not feel Romy should hit her mother. Tanisha discussed being worried for herself, her mother, and her sibling. In her descriptions of the violence that occurred, Tanisha conveyed that she and her sister have cried during incidents. Tanisha elaborated of one occurrence, “We heard them, um, fighting so we ran downstairs, put our clothes on, and then we started to cry because he started hitting on my mom.”

Children may sometimes blame themselves for incidents of violence because they believe they may have been the reason for the fighting. Jaleesa does not believe that her children ever felt to blame for the violence in her relationship. In contrast, Tanisha divulged that she did feel that the violence between her mother and Romy was her fault, but she could not explain why she felt that way.

Children also sometimes feel threatened or scared when there is an incident of violence in their home. Jaleesa did not think that her children ever felt threatened or afraid during an incident. On the other hand, Tanisha described both her and Tameca

being scared. Tanisha stated, "I would just holler because I get scared...Because I don't like fighting...My mom knew that I, I was afraid of fighting."

The aftermath of a violent incident may be traumatic for children. After an incident, Jaleesa stated the girls would usually cry and Jaleesa would talk to them briefly to console them. Tanisha has asked her mother to explain the violent incidents, but Jaleesa stated she did not go into details with her children. Jaleesa related that 8 year-old Tanisha would cope with the violence by reading while 6 year-old Tameca copes by fighting. They are now both in counseling to work on their feelings.

The aftermath may also be a transition to a 'normal' family environment. Tanisha reported that she and her sister would go downstairs after an incident and watch television. Tanisha said that if her mother and Romy talked things out after a violent incident and relaxed, then the family "would have a good day."

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Jaleesa and eight year-old Tanisha communicate several behavioral responses to the violence between the mother-partner subsystem. One of the ways that Tanisha navigates the violence in her family system is to first go to the incident when it is occurring to see what is happening. Tanisha would observe the violence and then often makes the decision to become involved in the violence in an effort to minimize the consequences. Both mother and Tanisha report that the behavioral response of 6 year-old Tameca is to go with her sister to see what is occurring, but then Tameca usually withdraws from the situation, stands back and cries.

From children's appraisals of the violence in their home, they may decide to intervene. Tanisha reported different ways in which she was drawn into the violence and how she responded. During one incident, when Romy bit her mother, Tanisha went downstairs to seek help from a family friend. Tanisha sought help from, "My mom's friend, Monette. And she came over...So that's when he got mad."

In addition, Jaleesa described that Tanisha would often intervene verbally, trying to referee the violence. Jaleesa said Tanisha would jump in saying, "Leave my mommy alone. Don't touch her. I'm going to call my dad" or "Mommy, no, don't do that" or "No, Romy, don't do that." Tanisha concurred about her verbal involvement in saying, "I would scream and tell him to get off" or "We would try to tell them to try to talk it out."

Sometimes children attempt a more physical intervention during violent incidents to try to separate the mother and partner. Tanisha recollected of both Romy and her father during incidents of violence with her mother, "I would jump on his back." This intervention can also have consequences where children may be injured. Tanisha reported that she and Tameca once tried to hit Romy:

That's when we was trying to hit him. So, mom was trying to get him back when we was trying to hit him, but he fell on us and then we ran upstairs and got the, um, hit him, I think, that's when he ran after us...He, he did like this (showed fist), like he going to hit us.

During other incidents children may resolve to withdraw from the violence to seek their own and their sibling's safety. Tanisha described that she would sometimes

“hide” with her sibling. Either Tameca or Tanisha would suggest hiding in their room, closet, or bathroom.

In some families the violence between the mother and partner may be modeled and the child may then demonstrate similar aggression. Jaleesa acknowledged that Tameca started becoming angry and fighting when she was four years old, “when she started seeing, you know, what was going on around in the house” between Jaleesa and Tameca’s father, Reggie. The girls have been “interacting” what was occurring in Jaleesa’s relationships. Jaleesa says of the violence in her relationship,

It affected them a lot because it showed them, like, I tried to not let them see that that was ok so that’s why I left. But, um, I guess they is coming out on you don’t be fighting more and stuff like that, so they interacting what was going on.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. Eight year-old Tanisha and six year-old Tameca have a sibling relationship characterized by sibling warmth and support, as well as serious conflict. Both mother and Tanisha reflected on the same sex dyadic sibling relationship. Some details regarding the toddler sibling were also shared.

Sibling warmth and support. Jaleesa and Tanisha described several positive interactions between Tanisha and Tameca. Jaleesa articulated great concern about fighting between the siblings. Nonetheless, Jaleesa felt the sibling relationship overall is “very close” and that the girls want to be together. Jaleesa further affirmed the older sisters love their little sister, Tychell, and “they are in competition, trying to do things for her.”

Tanisha appears to present as a source of warmth and support for both of her younger sisters. Tanisha characterized her relationship with Tameca as “good.” She described a sibling relationship that has companionship where she and both of her siblings play girls and food, do flips, tell jokes, jump on the bed, and spend time together. Tanisha is usually the one that is helping and caring for her siblings, while Tameca does not do much helping.

Tanisha also assists Tameca when she is unhappy or sad. Jaleesa shared that Tanisha would “go over to her (Tameca) if she see, um, she’ll try to help her (Tameca) out. See what she needs and stuff like that.” If Tanisha is the one that is unhappy or sad, Tameca would just ask Tanisha what is wrong. Tanisha concurred with her mother in that if Tameca is sad, Tanisha said she would “try to cheer her up” by tickling her or trying to play with her. Tameca would do the same for Tanisha.

Communication between siblings lends to the sibling warmth and support. Tanisha said that she and her sisters communicate during play. Also, when the girls were in an argument they would sometimes talk it out as their mother has taught them instead of fighting.

Regarding the intimate partner violence, Jaleesa reported that her older two daughters communicate with each other by talking about the incident and telling their mother and Romy that they would contact their father. The siblings do not talk to their two year-old sister about the violence. Different from her mother, Tanisha disclosed little communication with Tameca about the violence, only sharing that when an incident began Tanisha would inform her sisters about what was occurring.

During a violent incident, the siblings appear to show support and protection for each other. Jaleesa said she has Tanisha take her younger sister, Tameca, from the room. Tanisha agreed with her mother in that she would tell Tameca to go upstairs, “We would hold each other’s hand and run upstairs and go upstairs and go in a closet.” Tanisha continued to relay that she would hide with her sister in the house during a violent incident. On other occasions, Tanisha and her sister would go outside and wait until the fighting was over before they came back inside to watch television.

Sibling caretaking. In some homes, siblings gain a caretaking role for their younger siblings where they are responsible for the sibling’s care. In the Campbell family, 8 year-old Tanisha, the oldest female sibling, has several caretaking responsibilities within the family system, including caring for both her younger siblings, as well as her mother. Jaleesa reported that Tanisha is the “caring one” and “worries a lot” about her mother and siblings. A glimpse of this caretaking of her siblings was first observed by the researcher during the mother interview, as Jaleesa continually had Tanisha come and take care of 2 year-old Tychell to the point where the 8 year-old also changed the 2 year-old’s diaper during the interview.

In her reflection of her own shutting down during the violence, Jaleesa commented that she withdrew from interacting and playing with her children which led to Tanisha helping her mother and taking care of the siblings. It is this oldest sibling that appears to provide a high level of care for her younger siblings. Jaleesa reported that Tanisha helps a lot with the youngest child, Tychell, who listens to her sister. Tanisha said that she gets along with Tychell. Furthermore, she would do

things for both Tychell and Tameca, such as getting them food and drinks, helping them clean up their toys, reading to siblings, and helping Tameca with her homework. Tanisha also provides minimal discipline by tapping Tychell if she hits.

Sibling Conflict. Siblings often bicker and have some conflict in their relationships. At times, this may grow to a sibling relationship involving quarreling or aggression. Jaleesa is highly concerned regarding the physical aggression between the older siblings. Jaleesa went as far as characterizing Tanisha and Tameca's relationship as "horrible" because the girls constantly fight, which is "ridiculous" to Jaleesa. Tanisha is more often verbal with her sister, but both girls would start a physical fight. Jaleesa describes Tameca as a "fighter" who hits and wants to fight everyone. Tameca would continually "pick" at Tanisha. It is to the point that Jaleesa has to keep the girls in separate rooms. The girls have even had a physical fight at daycare once. Jaleesa expressed that the violence in her own relationship has shown the girls that it is acceptable to repeat what they have seen. Jaleesa said that she is afraid for her children to be around others due to their "interacting what was going on with me."

Although not to the same degree as her mother, Tanisha discussed conflict between her and her sister. Tanisha said she does not always get along with her sister because Tameca would begin to "fight a lot" with both her and Tychell. Tanisha related that Tameca hits Tanisha when Tanisha irritates Tameca, making Tanisha "real mad when she hit(s) me." Tanisha does not stand for the hitting and would hit her sister back.

Maddison Family

At the time of the interview, the Maddison family had been staying at a domestic violence shelter for one month. The mother, Amy Maddison, is a 33 year old Caucasian woman who graduated high school. She has no household income, and had low income prior to coming into the shelter. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with C. Amy and C were in a relationship for eleven years, and married for the past five of those years. They are presently separated.

Amy has two daughters: Hannah, a Caucasian 10 year-old female, and Rachel, a Caucasian 4 year-old female. C is the father of both Hannah and Rachel. Amy and Hannah participated in this study.

Amy described Hannah as a very smart and quiet 5th grader. She likes to read, draw, and play basketball. Amy said that Rachel likes to talk and is a handful. She loves to play with dolls and color. She gets grouchy when tired.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Amy's interview took place in an office at the shelter. The children were involved in a play group in an adjoining room. Amy wanted to participate. She easily answered questions, but those answers were quick and to the point, causing the researcher to use very specific prompts at times. Amy seemed to speak matter-of-factly, and often did not expand on her answers, even with the prompts.

Intimate partner violence has played a role within the Maddison family system for the past several years. Amy related the verbal abuse began about six years into the relationship. For the past two years, there has also been physical violence, with more

severe arguing occurring in the past year. Amy described C as “the yeller” and recounted that she and C “argued all of the time.” When asked about what the arguing looked like, Amy stated, “C yelling, throwing things, and threatening to hurt himself” and “just pushing and, and verbal.”

Amy was unhappy in her marriage and was involved in an extramarital relationship. This involvement led to Amy trying to leave C. She expressed that C would not let her leave. As she explained, “he grabbed the phone from me, threw the phone in the middle of the street, and then, like, pulled me home...He kept holding me back from the door.” Regarding that incident, she continued, “We were arguing. He punched both my arms here. I had black and blue marks. And threw a dresser drawer at me, and, uh, restrained me on the bed.” She ran out the door when he was not looking, went to get her children, and moved to the shelter.

Amy said she has had no violence in her past relationships. However, there was some violence in her parents’ relationship, and Amy’s brother can also be violent.

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Ten year-old Hannah provided some information regarding the violence, discussed her emotional appraisals of the violence, and communicated her behavioral responses to the violence. Amy also provided some information about her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the Violence. Both Amy and Hannah divulged small glimpses of the children’s exposure to the violence within the home. Amy said her daughters have seen little of the violence, as she recalled the children were mostly sleeping or watching television during incidents between Amy and C. However, Amy did

disclose that both girls have seen and heard arguing and yelling in her relationship. Without providing a descriptive account, she further explained that the girls have seen “some hitting.” When prompted to discuss more of what the children have seen, Amy said, “Um, probably just like a, a slap or something. Nothing, usually, most of the hitting was done in the bedroom, so.”

Amy expresses that the children did not witness the physical violence the day she left. When asked more specifically about the most severe violence the girls have seen, Amy articulated, “They’ve seen their dad, uh, the one incident he threatened to take his medicine and he dumped it all on the couch and threatened to take it all” and “they’ve seen C go to the kitchen and get knives and try to kill himself.” She then clarified that C would only threaten to kill himself and not actually try.

Hannah related that her father is sometimes “nice” and other times “mean.” She explained that her family came to the shelter because her mom and dad were fighting, but Hannah was in school and did not witness this occur. With minimal details, Hannah disclosed seeing some incidents of violence between her parents. When asked if she ever saw her parents fighting, Hannah said, “Sometimes, but it didn’t really, like, wasn’t that bad.” When her parents were fighting, Hannah related that her dad would sometimes throw things or “scream” at her mother. Hannah’s father would also say mean things to her mom. Of one incident, Hannah recalled hearing from another room, “That my dad, um, kept hitting my mom.”

