



Women's Acknowledgment of Intimate Partner Violence Victimization: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Purpose This systematic literature review (SLR) assessed literature on women's acknowledgment of possible experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization. Guiding questions were: (a) What are the research practices of studies on women's acknowledgment of IPV? and (b) What is currently known about women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization?

Methods The SLR identified 10 articles discussing 11 empirical studies. Searches were performed on criminal justice, psychology, sociology, dissertation and theses databases and Google Scholar and backward and forward chaining were also conducted. Eligible articles were written in English, included women, were about acknowledgment of IPV victimization, and reported on empirical studies.

Results Research on acknowledgment of IPV is in initial stages and generalizability is limited by focusing on school-based samples in the U.S. Spain, and Mexico. There is variation in acknowledgment, and some women who met formal definitions of IPV victimization did not acknowledge their experiences as victimization.

Conclusion Because not all women acknowledge their experiences of IPV, some victim-survivors may not be receiving the help they need to cope with violent relationships. However, these findings are limited to mostly younger White women in school settings. Future research should include an intentional focus on including people of diverse backgrounds. Acknowledgment research could improve outreach and awareness programs, counseling services, and the criminal justice system.

Keywords Intimate partner violence · IPV · Victimization · Acknowledgment · Systematic literature review · Epistemic injustice · Women

Prior to the Battered Women's Movement and the Anti-Rape Movements, violence against women was understood by the public as a private matter arising from the individual deviance among those involved (Ake & Arnold, 2018; Dicker, 2017; Herman, 2015). Through these movements, women came to view the violence they experienced as issues that affected women as a sociopolitical group. This new

perspective supported the creation of new interventions to help victims, such as shelters for battered women and other anti-violence programming (Ake & Arnold; Arnold, 2017). In sum, epistemic changes, such as a change in the way people understood the problem of violence against women, led to changes in responses to this phenomenon.

Just as some epistemic changes can support justice, other unfair epistemic processes could lead to unjust outcomes in social policies, intervention development, and social practices (McCollum, 2012; Samaržija & Cerovac, 2021). Such outcomes are consequences of an epistemic injustice (Byskov, 2020; Fricker, 2006, 2007; Maitra, 2010). An epistemic injustice is "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (Fricker, 2007, p. 1) with the term "knowers" referring to "those who seek to know and understand the world around them" (Grasswick, 2017, p. 314). In other words, an epistemic injustice is when an interested person is unable to understand the experience of an important phenomenon and make it intelligible to others. Using

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this definition, one form of epistemic injustice is not being able to recognize oneself as having experienced intimate partner violence (IPV; Jenkins, 2017). This is because a woman's acknowledgment of her victimization is tied to her ability to report, gather information about their abusive situation, and describe what happened (Liang et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2021). Failures to acknowledge IPV victimization can not only lead to failure to report the violence but also may lead to inaccurate reports to those who can intervene. Furthermore, if someone is unable to recognize their experiences as a form of victimization but still experiences distress, it may become harder for them to communicate the gravity of the situation to people in their support system or to other possible helpers (Liang et al.).

In this manuscript I will review the scientific research on women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization. The aims are to conduct a systematic literature review to examine the research practices of studies on women's acknowledgment of IPV and assess what is known about acknowledgment.

Conceptions of IPV and Acknowledgment

In analogous research on the acknowledgment of stalking, Spitzberg (2017, p. 265) described acknowledgment as the "nexus between the perception of legal and self-definitions of a crime." Unlike stalking, not all forms of IPV are legally defined. Therefore, I propose that acknowledgment of IPV victimization is the nexus between the perception of formal definitions of IPV and self-definitions of IPV. Access to definitions is affected by one's social position (Jenkins, 2017), such that some people's experiences are not well-represented in definitions. Thus, it follows that different social groups, such as women, may acknowledge IPV victimization differently than others. To capture this experience, this study will focus on acknowledgment research on women.

