

“Looking at intimate partner violence in heterosexual relationships using  
Situational Action Theory”

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## **Introduction**

For this dissertation I will look at intimate partner violence (IPV) in heterosexual relationships using Situational Action Theory (SAT). Domestic violence (DV) and IPV are big social problems in societies which need to be addressed (Winstok, 2007). Even though there is a widespread agreement on this statement, there is a broad disagreement on how these social problems should be perceived and addressed. This disagreement does result in there being different definitions of domestic abuse, domestic violence and violence against women (Winstok, 2007). The terms DV and IPV will be used in the understanding of abuse or violence perpetrated by male offenders towards female victims who are or were in any form of intimate relationship. The United Nations (UN) defined violence against women in the General Assembly in 1993 (United Nations, 1993). The UN definition could be used in this dissertation since I will focus on violence against women. However, The Home Office definition will be used here instead because it fits better with the IPV research in general, where results have indicated that IPV occurs in different types of relationships. The Home Office defines IPV as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional (Home Office, 2013).

The focus will be on heterosexual relationships, where we have a male offender and a female victim. The reason for this, is simply, that the research on this topic is well-developed which gives a wide range of evidence to look at in detail from different angles when using SAT. Trying to cover all types of relationships at once is too extensive a task. Furthermore, there has not been much focus in academic research on the other relationship forms which means that there are not enough resources to conduct research in detail.

SAT is a relatively new theory stating it can explain all violent acts (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:76). This theory has not been used specifically in DV studies. By using SAT, I am trying to view a very common and a well-researched crime in a different light. It will provide different perspectives from other theories which have been applied to IPV, for example Goffman's work presented in *Asylums* and *Stigma* (Avni, 1991; Enander, 2010) and Social Learning Theory by Bandura (Mihalic and Elliott, 1997; Franklin and Kercher, 2012; Kubeka, 2008). It can be stated that previous theories look only at certain aspects of DV with the main focus usually on the female victims.

Also, the theories focus on either environmental or individual factors to explain crimes as Wikström (2005) demonstrates. Goffman's theory in *Stigma* has been used in Enander's (2012) study, where findings indicated that female victims stigmatise themselves as being unintelligent because they stayed in the violent relationship. Similar focus on female victims is in Avni's (1991) study, which demonstrates similarities between female victims of IPV and inmates of total institutions. Here, the term *total institution* means any social establishment which places physical hindrances such as walls and locks to keep apart those within the establishment and the world outside the walls (Avni, 1991:138).

Social Learning Theory has been focused on how witnessing domestic violence in childhood can have a lasting effect on individuals in adulthood. There is a chance that an individual will be more likely to perpetrate IPV if he witnessed domestic violence between his parents in childhood (Kubeka, 2008). However, this is debated; some results do not find the connection between witnessing domestic violence in childhood and perpetrating IPV in adulthood (Lee et al. 2013). According to Wikström (2005), SAT provides the solution because the theory takes both individual and environmental factors into account when trying to explain why individuals commit crimes, including IPV.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach presented in *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* will be compared to IPV in order to show how SAT works better when applied to IPV. The two theories have not been used to a large degree in research where the primary focus is on IPV. Compared to other previous theories which focus more on who are the victims or offenders. SAT tries to understand why an individual intentionally breaks the law, what factors influence his alternative perception, his decision making in that specific moment, and the setting which make the individual act upon his perception. (Wikström and Treiber, 2009). SAT describes the moment right before a violent act takes place and what factors can possibly have an effect on the individual. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach describes the interaction between people as a performance where props, front and back stage are used by individuals. Goffman shows how an individual tries to control his surroundings and gives the audience a performance of someone who he wants the audience to believe exists. The individual who performs decides what is revealed in the performance on the front stage. The backstage is where the real individual comes out and where the performance is practiced (Goffman, 1959). It can be said that the settings around DV are similar to Goffman's (1959) descriptions; DV is common, and a lot of victims and witnesses keep quiet about the violence, revealing only things that they want the audience to see and know, as Peled and Gil (2011) demonstrate.

It can be stated that Goffman's theory describes the aftermath of the violent act; everyone has their role that they have to play. It is also possible that Goffman (1959) describes the interaction before any violent act has happened, perhaps in the beginning of the relationship, where the performer puts on a rehearsed performance and intentionally hides factors that are inconsistent with the act that the performer wants to convey.

With this combination of theory and crime type, I can shed light on the gap that exists in the academic literature. SAT has not hitherto been used to focus specifically on IPV, only on violence in general (Wikström and Treiber, 2009). With this approach, a new way of addressing IPV can be made possible, which can give wider information on IPV. To demonstrate how SAT can be applied to IPV, there will be a discussion about the different factors that have been associated with IPV. Witnessing domestic violence in childhood, marriage, pregnancy and children are factors that will be deliberated on. Cultural comparisons will be made to see if the same factors have influence on the risk of DV. Cohen's (1955) definition of culture as "knowledge, beliefs, values, codes, tastes and prejudices that are traditional in social groups and that are acquired by participation in such groups" (Cohen, 1955:12) will be used here.

I will build the dissertation around Wikström's work, particularly Wikström (2005) and Wikström and Treiber (2009) to explain SAT in detail, and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to explain his theory in detail. I will also use the academic literature to see what has been done when it comes to IPV and SAT. As stated before, SAT is relatively new and has not been used previously in IPV research, thus trying to find any criticism on the theory has not been possible nor is it possible to compare this dissertation's findings to other results of the same topic because there are essentially none. When researching IPV, I will use different journals such as *Journal of family violence*. I will try to ascertain if similar findings can be found in other studies conducted in different countries. The majority of sources will be studies presented in academic literature.

In this dissertation, I will try to give some suggestions on how SAT can be applied to IPV. I will also look at whether SAT can explain DV, the majority of incidences of which do not happen in public view unlike other types of violence (Thomas et al. 2010:1084). Furthermore, I will also try to ascertain if SAT can explain IPV in different cultures to see if the same factors are at work. It would also be interesting to see if the theory can explain IPV in different relationship types, for example, same-sex relationships. That might be the focus of future research. This dissertation has its limitations; there will not be any participants or original data from interviews, only my interpretation of different research findings.