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Hannah wanted to participate and seemed relaxed throughout most of the interview; however, when discussing her

parents Hannah squirmed in her seat and seemed uncomfortable. She did not provide a lot of detailed information about the violence in her home. A few times Hannah said that she did not remember or did not know what happened in her home. Nevertheless, Hannah remained involved in the interview, sharing some important insight into her experiences.

Children have differing emotional appraisals of violence in their homes. Amy said her daughters did not talk about the violence. However, Amy also shared their fear, “I know they were scared...I could tell. A mother knows.” Hannah concurred with her mother, stating that she was sometimes “sad” and “worried.” Although some children feel that they are to blame for the violence or feel threatened during the violence, neither Hannah nor her mother disclosed these feelings.

For some children, the aftermath of a violent incident may be a return to the “normal” family environment. Hannah discussed her and her sister after an incident, “We just sit there and watch a movie or whatever we are doing.” For coping, Amy said Hanna goes to a friend’s house and she is now in counseling at the shelter.

Behavioral responses to the violence. Amy described ways her children behaviorally respond to the violence in their home. Ten year-old Hannah did not disclose becoming involved during any incidents; however, her mother revealed she had. During an incident, Amy related Hannah would directly verbally intervene, demanding her father to “Stop doing that.” Rachel intervened with distraction. Amy said, “She (Rachel) just comes over to me and holds, like, tries to hug me and all.” C would yell at the girls to stay out of the incident.

During other incidents, Hannah would withdraw from the situation by going to her room. Both mother and ten year-old reported that the sibling pair also sought companionship from each other during an incident where Hannah took her younger sister away from the situation.

Amy did say she feels there are similarities between C and Hannah in that Hannah has a “temper” much like C. Amy disclosed that upon entering the shelter both girls were acting out, but since leaving her husband both girls’ attitudes and outlook have become a lot better, as they have become more open and talkative with both their mother and each other.

In some families, the sibling conflict may be modeled by the parents. Amy expressed some concern that Hannah “takes after her dad” in throwing a temper when she does not get her own way. Hannah would whine, pout, stomp her feet, and complain in her tantrums, but she would not be physical.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. The same-sex sibling dyad of ten year-old Hannah and 4 year-old Rachel have a sibling relationship characterized by sibling warmth and support with minimal sibling conflict.

Sibling warmth and support. Both mother and Hannah explained warm and caring aspects of the sibling relationship. Amy first stated the relationship between the siblings was just “okay” and they only “sometimes” got along. After further discussion, Amy described a sibling relationship that was “close” where the girls were “always together.” She further stated the violence in her relationship has made the

girls become closer. When Hannah was asked, she explained she and her sister got along “good.”

Both Hannah and her mother expressed a warm and companionate sibling relationship where the same-sex siblings play games and color together. Hannah is a helper and teacher to Rachel by reading Rachel books, teaching her how to write her letters, and helping her to get things when needed. Hannah also assists her younger sister if she is unhappy or sad. Hannah stated she gives her sister things if she is sad. Amy concurred with her daughters account, saying Hannah is caring towards Rachel by making her feel better when she is unhappy or sad. Rachel asks Hannah what is wrong, but does not go further than that when it is Hannah that is unhappy or sad.

Communication between the siblings usually involves play and imaginary people. In relation to the intimate partner violence, Amy does not see communication between her two daughters regarding the incidents. Both Amy and Hannah disclosed that during the incidents the girls are usually watching television or are in another room. Hannah explained, “We just, like, sit and stuff, and we just play or watch movies and stuff.” However, if the girls are present, Hannah shows support and protection for Rachel. Amy said that during incidents between her and her husband, “Hannah would usually take, try to take Rachel out into the other room or try to keep her occupied with something.” Hannah agreed she would sometimes take Rachel to a different room, “Like, she, I might take her to, like, the playroom, or I might tell her to play there and just watch a movie.”

Sibling conflict. As in many families, the older and younger sibling in the Maddison family system display minimal sibling conflict. Hannah described that she and her sister “have fights and stuff.” Hannah would get mad at Rachel when Rachel takes Hannah’s stuff, and Hannah would take it back from Rachel. Sometimes Rachel and Hannah are “mean” to each other where Rachel would hit Hannah, but Hannah does not hit back. Hannah goes to her mother when hit by her sister.

Amy agreed with Hannah’s description, saying that the girls do fight. They usually fought over toys or Rachel touching things that belong to Hannah. The fighting by the children means, “Pushing each other, taking stuff from each other, like, pulling away.” Amy described the girls as “whining” when they are not getting along.

Ryan Family

The Ryan family resides in their own housing. Pam Ryan is a 45 year-old Caucasian woman with a high school diploma who makes \$40,000 per year. She has utilized the services of the domestic violence shelter for four years now because of her relationship with her husband, Matt. Pam and Matt have been married for thirteen years, and are going through the divorce process. They separated three years ago and have a relationship based on co-parenting.

Pam has three sons: LB (Lawrence), a Caucasian twelve year-old male; Lance, a Caucasian eight year-old boy; and Landon, a Caucasian six year-old boy. Matt is the father of all three boys and shares custody with Pam. Pam and LB participated in the study. Pam felt it best that Lance not participate due to emotional issues.

Pam described LB as artistic and loving the outdoors. He does not do well in school, has anger issues, and physically fights with his siblings. She explained that Lance has a big heart, is quirky, and hyperactive. He has behavioral problems in school, feels abandoned, and would also physically fight with siblings. Pam said Landon is cute, goes with the flow, and is a free-spirit. He thrives on attention, likes to sing and dance, and does well in school.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Pam's interview took place in one of the shelter's family rooms. LB and Landon were in the play room while the interview took place. Pam very much wanted to participate to hopefully help other families in the future. Pam provided in-depth information about her family and relationship with Matt. At different times during the interview, Pam was tearful.

Emotional abuse has played a large role in the Ryan family system. The relationship began as Pam and Matt "working as a partnership" about fifteen years ago. After a few years, things turned where Matt and Pam would have a few "blow-ups" a year, which then escalated: "More and more responsibilities, more and more fights, more and more nastiness." There would be occasional alcohol use by Matt. Pam recalled that it was like a "dictatorship" where "everything was my fault, very accusatory, very nasty." She often felt at fault, could not go out when she wanted, and never knew what was coming. Pam disclosed the violence centered mostly on "mental abuse." She described a controlling relationship with "mind games" and "manipulation." Pam and Matt would both fight, "I mean, in your face, holler and

scream, 'FU,' nasty." Pam had considered suicide at one point and decided to leave when Matt threatened her life with the children present.

Matt and Pam have been separated for three years. Pam tries to limit her contact, as there is continual intimidation and emotional abuse regarding the co-parenting relationship, finances, custody of the children, and ongoing divorce process. She shared that Matt "wants to dictate everything." He does what is in opposition to Pam: he has cut the children's hair bald, has taken mother to court for not getting his permission to have their son in wrestling, and refused to take the children to cub scouts when he had them. Pam expressed, "Any decision that I would make he would not, he does the opposite" and "Anytime, any type of discipline that I try to do he undermines." Pam also reported Matt talks bad about her to the children, where the children now use similar language with their mother. Matt presently has criminal charges for shooting another person. Pam expressed, "I'm still physically afraid of him. I don't know, I didn't know what he was capable of doing and I still don't."

Children's diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Twelve year-old LB generally recalled the violence, discussed his emotional appraisals, and communicated his behavioral responses to the violence. Pam also provided specifics on her son's experiences.

Exposure to the Violence. Pam divulged her children have been exposed to emotional violence in the mother-partner subsystem. In contrast, twelve year-old LB revealed very little information regarding the violence in the parental relationship. LB said his father is sometimes "Oscar the Grouch," and yells a lot when angry. About

how his mother and father got along, LB shared, “Well, I guess after I went to sleep they fought a lot because that’s what my mom has told me.” He went on to say there was “one time” that LB saw them fighting and “It was kind of physical...My dad was hitting my mom, but um. He used to drink.” When prompted to expand on what he has seen, LB stated that he did not remember. LB also replied that he did not hear anything either, “I sleep like a rock” and they “kept quiet.”

Very differently from LB, Pam disclosed her three sons were exposed to an “environment that nobody respected the other person.” The boys have heard “nasty,” undermining fights, accusations, and controlling behaviors where things at home “could erupt at any time.” Pam recalled that she and Matt did not leave the room because the children were present, “We would get up in each other’s face...The kids would be playing or doing whatever, right there...At that point it didn’t matter. It just, all hell broke loose.”

In one incident Matt was drinking and left Landon unattended by a fire. With LB and Landon present, Pam said Matt “just turned...he got in my face and he, he was going to hit me. He said he’d kill me... ‘I’ll just take a gun and shoot you.’” LB somewhat similarly reported on this incident. LB recalled his father passed out and Landon crawling by the fire. LB continued that this was “the night that they fought, I think,” but he did not disclose hearing his father threaten his mother’s life.

By growing up with this control, disrespect, and accusations, Pam disclosed the boys are repeating things they hear from their father. Matt would “twist things that, ‘Mom never cooks.’ ‘Mom doesn’t provide’...If you ask them they’ll say, ‘Well

mom sat on her butt' because that is what they were told." Although not to the same degree as his mother, LB did disclose, "Well my dad talks about my mom constantly... Things that I can't repeat."

Pam also disclosed her concern that Matt used physical discipline with the children. LB did say that on occasion his dad would be physical, but he did not expand. Pam and the children are involved in family counseling, who are mandated reporters if there is a need.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. LB was very talkative, providing a lot of detailed information regarding his life and siblings. However, when asked about his appraisals of incidents between his mother and father, he provided very little information and said that he did not know to some questions.

LB felt that living with both of his parents was "good" for him because he could do more things with his father alone and he did not have to go back and forth between homes. When asked about his parents now, LB said he felt "ok" as he knew "Nothing's going to happen severely." He related that he would "deal with it."

Pam portrayed a very different story and expressed concern for the children. Pam related that Matt convinced the children to be afraid of her home, as he told them that there was a witch that lived upstairs. The children were involved in counseling at the shelter in the past, but now have family counseling in their home. Pam said LB feels "powerless." He has been angry, and to cope, LB has tuned things out and put up a wall. He "shuts down" and goes to his room. Pam described a few incidents

where LB has cried and felt scared. He also lacks support from his dad, but at the same time craves his dad's attention.

Pam explained eight year-old Lance blames himself, has threatened to hurt himself, has cut himself before, has low self-esteem, and is clingy. Lance was upset during verbal incidents between his parents. Pam stated of Lance, "He always feels abandoned. He has a really hard time whenever we do an exchange. He doesn't ever want to leave the parent that he is with." He has cried himself to sleep and has occasionally wet his bed. To cope, Lance "completely moves inward. It's, 'I'm so stupid.' 'I'm not worth it' 'You don't love me.' 'You hate me.'"

Behavioral responses to the violence. Pam shared that all of the children would just remain in the room during an incident between her and Matt, continuing what they were doing. They would not leave the room or become involved. As well, LB did not disclose doing anything in response to the violence between his parents. When asked if he would do something to stop the arguing between his parents, LB relayed that he did nothing, as there was nothing he could do because his parents would not listen to him. All that he shared was that he would go into his room after an incident.

Pam shared her belief that the aggressive behaviors of both LB and Lance are related to the violence in her relationship with Matt. Pam described LB's behavior as erratic where he is angry, has poor school performance, and is physically aggressive with his siblings. Similarly, Lance is so hyperactive that he has hurt himself, he is presently having behavioral problems in school, is physically aggressive with his

siblings, and has tried to cut himself in the past. Landon does not act out, but he can be physical with both his mother and siblings.

In some families, the violence between the mother and partner may be modeled and the child may then model similar aggression. After the incident when Landon was unattended by the fire and Matt threatened Pam, Landon came over to his mother and was mimicking the “same mannerisms” of Matt yelling at her and Landon was stabbing her with an object. Pam described that the children have been drawn into the emotional violence as well. She explains that Matt made a secret game with the boys to call their grandmother “fatty.” Also, Pam expressed concern because the children have come home saying exactly the words that their father says. For example, when discussing the laundry with LB, LB told Pam that he never has anything to wear because she never does the laundry. Pam says, “And that, to me was just like it was coming out of his father’s mouth.”

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. LB, Lance, and Landon have a sibling relationship characterized by some sibling warmth and support, but there is also severe conflict within some of the sibling dyads.

Sibling warmth and support. Both Pam and LB portrayed some sibling warmth and support in the sibling relationships. Pam relayed that eight year-old Lance and six year-old Landon maintain a supportive and warm relationship with some conflict, and are probably the closest of all the siblings. They share a bedroom, mostly play nicely, and can “interact very well.” They talk about school and

characters from their imagination. Lance “will help him try to read and that makes him feel better and bolsters up that esteem a little bit.” Pam also said the siblings are “protective” of each other when one is unhappy or sad. She stated, “They kind of do look out for one another.”

