**Omega Graduate School**

**Dissertation Research Prospectus (Pre-Proposal)**

Denise Smith-Lewis

**Problem Statement**

The problem is dysfunctional intimate partner relationships among Antiguan men aged 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Parish in Antigua. Men living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua, experience dissatisfaction in their intimate partner relationships because of dysfunctional parental practices.)

Parental influence can have a significant impact on their children’s behavior. Parents are the primary caregivers and teachers during a child’s formative years, and their actions, beliefs, and attitudes can shape the child’s behavior and worldview. (Dhiman, Dr. Bharat, 2023).

**Purpose Statement**

This study examines the relationship between satisfaction in intimate partner relationships of men living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua, and parental discipline practices (socialization) as a young child. Relationship health has a strong influence on physical and emotional health, and with reported rates of divorce at 40-50%, relationship health is a critical public health issue. Thus, it is essential to identify mechanisms that encourage healthy relationship functioning.

(Cordova, et al, 2022).

**Background of the Problem (1-2 pages)**

In Antigua, parents socialize their male and female children differently, and that socialization influences how children behave in their intimate partner relationships. The words of a popular Antiguan social commentator, Torianna ‘Onku’ Edwards, capture the socialization in these lines in his calypso “Tie your hen, my cock let go.” He colloquially suggests that the hen, namely the female child, should be tied and tamed, and protected, while the cock, the male child, is free to roam and do damage. This attitude provides a particular perspective for both men and women to view themselves in relationships. This perspective of a subdued, tamed hen in a relationship with a wild, roving cock often provides the photoplay for problematic intimate partner relationships.

This issue of male-female relationships continues to be identified at various levels in Antigua and Barbuda society. Men previously involved in intimate partner relationships have indicated their disinterest in continuing such relationships. “Women are stress” one young man stated. Concurrently, some women in long-standing, significant relationships left these relationships, citing their partners’ attitudes and behaviors as the reason for the separation. Additionally, there has been an increase in reported incidents of women being shot or stabbed to death by their intimate partners, and some of these happened in the presence of children. These brutal deaths sent shock waves through the community because the accused perpetrators were young men aged 20-30. The researcher, living in the community and having been directly involved with some of these cases, can cite the detrimental effects these relationship fractures have caused in the family.

Questions emerged from the population: What is happening in our little community? Why are so many male-female relationships toxic? Why do some relationships end in violent deaths and young men incarcerated? Reflections on these questions provided the impetus for examining general and male socialization. These reflections enabled the researcher to recognize the value of reviewing male satisfaction in their intimate partner relationship (IPR) and parental socialization influences to determine if any correlational relationship factors contribute to how males function in their intimate partner relationships.

What is an intimate partner relationship, and how do parental practices influence them? Cornell’s University Legal Information Institute defines the term “intimate partner” as, with respect to a person, the spouse of the person, a former spouse of the person, an individual who is a parent of a child of the person, and an individual who cohabitates or has cohabited with the person.

One could infer that an intimate relationship, therefore, is an interpersonal relationship that involves physical or emotional intimacy. Although commonly a sexual relationship, it may also be a non-sexual relationship involving family, friends, or acquaintances. For this study, Intimate partner relationship (IPR) refers to a sexual relationship between a man and a woman.

Parental socialization practices influence these intimate partner relationships significantly. Socialization may be understood as the lifelong process of internalizing society’s norms and ideologies. Individuals acquire culture and assimilate into society by practicing its customs and traditions. Language, attitudes, parental upbringing, values, and roles form part of one’s socialization. Parental socialization includes parental practices, which can be overt or covert. They can be physical, sexual, or emotional. Parental emotion socialization encompasses processes that impact the development of youth’s emotion-related skills―emotion understanding, expression, and regulation―through parent-child exchanges (Eisenberg et al., 1998). Parental emotion socialization encompasses processes that impact the development of youth’s emotion-related skills―emotion understanding, expression, and regulation―through parent-child exchanges (Martins et al., 2018)

Studies conducted on intimate partner relationships indicate that cultural and social norms acquired through socialization highly influence an individual’s attitudes and behaviors, including violent ones. Corporal punishment and witnessing violence in the family, media, or other settings contribute to social tolerance of violent behaviors. Sometimes, violence is regarded as the only method of resolving conflicts or rearing children, increasing the risk factor for interpersonal violence ([Krug et al., 2002](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260517692336?casa_token=ypmG1ZyCPCEAAAAA%3ACws6eCQ_vylPOSHPW7vPq5j7UoFoebeqnvQiPSbJMxiY_BonB-zQ4l_ZGPr85x6itLgK8RKpDg)).

Studies also point to parents’ relationship, parenting philosophy, and how their child selects their child’s “ideal partner.” This new dynamic plays a role in developing the image of the perfect partner for the child. Studies further indicate that exposure to violence during childhood has been linked to dating violence victimization and perpetration. Also known as the intergenerational transmission of violence, the link between violence during childhood and dating violence has traditionally focused on physical violence. Researchers have estimated that between 9% and 87% of high school and college students are involved in violent dating relationships (Harned, 2002). Although most research has focused on physical violence, other studies have examined psychological or emotional abuse, threats of violence, verbal abuse, and sexual violence. Experiencing and perpetrating dating violence is linked to exposure to violent atmospheres in the family of origin.