### **Situational Action Theory (SAT)**

SAT has not been used to explain DV or IPV specifically; however it has been applied to violence in general (Wikström and Treiber, 2009). Wikström (2005:212-213) suggests that the focus should be on why individuals break the laws or moral prescription intentionally. A crime can be explained when moral behaviour is explained, that is why individuals break or follow rules that indicate what is right or wrong to do. The explanation of crime should therefore not be based on the act in particular for example, hitting someone, rather on the fact that an individual perpetrates this specific act even though he is aware that he is breaking the laws. Wikström (2005:213) suggests that the focus should be on both the individual and the environmental factors and the interaction between those two. They have an effect on how an individual reacts in a situation, whether he follows the law or not. Wikström and Treiber (2009:77) indicate that there is no primary difference between individuals who break or follow moral rules that are defined as illegal by law or why an individual breaks or follows moral rules that are defined by society as informal rules such as having a conversation in a library.

As stated before, SAT takes into account both the environmental and individual factors when explaining moral action and crime. SAT (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:77) aims to move past the persistent divide between environmental and individual explanations of moral action, such as violent acts. The theory accomplishes this by suggesting situational mechanisms, such as an individual's *perception of alternatives* which connects an individual and his environments to his actions (Wikström, 2005:217).

Wikström (2005) demonstrates how different criminological theories have failed to take both the individual and environmental factors into account; their focus is more on either factor separately. Wikström (2005:213) demonstrates this with an example of individual level studies in criminology, where he indicates that these theories are unsuccessful to clearly define the situational mechanisms where experiences and characteristics of an individual transform into criminal actions. These theories fail to specify the connection between action, choice, opportunity, and the main suggested risk factors (Wikström, 2005:213). According to Wikström (2005:214), Routine Activity approach, for example, focuses too strongly on the setting but not on the interaction of the individual within the setting.

Even though the Routine Activity approach has contributed to the understanding of crime causation, the theory still needs to take into account the role of individual differences according to Wikström (2005:214). Wikström (2005) suggests that SAT is successful in defining the mechanisms that connect the setting and the individual to the criminal actions, which other theories fail to do.

According to Wikström (2005:213) “*Crimes are acts, not propensities*”. He goes on to suggest that to be able to explain a crime, one needs to explain the actual act of breaking one of the moral rules, not the individual’s propensity to break the moral rules (Wikström,2005:213). However, the individual’s law-breaking tendency may be a factor in the explanation of why an individual may break the law. The crime propensity can be seen as one option and that the individual will choose that option and break the law. “Propensity is thus not individual characteristics and experiences (which causes propensity), and it is not action (which is the outcome), but the process that links the two (the *tendency* to see and choose in particular ways)” (Wikström, 2005:213).

Wikström and Treiber (2009) define the term *moral actions* as acts of violence or “actions guided by what it is right or wrong to do, or not to do, in a particular circumstance” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:77). There is no main difference between the causal processes that make an individual steal from, lie to, or hit another individual; the difference is the moral rules that guide particular kinds of action. Moral rules are, for example, the law. Moral rules indicate if usage of violence is allowed in a situation or not, and they always function as guidance on what type and level of violence is allowed in different circumstances. Wikström and Treiber (2009) give an example: “the use of violence in a boxing ring is permitted *if* boxing is legal, *if* the person hitting is a boxer, *if* the person being hit is his opponent, and so forth”(Wikström and Treiber, 2009:79).

In some countries violence is legal but the circumstances have sometimes changed within a country over time. Wikström and Treiber (2009) indicate that in some countries DV is allowed in different forms, for example, “a husband’s right to use violence against his wife” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:79).

Wikström and Treiber define *violence* as “*acts intended to bring about physical harm to other beings*” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:78). Wikström and Treiber (2009) indicate that SAT can explain every type of violent act, including DV.

Wikström and Treiber's statement "we maintain that *all* acts of violence can be explained within the general framework of a theory of moral action. We present such a theory – Situational Action Theory" (Wikström and Treiber, 2009: 76) brings doubt, even though they state that "our explanation applies equally well to intentional acts which cause emotional harm (for example, verbal abuse)" (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:78). The question remains why the emotional harm was not included in the definition of violence in the first place if the theory is supposed to explain all acts of violence. DV is not solely physical abuse as the Home Office definition demonstrates. Wikström and Treiber's (2009) definition brings doubt to the idea of whether SAT can be applied to every aspect of DV or if it can only be applied to the physical violence. This may be due to the secrecy of other aspects of DV; physical abuse might be the easiest type to prove.

According to SAT (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:77), habitual and deliberate moral choices distinguish all types of moral action. SAT combines approaches of behaviour and free will to the explanation of crime and moral action. The theory does so by acknowledging that human action, such as law abidance and acts of crime, can be caused either by the individual's *deliberation* or *habit*. Self-control and free will of the individual will only have influence on how the individual will respond to the setting's external controls when the individual deliberates. Whether the individual's choice of action is habitual or deliberate is controlled by the individual's familiarity with the situation. Repeated exposure to specific circumstances for example, may result in actions becoming habitual or automated (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:77).

An individual will habitually choose violence if he sees it as the only alternative. The situation where the individual will see violence as the only option is when the individual perceives violence as not being wrong, due to his own moral rules. Furthermore, the individual's motivation to perpetrate violence is maintained with emotions such as anger and/or he does not perceive the deterrence of emotions such as guilt. The individual also does not take into account any other factors (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:87). The individual may only see one option and will thus respond habitually to the situation.

However, when an individual considers more than one possible action option he deliberates. Hypothetically, an individual will only see physical violence against his partner as an alternative in a certain situation and will respond habitually. The individual might deliberate, however, as to whether he should use physical abuse now or later because the children are in the same room or if there are other factors holding him back.