Constructions of IPV were influenced, in part, by debates in scientific research (Bograd, 1988). Previously, non-feminist research assumed that victimization was the result of women's pathology, family deviance, or that IPV could be researched from a gender-neutral stance. Feminist research assumes that examinations of women's IPV victimization cannot be divorced from the context of patriarchy, unequal power relations, and gender norms (Bograd, 1988). Thus, in feminist analyses, IPV occurrence is not a deviant violation of social norms but is reflective of social norms whereby women are excluded from power.

In addition, formalized responses to IPV have influenced the inclusion of phenomena considered to be IPV. The U.S. legal system developed definitions that limited the scope of its work to criminal violations (Fagan, 1996).

Meanwhile violence prevention agencies used a broader definition which allowed services to be offered to many victims, including those who would not meet criminal justice definitions of IPV. Specifically, legal efforts to combat IPV included the criminalization of certain violent acts and the establishment of recourse for victims through the criminal justice system. This resulted in IPV being legally defined as a form of severe violence which involved criminal acts. In violence prevention and advocacy, severity is not necessary for the definition of IPV. For example, the definition endorsed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control indicates that some forms of IPV may not be recognized as being as severe as other forms (Breiding et al., 2015). In sum, acknowledgment of IPV developed in a sociohistorical context that involves viewpoints which sometimes conflict with each other: feminist and non-feminist perspectives, formal and informal conceptions, and legal and advocacy criteria.

Purpose of the Current Study

Research on acknowledgment can increase the ability of women to understand their experiences of victimization and communicate those experiences to others, inform counseling practices that support women who have experienced violence, and improve interventions to reduce and prevent IPV. This study will conduct a systematic review of the literature on women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization and apply the concept of epistemic injustice during analysis of research practices. Two questions guide this review: (a) What are the research practices of studies on women's acknowledgment of IPV? and (b) What is currently known about women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization?

Method

Previous research on women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization was reviewed according to the procedures suggested by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA; Moher et al., 2009).

Researcher

All procedures in this study were performed alone by an Asian American woman researcher who had previously worked as a crisis counselor with people reporting experiences of IPV and sexual assault in New York, New York. The clients served while in this position were predominantly low-income women of color.

Eligibility Criteria

See Table 1 for detailed information on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Because IPV has been studied within public health, criminal justice, and social science fields, electronic databases in these fields were considered for information sources. Based on an initial scoping search in February 2020, public health and medicine databases were returning irrelevant literature and were eliminated from the search. Peer-reviewed information sources were: Criminal Justice Database 1981- Current (ProQuest Central), PsycINFO 1806-Current (ProQuest), and Sociological Abstracts 1953-Present (ProQuest). Backward chaining through reference lists and forward chaining for new citations of the chosen articles in Google Scholar. To search for gray literature, I included searches of Dissertations & Theses Global (ProQuest) and Google Scholar. During a scoping search of Google Scholar, each search term returned thousands of items. However, relevance decreased markedly after the first 50 returns. As such, I decided to only choose the first 50 returns for each search term for consideration in the search. Searches were not limited by time of publication.

Search Strategy

Based on a PICOS model, I created a list of search words addressing each criterion. Additionally, the search was limited to English publications only due to my limited ability to read other languages. After testing initial search terms in

a scoping search in February 2020, the word list was edited and refined to result in the most suitable article titles. This search strategy did not have any set limitation on publication time. See Table 1 for search terms.

Study Selection

To aid in the study selection process, a screening tool was created as an Excel workbook with a spreadsheet for each screening level (title/abstract and full text). First, the list of citations was de-duplicated. Next, all citations were screened for inclusion by document type, title and abstract. The full text for articles that could not be confirmed as meeting inclusion criteria during the initial title and abstract screening were obtained and screened.