Twelve year-old LB and six year-old Landon seem to also have a relationship with warmth and support, as well as some conflict. Pam said they “get along pretty well” and “can play nicely.” They are companionate where they enjoy playing hand puppets and action figures, and both have tried to help the other if one is unhappy or sad. LB described a similar relationship as his mother and felt that he and Landon get along pretty good sometimes. They like to color and draw when they do get time to play together. LB keeps an eye out for Landon if they are out, and reported he would try to help Landon. If Landon is in trouble LB will talk to him about what he has done and give suggestions on how to act. LB also tries to help Landon with his homework. If Landon is unhappy or sad LB said, “I kind of talk to him, try to make him feel better in time out, try to fix everything.” If LB is unhappy or sad, Landon will “try to be near me, and sit by me.”

The relationship between twelve year-old LB and eight year-old Lance seems to have some warmth, but there is typically conflict. Pam mostly discussed the conflict, but did say the boys get along and help each other sometimes. On the contrary, LB mostly discussed a warm relationship with his middle sibling, but did share some conflict. LB and Lance are companionate where they will ride bikes together, go on outside adventures together, and play with a wheel barrow go-kart. LB

said he knows Lance looks up to him, and when LB is tolerant, he will allow Lance into his room to play the keyboard together, or to play Legos or Batman. LB also described comfort and helping in the sibling relationship when LB helps Lance space out his words or when LB helps Lance when he is sad. LB did say that often Lance “doesn’t want my help.” If Lance will accept help, LB said “I just kind of give him a hug. When we get along I take him up to my room and just make him, try to make him feel better.” If LB is angry Lance will stay away, which is actually helpful to LB. LB shared that he and Lance get along “pretty good when we’re not fighting.”

Regarding the controlling and undermining by Matt, Pam shared that the children have been “in the middle.” The boys have continued to do what they were doing when an incident occurred because it was their “normal.” Pam said the children did not talk to each other or make each other leave the room during an incident. Today, the boys still do not talk, “They seem to want to avoid it.” Pam states, “I don’t see them clinging to each other for that reason.”

LB did not disclose being present with his siblings during any incidents. He said his siblings were probably sleeping or much younger. LB did not know what he and his brothers would do. When directly asked, he denied he would talk to his brothers or try to make them leave the room.

Sibling conflict. Siblings often bicker and have some conflict in their relationships. At times, this may grow to a sibling relationship involving severe quarreling or aggression. Pam was very concerned about the physical aggression between the siblings, as well as the “jealousy on all ends.” When speaking about all

of her boys, Pam said, “If you get three in the mix and there’s, there’s always somebody that is unhappy and then it usually ends up in a fight or somebody doing something.”

Eight year-old Lance and six year-old Landon have some physical aggression in their relationship. Pam said they can both physically fight where they will hit, kick, bite, and pinch. Landon will get angry and go after Lance, and Lance will hit or kick him back. Pam worries Lance can hurt Landon because of his size. There is also a wedge between the two boys, as Lance is jealous of and resents Landon for extra time he spent with their father.

Twelve year-old LB and six year-old Landon also have some physical aggression in their relationship. Pam said, “I’ve seen Landon get very nasty to Lawrence (LB), and, you know, physically try to hit him or hurt him.” She was concerned about how much stronger and bigger LB is than Landon. A bit less than his mother, LB related he sometimes fights with Landon if Landon touches LB’s things. They will be “chasing, yelling” for a short while. They would hit each other sometimes, but LB said it is “nothing like try to kill each other.”

Pam described the relationship between twelve year-old LB and eight year-old Lance, “Like oil and water.” Lance looks up to LB, and if Lance feels shunned from LB he will become “nasty” and will “take things, he will hide things, he will throw things.” LB has “no tolerance for Lance” and will get very nasty and demeaning with name calling, calling each other “stupid” or “idiot,” and saying “I hate you.” It seems Lance will go out of his way to do something nasty, which aggravates LB. Recently,

out of anger with Lance, LB threw a rock near Lance and it hit him in the face, possibly breaking his nose and giving him a shiner. Pam reminds LB he needs to watch himself as he is bigger and can hurt his sibling. Similar to his mother's account, LB related Lance can be frustrating because he cannot sit still. It is annoying to LB, as Lance is always flipping around. Lance looking up to LB all of the time, tagging along, and coming into his room is sometimes annoying to LB as well. LB portrayed a somewhat less physically aggressive relationship. LB said if they are not getting along there is "usually just yelling." He further admitted he and Lance sometimes hit each other and Lance will kick, punch, and bite.

Allen Family

At the time of the interview, the Allen family had been residing at a domestic violence shelter for one month. Ebony is a 31 year-old African American female with an 11th grade education who currently has no income. She went to the shelter because of her relationship with Jared. Ebony and Jared were living together for three and a half years, and presently have no relationship.

Ebony has five children. Two of the children were raised by others, eighteen year-old Xavier and adopted four year-old Daniel. The children living with her presently are Keisha, an eleven year-old African American female, Tiffany, a five year-old African American female, whom Ebony recently got back into her custody, and Jayden, a two year-old African American male. Jared is not the father of any of the children, but Jayden only knows him to be his "father." Ebony does not know who

Jayden's biological father is. Keisha and Tiffany both have different fathers. Keisha does not see her father often, but Tiffany visits with her father. Ebony and Keisha participated in the study.

Ebony described Keisha as loving and caring. However, she is also angry, has behavior problems, an attitude, and she "fights on her sisters." Ebony said that Tiffany is quiet, laughs at everything, and goes with the flow. She is also sneaky, will try to play the innocent one, and is very emotional. Jayden drives Ebony up a wall. She shared he is curious, fights, and cusses.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Ebony was interviewed at the shelter with her children playing in another room with staff. She checked on the children once during the interview because they were loud, and one time two year-old Jayden came to talk to his mother. Overall, Ebony provided brief responses to all questions, especially towards the end. She was not overly descriptive in the information she provided regarding the violence in the home. However, Ebony was involved in the interview and provided some important details.

Violence has been a part of the Allen family system for the past year. Ebony described the violence, "It was all right in the beginning and then, um, he got overprotective...started abusing me" because Ebony went outside of her relationship with another man. Ebony explained Jared was "mentally, physically, all that" abusive. She continued, "We got along sometimes when I was doing what he wanted me to do." Although Ebony did not provide detailed description of the physical violence and did not want to discuss the most severe incident between her and Jared, she did share

one incident where she and Jared were fighting outside and he hit her in front of her oldest daughter. Ebony said a typical incident would be Jared finding Ebony talking on the phone to someone and Jared would “yell and scream.” This would happen five or six times a week. Ebony disclosed the police were involved during one incident. Ebony came to the shelter “just to get away and get my kids out of the situation.”

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Eleven year-old Keisha provided some information regarding the violence, discussed her emotional appraisals of the violence, and her behavioral responses to the violence. Ebony also provided some information about her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Ebony and Keisha provided a very similar glimpse into the intimate partner violence in the home, sharing minimal details. Ebony stated all three of her children have been present for and heard the yelling in her relationship with Jared. Similar to her mother, Keisha shared the siblings were present in the same room as the mother-partner subsystem during an incident. When asked where she would be, Keisha responded, “Right there.” Ebony said the children would be “yelling.” She related all three of the children have seen the yelling between Ebony and Jared. When asked about the physical incidents of violence, Ebony shared, “Keisha was there...Jayden too.” Both children have seen Jared hit Ebony. Though, Keisha has seen more incidents of violence because she was “around more” and is “alert.”

During one incident before coming to the shelter Ebony said, “We was fighting outside and Keisha was here and he hit me in front of her.” Ebony also shared Jared

sometimes yells at the kids during an incident but “nothing too much.” Keisha did not discuss Jared yelling at her, but did say that Jared was “mean.” She likewise acknowledged her mother’s account of the violence. Keisha said the mother-partner subsystem got along “bad” where “he (Jared) would fight.” She did not expand on what “fight” meant.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Ebony spoke privately with eleven year-old Keisha right before the interview. Keisha seemed hesitant after talking to her mother. She was fairly engaged in the interview and somewhat talkative, but she was brief in most of her answers throughout the interview. Whenever the researcher first changed the subject to her home before the shelter, Keisha just looked at the researcher. She was visibly upset with a tear in her eyes when asked about the violence in the mother-partner relationship so the researcher moved forward in the interview. From there, Keisha answered very few questions, mostly remaining quiet or providing a headshake as an answer.

Ebony shared that Keisha has a lot of anger and attitude right now that “she’s trying to process.” Keisha is often angry during an incident, “she’s seen a lot, she’s been through a lot.” She is presently in counseling. Ebony said of five year-old Tiffany during an incident, “she just cries.” However, if she sees her mother then she is fine. Two year-old Jayden will also cry during an incident. Ebony expressed the children are “just glad it’s over.” Regarding Keisha specifically, Ebony said, “She just don’t want me to deal with him anymore.”

Keisha said she feels “sad” when her mom and Jared fight. Keisha shook her head yes when asked if she was afraid during an incident, but did not expand. She had tears in her eyes when asked if she felt she was to blame for the incidents. She originally did not respond, but later said she sometimes feels that she is to blame for her mother and Jared fighting because they “argue” about something that Keisha asked for. Keisha would communicate with her siblings about their emotions during an incident. Keisha would ask her brother and sister if they were “scared,” and the siblings would say “yeah.” Today, Keisha is not happy about being at the shelter, but feels “good” about being away from Jared. Ebony shared that Keisha is in counseling to cope with the violence in the mother-partner relationship.

Behavioral responses to the violence. From their appraisals of the violence, children may decide to become verbally involved during an incident. Ebony shared that all of her children will be “yelling” during an incident. Of two year-old Jayden, Ebony said he “yells and he thinks he can fight everything.” Ebony discussed eleven year-old Keisha verbally being involved, “She’ll just say mom, stop arguing,” and she’ll tell Jared to stop arguing as well. Keisha supported her mother’s assessment, stating that during an incident she would tell Jared to leave her mother alone.

Some children also become physically involved during an incident. Of one incident where Jared hit Ebony, Ebony stated Keisha “tried to chase him down and fight him...She was just, like, like, trying to fight on him and hit him.” Similarly to her mother, Keisha said that during an incident she hit Jared which led to Jared hitting Keisha, which led to Ebony hitting Jared.

At times, children may perceive the violence as rising to the point that they need additional assistance from extended family. Keisha reported she would sometimes call her aunt or grandmother during an incident. Keisha would say, “Grandmom that um, um, that mom and Jared are fighting.” The grandmother and aunt would come to the home and take the kids and their mother to the aunt’s house.

Some children may resolve to withdraw during an incident. Ebony shared that five year-old Tiffany withdraws and cries during an incident of violence. Other children act out in households with intimate partner violence. Ebony related that Jayden is currently fighting and cussing at home. Of Keisha, Ebony said that she fights with her sisters, has a mouth, and is having behavioral problems at school.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. Keisha, Tiffany, and Jayden have a sibling relationship characterized with sibling warmth and support, but also moderate conflict. Both mother and eleven year-old Keisha discussed the same-sex sibling relationship between eleven year-old Keisha and five year old Tiffany, and the mixed-sex sibling relationship between Keisha and two year-old Jayden. Ebony also discussed the mixed-sex sibling relationship between Tiffany and Jayden.

Sibling warmth and support. Both Ebony and Keisha share that the three sibling dyads display some sibling warmth and support. Of the relationship between Keisha and Tiffany, Ebony described them as being companionate as they cut and paint nails together, play beads, and go to the park. According to her mother, Tiffany tries to help Keisha the most, do things for her, share, and be nice, but Keisha has a lot

of anger and won't "break." When asked if Keisha would help Tiffany, Ebony said, "I believe she would, but I just haven't seen it." Of Tiffany helping Keisha, Ebony stated, "She'll stand beside her." Keisha is protective and will not let others hurt Tiffany. Overall, Ebony believed the sibling relationship between Keisha and Tiffany is "close to a certain extent." Keisha confirmed what her mother shared that Keisha and Tiffany will play and color together. Contrary to her mother, Keisha said she does help Tiffany with school work and chores. Tiffany will help Keisha back similarly. If Tiffany is unhappy or sad, Keisha stated, "I cater her or sometimes I tease her" meaning she will "tease her, like, say 'Ah ha' or something like that" or cater to her, "tell her it's ok, stop crying." If Keisha is unhappy or sad Tiffany will "tease me or just look at me or something."