The individual's moral judgement is the form of the deliberation in the situations where at least one option conflicts with the individual's own morality (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:87). An individual might choose the option to perpetrate violence if he perceives that harming other individuals is the most efficient and convenient method to fulfil a need or act upon a friction. The individual might also use violence in a situation if he is incapable of preventing the violence even though the individual perceives violence as wrong (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:87). Evidence has shown, for example, that if the offender has been drinking or using illegal substances, there is a higher risk of him perpetrating violence against his partner, and in that situation the individual is incapable of preventing the use of violence (Dude, 2011; Balogun et al. 2012).

Wikström (2005:217) uses the term *context of action* to define the interplay between the individual, who has specific characteristics and experience, and a specific type of setting which also has specific characteristics such as other individuals, objects or events. Wikström (2005:217) indicates that actions such as criminal acts may be seen as a result of the interaction of two factors, the individual and the setting. The individual's *perception of alternatives* and *process of choice*, or situational mechanisms, are the factors that connect the individual and the setting to the individual's action. In certain situations the individual has more influence on the course of action while in other situations the setting may have more impact. However, there is always interaction between the setting and the individual that, in combination, has an impact on the options that the individual sees as possibilities and what option the individual will end up choosing (Wikström, 2005:217).

In figure 1 below, an overview of the Situational Action Theory's key factors and mechanisms can be seen. Figure 1 does indicate how different factors and mechanisms influence the individual when in a specific situation, what the individual sees as an alternative and how the individual will act upon it.

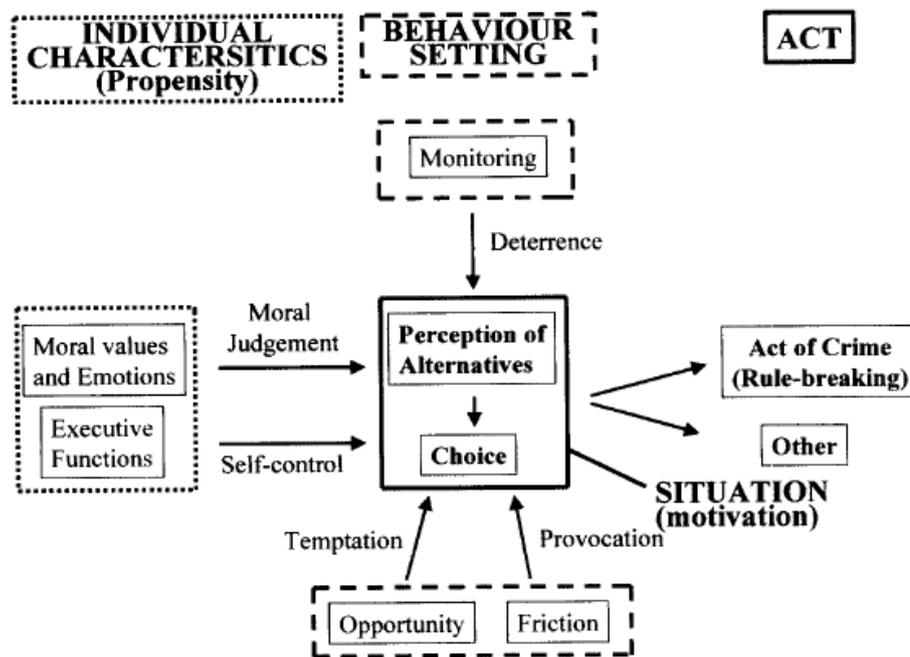


Figure 1. An overview of key factors and mechanisms of the Situational Action Theory (Wikström, 2005:218).

Wikström (2005:217) indicates that an individual's *morals* such as moral values and emotions and *executive functions* are the key factors of individual differences that are relevant to an individual's crime participation. The individual's *moral judgement* (individual's morals) and *self-control* (executive functions) of the individual are primary mechanisms that connect the individual to criminal actions.

According to Wikström (2005:217), the moral judgement of the individual is the main influence on what the individual sees as possible action alternatives, such as, seeing the possibility to commit a crime or not. The individual's self-control is the main influence on the individual's choice process, such as whether the individual will act upon the option of committing a crime or not. Wikström (2005:217) indicates that in SAT, the setting has certain main characteristics which are: *opportunity*, *friction*, and *monitoring*. These characteristics have an influence on whether an individual will see crime as a possible option and whether that individual decides to act upon it.

Wikström and Treiber (2009) suggest that moral rules are important factors in the explanation of human action because of their *causal powers*, here defined as "powers to bring about certain actions" (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:79). The causal powers have impact on how individuals act in particular ways and how they influence the individual's perception on possible action options and how the individual will act upon that perception.

Wikström and Treiber (2009:79) indicate that moral rules are primary causal powers in explaining violent acts, that the moral rules allows the individual to perceive and chose violence as a viable option of action as a response to a specific circumstance.

According to Wikström and Treiber (2009:79) *controls* are another causal power that influences the individual's moral actions. The situation where the individual deliberates whether or not to break a moral rule, the controls come in as an additional causal power. Wikström and Treiber (2009) define controls as “enforcements of moral rules. They are processes that support adherence to moral rules, such as those regulating the use of violence.” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80). An individual will act according to moral rules if the controls are effective and force the individual not to break the moral rules. As stated before, the controls are only triggered in the situation where the individual will deliberate over different alternatives. However, they are not important when the individual responds habitually to his environment because then there is no deliberation factor as the individual's response is automated.

Self-control and deterrence are two key types of enforcement of moral rules (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80). Wikström has defined self-control similarly in his works, for example, Wikström and Treiber (2007). However, the definition of self-control in Wikström and Treiber (2009) will be used here, with the definition being “the inhibition of perceived action alternatives or the interruption of a course of action, which conflicts with the agent's own morality” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80).

Wikström and Treiber (2009:80) indicate that self-control is a causal force when there is a conflict between an individual's motivation to act and the individual's morality. Wikström and Treiber (2009:80) demonstrate this with an example: an individual is being provoked in a setting by someone and the individual feels motivated to respond with violence, but perceives hitting another individual as wrong. In that situation the strength of the individual's self-control will determine whether the individual will act upon his feeling of response or not.