At each level, citations were assessed for whether each was written in English, women victims were included, the topic was acknowledgment, the context was IPV, and the article reported on an empirical study. If an article met all inclusion criteria it was advanced to the full-text level of screening. At the full-text level, there was an additional assessment category of whether the citation belonged to a thesis or dissertation that was later published as a peer-reviewed article.

Data Collection and Data Items

I collected data using a data extraction tool created in Excel where citation characteristics, definitions, sample

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic literature review

Criteria Type	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Language	Written in English	Not written in English
Population	Women victims are included in the study Search terms: Women, girls, females	Victims are exclusively not women
Phenomenon of Interest	Acknowledgement is the nexus between the perception of formal- and self-definitions of IPV (modified from definition of stalking acknowledgement by Spitzberg, 2017) Search terms: Acknowledgement, acknowledged, unacknowledged, self-perception, perception, label, labeling, hidden, underdetect*, detection, undetected	Any topic besides acknowledgement of one's own intimate partner violence victimization
Context	Intimate partner violence was defined as physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner (i.e., spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, dating partner, or ongoing sexual partner) (Breiding et al., 2015, p. 11) Search terms: intimate partner violence, partner violence, partner abuse, domestic violence, domestic abuse, dating violence, dating abuse, battering, battered, abused, sexual assault, rape, unwanted sexual experience, stalking, partner* spouse*, and intimate	Contexts besides intimate partner violence
Study Type	An empirical study	Not an empirical study Systematic literature review Meta-analysis Dissertation or thesis that formed the basis for an article already included

characteristics, goals and hypotheses, research design and analyses, and findings were entered. This tool was piloted with four articles in June 2020 and refined.

Risk of Bias in Individual Studies

Two different tools were used to assess study quality and risk of bias. To assess the cross-sectional studies, AXIS (Downes et al., 2016) was used. AXIS consists of 20 items which help a rater appraise study design, reporting quality, and risk of bias in cross-sectional studies. Its goal is to help critics across medical and health disciplines assess quality of research. When piloting the tool in July 2020, the items also appeared appropriate for assessing social science studies.

The CASP Qualitative Checklist (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018) was used to assess the risk of bias of qualitative studies. The CASP has ten questions which appraise whether the aims are clear, the qualitative method is appropriate to the aims, results of the study are valid, the results are useful, and the quality of the report of results. Its goal is to assess quality of studies in health and medicine, but when piloting the tool in July 2020, the items appeared useful for appraising the social science qualitative study.

Presentation of Results

The results that will be presented include selected studies, study characteristics, and risk of bias within studies, and a synthesis of results in the selected studies. Additionally, results of quantitative studies were compared with criteria for significance, effect size, and model fit. Findings for tests of association with $p < .05$ were considered significant. The criteria for Cohen's d measure of effect were: small effect $d = 0.2$, medium effect $d = 0.5$, large effect $d = 0.8$ (Cohen, 1988; Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Pearson's r were compared to the following criteria: small effect $r = .10$, medium effect $r = .30$, and large effect $r = .50$ (Cohen). Fit indices for path analyses were compared against the following criteria for acceptable fit: χ^2 ($p > .05$), goodness of fit index (GFI) ≥ 0.95 , adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) ≥ 0.90 , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 , standardized root mean residual (SRMR) < 0.08 (Hooper et al., 2008).

Risk of Bias Across Studies

To assess risk of bias across studies, the representativeness of the studies for the population of women who experienced IPV was first considered. Second, bias due to use of uniform definitions, design, sampling, methods, and reporting of results was discussed.

Analysis Plan

The analysis plan consisted of three parts: to describe the data reported by the studies, to review risk of bias within studies, and to perform a narrative synthesis of the data following the guidance of the ESRC Methods Programme (Popay et al., 2006). This literature review was intended to adhere to the best practices outlined in the PRISMA 2009 Checklist (Moher et al., 2009).