According to Ebony, Keisha and Jayden are much different, as "they are close," they talk to each other, and they do things with each other. Differently than the same-sex sibling dyad, Keisha can get Jayden to do "whatever she wants him to do." Keisha takes Jayden to the park and "helps him...whatever he asks her to do, she'll do it." If Jayden is unhappy or sad, Ebony finds that Keisha, "Oh, she, she spoils him." If Keisha is unhappy or sad, Jayden, "Oh, he'll, he'll comfort her." Of Jayden, Ebony said Keisha "always protected him and watched out for him...been right there for him." Keisha described a similar sibling relationship as her mother. She said Jayden is "fun, and he's bad" in that "he doesn't listen." They sometimes get along. Keisha is helpful to Jayden as she helps Jayden with daily activities of dressing and brushing his hair and teeth. Keisha and Jayden are companionate as they play, read books, say

ABC's, and count together. Keisha said Jayden is "special" and "he gets whatever he wants." If Jayden is unhappy or sad Keisha will "pick him up and give him a hug or kiss him," and if Keisha is unhappy or sad Jayden "hugs me or says it is ok."

Ebony shared five year-old Tiffany and two year-old Jayden have a warm relationship with some conflict. The two youngest will talk and will ask for each other if they are apart. Ebony stated Tiffany will try to help Jayden, but because of his age he does not help. If Jayden is unhappy or sad, Tiffany, "She tries to baby him." If Tiffany is unhappy or sad, Jayden will tell his mom, "Tiffany's crying mommy."

During an incident of intimate partner violence, Keisha will be protective over her siblings. Ebony stated that Keisha, "Just make sure nobody gets hurt." Similarly to her mother's account, Keisha said of her siblings that she would "take them in the other room." The children would talk about being scared and about "moving."

Sibling conflict. Siblings can bicker and have conflict in their sibling relationships. The Allen siblings show moderate conflict in their relationships. Ebony shared that eleven year-old Keisha and five year-old Tiffany "Don't get along." Keisha won't help Tiffany and when Keisha takes the children to the park, Ebony said, "Tiffany always comes back crying because Keisha done did something." The two girls "fight a lot" because Keisha is jealous of Tiffany's looks (Tiffany looks more like their mother than Keisha). This fighting usually includes Keisha physically hitting first and then Tiffany trying to hit back.

Somewhat similar to her mother's account, Keisha shared it is "hard" being Tiffany's big sister "because she doesn't listen" and she is "sneaky." Keisha

continued, “If it’s something important and I want her to do something, she doesn’t do it.” Keisha said, “We don’t really get along...because she gets too smart...she hits me and she says, ‘I don’t care.’” Keisha will hit her sister back when this happens.

Even though Keisha and Jayden have a close relationship, there is also some conflict. Ebony shared that Jayden will “try to bull at her (Keisha). He tries to fight both of them. Like, he think he can beat both of them up...he tries.” Keisha will not fight with Jayden. However, Ebony has caught Keisha disciplining Jayden before: “I catch her spanking him and I tell her to stop hitting him.” Of her and her brother, Keisha related, “we don’t get along that well either” because “he thinks he could beat me and Tiffany.” She shared he will fight on both of his sisters.

Five year-old Tiffany and two year-old Jayden will fight. Ebony said when helping Jayden, Tiffany, “she’s got to be cautious because he, she knows, like, he will slip the script and turn off and smack her or something.” Tiffany has to watch out with Jayden because she does not know what he will do. As is common with many siblings, these two younger children have issues with sharing.

Hall Family

The Hall family has been involved with the domestic violence shelter on and off for the past fifteen years, with Paige Hall entering the shelter again recently. Paige is a 46 year-old Caucasian woman who brings in \$80 per month housekeeping, and has attended some college. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with Gary. Paige and Gary have been together for 24 years, married for 10 years. They are

now divorced and presently have a relationship based on the children and property they own jointly.

Paige has two sons and a daughter: Dan, a 26 year-old Hispanic male who lives on his own; Tony, a 15 year old Caucasian male; and Skye, a 12 year-old Caucasian female. Gary is the father of Tony and Skye, and he has primary physical custody of the children where the children spend the day with Paige and nights with Gary. Paige has been unable to regain custody of her children, even though she feels that Gary is abusive to them. Paige and Skye participated in the study.

Skye was born with muscular and learning disabilities. Paige described Skye as a 7th grader who is below level, is helpful, and likes art and roller blading. She has a poor body image, has to be in control, feels she is always right, and has difficulty maintaining friendships. Paige said Tony has high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder and likes diving, music, drawing, and rollerblading. Tony lacks coping skills and showing emotion, and is extremely angry to the point where he punches walls and is physically aggressive.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Paige was extremely talkative and blunt throughout the interview. At times, she was tearful. She provided detailed information regarding her experiences in her lengthy history with her ex-husband.

The twenty four year mother-partner subsystem has been plagued with severe physical and verbal violence, as well as extensive drug use by both Paige and Gary. At one point the children were taken away from the parents by child welfare. In addition,

a major family issue occurred when Dan (14 years old at the time) sexually molested Tony (2 ½ years old at the time), causing additional stress and legal interventions with the family.

Paige described a relationship where Gary shoved, hit, slapped, pinched, and smashed Paige's belonging. Further, there was emotional abuse where Gary belittled Paige by calling her names such as, "stupid," "retard," "Maggie moron," and "dumb bitch." Paige divulged of the violent relationship that Gary would "grab me by the back of the hair and smash my face on the door, he backhanded me, he head butted me, he pinched my legs to the point where I had black and blue marks." He has also slapped, punched, and choked Paige and "held a gun" to her head.

Paige was asked to describe the most severe incidents of violence. Once, Gary loaded a handgun. Paige recalled: "He laid it on the table and tells me the world would be a better place without me anyway." Another time Gary accidentally caught Paige on fire when they were using drugs, and he just yelled at her instead of helping her: "You stupid retard. You dumb bitch. Look what you're doing?" And once, Gary was choking Paige at the top of the stairs by her throat and was going to throw her down. Gary asked a 9 year-old Skye, "Do you want to see mommy fly?"

Over time, Paige would instigate Gary to "get it (the violence) out of the way." She also explained one escalated violent situation, "I stabbed him... When I was backed in a corner and he punched me and said are you afraid, are you afraid yet, and grabbed a knife off the counter and I did stab him."

Paige left Gary three years ago, but was sexually involved with him until this year. The physical violence decreased when she left, but “the controlling, the yelling, the screaming-that didn’t change.” Paige described intimidation and sexual abuse. Gary uses Paige’s visitation with the children to control her. As a consequence to Paige for not keeping the children in line, Gary will threaten Paige that he will “punch their lights out” or “beat the shit out of them.”

In her own childhood history, Paige’s father drank and was severely abusive to her mother, as well as to Paige and her sister. Paige’s first husband, Dan’s father, was also abusive.

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Twelve year-old Skye recalled the violence, discussed her emotional appraisals, and communicated her behavioral responses to the violence. Paige also provided details regarding her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Paige and Skye described in detail that all of the children in the home have been exposed to the intimate partner violence and drug use. Paige said that during a violent incident, the children are present in the same room or in another room, and “they’ve seen everything.” She continued describing what they have seen:

Screaming, hitting...they didn’t see the incident where he gave me the broken nose and he head butted me, but they saw the blood after it was done...She (Skye) has seen him smashing my stuff and she has seen him physically hitting me...He’s (Tony) witnessed more of us, the, um, when we were living in the projects and Gary kicked, was kicking me repeatedly in the face and in the head and the stomach, he seen, he stood there and watched.

Skye reported a somewhat similar account to her mother as to the children's exposure. Skye said, "My mom and dad didn't really get along," and there would be "fighting." She clarified in a slight whisper, "My dad would get physical," meaning "He would hit my mom." Skye recollected that both she and her brother have seen her father hit and push her mother, laugh at and call her mother names, use curse words, and rip down a screen door. In describing one incident at 6 years old, Skye said, "He had her by her throat above the staircase about to throw her down." In another incident, Gary broke a door, throwing Skye's head into a counter.

Paige reported Gary verbally threatened the children during a violent incident, asking them, "Well, you want it too?" In one incident Gary "bragged" to the children, "See what you get when you violate my six inch living space? Your mom thought it was a good idea to violate my six inch living space and I head-butted her in the face."

In addition to the violence, the siblings have been witness to the drug use in the home by both Paige and Gary. Paige acknowledged:

My daughter saw a lot of bad things when I was using. She saw a lot of bad things when her dad was using, mine was a whole lot worse because I was using IV drugs...She saw the spoons, she saw the stuff for shot, she saw me using. And, um, me tying off my arm. She saw everything except seeing me stick the needle in my arm...Then she seen her dad, she sees him use pot, he smokes pot in front of her. Um, he drinks, he drinks and drives.

Different than her mother's account, Skye did not discuss drug use by either of her parents. However, she did report, "My dad, I'll be honest with you, he's sort of a drunk." When her father drinks now, Skye said he "sits, be lazy, watch movies. He never really gets violent when he drinks. He's always mellow when he drinks."

Paige was worried about Gary's being abusive and threatening to the children, his substance use, and his verbal abuse of his girlfriend. Paige disclosed that Gary was now using similar belittling language with Skye, calling her degrading names and curse words. In contrast to Paige's worries, Skye reported her father is sometimes nice to her, and will sometimes yell. Skye did not disclose her father belittling or calling her bad names. She did talk a little about her father yelling at his present girlfriend. Paige's reports to child protective services and the courts have been unfounded and the children remain in the custody of Gary. Both children see a counselor at the domestic violence shelter, who is a mandated reporter if necessary.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Twelve year-old Skye was very talkative, using her hands while talking, and providing a detailed account of her home life. She did fidget and move around at times. Through discussing her experiences, Skye came across as older than her actual age. She also tended to go off topic, in detail, during several parts of the interview, and became extremely tired by the end.

Although Paige admitted she does not really know, Paige believes the violence was "hard" on her children. She said Skye and Tony "blame themselves" for the violence in the mother-partner subsystem. Paige disclosed she would place guilt onto her children by telling them she and her partner were fighting because of them and their actions. Paige also said Skye would comfort Paige after an incident, while Tony would run away, ignore the issue, or cry.

Of the violence, Skye stated, "I didn't really like it." Skye said that sometimes she would be hiding with her brother and they "would just cry." Contrary to her

mother, Skye denied she felt to blame. However, she divulged she was afraid sometimes and is sad about the violence because she does not feel her mother “deserved” being hit.

Both children are in counseling. Regarding how the children cope with the violence, Paige communicated: “Skye worries about everything, acts out. Tony acts out, and I don’t think he talks to anybody about it.” Tony’s reactions center on anger and lashing out physically with Skye. Paige elaborated about Tony, “He doesn’t have the coping skills to deal with. Like, he doesn’t show emotion.”

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Paige and Skye discussed behavioral responses to the violence by the children. Skye related both she and her brother would sometimes observe the violence between their parents. She said of other times that Tony and she would withdraw to their rooms, run out of the house, or go and hide together, “We used to hide in the closet sometimes.” Of Tony, Skye relayed he usually did not get involved during an incident, as he “either cries, runs, or keeps doing his homework because he just ignores it.” Paige verified Tony would withdraw from the violence, “My son pretty much will go run and hide...My son would hide in the closet, hide under the bed.”

In regards to Skye though, Paige expressed Skye was often involved in the violence, “My daughter always got in the middle of everything...Skye always tries to stop what happens.” Skye will be verbally involved in the physical fighting and say, “Daddy, please stop” or “Mommy, just come on. Mommy, come on. Let’s just go

over here. Let's not talk to daddy." When involved, Paige disclosed Skye may have been "knocked down" on occasion.

Skye confirmed her mother's view of Skye's involvement. Skye articulated she would be physically involved where she would "push" or "scream" at her dad. She provided a description of her physical involvement in an incident when she was six where her father was going to throw her mother down the stairs, so Skye "punched" her father (in his private parts) "and he fell down and my mom dropped down to me. And luckily I had the railing or we would of both went down." After this occurred, Skye said her father "crawled on his hands and knees apologizing to me so I slapped him across the face." Paige described this same incident, but Paige did not disclose Skye actually hit her father. Of the incident, Paige related, "My daughter is the one that saved me from being killed. She came out and screamed, 'no daddy, put her down, put her down' and he dropped me on the floor."