SAT suggests a main factor of inhibition, or *deterrence*. Wikström and Treiber's (2009) definition of deterrence will be used here, where deterrence is defined as “the felt worry about or fear of consequences when considering breaking a moral rule or committing an act of crime” (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80). Deterrence is a causal force when there is a conflict between the moral rules that are applied to the situation and the individual's moral rules.

Wikström and Treiber (2009:80) demonstrate this with an example where in a certain situation the individual does not have any problem with perpetrating violence towards another individual in response to, for example, a rude comment. However, the moral rules of the setting, such as the laws, forbid such action. The strength of the deterrence will have an influence on the outcome of that situation, for example, the seriousness of potential consequences (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80).

The individual is more likely to use violence if the moral rules of the environment and his own moral rules will encourage or allow the individual to use violence. If the situation is reversed the individual is not likely to respond to the situation with violence. The strength of the control such as self-control or deterrence, will influence the individual and whether he decides to perpetrate violence or not (Wikström and Treiber, 2009:80).

The individual's self-control will have an influence on how well the monitor factor will have an effect on the individual's deterrence (Wikström, 2005:218). Wikström (2005:218-219) indicates that temptations and provocations have an influence on the individual's alternative perception that is, if the individual sees the option of committing a crime or not. Deterrence, however, has an influence on the individual's choice process that is, whether the individual will follow up on the option of committing a crime or not.

Wikström and Treiber (2009:81) indicate that the individual may be motivated to use violence due to temptations or provocations. These two factors are the most important classes of motivation in moral action, where the temptation comes from within the individual and the provocation originates from without the individual such as unwanted external interference. There can be different reasons and motives why an individual will perpetrate violence in a situation; the individual may be acting upon a need, a friction or a commitment. According to Wikström (2005:218) *temptation* and *provocation* are mechanisms that connect the setting's characteristics, opportunity and friction, and the individual's criminal actions.

Wikström (2005:218) defines temptation as when an individual sees an alternative to fulfil a specific need by going about it in illegal ways. Wikström (2005:218) defines provocation as when an individual feels being attacked himself, or his family or his properties, and sees the option of responding in illegal ways. When an individual sees an opportunity, he might be tempted to act upon his alternatives to commit crime. When in conflict or friction, the individual might respond to the situation by seeing it as a provocation. Moral judgement of the individual will influence what opportunities the individual will find tempting and what friction the individual will perceive as provoking (Wikström, 2005:218).

In Figure 1 above the key factors and mechanisms of SAT can be seen. With the previously defined terms in mind, the picture does give a good explanation of how SAT works. An individual with his moral values, emotions, and executive functions will be in a certain situation where monitoring, opportunity, and friction may have influence on what the individual will see as alternative opportunities, such as seeing the option to commit a crime or not and whether that individual would actually act upon it.

Self-control, moral judgement, deterrence, temptation, and provocation are the factors that will affect the individual's perception of alternatives and what alternatives he chooses. If an individual is in a situation where his moral rules and the moral rules of the setting encourage law-breaking, the individual is likely to act upon the option of committing a crime. However, if the situation is reversed and the individual decides to follow both his own moral rules and the laws, the individual is not likely to commit a crime (Wikström and Treiber, 2009).

### **Goffman's dramaturgical approach**

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach which is presented in *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* has not often been applied to IPV or DV before (Felson et al. 2003). Perhaps the reason for that may be, for example, the timeframe in which the book is written and the theory developed which is in the 1960s. It is possible that DV may have been ignored or seen as normal in societies and thus, the theory has not been applied to DV or IPV. Goffman defines a lot of key terms in his dramaturgical approach, however, there will only be a short summary of the most important ones in an attempt to explain his approach. Goffman's dramaturgical approach is very detailed and due to length limits of this dissertation and the fact that the role of the dramaturgical approach in this dissertation is solely to show the strengths and limitations of SAT, the deliberation will not be as detailed as SAT.

Goffman's work has not often been used in relation to DV (Avni, 1991; Enander, 2010). It seems that Felson et al. (2003) may have been the only ones who followed Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach in their study, but in combination with other Goffman's theories. Felson et al.'s (2003:622) findings indicated that individuals are usually less likely to perpetrate violence during an altercation if the antagonist is a family member than if he is a stranger.

Furthermore, individuals seem to have stronger inhibitions about perpetrating physical violence towards a family member than towards a stranger. Felson et al. (2003) suggests that DV is rare relative to the level of domestic conflict. Findings of the study could be supported by Goffman's dramaturgical approach, as verbal altercations are less likely to take place in conflicts involving a stranger compared if the conflict involves the individual's partner. A performer controls what he shows others around him; if an actor wants to show how polite he is, he will not have a verbal altercations with a stranger but rather wait till he gets backstage and show his real thoughts and actions there. An individual's partner and children are most of the time with him backstage and thus more likely to have a verbal altercation taking place between them.

Even though the findings can partly be connected to Goffman's dramaturgical approach, there are some limitations to the findings as a whole. Felson et al.'s (2003:625) sample is a combination of individuals from the United States and South Korea. The total number of participants is 786 individuals causing some to say that the sample is quite small. Felson et al. (2003) compared data which was collected 20 years apart and built their findings on them, where the majority of the data is American. However, Felson et al. (2003:632) indicate a limitation in their discussion being the age of their American data which dates back to 1980 compared to the South Korean data which dates back to 2000. This does cast some doubt on the relevance of the findings due to their research topic, DV, which has only recently been accepted as a crime. Attitudes and laws can develop a lot over 20 years so the comparison is not really strong.

Felson et al. (2003:632) suggests evidence for DV being less common in the 1970s than in the 1980s and thus their findings are supported. However, it can be argued that victims of DV did not have anywhere to go during this period, as Felson et al. (2003:632) indicate themselves, so there will not be many reports from victims to the police or shelters because they were not an option at the time. There is a strong possibility that DV was tolerated at that time by the society. The study was conducted in 2003 and the data would have gained more strength if the interviews used in the study had been repeated and the data from 1980 had not been used. Moving away from the limitations this seems to be the only research where Goffman's dramaturgical approach was used in some way.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach is about impression control everywhere in the social life. "The expressiveness of the individual appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*" (Goffman, 1959:14).