Results

Study Selection

There were 10 articles selected for review which reported on 11 studies [Rodríguez-Franco et al. (2012) reported two studies]. Articles were published from the years of 2000 to 2017. Although searches for this review were not limited by time, no literature studying acknowledgment of IPV victimization was discovered before the year 2000. While there was earlier literature on acknowledgment of violence against women (i.e., sexual violence), these studies were not focused on violence that occurred in intimate relationships.

I will use ($a =$) to refer to number of articles and ($s =$) to refer to number of studies in the evaluation to follow. See Fig. 1 for a PRISMA Flow Diagram detailing the selection process and Table 2 for the citations of the ten selected articles.

Study Characteristics

Defining IPV Victimization and Acknowledgment

In creating the PICOS logic model for this study, I relied on the definition of IPV by the Centers for Disease Control (Breiding et al., 2015). Based on this definition, two studies assessed experiences classified as IPV without using this term in their studies (Harned, 2004, 2005). Specifically, these two studies were assessing unwanted sexual experience with a dating partner. Victimization was an inclusion criterion for two studies (Hamby & Gray-Little, ; Harned, 2005, see Table 3). This means that the remaining 8 articles (9 studies) compared acknowledgment among those without victimization to those who experienced victimization. Six of the 11 studies ($s = 54.5\%$) included the criteria used by researchers to determine the victimization status of participants (Ayala et al., 2014; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004, 2005; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012). Of these six articles, one (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012) reported on two studies and listed the criteria for one of the studies but not the other.