Abusers sometimes try to gain the assistance of children to become verbally involved. During an incident, Paige said Gary would encourage both children to call Paige names. He would tell Skye to call Paige mean names, such as "stupid" and "moron." Skye did not discuss her father asking her and her brother to say things to their mother during an incident. However, Skye did allude to an unspoken warning in her home that can be used to avoid a disruption, "Well, if he's tired, don't ask too many questions...don't ask the questions over and over again."

Sometimes children are responsible for gaining help in violent situations. Skye reported one incident where she had the phone: “If my mom screamed we were supposed to call 911.” However, Skye reported that she never called.

Even now, with Paige at the shelter and the children with Gary, Skye will get involved to mediate when Gary is threatening and arguing with Paige. Paige stated, “My daughter says, ‘Mom, don’t even worry about it. I’ll just piss him off and he’ll send me with you.’ And he does. And I tell them (children) that you can’t do that.”

Paige voiced a strong concern for her children, as she has seen similarities in behavior between Gary and both siblings. Paige said Tony is physically aggressive like his father, and “everything is always somebody else’s fault. He can’t take ownership for nothing. And, and, and that lack of empathy, thinking that you’re justified in doing everything that you do.” Regarding Skye’s resemblance to Gary, she is “bossy,” and “wanting to control everything.”

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. The sibling relationship within the Hall family is complex. Dan is an adult child not living with the family. This study focused on the dyadic mixed-sex sibling relationship between twelve year-old Skye and fifteen year-old Tony. Both Paige and Skye’s perceptions are presented where they both tended to focus on the conflict, resentment and aggression in the sibling relationship. However, they did share some warmth that is in the sibling relationship.

Sibling warmth and support. The sibling subsystem in the Hall family consists of minimal comfort, companionship, and protection. Paige explained the

relationship between Skye and Tony was “awesome” in the beginning. Tony would help Paige take care of Skye by being around and holding her. However, this changed once both parents spent more time with Skye.

There is little companionship described within the dyadic relationship. Skye informed the interviewer that she and her brother do not do anything together and they barely talk. Somewhat differently to this account, Paige maintained, “They, um, they like the same TV shows sometimes. They’ll sit and watch them together, and, like, we wrestle, like we joke around wrestle. It will be all three of us.” Paige also reported the siblings communicate once in a while when they are joking around.

Both Paige and Skye communicated the siblings sometimes help each other. However, Tony only helps Skye when it suits him (i.e. when he wants to go somewhere and is not allowed until everything is clean). Skye often offers to help Tony with his room, when he is sick, or to share with him, but Tony will not help or share in return. Paige stated Skye dually reacts when it comes to her brother in that she will jump right in to protect her brother, telling Paige not to ground or be mad at Tony, and at a different time Skye is the one telling on Tony to get him in trouble.

One way that shows much warmth and support in the sibling relationship is a protectiveness that Tony has shown over Skye. Paige said that regardless of the conflict and aggression, Tony will physically fight for his sister if she is picked on. This protection surprised Paige because “I thought he hated her. I thought basically he wished she wasn’t here. I mean, he says it all the time.”

Additionally, although Tony usually withdraws when there is a violent incident, sometimes Tony will remain in the violent situation and try to assist his sister. Paige conveyed,

Tony would always try to get Skye away from it. He would always try to pull her into his room. Tell her to stay in her room. He'd be like, 'Leave them alone, just leave them alone.' Like, and she wouldn't listen. And he'd get frustrated.

Skye communicated sometimes during an incident both she and Tony would make a decision to go and hide together. On two occasions, "Me and him grabbed the house phone and we ran and hid underneath his bed." Skye recalled she did not talk to Tony about the violence when they were hiding, as they would "just cry." Skye expressed that she and her brother never really helped each other during a violent incident, but they did work together to calm the dogs down by petting and talking to them to prevent the animals from biting someone.

Sibling Caretaking. It seems that at times throughout their lives, the three children have been forced into taking care of themselves and each other due to the violence and drug issues between Paige and Gary. Paige said that one time when Gary was living out of state, her oldest son, Dan, who was 9 years old at the time, "like basically had to take on the role of the caregiver." Furthermore, about seven years ago, Skye and Tony were taking care of themselves because Paige relapsed and "wasn't paying attention." Paige tearfully described, "They were placed in foster care...I threatened to commit suicide. Um, the physical violence in the house was astronomical." She further said that with both she and Gary using, the children were

lacking a parental figure. In addition to the siblings caring for each other, Paige conveyed that Skye was also a caretaker for Paige at times: “She thought she had to take care of me and for a while there she did.”

Sibling conflict. The Hall family and sibling subsystems have been absorbed in violence. This includes the present aggression between the two younger siblings, and the sexual abuse from the oldest sibling. Due to the sexual abuse of Tony (at 2 ½ years old) by Dan (at 14 years old), Dan was involved in ongoing counseling and lie-detector tests for him to remain in the home. This was a stressful time for the entire family. Today, Dan and Tony get along, but according to Paige, Dan “thinks Skye is annoying” which makes Skye feel left out. According to Paige, Dan has talked to his siblings about the violence, telling them to respect their mother because they have no idea how much worse things were when he was little. Because Paige continues to struggle with what happened, she does not want the children to spend time alone with Dan.

Regarding the sibling relationship between Skye and Tony, Paige reported that in the middle of the chaotic family drug and violence issues, along with the parents coddling Skye due to her disability, “Tony kind of got pushed to the wayside and Skye, kind of everybody doted on her.” Then, if Skye would cry, “Gary would go in and hit Tony thinking he did something to her. Gary would scream at Tony thinking he did that to her.” So, “Tony now resents the hell out of Skye” because “he thinks everybody favors Skye, poor little sweet princess, she gets whatever she wants.” Tony declared that he hates his sister and wished she was not there. Paige admitted she does

not help the situation because she forces Tony to take Skye with him, adding to Tony's anger.

Both Paige and Skye did not consider the sibling relationship between Skye and Tony as close. If one sibling is unhappy or sad, Paige pronounced, "They don't care." Paige relayed Tony gets "extremely angry very easily." He has an "attitude problem" with Skye, and he is also physically aggressive with Skye, to the point that Paige does not want to leave them alone together. Paige verbalized, "The minute I tell him no then I'm dealing with, you know, he takes it out on Skye when he's mad. He'll be mad at her, she won't even have to do anything and he'll snap." Paige was concerned that Tony is aggressive. She expressed, "It is normal for them to fight amongst each other, but some of the things that I'm concerned are things that I know, like, Gary and I did in front of them." And Paige is seeing a "mirror image" in what is happening between Tony and Skye. Paige also relayed physical aggression by Skye: "My daughter bites. My daughter bites, my twelve year-old. Twelve years old and she bites...When she's angry, she bites. And she bites hard." She will bite both her 14 year-old brother and her mother, and peers.

To make matters worse, Paige said Skye instigates Tony "until he blows up and then he does the same thing his dad did which was blow up." Paige shared:

Like, her instigating. Like, she knows drinking from his cup, Tony's going to get mad. So why wouldn't you get your own cup of Kool-Aid? The glass is right there, the Kool-Aid pitcher is right there. You're doing it just to piss him off. So why are you doing it? Because she, they're familiar with that chaos and that fighting.

Skye described a similar conflictual sibling relationship, but did not discuss the physical aggression that Paige reported. Of being Tony's sister, Skye related, "I hate it." Skye described Tony as annoying, mean, and rude. She said Tony will "yell at you if you do something wrong or if you'll touch him or if you'll hit him." She continued that Tony is very negative towards her. Tony is always saying, "I wish you were never my sister" and "(I wish) I never knew you." Skye said she does not really do anything with or talk to Tony about anything because it "just stirs up a fight." If Tony is unhappy or sad, Skye knows to "just leave him go because I know he'll flip out on me." Skye reported she and Tony are not bonded and, "honestly, we don't have a brother and sister relationship like we used to."

Skye disclosed she and Tony would fight. Skye further elaborated to explain what fighting involved: "Yelling, screaming. Since we moved here it really didn't get to a point where he swung or I swung. It just did it yelling and screaming and 'Mom, he did this' 'Mom, she's touching me.'" If Skye touches Tony, a hug or game of tag, "he'll freak out."

Paige responded that she does feel the violence in the household "had a pretty negative impact" on the sibling relationship between Skye and Tony. Paige saw that when Skye instigated Tony, she was doing it just to make him mad. This echoed the violence that they have seen in the mother-partner subsystem. The sibling dyad argues because they thrive on the "yelling and screaming" and conflict. This is "familiar to them." Paige was concerned with how aggressive and violent the children get, and

that Tony may just push Skye into really hurting him, similar to how Paige hurt Gary with the knife that day.

Gomez Family

The Gomez family came to the shelter five months prior to the interview and was staying in the shelter's transitional housing program. Ariana is a 38 year-old Hispanic female who is presently in the process of obtaining her GED, and makes \$500 a month. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with Tomas (Garcia). Ariana and Garcia have been together, on and off, for almost twenty years. They are presently separated and have a relationship surrounding an adult child.

Ariana has four children. Eighteen year-old Isaac lives with his father, Garcia. Fourteen year-old Camila lives with her father out-of-state. Two children live with Ariana presently at the shelter: Daniel, a sixteen year-old Hispanic male; and Isabel, an eleven year-old Hispanic female, who came back into Ariana's custody two years ago. Both Daniel and Isabel's fathers live out-of-state, and have sporadic contact. Ariana and Isabel participated in the study.

Ariana communicated Daniel is a good kid who does well in school. He likes to play video games and is "kind of lazy." He does chores and stays out of trouble. Ariana said Isabel is in the 6th grade, is "pretty smart" and tries her best. She has friends, likes to make things, and enjoys science and listening to music.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Ariana was involved in the interview and provided a lot of information about her

family life. At times, she was not always clear in her descriptions. Ariana first became involved with Garcia when she was twenty years-old. Both Garcia and Ariana were heavily involved with drugs and alcohol for several years. Presently, Garcia has been clean three years and Ariana has been clean five years. After the relationship started, Ariana discovered Garcia was already married and he remains married today. However, Ariana and Gomez continued the relationship and had a child, eighteen year-old Isaac.

Much of Ariana and Garcia's almost twenty year relationship was being together and then being apart, where the separation caused increased issues. Ariana revealed she would often get back together with Garcia out of fear, "Because I was scared, not because I wanted to." Ariana said that when broken up, Garcia would "always stalk me...He always want to be around me...He would just show up in the door and stuff. Even after I tell him it was over." She continued to say Garcia would stalk, call, and text her repeatedly. Garcia is jealous, "Really, really, really jealous...And the jealousy for a Hispanic is scary...Scary. That it could be really bad scary." Ariana continued that Garcia has threatened both of their lives,

He argues and he'll say that, 'F' my life...He will had threatened me things, you know, like us going to 'up the road' and this and that...Up the road like me driving, and him, like, messing with the steering wheel.

Of Garcia, Ariana said, "He will call me names...Like making me feel low self-esteem." He is also "controlling as in telling me what to do with my kids...He was just too much. He was overwhelming me in telling the kids what to do." They

would argue over the children, “We didn’t agree and stuff, and I’m trying to defend my kids.”

In one incident two years ago, Ariana caught Garcia living with another woman. This escalated to an argument in the street with Isabel present. Ariana said of Garcia, “He just exploded. Like, he just, I don’t know what’s wrong with him. Something’s wrong with him. He needs help.” Ariana did disclose she would also scream at Garcia, and she may have been “too obsessed” at one point, much like Garcia is obsessed with her.

Ariana’s stepfather was an alcoholic and was sexually abusive to Ariana. She was then involved in a physically violent relationship. Then, when the children were younger, Isabel’s father would “push me and stuff and then he would, um, he was cursing and verbal violence.”

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Eleven year-old Isabel recalled the violence, discussed her emotional appraisals, and communicated her behavioral responses to the violence. Ariana also provided information regarding her children’s experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Ariana and Isabel shared about the children’s exposure to the violence and drug issues. Ariana discussed that when they were much younger, Isabel, Daniel, and Isaac were present during her previous relationship where Isabel’s father would push Ariana and cuss at her.

Ariana described that her own drug “addiction was so deep” for five years that she sent fourteen year-old Camila to permanently live with her father. Eighteen year-

old Isaac had many difficulties with the law and drugs during that time, and was in placement for a period of time. Ariana also had Isabel go to live with her father and grandmother. Isabel lived with them for multiple years until two years ago when Isabel was returned to her mother's care due to abuse by the father's girlfriend. Ariana said Isabel has "been through a lot." Eleven year-old Isabel did not discuss any drug use or living with her father.