An individual communicates in two ways. First, what the individual actually says verbally in the communication setting. Second, what that individual's actions are during the interaction. These actions can either reinforce or contradict the verbal statement of the individual. The audience who is listening may try to figure out if these actions are performed for some other reason than for the one the actor initially tried to display (Goffman, 1959:14). Goffman's (1959:28) dramaturgical approach looks at every normal social interaction as a play; where individuals have their own script, character and a role to follow. In a performance the audience is asked to believe that the actor's character is real, and truly holds the attributes he appears to hold. According to Goffman (1959:32) a *performance* is all the actions of a particular individual in a setting where the function is to influence the audience in any possible way.

Goffman's (1959:32) dramaturgical approach indicates that an individual moves naturally from front stage behaviour to backstage behaviour whereas rehearsed; almost perfect performances are given on the front stage. The individual performs his role in the *front* which is stable and determines the situation for the audience.

Goffman (1959) describes standard elements of the front, such as the setting and personal front which are used by the actors in every performance. According to Goffman (1959:32-33) the setting is fixed which means that a performer will use different settings for different performances. A *setting* may include different items such as furniture, location or other props to help set the scene and help the performer to shape what the audience see in the performance. Although the setting element stays put, there are other elements that depend on the performer such as the *personal front* of the performer. Personal front is for example: sex, age, racial characteristics, and speech patterns. However, even though some elements are stable such as the sex of the performer, elements such as facial expression are not fixed and can be adjusted between performances (Goffman, 1959:32-33). A performer can adjust his facial expression to fit the situation; hypothetically, the performer may display threatening expressions at home, but go to the supermarket half an hour later and display only friendly politeness.

Goffman (1959:34-35) divides the personal front into two different factors: appearance and manner. The performer's *appearance* will inform the audience of the actor's social status, also the performer's impermanent state such as his work or other formal social activity. An actor's appearance can be his characteristics, for example his gender or age. The performance's *manner* is the performer's behaviour.

It can serve as a warning for the audience of the performance the actor is expecting to perform in the oncoming interaction. Goffman (1959) gives an example “A haughty, aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course” (Goffman, 1959:35).

Goffman (1959) indicates that often there is the expectation of consistency between appearance and manner. Appearance and manner may however contradict each other when, for example, “a performer who appears to be of higher estate than his audience acts in a manner that is unexpectedly equalitarian, or intimate, or apologetic” (Goffman, 1959:35) Furthermore there is also the expectation of coherence between the setting, appearance and manner.

An actor wants to have control over how much information is revealed to the audience during a performance. The actor will adapt his character and performance to the situation, sometimes being more consistent with the main norms and values of the society (Goffman, 1959). “When the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole” (Goffman, 1959:45).

According to Goffman (1959:50) an actor needs to make the performance perfect. This is done by making the performance follow certain standards. Some factors, such as inappropriate conduct or pleasures, do not meet these standards so the actor intentionally hides them. The actor may allow himself to enjoy this inappropriate conduct in secrecy. Goffman (1959:51) refers to this as *secret consumption*. In Goffman’s book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman references two examples to explain secret consumption. The first example is of housewives using cheaper ingredients in their cooking to save money or time and still trying to make out that their food is of a high standard. The second is “the same women may leave the *Saturday Evening Post* on their living-room end table but keep a copy of *True Romance* concealed in their bedroom” (Warner, 1951 cited Goffman, 1959:51).

However, these examples are difficult to follow up on. Goffman gets information about these two examples from an unpublished report from Social Research Inc. and from a seminar in 1951. As a result there is no chance to find the original source to independently verify what Goffman states and to decide whether these examples actually support what Goffman indicates or not.

According to Goffman (1959:51), an actor has the tendency to hide different motives or facts that are inconsistent with the perfect version of the actor and his performance. Goffman (1959:52) indicates that there are different elements that can lead to discordance between reality and appearance. The actor may be involved in a profit-making operation which is inconsistent with the act that he is showing to the audience and intentionally hides it in the performance. The actor may, for example, use his work to hide his involvement of unethical behaviour from the audience (Goffman, 1959:52).

It is important to the actor to make the audience believe that he will never make a mistake and with his performance maintain that belief. Due to the actor's need to maintain the feeling of impeccability, mistakes and errors are sometimes rectified before the actor puts on the performance. Tell-tale signs that the actor himself has made any mistake or error and rectified them are hidden to reinforce the illusion of the actor's impeccability (Goffman, 1959:52). Goffman (1959:52) demonstrates this with an example in which doctors have the tendency to bury their mistakes. The audience only gets to see the final version of the performance and will judge the actor on that performance. What is concealed from the audience is the effort that went into making the performance perfect, whether the effort was a little or a lot (Goffman, 1959:52).

According to Goffman (1959:53) some performances could not be given if the actor had not gotten involved with unethical behaviour such as semi-illegal behaviour. As with other facts that are inconsistent with the perfect version of the performance, these are rarely revealed to the audience. As stated before, there are standards that the actor has to follow and some factors need to be concealed to make the performance perfect. However, these standards may be maintained in public by sacrificing some of the other standards in private. Goffman demonstrates with an example "If a *restaurateur*, grocer, or butcher is to maintain his customary show of variety, and affirm his customers' image of him, then concealable sources of illegal supply may be his solution"(Goffman, 1959:53).

An individual communicates in two ways: with verbal communications and the unspoken acts that he demonstrates in those communications. When a performer shows his performance, the intentional meaning of those acts may be misunderstood by the audience. Some of the signs that the performer unintentionally demonstrates, the audience may perceive as awkward. However, as long as those signs, being intentional or not, are consistent with the whole purpose of the performance the actor will try to use them frequently (Goffman, 1959:59).

The audience is always trying to figure out if these unspoken actions in a communication have any other reasons than those that the performer is trying to demonstrate in his performance. Goffman (1959:60) uses the term *unmeant gestures* to describe the situation where the audience picks up any small discrepancy in an actor's performance, which discovery may result in alarming the audience.