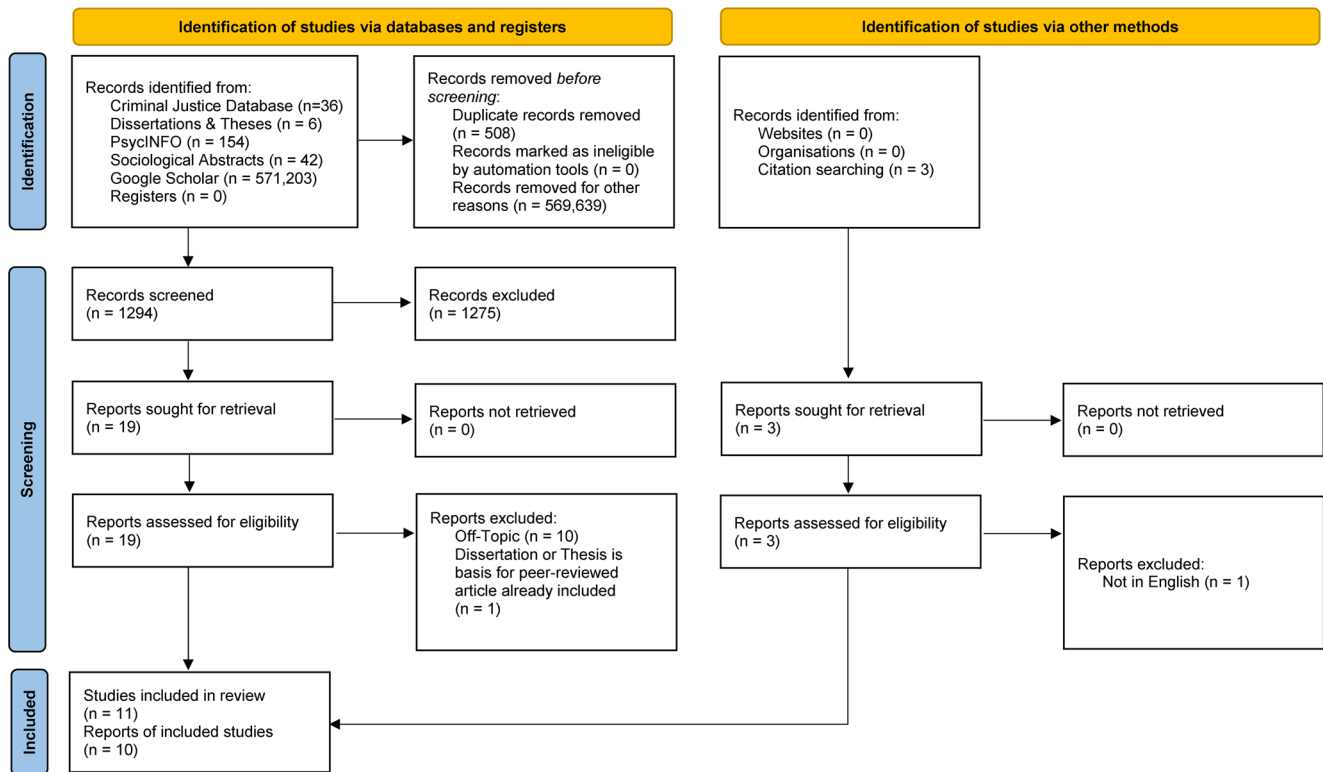


Fig. 1 PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process

All 10 articles (11 studies) operationally defined victimization by measuring the frequency of violence. However, the studies used four different instruments (: the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS/CTS2) or its subscales (Straus, 1979; Straus et al., 1996); Cuestionario de Violencia entre Novios (CUVINO in Spanish)/Dating Violence Questionnaire (DVQ in English) (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2010); Sexual Experiences Scale (SES; Koss & Gidycz, 1985); or a single item measuring self-report aggregate frequency (Hamby et al., 1996). These different instruments suggest different conceptions for IPV: studies using the CTS/CTS2 use an understanding of IPV that corresponds to definitions by Breiding et al. (physical, sexual, stalking, and psychological aggression), while the studies using the CUVINO conceive of IPV as including additional forms of violence such as coercion, detachment, gender-based violence, instrumental violence and humiliation (see Table 4 for descriptions of forms of IPV). The studies using the SES aimed to study sexual violence but were included because these experiences occurred during a dating relationship.

Table 2 displays operational definitions for acknowledgment. When determining which participants acknowledged their own victimization, almost all articles ($a=9$ or 90%) and studies ($s=10$ or 90.9%) used single items that asked about the participant's assessment of whether they had been

abused or experienced violence (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Ayala et al., 2014, 2016; Clements & Ogle, 2009; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Harned, 2004, 2005; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016). Although acknowledgment level was measured by all studies, it was not an inclusion requirement for any study (see Table 3); this is because studies were assessing factors associated with both acknowledgment and non-acknowledgment. Each studies assessed IPV experiences and compared these experiences to participant acknowledgment levels.

Sampling

Samples were drawn from populations in Mexico (Ayala et al., 2016; Ayala et al., 2014), Spain (García-Díaz et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016) and the United States (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004, 2005). The most common ($a=30\%$; $s=27.3\%$) target populations were women who experienced physical violence or unwanted sexual experience by a partner (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004, 2005), followed by undergraduate or college aged women ($a=20\%$; $s=18.2\%$; Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Clements & Ogle, 2009). Three articles ($a=30\%$; $s=27.3\%$) had discrepancies between the