In reference to an incident with Ariana and Garcia, Ariana said of Isabel and Daniel, "They'll be outside" or "In the living room and he'll be like right in the kitchen." The children usually just stayed and listened because they were in a small apartment, "There's not much to hide." They have "heard the, the stalking and the cursing and stuff." Of Isabel, "She just heard a lot of arguments." She was present the day Ariana and Garcia were arguing outside.

Likewise, Isabel minimally talked about Garcia and her mother, "He's ignorant...He's rude to my mom." Isabel further shared her mother and Garcia "argue a lot" because Garcia is mad, "He gets jealous very easily." Garcia will "just yell."

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Eleven year-old Isabel was cooperative and answered questions throughout, but she provided very brief answers to all questions. She did not go into depth about any parts of her life or sibling relationship, and several times she provided "I don't know" answers. She yawned a few times in the middle of the interview.

Ariana said her history with Garcia and his wife has been "affecting my kids." She described the days when Garcia would be "texting and texting" or coming to the

home, “It’s stressful for the whole day...Because I’m not, you know, keeping attention to them (the children) and I would not pay attention to them and it’s just, it distracts me.” Ariana related that Daniel knew Garcia was in the wrong, “He knows the, his wrong.” She continued to say Isabel has been sad about the violence in the mother-partner subsystem. Isabel has also expressed some of her anger at her mother because Isabel felt her mother should have left the relationship earlier.

Additionally, the children have been worried that their mother is upset.

Ariana shared of her children’s feelings,

They feel hurt because they, he hurt me. They feel like he doesn’t deserve me. Um, because of what he did to me. Especially Isaac. He doesn’t agree and he, he has the part of him that he hates about him, about him hurting me.

Isabel described living with Garcia, “I didn’t like it.” She also said she would be “angry” at Garcia. When asked about how she felt about the incidents between her mother and Garcia, Isabel shared, “I don’t know...I don’t know how I feel about it.” Isabel further shared of the arguing, “We’re kind of used to it.” Now that her mother has left Garcia, Isabel hopes her mother is “happy” because she does not “deserve” Garcia. Isabel is presently in counseling. Ariana said Isabel will “play games and stuff,” as well as talking to Ariana to cope with the violence in the household.

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Ariana and Isabel provided some information on the children’s behavioral responses to the violence. Ariana described that Daniel and Isabel would try to withdraw from the incidents, “They used to hide themselves. It was really during the breakup.” Ariana felt the children would take

steps to become involved in an incident if the relationship became physical. However, as the mother-partner subsystem was usually only involved in verbal arguments, the children would not usually pay attention. Ariana shared, “If he moved inside, the kids would have done something, like, they would protect me and stuff. But the arguments and stuff, they just ignore. Like, they ignore the whole time. I know they hear, but they ignore.” Isabel confirmed she does not pay attention and will remove herself from the arguing, “Because I really don’t listen. I just walk away.”

At times, the children would get verbally involved in an incident. Ariana stated that Daniel would “say some things” to Garcia about the relationship and his wife. Garcia would then “get mad because he know he (Daniel) was right.” Of eighteen year-old Isaac, he has also gotten involved, “He did holler at him, scream at, you know, shout at him...I’m tired of you hurting my mom...You keep promising her.” Ariana said Isabel will also speak up and ask, “Will you guys stop?” Isabel confirmed she will become verbally involved during an incident, “Well, I would get angry at him and be like, ‘Don’t talk to my mom,’ but my mom would get mad because they’re talking and they’re adults.”

Further, Ariana shared that Daniel talks to Ariana about his disapproval of the relationship, “Aw, you guys are going to go back to each other. This is just an everyday thing. You guys fight and then, and fight.” After an incident, the children usually just “continue doing what they are doing,” but they will express their disappointment to Ariana because they know she will get back together with Garcia. Sometimes, Isabel will shout at her mother, pleading wither to “just leave him.”

Ariana saw some similarities in behavior between Isabel and Garcia. Of Isabel, “She’ll call me dramatic.” Ariana continued, “Like, he used to call, he be calling me dramatic, drama queen, and she (Isabel) call me drama queen...She (Isabel) picked up some things from him.”

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. The relationship in this study focuses on the dyadic mixed-sex sibling relationship between sixteen year-old Daniel and eleven year-old Isabel. Their relationship seems to mostly contain warmth and support. However, there are aspects of the sibling relationship that are minimally conflictual. Additionally, there is some discussion on the distant relationships with siblings not living in the home, eighteen year-old Isaac and fourteen year-old Camila.

Sibling warmth and support. Isaac spent little time with his siblings as a teen, as he was involved with drugs and alcohol, “having a sticky hand,” and was in placement. Isaac now sees his siblings when they visit at Garcia’s home. Ariana said the relationship with Isabel and Isaac now is close, “She gets along more with him. Like more attached. More buddies.” Isabel confirmed Isaac is “nice” and they get along. Ariana said Isaac and Daniel also get along, “They respect each other now.” However, that has not always been the case because Daniel did not agree with Isaac’s choices during adolescence.

Camila lives with her father and visits her mother and siblings for a month in the summer. Ariana said, “They’re happy when she (Camila) comes.” Isabel shared

she gets along well with Camila when she comes for a visit, “We’re girls. We just hang out and watch music videos. Outside we walk around, play games and stuff.”

Ariana articulated that Daniel and Isabel “get along good” and have a close relationship. Ariana shared Daniel “protects” Isabel. When asked how, she replied, “He cares and stuff.” Both mother and Isabel described very little companionship in the dyadic sibling relationship. Of Isabel and Daniel, Ariana said, “She’ll try to blend in with him to play with his games.” Daniel is not receptive to this, but the two will watch movies together. Isabel confirmed her mother’s statement that Isabel will try to play video games with Daniel, but he tells her she does not know how to play and will ruin his game. Isabel did state she spends some time with Daniel, “We play games.”

Ariana said the two siblings will also help each other. She shared that once, Isabel was hurt and Daniel “picked her up and carried her. I know if she gets hurt that he’ll be right away, you know.” Along the same lines, Isabel stated Daniel will help her with her homework. If they are unhappy or sad, Ariana said of Daniel and Isabel, “He always comforts her when she’s crying and stuff.” On the contrary, Isabel shared that she and Daniel leave each other alone if one is sad.

In relation to the violence in the home, Isabel and Daniel will often be together. Ariana stated, “Maybe she’ll come up to him.” She further expressed, “They’ll stick together and stuff...The arguing has been a lot for her.” Isabel similarly said she and Daniel will be together when there is an incident, watching a movie, or “Just sitting there, doing nothing. Just probably on the phone.”

Sibling conflict. Daniel and Isabel present with minimal conflict in their sibling relationship. Ariana shared Daniel and Isabel get along, but “usually like, you know, they’ll start arguing.” Ariana continued that this arguing will be “Just verbal. Never, never physical ever... Sometimes they’ll curse.” Ariana said Isabel and Daniel will “tease each other.” Along the same lines, Isabel shared her dislike of her brother Daniel by saying she does “hate him” because he teases her, “Just regular teasing. When he’s mad he goes ‘nanananana.’” Isabel said she will also say things to Daniel, “I scream at him and I go to my room.” When screaming, Isabel will say “rude” things to Daniel, and Daniel will somewhat scream back to her, “He screams, light scream.”

Of Isaac and Daniel, Ariana said, “They used to argue a lot, they were physical when growing up.” Because of Isaac’s way of life, “He never had, like a brother relationship with his brother.”

Franklin Family

The Franklin family entered the domestic violence shelter three months prior to the interview and resided in the shelter’s transitional housing program. Jen is a 27 year-old Caucasian woman with a recent Associate’s degree and will begin a job in nursing for \$29 an hour. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with Derrick. Jen and Derrick were living together for five years, and have a relationship surrounding the children. Derrick would like to have his family back together.

Jen has four children: Katy, a 9 year-old Caucasian female; Sarah, a 4 year-old Caucasian female; Abby, a 2 year-old Caucasian female twin; and Derrick Jr., a 2 year-old Caucasian male twin. Derrick is the father of the three younger children and has weekly visitation. Katy has no contact with her father, Ken. Jen and Katy participated in the study.

According to Jen, Katy is in the 4th grade, is a good student, and enjoys science. Katy gets teased about her weight, can be moody, will throw things, and says cuss words. Jen described Sarah as a princess, the “good one,” and dainty. She is a daddy’s girl and can have an attitude. Jen said Derrick is a mama’s boy who she babies. He whines, is very energetic, is always into something, and will throw temper tantrums. Jen described Abby as feisty, very outgoing, bossy, independent, and takes “nobody’s nonsense.”

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Jen’s interview took place in an office at the shelter. Jen was very talkative and provided details. She seemed to speak matter-of-factly about the incidents in her life and showed little emotion during the interview.

The violence between Jen and Derrick began three months into the relationship. Derrick was “very abusive” during Jen’s pregnancy, and once threw the car into park when Jen was driving, eliciting police intervention. The violence escalated with Derrick’s methamphetamine use over the past few years. Derrick screams, threatens, throws things, will “rampage” the house, and smashes phones or takes batteries out of the car. Jen explained Derrick is,

Very verbally abusive every day...If it did get physical he would, um, push me or, you know, um, he had already lifted up the bed and tried to break it, the bed, with me on it. Or grab me around the neck, or um, when I was pregnant he tried to break my arm, throw me into the Christmas tree, um, things like that. But he, a lot of time would, would break things, and, you know, throw coffee across the room and say, 'Now you clean it up.'

The most severe incident was when Derrick smashed things in the house, ripped the banister off the wall, and ripped Jen's clothes off as she was trying to run for help.

Jen described that last year a police officer "forced" Jen into getting a PFA against Derrick, which she did not abide by at first. The couple then split up for a while. However, Derrick became involved with Jen again a few months ago. Derrick took Jen and 4 year-old Sarah in the car because he was upset Jen had another male in the house. Derrick threatened to kill them, threw coffee on Jen, and tried to drive them into other cars. Jen called the police for help, but was actually the one charged due to the PFA. The officer told Jen that if she entered the shelter, he would drop the charges. Derrick and Jen have argued about her being at the shelter with the children, and he insists on "being a family, and making things work."

Directly prior to her relationship with Derrick, Jen was involved in a six year relationship with Katy's father. He was very controlling, became obsessed with Jen, physically hurt himself, and forced sex upon Jen.

Children's diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Nine year-old Katy was able to discuss the violence in her home, as well as her emotional appraisals and behavioral responses to the violence. Jen also provided details regarding her children's experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Jen and Katy similarly disclosed detailed accounts of the children's exposure to the violence in the home. Jen reported all of the children were "usually always present" during an incident between her and Derrick. They have heard Derrick call Jen "every name in the book" and the children sometimes use those same words against Jen. Of one incident, Jen said, Derrick dumped Gatorade all over her and kept the family up all night. Jen relayed, "And then at one point he had locked me in the bathroom and all of the kids were kind of standing at the door and screaming."

Jen further disclosed that the children have witnessed the physical violence as well: Katy has seen Derrick throw Jen into a Christmas tree and try to break Jen's arm; when the twins were babies Derrick threw the Christmas tree and it landed on them; Sarah was in the car recently when Derrick tried to hit other cars and threw coffee; all of the children were present when Derrick lifted and broke the bed with Jen on it; and they have all seen Derrick "slam me up against the wall, or have me down on the floor with his hands around me."

When asked about her home, Katy declared, "Well, there was a lot of chaos." Katy said her mother and Derrick got along "good and bad" and Derrick "would start abusing my mom...like, hurting her or pushing." As Jen had indicated, Katy stated both she and her siblings are present, "just standing there," during incidents. Katy spoke of Derrick, "He is a two face. He can be happy but then he could turn mad." She does not bother with him because it looks "horrible" when he is mad. Derrick will get angry "about nothing" and starts "yelling." He will also punch "holes in the

walls.” Katy shared Derrick gets mad at her mom, and he will “dump coffee on her” or “rip a sweatshirt off of her.” She continued that Derrick will “chase after her (mother), uh, umh, knock Christmas trees over at Christmas.” Katy disclosed she has also heard Derrick cursing, smashing things, and throwing things during incidents.

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Katy was timid at first in the interview, but she warmed up, was talkative, and shared information about her family. She did not appear to show a lot of emotion during the interview, but overall had a smile on her face. Katy did squirm more in her seat when talking about the violence in her home, but she continued to provide details. Katy sometimes looked like she was guessing an answer, and provided some information that was very similar to her mothers’.

Katy voiced she was “upset and worried” about the violence between Jen and Derrick. Katy admitted, “I don’t really mess around with him” because she was uncomfortable and “afraid” Derrick would “do something.” Katy felt “threatened” during the most recent incident, as she knew Derrick was not supposed to be at their home. Katy is now concerned about her mother’s criminal charges. Katy said her three younger siblings “cry” and were afraid when incidents occurred. Today, now that they are at the shelter, Katy wants Derrick to just stay away and “not scream.”