Goffman (1959:60) indicates that an unmeant gesture may take place in different performances, and most of the times are inconsistent with the version of the perfect performance. Goffman (1959:60) divides the unmeant gestures or events into three different groups. According to Goffman (1959:60) the first unmeant gesture is when an actor incidentally expresses impoliteness or indecency in a performance. These unmeant gestures may be for example when an actor unexpectedly yawns, eructates or momentarily loses his balance in front of the audience.

The second gesture is when the actor seems not to be following the right script or character in the performance or is unrehearsed. The actor can convey this by showing a lot of interest or too little in his interaction with actions such as not remembering his lines or seeming anxious or stammering. Furthermore, the actor can disable himself temporarily from the interaction by conveying improper actions such as effusion of laughter or anger (Goffman, 1959:60).

The third gesture is when for example the setting not being right for the performance or is not ready for the performance. Furthermore, the timing may be incorrect; the actor may get the timing wrong which can result in the actor's arrival or departure from the situation being not right (Goffman, 1959:60-61). These three unmeant gestures may reinforce the audience's belief that the unspoken cues are conveyed for other reason than those the actor wants the audience to believe.

As stated before only main key terms of Goffman's dramaturgical approach will be deliberated on here, so I will finish with a discussion on Goffman's term *teams*. A team is a group of individuals who in cooperation keep the definition of the situation they are in with their performance (Goffman, 1959:85). Goffman (1959:87) indicates that individuals who are team members of the same team perform the same performance in cooperation. The cooperation between the members results in an important relationship to one another.

Goffman (1959:88) cites two essential elements of the team performance. Firstly, there is the possibility that any team member may disclose or interrupt the performance by improper conduct. Every actor wants to have the performance perfect and the same can be said of the team performance. Because of this team members are forced to rely on every team member following the right script and conveying the right behaviour for every situation. A sense of cohesion is maintained in the team even though teammates have different backgrounds (Goffman, 1959:88).

Secondly, every actor has a different front in order to maintain the team cohesion and team members are individuals “*in the know*”. By doing so the team performance is more cohesive and the team is able to maintain the right definition of the situation for the audience, giving the audience the version of a perfect performance (Goffman, 1959:88).

An actor in a team does sometimes make a mistake in the performance. In that situation other team members must wait till after the performance finishes and the audience have left to penalise and educate the actor who made the mistake Goffman (1959:94). The team deals with the mistake after the audience has left to prevent the audience from seeing something they are not supposed to, something that is only meant for the team to know Goffman (1959:94). By doing this the team is hiding from the audience some particular information or facts that are inconsistent with the performance, resulting in the audience only seeing the perfect performance.

### **Factors associated with intimate partner violence (IPV)**

As stated in the introduction the IPV definition from the Home Office will be used in this dissertation. Furthermore, DV and IPV will be understood as abuse or violence perpetrated by male offenders towards female victims who are or were in any form of intimate relationship with the offender. IPV is one of the most common types of DV and is prevalent in different cultures around the world (Okenwa, et al. 2009; Meyer, 2011; Vatnar and Bjørkly, 2011; Loke et al. 2012). Each country has its own culture, social values, and religion and because of these factors, IPV is perceived differently. The main focus is on heterosexual relationships where the offender is male and the victim is female. The majority of IPV in relationships happens in these situations (Kuijpers et al. 2011; Loke et al. 2012; Cavanaugh et al. 2011; Glass et al. 2008; Brown, 2008).

However, there is evidence that IPV is present in all types of relationships, for example, where the female is the offender and the male is the victim (Archer, 2000; Eaton et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2012; O’Leary et al. 2008). Evidence also indicates that IPV is present in teenage relationships, same-sex relationships and immigrant relationships (Ashley and Foshee, 2005; Stanley et al. 2006; Speziale and Ring, 2006; Ogunsiyi et al. 2012; Kubeka, 2008). García-Moreno et al.’s (2005) and Balogun et al.’s (2012) findings indicate that IPV occurs in many countries and victims are of all ages, have different marital status and level of education.

Even though IPV is in many countries and cultures, there can be different factors, when combined, may lead to IPV or the risk of experiencing IPV. In SAT self-control is a really important factor which indicates whether a certain situation with a combination of factors, will result in violence or not (Wikström and Treiber, 2009). Evidence indicates that different factors may influence IPV, for example, offender’s and victim’s alcohol misuse and illegal substance use, financial difficulties, unemployment, religion, jealousy, stress, HIV/AIDS and the couple’s home location, rural or urban location (Eaton et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2012; Okenwa et al. 2009; Boonzaier and de la Rey, 2003; Hellmuth et al. 2013 Balogun et al. 2012; Dude, 2011).

The aforementioned factors are a small example, covering all possible factors that may lead to IPV is too extensive a task so the discussion, as has already been stated, will be on the three following factors: witnessing domestic violence in childhood, marriage, pregnancy and children. There is evidence that indicates that witnessing domestic violence between parents in childhood may influence or increase the risk of IPV (Kubeka, 2008). Evidence has also indicated that pregnancy (García-Moreno et al. 2005) and marriage (Waller et al. 2012) are factors that may influence IPV.

Even though these aforementioned factors can be identified in different relationships, some factors may have more influence on the risk of IPV than others in a situation. Furthermore, these factors may not have the same impact on the situation in different countries and cultures. Although the discussion will focus on these three factors this does not mean that every pregnant woman is at risk of IPV victimisation, as in many situations there are other factors that have influence, such as a partner’s alcohol misuse.

## **Witnessing domestic violence in childhood**

Evidence suggests that if the individual has witnessed domestic violence and/or was physically punished in childhood, it may be connected to IPV. There is evidence that an individual who witnesses IPV may perpetrate violence in future relationships or is likely to experience IPV victimisation in future relationships (Kubeka, 2008; Vatnar and Bjørkly, 2008). However there is also evidence that witnessing IPV in childhood does not necessarily lead to violent relationships (Lee et al. 2013).