Table 2 Operational Definitions of Acknowledgement

Study	Operational Definitions
Hamby & Gray-Little (2000)	<i>Variable:</i> Labeling <i>Instrument:</i> “Do you believe this event is an instance of physical abuse?”; “Do you think of yourself as a victim of violence?”; “Do you think of yourself as a battered woman?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Score of 4 and above on Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (“Definitely Not”) to 7 (“Definitely”).
Harned (2004)	<i>Variable:</i> Labeling <i>Instrument:</i> “Have you experienced sexual abuse or assault from a dating partner?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Score > 0 on 5-point scale from 0 (never) to 4 (very frequently).
Harned (2005)	<i>Variable:</i> Labeling <i>Instrument:</i> “Do you consider this situation to have been sexual abuse or assault?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Yes response.
Clements & Ogle (2009)	<i>Variable:</i> Acknowledgement <i>Instrument:</i> One item that asked whether they had ever been physically abused by an intimate partner. <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Endorsement
Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi (2012)	<i>Variable:</i> Labeling <i>Instrument:</i> “In your opinion, did this partner ever abuse you?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Responses of Yes were acknowledged, responses of maybe were questioning
Rodríguez-Franco et al. (2012)	Study 1: <i>Variable:</i> Perception <i>Instrument:</i> “Do you feel or have you ever felt abused?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Not reported Study 2: <i>Variable:</i> Perception <i>Instrument:</i> “Do you feel or have you ever felt abused in your relationship?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Not reported
Ayala et al. (2014)	<i>Variable:</i> Self-perception <i>Instrument:</i> “¿Te has sentido maltratado/a?” (Have you ever felt abused?) <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Yes response
Ayala et al. (2016)	<i>Variable:</i> Self-perception <i>Instrument:</i> “Have you ever felt abused?” <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Yes response
Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016	<i>Variable:</i> Perception of being a victim of abuse <i>Instrument:</i> Item asking about perception of being a victim of abuse <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Yes response
García-Díaz et al. (2017)	<i>Variable:</i> Self-perception of abuse <i>Instrument:</i> Not reported <i>Acknowledgement criteria:</i> Not reported

title or abstract and the text about which population was to be studied (Ayala et al., 2014, 2016; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016).

The most commonly reported inclusion criteria ($a = 50\%$; $s = 54.5\%$) included being female or a woman (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004, 2005; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012), and being in a relationship or having been in a relationship of at least one month ($a = 30\%$; $s = 36.4\%$; Ayala et al., 2014; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012). Three articles ($a = 30\%$; $s = 27.3\%$) did not report inclusion criteria used for participant selection (Ayala et al., 2016; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016), while three studies ($a = 30\%$; $s = 27.3\%$ of studies) indicated a target population of younger aged adults or adolescents

but had no age criteria for inclusion (Ayala et al., 2014, 2016; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016).

Exclusion criteria were reported by 40% of the articles ($s = 36.4\%$; Clements & Ogle, 2009; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2005). Reasons for exclusion included incomplete data ($a = 20\%$; $s = 18.2\%$; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Harned, 2005) and not experiencing partner violence ($a = 20\%$; $s = 18.2\%$; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2005) or only experiencing such violence as a child ($a = 10\%$; $s = 9.1\%$ of studies; Clements & Ogle, 2009).

Participants

See Table 3 for participant information across the 11 studies.