Regarding how the children feel about the violence in the home, Jen conveyed, “I think they have become used to it...I know they don’t like it.” Similarly to Katy, Jen said that she knows all of the children are “scared.” Jen further discussed that Katy becomes very upset during an incident and is sometimes scared. Jen said after an

incident, the children “try to kind of cling to me” and try to comfort Jen. Once before, Jen left Derrick, and Katy was very upset with Jen for going back. Jen explained that Katy would talk to Jen about what happened and would tell Jen that she and the younger children “hate” Derrick because he is continually hurting Jen.

The Franklin siblings cope with the violence in different ways. Jen reported Abby just does “her own thing.” Derrick clings to Jen. Katy and Sarah communicate with each other or with their grandmother about the violence. Further, Jen said Katy copes by getting “angry,” yelling, or talking to her friends. Katy is also in counseling at the shelter. Jen reported that now at the shelter, Katy has a hard time because Katy misses Sarah when she visits with Derrick.

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Jen and Katy discussed ways in which the siblings behaviorally respond to the violence. Jen revealed the children would all “scream” during an incident. Jen further reported her children often “try to help during an incident.” When asked what Katy would do during an incident, Katy responded she would attempt to verbally stop the violence. She would yell or tell Derrick to “stop” and to not touch her mother. Further, Jen disclosed two year-old Abby would actually become physically involved. Of Abby, Jen said anytime Derrick came near Jen she “would actually jump in the middle because she, to, to try to help me.” Jen said even if Derrick was just hugging Jen, Abby would “get frantic and scream, and, you know, go over and hit him.”

Katy was involved in incidents where she was in charge of seeking assistance from others when the violence occurred. Jen would often elicit Katy’s participation in

a plan to seek help even before the violence began. When Jen gained a sense that violence may occur, she obtained the help of Katy to try to hide the phones so that Derrick would not destroy them. The plan was for Katy to call for help if anything happened. This placed Katy in the “middle” of the violence, as Derrick sought out Katy to get the hidden phones. Jen would ask Katy to call for help while Derrick was screaming at Katy to not call. Similar to her mother’s account, Katy shared her mother would tell her to call the cops, but “I have never did because Derrick would try to smash the phone and I would be scared to call.” She said that when that happens, “It would just get worse because Derrick would start screaming more.”

There are also parents who elicit the help of their children to be involved in the violence. Jen reported Derrick uses the children to try to turn them against Jen. Derrick puts Jen down in front of the kids or overwhelms Jen to the point she is flustered and upset, and then he tells the children, “Mommy doesn’t want to do anything.” The children will then say, “Yeah, mommy doesn’t want to, she doesn’t want to go anywhere.” Derrick also encourages 4 year-old Sarah to say the “n...” word because Derrick knows that it upsets Jen. Along the same lines, Katy revealed Derrick would tell her “bad things about my mom....and I don’t think it’s good for me because he is just putting more things in my brain.”

Jen sees similarities in behavior between three of her children and Derrick. Regarding two year-old Derrick Jr., Jen said, “I see a lot of him, just in, he is very temperamental, which scares me. He is extremely temperamental.” Of four year-old Sarah, Jen related, “She more would follow him, um, you know, after something

would happen, she would more or less, um, kind of switch over and you know, be like, ‘Mommy, you’re so dumb’ or, you know, say hurtful things.” Now at the shelter, Sarah comes home from visits saying “smart” comments to her mother. Nine year-old Katy similarly articulated Derrick is telling Sarah bad things to tell Jen because “Sarah, like, butts into it and starts yelling at my mom.” Katy pronounced, “I tell her, Sarah, stop” because “I don’t think she should be butting into it.”

Katy may also be modeling some of Derrick’s behaviors. Katy expressed unhappiness about Jen gaining independence at the shelter. Jen explained Katy “almost turns into what seems like my ex. Like she takes on his persona.” Katy will give her mother orders on what she needs to do, will get “very moody” and will “throw things.” Jen said it has gone even deeper, as Katy has started saying nasty things about Jen to affect Jen’s friendships. Katy will write to her mother’s Facebook friends: “My mom’s, you know, a dirty hoe, a dirty whore.” Unlike her mother, Katy did not disclose doing any of these negative things to her mother.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. The Franklin siblings have a close and warm relationship with some minimal sibling conflict. Discussed are the same-sex sibling relationship between nine year-old Katy and four year-old Sarah, and also the relationship with Katy and both of her two year-old siblings.

Sibling warmth and support. Both Jen and Katy discussed warm and companionate facets of the sibling relationship. Jen described the relationship of Katy and her three younger siblings as close and showing support for each other, “They are

definitely very protective of each other.” In particular, Jen said Katy helps and takes on a “motherly” role with her younger siblings.

Of the relationship between Katy and four year-old Sarah, Katy described a little less warm relationship than Jen. Jen reported the girls have a “very good” and close relationship. They get along well, playing doctor and nurse together. Katy agreed she is companionate with Sarah in that they play outside and go places together, but Katy said Sarah and she only get along “in the middle.” Katy clarified that they get along sometimes and sometimes they do not. Nevertheless, Katy appeared to be very caring towards Sarah. The girls talk about life, people, and things that make them mad. Jen said both girls will miss each other if they are apart. If Sarah is unhappy or sad, Jen related Katy will talk to or hold Sarah. Katy agreed with her mother by saying, “I try to ask her (Sarah), like, if she wants anything or, like, what’s wrong and what do you want?” Jen and Katy both voiced that Sarah will do similarly if Katy is unhappy or sad by asking Katy what was wrong and telling her things will be ok.

Both Jen and Katy also described that Katy and Sarah are helpful to each other. Jen related Katy will help Sarah, as “Sarah always looks up to Katy to try to, you know, play with her, and help her with whatever she is doing.” Katy added she will help Sarah get things, make her a snack, or cook for her. Sarah will help by carrying things for Katy or putting toys away.

Of Katy and two year-old Abby, Jen said they have a fairly close relationship, as they will play “girly” things together like make-up and nails. Jen stated Abby is fun

and Katy “gets amused with the things Abby will say or come up with.” Jen described a comforting relationship where the two girls tend to get along, help each other, and comfort each other if one is unhappy or sad. Katy agreed she is companionate with Abby, as the two girls will ride scooters, walk places together, and talk about games. Conversely, Katy said Abby is “hard to explain” and is “feisty.” Contrary to her mother, Katy described her relationship with Abby similarly to her relationship with Sarah, meaning that they are “not always getting along.” Katy related she does not comfort Abby because Abby is always “happy” and “playful.” However, if Katy is unhappy or sad, Katy said Abby “would ask me, like, ‘What’s wrong sissy?’”

Jen relayed a little less of a close relationship between Katy and two year-old Derrick than all of the girls. Katy will play with Derrick sometimes, and occasionally helps him. Jen verbalized Katy will “stand up for him” if someone hurts Derrick or if he gets hurt. However, Jen acknowledged that sometimes the two do not get along well because Katy feels Derrick always gets his own way and is temperamental. Similar to her mother’s account, Katy said Derrick is “really grumpy” and a “mama’s boy.” Katy shared they do get along, but Derrick gets mad easily and doesn’t share, “everything is his to him.” Katy disclosed both she and Derrick will help each other by picking things up. Due to Derrick’s grumpiness, Katy said she does not assist him when he is unhappy because he would strike out against her.

When considering the intimate partner violence within the home and the sibling relationships, Jen believed the violence has brought her children closer together. Particularly, Jen felt Katy shows protection and support to her younger

siblings. Regardless of any minimal conflict between the siblings, Jen said if there was an incident within the home, then Katy was “very close to all of them. She tried to take them under her wing.” Jen continued, “Katy would try to help the (younger) kids. Um, Katy, unfortunately, she, being the oldest, she’s seen the most. She remembers the most.” Katy took on a caretaking role to protect her younger siblings from the violence. During an incident, Jen revealed Katy would “Probably take them.” Katy was there to calm the children and keep them together. However, Jen felt Katy was also scared during these incidents and Jen said, “I think she has at times tried to get them out. Um, but most of the time she is more concerned with trying to help.” Although her mother stated this occurred, Katy could not recall if she ever tried to leave with the younger kids during an incident. Katy did describe that she and her siblings would be standing together during an incident with their mother and Derrick.

Some siblings communicate about the violence within the home. Jen stated Katy and Sarah talk about the violence. Jen said Katy would tell Sarah to come to her, where Katy would hold Sarah and “tell her it’s ok.” Sarah and Katy would then talk to each other about how “mean” Derrick was to their mother. Katy similarly spoke about communication during the violence. During an incident, Katy would reassure her younger siblings that everything would be fine. However, Katy revealed that instead of talking with each other, the siblings would more so try to “stop” the violence by telling their mother and Derrick to stop fighting.

Sibling Caretaking. In some families, children take on a caretaking responsibility of their siblings. Jen admitted she was not emotionally available to the

children during the violence in her home. This unavailability required nine year-old Katy to take on caretaking responsibilities of her siblings. Jen said of Katy, “Um, she’s always had, kind of, she had to take on, like, the motherly role. Um, she tried to, you know, trying to help me.” Jen shared that Katy shows a lot of support for her younger siblings, and they have had her to rely on throughout their lives. Katy helps the children with meals, and helps Sarah with her school work and reading books. Even when they went to the shelter the first day, Katy was the one that showed the children around and “tried to make them feel at home.”

Sibling conflict. Although the Franklin siblings have many warm tendencies in their relationships, there is also some minimal conflict. Jen relayed that nine year-old Katy and four year-old Sarah generally get along well, but their relationship is “not always perfect” and they do have their arguments. The two girls may scream at each other at times, occasionally name call (“you are stupid,” “I hate you”), or sometimes pinch. Somewhat different from Jen’s description of the sibling relationship, Katy said she only sometimes gets along with Sarah. Of Sarah at times, Katy shared, “She gets on my nerves.” Sarah will get mad if she does not get what she wants and she also cries over everything. Katy reported that she and Sarah will sometimes get mad at each other and they will start “yelling and arguing.”

Of Katy and two year-old Derrick Jr., Jen said that Katy will tease Derrick Jr. because he is easily angered and “she finds that amusing.” Katy does not spend much time with Derrick Jr. because he is a boy and younger. When asked if they get along, Jen responded, “sometimes not well” because Katy thinks Derrick Jr. is spoiled and

gets his way. Katy agreed with her mother about her relationship with Derrick Jr. She said of Derrick Jr., “He gets on my nerves too.” Katy relayed that she and Derrick Jr. will sometimes argue. If Derrick Jr. is unhappy or sad, Katy stated, “I basically leave him alone because he would start yelling at me. And he would start swinging at me.” Katy will try to help him but she said, “It just always ends up bad.”

Jen relayed there is minimal conflict between Katy and Abby. They fight over toys occasionally or argue with each other. Katy related she and Abby do not always get along. If they are not getting along, Katy said Abby “gets like Derrick Jr. She starts to swing at me.” Katy related she does not hit back, she just tells her mother.

Strom Family

The Strom family entered the domestic violence shelter nine months prior to the interview and resided in the shelter’s transitional housing program. The mother, Tina Strom, is a 36 year-old Caucasian female with some college experience, and makes \$10,000 a year as an LPN. She came to the shelter because of her relationship with Sam. Tina and Sam have been involved and living together for thirteen years. They are presently separated and have a relationship based on the children.

Tina has two children: Natasha, a 9 year-old Caucasian female, and Nicholas, a 3 year-old Caucasian male. Sam is the father of both children. Tina and Natasha participated in the study.

Tina stated Natasha is a 5th grader with declining grades. She further said Natasha is independent and self-entertaining. Natasha likes movies, doing her hair

and nails, drawing, reading, and singing in the shower. Tina finds Natasha to sometimes be “self-centered and selfish.” Natasha has had some issues in school with bullies. Tina said Nicholas is intelligent, likes music, reading books, and television. He is independent, but at the same time he clings to his sister and mother.

Diverse experiences of intimate partner violence in the adult relationship.

Tina was cooperative and wanted to participate in the interview, but she was a little hesitant of the recorder at first. She was very open and disclosed a lot of details about her family. She seemed calm and shared information easily at the beginning of the interview. However, as the interview progressed, she became upset and was crying and sniffing at different points throughout.