Study findings from the United States indicate that witnessing violence may have an influence on future relationships. Franklin and Kercher's (2012:192) findings, for example, indicated that individuals who witness violence between parents and experience punishment during childhood, such as being hit, spanked, or slapped by a parent of either gender, significantly increased the odds of perpetrating abuse in adulthood relationships. Franklin and Kercher's (2012:192) results also indicated that witnessing violence between parents and physical punishment in childhood increased the odds of perpetrating psychological abuse and respondents were more likely to cite adult victimisation. Similar findings can be seen in Lee et al.'s (2013:85) study where the majority of male respondents indicated exposure to maltreatment or witnessing domestic violence in childhood. Findings furthermore indicated that an individual who has a history of family violence does approve more strongly of ideas that present women in a negative light.

Lee et al. (2013:85) suggest that even though an individual is exposed to family violence during his childhood, this does not mean that IPV will occur in the future. However its presence may be a marker for more severe behavioural and attitudinal problems.

When looking at different countries and cultures such as South Africa, it has been found that among individuals who witness domestic violence between parents in childhood, being a direct witness to the violence was more common than overhearing the violence. This was related to the house size, where many respondents only had one bedroom in the house which made it difficult for individuals to avoid witnessing the conflict between their parents (Kubeka, 2008:288-290). This is different from the Franklin and Kercher's (2012) study where the focus was on direct witnesses, seeing one parent hit the other, but did not ask if individuals had overheard the violence. There might have been higher incidences of witnessing domestic violence between parents if overhearing it had been an option as well.

Some of Kubeka's (2008:292) female respondents reported having experienced violent outbursts from their boyfriends and some decided to stay in the relationship grounded on their view that their boyfriend was acting out of "love". Female respondents indicated that their male partner's actions were motivated by short temper and anger, caused by the girl's transgression, real and imagined. Some female respondents did tolerate the violence due to the fact that love is associated with violence and seen as an indication that the individual is demonstrating affection and attention (Kubeka, 2008:292). Furthermore, a female participant did not see anything wrong with a man hitting a woman, particularly if the female had provoked her partner; this view was based on what she had observed between her parents at home. Few female participants did not see their relationship as violent, even though it was. Findings indicated the male respondents were following the same ideology that they grew up with; that the male should be a leader in the relationship and the head of families (Kubeka, 2008:292; 296).

This factor may have an effect on IPV when SAT is applied. However, it can be one of the facts that the performer intentionally hides, for different reasons, in his performance when Goffman's theory is applied. Here SAT works better in the IPV context.

### **Marriage**

Marriage is found in every society in some form, but the importance of marriage can, however, vary between cultures. In some cultures, for example in African culture, a female who is single or divorced can experience negative stigma from the society she is living in. Some cultures in Asia, for example, reinforce certain factors such as male-dominance or a strong male-privilege in a marriage. A female in that kind of marriage is more likely to experience IPV victimisation (Kim and Sung, 2000; Yoshioka et al. 2001; Ting and Panchanadeswaran, 2009; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Kubeka, 2008).

When looking at, for example, the United States, O'Leary et al.'s (2008) findings showed that physical violence incidents increased when couples got engaged. Waller et al.'s (2012) showed similar findings where females married or living with their partner were at greater risk of victimisation of physical violence only and/or sexual violence or both. Franklin and Kercher's (2012:196) results indicated that married individuals were less likely to perpetrate IPV compared to individuals who were cohabiting or involved in dating relationships. However, IPV victimisation was present in both marriage and other forms of relationships.

Polygamous marriage is allowed in some countries, for example, Africa. This can be seen as one cultural factor that may relate to the risk of IPV. Studies have indicated that females in polygamous marriages are likely to have experienced IPV (Dude, 2011; Okenwa et al. 2009).

A cultural factor related to marriage that may lead to IPV is the dowry tradition in some Asian countries such as Bangladesh and India. Evidence has indicated a connection between dowry and IPV (Naved and Persson, 2010:830). However, there have also been results that indicate that dowry is more of a protective factor for the woman than a risk factor for IPV due to the woman's control over the dowry payment (Srinivasan and Bedi, 2007:872).

Another factor that may lead to IPV in India is when women are married before the age of 18 which is the legal marriage age. Respondents in Speizer and Pearson's (2011:1963) study for example, were more likely to have experienced IPV if they were married before 18 compared to women who were married after reaching the age of 18.

SAT can be applied to different marriage forms. In contrast, marriage may be the factor that the performer in Goffman's theory, hides intentionally for different reasons. Here SAT works better in the IPV context.

### **Pregnancy and children**

Evidence has indicated that pregnancy and children may lead to IPV (Lobato et al. 2012; Hellmuth et al. 2013). In some situations the pregnancy factor may lead to IPV in combination with other factors such as a partner's alcohol misuse (Hellmuth et al. 2013:22). When looking at different countries it can be seen that females experience IPV during pregnancy and sometimes before getting pregnant. Evidence indicates that some females experience IPV for the first time when pregnant (García-Moreno et al. 2005:66). However, for some females in the United States, the time during pregnancy has the lowest rate of violent incidences. Violent incidences may, however, increase before the female is pregnant and after she has given birth. This could be due to the offender's view of not wanting to harm the unborn child or due to the deterrence from society, where perpetrating violence towards a partner when pregnant is unacceptable (Scribano et al. 2013:315). Evidence also indicates a connection between IPV and higher rates of rapid repeat pregnancy and lower rates of usage of contraceptives (Scribano et al. 2013:316). Pregnant females who reported experiencing depression symptoms were twice as likely to indicate postpartum depression symptoms compared to pregnant females who did not experience any depression symptoms.

Results indicated that this relationship is affected by the IPV severity and depression (Trabold et al. 2013:344-345). Beydoun et al.'s (2011:871) result showed that respondents had experienced IPV prior to and during pregnancy. Furthermore, stressful life events during pregnancy, unintended pregnancies and pregnancy complications were, among other things, positively associated with physical violence.

