

The Difference between the Perception of Experienced and Communicated Psychological and Physical Violence in Intimate Relationships

Physical and psychological violence are risk factors for poor physical and mental health. Reports of intimate partner violence, typically focus on the physical aspects, whereas first hand reports emphasize the psychological aspects. In this interdisciplinary project with partners from psychology and law, we investigate communication biases in a new paradigm where participants are asked to write and grade self-experienced psychological and physical violence. These stories are later evaluated by another group of participants. We hypothesize that physical violence that is communicated is evaluated as more severe than experienced violence, whereas this is not true for psychological violence. This is supported by preliminary data from our lab showing a large effect size. This has great importance in society e.g. when the grading of the violence affects how a crime is evaluated. The same goes for the evaluation of whether or not parents will be able to cooperate in joint custody or joint residency or in evaluating what access or contact, if any, the perpetrator should have to the child. The first stage investigates the general population in Sweden, whereas the second stage investigates couples that are in custody/residency or access disputes. The texts describing the violent events will also be analysed using advanced computational methods (Kjell et al 2018, see also online resources) allowing for objective measures and data-driven definitions of physical and psychological violence. We will also put the results into its legal context to problematize the effect communication bias has on legal outcomes. A communication bias may lead to a negative gender discrimination of men, because they are associated more to physical than psychological violence. An enhanced understanding of how violence is communicated may also lead to a better situation for the victims.

Supervisor: Sverker Sikström, Sverker.sikstrom@psy.lu.se

Collaborating researcher: Mats Dahl, Oscar Kjell, Åse Innes Ker

Online resources: semanticexcel.com