Table 3 Reported Participant Information

Study	Reported Participant Information					
	Sample Size Analyzed	Participants/Inclusion Criteria	Mean Age (SD)	Race/Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Disability
Hamby & Gray-Little (2000)	78	Nonfaculty female employees at a university who endorsed that “physical force” had been used against them at least once in current or most recent relationship	38.7 (9.62)	White: 79%	Not reported	Not reported
Harned (2004)	Total: 1395 Sample 1: 489 Sample 2: 906 For analysis, after listwise deletion: 1,329	Female undergraduate students who had dated while at the university Unwanted sexual experiences were measured, but victimization was not required for inclusion	Sample 1: 20.94 (3.67) Sample 2: 19.58 (0.87)	Sample 1: Asian: 11%; Black: 8%; Hispanic/Latina: 4% White: 73%; Other: 4% Sample 2: Asian: 10%; Black: 5%; Hispanic/Latina: 3% White: 78%; Other: bicultural 2% foreign 1% other 1%	Sample 1: Heterosexual: 95% Lesbian: 2% Bisexual: 3% Sample 2: Heterosexual: 95% Lesbian: 3% Bisexual: 2%	Not reported
Harned (2005)	251	Female undergraduate sophomore and junior students who reported an unwanted sexual experience with a dating partner	19.64 (0.73)	Asian: 10%; Black: 4% Hispanic/Latina: 3% White: 80%; Other: foreign: 1%, bicultural 1%, other: 1%	Heterosexual: 96% Lesbian: 1% Bisexual: 3%	Not reported
Clements & Ogle (2009)	319	Women undergraduates who answered questions about student relationships Experience of rape and IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion	18.98 (2.80)	White: 89%	Not reported	Not reported
Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi (2012)	97	Deaf and hard of hearing female undergraduates who had been in at least one relationship within the past year Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion.	20.86 (Missing)	Asian: 7.2%; Black: 4.1% Hispanic/Latina: 10.3% White: 47.4% Multiracial: 11.3% Other: 19.6%	Straight: 82.5% Gay: 7.2% Bisexual: 10.3%	Deaf: 88.7% Hard of hearing: 11.3%
Rodríguez-Franco et al. (2012)	Study 1: 709 Study 2: 1,327	Study 1: Female students who were in a dating relationship longer than one month Study 2: Female students who were in a dating relationship longer than one month Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion in either study.	Study 1: 18.53 (1.55) Study 2: 18.56 (1.52)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Ayala et al. (2014)	3495	Pre-university and university students Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion.	Pre-university students: 15.99 (1.64) University students: 20.16 (2.13)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Ayala et al. (2016)	3304	Young Mexican students Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion.	17.47 (2.28)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Rodríguez-Franco et al. (2016)	3844	Pre-university and university students Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion.	18 (1.58)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
García-Díaz et al. (2017)	4,919	Students in Spain Experiences of IPV were measured but victimization was not required for inclusion.	17.9 (2.02)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported

Table 4 Evidence gap map: critical findings of women's acknowledgement of IPV

Methodological quality of the study per quality assurance tools

° Low Trustworthiness °° Moderate Trustworthiness °°° High Trustworthiness

Independent Variable		Outcome Variable	
Acknowledgement		Acknowledgement	Psychological Distress
Violence			Acknowledging sexual violence did not predict psychological distress better than the actual experience of sexual violence (Harned, 2004 °°°)
			Not acknowledging physical abuse victimization is associated with greater disability, greater psychological distress, and poorer coping (Clements & Ogle, 2009 °°)
			Relationship with this variable not studied
	*Coercion: Pressure exerted on someone to force their will or behavior	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	
	*Detachment: *An attitude of indifference and rudeness toward the partner and their feelings	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	*Emotional Punishment: Fictitious displays of anger, which are not very adaptive and appropriate in a romantic relationship.	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	*Gender-Based Violence: Mocking behaviors and sexist feelings of superiority.	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	*Humiliation: Behaviors involving personal criticism directed against a partner's self-esteem and pride, neglect and denial of support, and behaviors tending to lower a person's self-esteem.	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	*Instrumental Violence: Use of indirect means to inflict harm or suffering on the woman. In this case, it refers to theft of beloved objects, throwing objects, and insults.	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied

Table 4 (continued)