Lobato et al.'s (2012:431) study conducted in Brazil indicated that respondents reported experiencing IPV during pregnancy. The majority, 220 females out of 307, reported having experienced more than two violent acts compared to 87 females who had only experienced at least one violent act during pregnancy. 37.8% out of 811 female respondents reported physical violence victimisation during pregnancy. There was a strong relation between experiencing IPV and postpartum depression (Lobato et al. 2012). García-Moreno et al.'s (2005:66) study shows similar results for Brazil: female victims have experienced physical violence during pregnancy and prior to pregnancy, however, 50% of female victims in Brazil did experience IPV for the first time during pregnancy.

Eaton et al.'s (2012:210) findings showed that African pregnant female respondents were more likely to agree with common IPV beliefs such as "*hitting a woman is sometimes necessary to keep her in line*" than non-pregnant females. Furthermore, men with pregnant partners had higher rates of agreement with these IPV beliefs compared to men without a pregnant partner. García-Moreno et al.'s (2005:65-66) study showed that Ethiopia has high overall levels of physical violence and high levels of physical violence during pregnancy.

Compared to Brazil, 13% of Ethiopian female victims had experienced IPV for the first time during pregnancy. Furthermore, results also indicated that violence got worse during pregnancy. Female victims who experienced violence were significantly more likely to have more children than non-abused women (García-Moreno et al. 2005:66).

Peled and Gil's (2011:457) results showed that the mother's primary struggle was to create a buffer to separate the children's world and the violent world; by doing this they were trying to prevent the violence from influencing their function as mothers and attempting to restrain their partner's abuse and fix it. The purpose was also to try to shield their children from the violence. The female victims in Peled and Gil's (2011:468) study indicated that they ignored the violence and tried to cover it up when the children were around, so the children would have a positive image of their father and not see the violence happening.

Even though there is evidence that indicates that IPV is related to pregnancy, McMahon and Armstrong (2012:11) suggest evidence in the literature that indicates mixed findings as to whether pregnancy is a risk factor for IPV, and whether IPV gets more severe during pregnancy. Although McMahon and Armstrong (2012:9) suggest that IPV is connected with severe negative health outcomes for the mother and her unborn child. Scribano et al.'s (2013:313) results however indicated that there was no relation between IPV and negative perinatal outcomes such as prematurity and low birth weight.

These factors may have an effect on IPV, when SAT is applied. They can be one of the facts that the performer intentionally hides, for different reasons, in his performance when Goffman's theory is applied. Here SAT works better in the IPV context.

### **Conclusion**

SAT and Goffman's dramaturgical approach can both be applied to IPV; however, SAT works better in the IPV context than Goffman's dramaturgical approach. Results have demonstrated different factors are at play when IPV is analysed, such as: witnessing domestic violence in childhood, alcohol use, jealousy, and pregnancy, among other factors. It seems that a combination of different factors may lead to IPV and not just one factor. These common factors lead to IPV even in different countries.

By applying SAT to IPV, it can be seen how different factors work together. One factor of SAT is the deterrence; hypothetically, there is not much societal monitoring inside someone's house, which might have a stronger influence on the IPV being perpetrated inside the house instead of in public, given that the neighbour will not call the police when hearing screams or loud noises. Witnessing domestic violence in childhood has been associated with IPV perpetration; an individual might see DV as normal and repeat it in future relationships as a sign of love. Due to this factor, IPV perpetration might be habitual as SAT demonstrates, as a possible response in a setting. Results indicate that partners of pregnant women do agree with common IPV beliefs which might strengthen the moral values that perpetration of IPV is not wrong. Taking these factors together: witnessing domestic violence, negative attitudes towards women, pregnancy and low deterrence, might all in combination reinforce the alternative perception and make the individual choose to perpetrate violence in that specific situation. The offender might, however, wait and not perpetrate violence due to strong self-control, but use IPV when intoxicated as the perpetrator's self-control is incapable of preventing the act.

When looking at the same situation with Goffman's dramaturgical approach, the perpetrator might not use IPV around others at home or in public in order that the performance of the perfect father and husband will remain intact. On the front stage the perpetrator hides the IPV fact from the audience, such as colleagues, but perpetrates IPV backstage. In Goffman's dramaturgical approach everyone follows a script, or in other words covers up the violence, as Peled and Gil (2011:468) demonstrated. In that situation the actors, the offender and victim, try to control what the audience, the children, see. The victim tries to maintain the perfect version of the father for the children's sake.

However, there are more questions that need answering when applying Goffman's dramaturgical approach to IPV. Goffman gives little information on who the performer is, or why the performer used illegal ways to get to the perfect performance while giving the impression that an actor is not a criminal but an individual in normal social interaction. SAT does take into account the intervention by society, the deterrence factor. There might be a chance in a situation that an individual will not commit crime because of the possible intervention and the consequences of getting caught. This is not noticeable in Goffman's dramaturgical approach. There is no monitoring factor that may intervene with the performance, even though the actor hides illegal behaviour intentionally, Goffman gives the idea that the actor will not get caught by law or has no deterrence that might intervene with his act. SAT takes into account both the individual factor and the environmental factor. The theory takes the interaction between the individual and his environment further than Goffman's dramaturgical approach which focuses too much on the actor's control of the environment. SAT focuses on the exact moment of decision whether violence should be used or not, and how the possible offender will perceive external controls and his own moral rules. Violence could be used in certain situations depending on the self-control of the offender. In contrast, Goffman's theory gives the idea that the performance would be given after the violent act has happened, or long before, where the possible offender only shows the perfect version of himself and not the true version.

It can be said that SAT works better with IPV than Goffman's dramaturgical approach. Any factor that may be associated with IPV in any culture can be added to SAT and give information about whether the offender will perpetrate violence in a certain situation. Goffman's dramaturgical approach works when IPV is seen as a play where everyone follows a script to cover up the violence, which is a common reaction to IPV. The theory does not give much more information apart from how the actor controls his surroundings and hides specific facts. This sounds at first like a typical IPV perpetrator's behaviour, but does not give any support to that idea in the long run.

For future recommendation, proponents of SAT should adjust its violence definition to cover all aspects of IPV which would strengthen its argument. It would be interesting to see more work in the future where IPV, in all types of relationships and cultures, and SAT are combined to get wider information on IPV.

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## **Diagram**

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