Since relationships are foundational to us as humans, and we cannot exist without these nurturing relationships in the social context, we must be supplied with the requisite tools to engage in these relationships safely and securely. (Gover, et. al. 2008). The writer believes that understanding how our background and parental upbringing influence us can provide the knowledge and impetus to make necessary adjustments and advance our freedom.

**Significance**

This study will contribute to the gap in the literature by identifying how parental socialization factors, such as parental upbringing, contribute to the satisfaction and functioning of Antiguan young men 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Antigua intimate partner relationships.

This study may also contribute to positive social change by increasing the success of intimate partner relationships among Antiguan men aged 18-30 years. Increasing relationship success will contribute to a more stable family structure, potentially improving family well-being by providing a framework for healthier intimate partner relationships. A greater understanding of relationship functioning will ensure that God’s kingdom’s purposes for families come to pass. Family members will achieve self-efficacy and enjoy better well-being when they are well.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What relationship exists, if any, between dysfunctional parental discipline practices and dysfunctional intimate partner relationships among young men aged 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua?

What relationship exists, if any, between the satisfaction in intimate partner relationships of men living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua, and those who experienced parental discipline practices as a child?

**Research Methodology**

This study will utilize quantitative methodology because hypotheses derived from research questions will be tested using statistical analysis.

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Both Social Learning Theory and Behaviorism Theory frame this study.

Burrhus Frederic Skinner, an American psychologist behaviorist, proposed behaviorism. He is considered the Father of behaviorism. Skinner believed human free will is an illusion, but human action depends on the consequences of previous actions.

If the consequences of an action are dire, there is a high chance the action will not be repeated. If the consequences are good, the probability of the action being repeated becomes stronger.

Social Learning Theory suggests that people learn social behavior by observing and imitating the behavior of others. Psychologist Albert Bandura developed the Social Learning Theory, emphasizing the importance of monitoring, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how environmental and cognitive factors influence human learning and behavior.

Albert Bandura (1977) agrees with the behaviorist B.F. Skinner and his theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning in social learning theory. However, he adds two important ideas:

1. Mediating processes occur between stimuli and responses.
2. Behavior is learned from the environment through observational learning.

**Instrumentation**

Validated survey instrument that measures attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, or behaviors… (quantitative)

This study will utilize.

1. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is an instrument that measures general relationship satisfaction in intimate partner relationships. It is appropriate for use with individuals in personal relationships, such as married couples, cohabiting couples, engaged or dating couples. The instrument consists of 7 questions.

1. The**Parenting Scale** ESPA29 was designed to measure dysfunctional discipline practices in parents of young children. It precisely measures three factors of dysfunctional discipline style: (a) Laxness, (b) Over reactivity, and (c) Verbosity. (Arnold et al., 1993)

**Research Design**

Correlational Design: examines the relationship between two continuous variables within the same group from a validated instrument (quantitative, deductive)

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational design because it will examine the relationship between parental practices of socialization and intimate partner relationships among young Antiguan men 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Antigua.

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational design to examine the relationship between the satisfaction in intimate partner relationships of men living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua, and those who experienced parental discipline practices as a child.

**Population and Sampling**

The target population for this study will be Antiguan men in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua.

**Hypotheses (Quantitative Only)**

Correlational:

H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between dysfunctional parental discipline scores and dysfunctional relationship scores among young men aged 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua.

H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between satisfaction in intimate partner relationship scores among men living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua, and scores of parental discipline practices experienced as a child.

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between dysfunctional parental discipline scores and dysfunctional relationship scores among young men aged 18-30 living in St. Mary’s Parish, Antigua.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Quantitative:

This study will test data for normality and relevant assumptions of appropriate statistical procedures. If data do not meet assumptions for parametric procedures (results apply to the population), nonparametric procedures (results apply only to the sample) will be utilized.

This study will utilize Pearson’s Product Moment of Correlation (parametric) or Spearman’s Rank Correlation (nonparametric) to test the hypotheses for statistically significant relationships.

This study will utilize a t-test (parametric) or a Mann-Whitney U procedure (nonparametric) to test the hypotheses for statistically significant differences.

**Works Cited**

Arnold, et al., (1993).

Bandura, A. (1977). Social Learning Theory

Cordova, et al. (2022).

Cornell. (?). Intimate partner. University Legal Information Institute

Dhiman, B. (2023).

Edwards, Torianna ‘Onku.’ (?). “Tie your hen, my cock let go.”

Eisenberg, et al. (1998).

Gover, et. al. (2008).

Harned, (2002).

[Krug, et al. (2002](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260517692336?casa_token=ypmG1ZyCPCEAAAAA%3ACws6eCQ_vylPOSHPW7vPq5j7UoFoebeqnvQiPSbJMxiY_BonB-zQ4l_ZGPr85x6itLgK8RKpDg)).

Martins, et al. (2018).

Skinner, B. F. (?). Behaviorism Theory