The thirteen year mother-partner relationship in the Strom family has been besieged with violence, as well as some drug use by Sam. Tina described her relationship as an “emotional roller coaster” that was “pure hell.” From the very beginning, when they were just friends, Sam would take pictures of Tina and pull her nightgown up when she was sleeping. Tina described the physical abuse from Sam when she was pregnant where she was grabbed by her neck and slammed into a wall. Then, Sam severely bit her thumb. She continued to describe the emotional and physical abuse in her relationship,

He would run in the bathroom and slap my ass so hard that I’d feel a jarring in my neck. And as I’m sitting there on the toilet, he would pull his pants down, pin me down, and slap my face with his penis.

Tina shared that in one incident, “He jacked me up by my throat and slammed my head into the wall and coughed up a loogie and spit in my face.” In a different incident, Tina had her supervisor at the home when Sam

proceeded to slam my head into the sink, hold me under the faucet, pour water all over me and when I was trying to slink down to get away from him he pushed me down to the tile, rolled me over and was punching me.

Tina further disclosed sexual abuse where after an incident Sam “would want to be sexually active...Want to paw at me.”

The incident that Tina felt was the worst is when she was weak after surgery.

Sam was supposed to be helping her to change, but Tina said he proceeded to

start pawing at me, and touching me, and saying, ‘I love it when you’re in pain. I can tell by the sound of your voice you’re in pain and it turns me on.’ And he tries sticking his hands in between my legs and I could not fend him off.

Sam would then get mad at Tina because she could not have sex when she was sick, so he would force her to have sex with him, “I would be crying during it and telling him to stop. He was hurting me. It didn’t matter.”

Children’s diverse perceptions of intimate partner violence. Nine year-old Natasha was able to discuss the violence in her home, as well as her emotional and behavioral responses to the violence. Tina also provided details regarding the sibling’s experiences.

Exposure to the violence. Both mother and daughter described that the children have been exposed to intimate partner violence. Tina disclosed both children have seen the physical and emotional violence between the parental subsystem, “Hitting, yelling, screaming, fighting.” Further, they have heard the violence,

“Yelling, screaming, fighting, um, banging. Me screaming, ‘Get off!’ You know, they know something’s happening.” Tina informed, “The kids are always around” during an incident. In the incident where Sam had Tina by her throat, Nicholas and Natasha were exposed to the violence, “Natasha saw Sam holding me off the ground by my throat against the wall.”

Comparably, Natasha shared that her father and mother “fight sometimes” and “yell at each other.” She revealed one incident where the police were involved. She shared of the violence between her parents, “Mama and papa will like, fight sometimes...He’ll like start yelling and stuff...Hitting.”

Regarding the treatment of the children, Tina said, “Natasha, I forced her to be more independent. Nicholas, I have had to protect him from the day he was born because of Sam.” Sam never treated Nicholas like his son, even though he is the father. In one incident, Sam was mad at Tina and then Nicholas accidentally hit Sam with part of a hose. Sam was physically violent with Nicholas, once leaving a handprint on his face. Regarding how Sam would treat Nicholas in general, Tina said Sam would hurt Nicholas to the point he would have a “busted” lip. Tina revealed Sam was not physical with Natasha, but Sam would yell at Natasha, telling her that he would not help her and to not bother him. Natasha concurred with this, stating, “Sometimes I think he doesn’t ever have time for me.” Natasha also felt that her father is “a little bossy” and “He’ll like start yelling and stuff.”

Emotional appraisals of the violence. Nine year-old Natasha was extremely talkative, expressive, and provided a lot of detailed information. She continually

provided different stories in detail in talking about her life and sibling relationship. Through her discussing her life, Natasha came across as older than her actual age. Natasha's mother had actually noted this same thing to the researcher during her interview. Natasha was very happy to be talking about her brother. However, Natasha's demeanor changed when talking about the violence by her father. She became much quieter with her head down, and used some head shakes instead of verbal answers.

Tina said of her children's feelings regarding the violence, "They don't like it." Moreover, the children felt threatened during an incident, "Nicholas would cling to me and tell me, 'No papa.' And Natasha would stay by me or hide in her room." Tina further disclosed the feelings of her son, "Nicholas has always been afraid of him (Sam) since the day he was born. Anytime Sam even touched him, he would scream bloody murder, as if his throat was being slit." Nicholas says, "Please. No papa. No papa. Only mama." Now, Nicholas "never asks for papa." He also has trouble sleeping: "Nicholas always didn't want to go to sleep when we lived together."

Tina shared that Natasha is afraid of her father. When living with Sam, Natasha would behave very similarly to how Tina reacted to the violence. Natasha would cower from Sam and fear doing anything that would upset her father. Tina said Natasha is "hypersensitive in some ways" and "void of feeling in others." Natasha has withdrawn from doing things with Tina, "As time has gone on with the crap with him (Sam), she has stopped doing things that we used to do together." Natasha also

presents as having trouble with food and sleeping, “Natasha started not eating right...Natasha was easily aroused whereas before she was the heaviest sleeper.”

Tina said Natasha has come to her and expressed, “No, don’t you ever get back with him.” She followed it up with, “I want my last name changed to yours. I want to get rid of all my toys that he bought me.” Another concern from Tina of Natasha is, “She doesn’t like being hugged anymore.” Also, “She is prone to being around bullies thanks to me. Thanks for me for tolerating what I did, thinking it was only affecting me.” Furthermore, Tina revealed Natasha “worries. She started chewing the skin off her thumb...Natasha looked like a burn victim. She couldn’t even see her fingerprints on both thumbs.” That has subsided with counseling, but she now picks at any blemishes, “When she’s upset, she will pick and pick and pick until it bleeds.”

Natasha shared that after a violent incident she would sit with her mother, father, and brother and watch television, and “pretend” that nothing happened. When asked how she felt about the violence, Natasha said, “I just like ignore it...It’s not really my problem...Because I’m not the one that’s fighting.” She did shake her head yes in response to the question if she ever felt sad or upset during a violent incident, but she did not elaborate on why.

Regarding how the children cope with the violence, Tina said Natasha will talk to Tina. Natasha is also involved in counseling and has a mobile therapist weekly. Nicholas will get “closer and closer” to Tina to cope. He is also in play therapy.

Behavioral responses to the violence. Both Tina and Natasha discussed ways in which the sibling dyad behaviorally responded to the violence. When an incident

occurs, Natasha would go to the incident to see what was happening, “Natasha has woken up from us fighting, come downstairs.” Other times, when Nicholas was present, Tina would call for Natasha to come so that she could take Nicholas away.

Some children are physically involved in an incident. The Strom siblings have both been physically involved in an incident between Tina and Sam. Tina expressed, “Nicholas tried to get in between us to get to me.” Natasha tried to do the same when she was a toddler. Natasha shared one incident where she was involved,

I kind of like went in and I know it’s not good to just like go like this (waving hand), but, um, I got, I got like plates and I started like going like this (waving) so they would go away from each other and stuff...I was just waving them so they would like get away from them...They like backed away...And they stopped I think.

Natasha would also become verbally involved in an incident. Tina related Natasha would plead, “Please stop fighting...Natasha has stood up at the table and said, ‘I can’t take it no more. You guys quit fighting. Look what you’re doing to me.’ And started balling.” Similarly to her mother’s account, Natasha shared she has been verbally involved in an incident by telling her father to “stop fighting.”

Sometimes abusers convince children into not seeking help. Tina said, “Natasha knew not to call the police. Sam made sure that she always knew that the police were bad, the police will take you away.” Natasha shared that she has never called anyone during an incident.

Tina expressed similarities in behaviors between Sam and both of the siblings. She described it in Nicholas with his being aggressive, “The hitting. He was hitting

there for a long time...It didn't matter what it was for. You would get nailed." Tina described concerns with Natasha as well in that Natasha will talk to and treat her mother very similar to how Sam has.

Child sibling relationship quality within the context of intimate partner violence. Natasha and Nicholas have a very close, warm, and supportive sibling relationship with minimal conflict. Both Tina and Natasha described the sibling relationships in the home.

Sibling warmth and support. Both Tina and Natasha discuss a warm, companionate, and supportive sibling relationship. Nicholas is very attached to Natasha, and they get along "phenomenally." Tina described their very close relationship, "They do everything together...They do go to bed at the same time, they get up at the same time. They eat together. Everything." Natasha will go as far as to turn down doing something if her brother is not with her. Tina continued, "Natasha plays teacher with him a lot...They do a lot of pretending. Big time imagination stuff." Natasha similarly described a warm and close sibling relationship where she and her younger brother get along "pretty well." She expressed, "We get along so well that sometimes when she (mama) tells us we have to go to bed or something, we get mad at her and we will just stay up and keep talking to each other when we're in bed." Natasha shared of Nicholas, "He is so fun and playful." They are companionate where they play games, dance, and watch television together. They will also play at the playground.

The sibling dyad is communicative where they talk about life events, as well as more personal things. Tina said Natasha has been upset about her father getting rid of their cats, “And, so I’ve heard her confide to him (Nicholas) about the cats and how she’s worried.” Natasha also shared that the siblings communicate,

Um, we tell each other funny stuff. Like, one day I walked up to him (Nicholas) and I went, ‘flat face’, and he called me, ‘long face’...I tell him stuff that happens at school and he tells me stuff that happens at school...And we like tell each other what we are going to wear tomorrow.

Natasha and Nicholas are also helpful towards each other, “Normally, they both help each other.” They also care for each other when one is hurt or upset,

But let Natasha shed a tear. He, and it’s real, he will start screaming and crying right with her, ‘Natasha, stop crying.’ And he loses it. If he’s really crying, like the real deal, hard core, she’ll start crying. They can’t take it if either one of them are hurt.

Natasha agreed that she helps Nicholas, and she said that he helps her too,

And sometimes he helps me, like, if I have a bad day and stuff, um, he like helps me relax and stuff because he always says stuff to cheer me up...And he starts laughing and makes me laugh.

If Nicholas is unhappy or sad, Natasha said, “Sometimes I ignore him because sometimes he, he, like, gets so mad or sad or something, and he’ll like, just start yelling at people and being disrespectful.” However, of other times Natasha stated, “Sometimes I try to make him laugh, because when he laughs I start laughing, and when I start laughing he thinks it’s really funny.” Natasha shared that Nicholas is also helpful when she is feeling upset, “He kind of just like gives me hugs. He says, ‘Let’s go watch TV.’ He tries to play with me and stuff.”

In reference to the violence in the home, Tina shared that in the beginning, Natasha treated Nicholas the same way as Sam treated Tina. However, this changed as Natasha realized she needed to be close to her brother, “And then she saw that it was, ‘We got to stay close together. We got to stay close together. This is it. You know, we gotta. We’re all we have.’” Tina believed that from the violence, the sibling dyad has become closer, “I think they are closer. I think they truly rely on each other like life preservers.”

Natasha was protective of her younger brother during a violent incident. Tina said she usually calls for Natasha during an incident, “And she would come fetch him and hide him away. Take him in the bedroom, shut the door.” Likewise, Natasha shared she would take Nicholas away from a violent incident. Natasha would take Nicholas to her room to play with her toys and to “distract” him.

Sibling caretaking. Natasha does take on some of the caretaking role of Nicholas. Both Natasha and Tina described a very close relationship where the children do not do anything without the other. Tina shared, “Natasha tries to teach him things constantly.” Tina further exclaimed Natasha talks and acts like Nicholas is her son and she is the mother. Tina has seen Natasha discipline Nicholas, “I’ve watched her put him in time-out.” Tina’s own mother has gone as far as to say that she feels Natasha is “obsessed” with Nicholas because she always needs to be with him. Likewise, Natasha stated she helps Nicholas with daily issues that her mother would do, “If he has a problem while he’s, like, in bed or something, and I’m staying up later than him, I will like come up and help him instead of mama having to get up.”

Sibling conflict. The Strom dyadic sibling relationship consists of very little conflict. Tina described seeing Natasha treat Nicholas poorly at times, “Natasha will mistreat him as if she’s the bully. I see the bullied turn into the bully.” When Natasha was younger, Tina has seen Natasha be physical with Nicholas, “Natasha will lash out at him and snatch things from him.” However, Tina does not see this occur as much as Natasha has aged. Tina has also seen the younger sibling strike Natasha, “I’ve seen him lash out and rip her stuff or smack her. If he’s mad he will walk over and nail her one.”

Natasha concurred with her mother in saying that when she is really mad she has hit Nicholas back when he hit her, “I go, ‘Please don’t hit me or I’m going to hit you back.’ And he, he goes, seriously mad and he hits me again...I hit him back... And he goes, ‘I’m telling. You hit me.’” Natasha further said this does not occur frequently, “Like once in a while if we get really mad at each other.”