Methodological quality of the study per quality assurance tools

° Low Trustworthiness °° Moderate Trustworthiness °°° High Trustworthiness

Individual Characteristics	Physical Violence:	Women experiencing more severe physical violence also acknowledged (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°) No significant relationship between physical abuse and acknowledgement among Deaf women (Anderson and Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012 °°°) Women experiencing more frequent physical violence acknowledged their victimization (Ayala et al., 2014 °°; Clements and Ogle, 2009 °°; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°) No difference in tolerance for violence between abused women who acknowledged and who did not. García-Díaz et al., 2017 °°; Ayala et al., 2016 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Psychological Aggression:	Women who experienced more frequent psychological aggressions were more likely to acknowledge IPV victimization (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012 °°°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Sexual violence:	Students who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization. (Ayala et al., 2014 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Age	Relationship with this variable not studied	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Disability	No significant relationship between physical abuse and acknowledgement among Deaf women (Anderson and Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012 °°°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Immigration Status	Relationship with this variable not studied	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Socio-economic Status	Women whose partners had lower income more frequently acknowledged (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Race or Ethnicity	Black participants more frequently acknowledged than participants of other races (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Other Participant Characteristics	Women who ended the relationship more frequently acknowledged (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°) Women had a variety of reasons for not labeling unwanted sexual experiences including their own behaviors during the incident.(Harned, 2005 °°°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Perpetrator's Behaviors	Women had a variety of reasons for not labeling unwanted sexual experiences including perpetrator's intentions, behaviors, or feelings.(Harned, 2005 °°°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
Contextual Characteristics	Sexual Orientation	Relationship with this variable not studied	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Characteristics of Violent Incident	Women had a variety of reasons for not labeling unwanted sexual experiences including aspects of incident.(Harned, 2005 °°°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Relationship Characteristics	Women who reported lower relationship commitment more frequently acknowledged (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000 °°)	Relationship with this variable not studied
	Social Norms	Relationship with this variable not studied	Relationship with this variable not studied
Responses	Help-seeking Behaviors	Relationship with this variable not studied	Relationship with this variable not studied
	IPV Prevention Programming	IPV prevention programs have not led to increased acknowledgement (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012 °°, 2016 °)	Relationship with this variable not studied

The number of squares for each citation represents the quality of the study as determined through the quality assurance assessments. Levels of trustworthiness were created by dividing the total possible scores on the quality assurance assessments into thirds. The lowest third of scores were categorized as low trustworthiness, the middle third of scores were categorized as moderate trustworthiness and the highest third of scores were categorized as high trustworthiness

* These violence types were measured and defined by Rodríguez Franco et al. (2010)

Design

Nearly all of the studies were quantitative ($a=90\%$; $s=90.9\%$; Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Ayala et al., 2014, 2016; Clements & Ogle, 2009; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016) except for one qualitative study ($a=10\%$; $s=9.1\%$ of studies; Harned, 2005). The quantitative studies used cross-sectional survey designs, while the qualitative study used phenomenological qualitative analysis. The qualitative study (Harned, 2005) along with the studies reported in five other articles were exploratory ($a=50\%$; $s=54.5\%$; Ayala et al., 2014, 2016; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016). Confirmatory studies made up the remainder of the quantitative articles ($a=40\%$; $s=36.4\%$; Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Harned, 2004).

Risk of Bias Within Studies

Using the CASP Qualitative Checklist, the qualitative study (Harned, 2005) was found to be of good quality by meeting eight of 10 criteria.

When using the AXIS to assess the quantitative studies the number of criteria that the quantitative studies met ranged from six to 14 (out of 20). Three articles ($a=30\%$; $s=36.4\%$) did not clearly state their goals/hypotheses or had inconsistencies between title, abstract, and text about the goals (Ayala et al., 2014; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016). Only one study (Harned, 2004) reported how its sample size was chosen. Almost all the quantitative studies selected participants through convenience, but one study ($a=10\%$; $s=9.1\%$; Harned, 2004) used stratified random sampling to select participants. Some articles had missing information in their reported results (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Ayala et al., 2016; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016).

Synthesis of Results

This systematic literature review indicates that existing peer-reviewed research on acknowledgment is in early stages of development, with few studies exploring the topic. Studies on this topic were recent and published only since 2000. All studies sampled participants who were associated with schools which limits the generalizability of results. All studies found that there was variability in acknowledgment among participants. See Table 4 for an Evidence Gap Map of the critical findings and gaps in research.

Differences in Acknowledgment

Not all participants who reported experiences of IPV acknowledged these experiences as IPV victimization. Across studies, up to 84.9% of victim-survivors acknowledged the abuse, up to 86% did not acknowledge, and up to 52.6% reported being unsure or questioning whether they were abused. Reasons for non-acknowledgment were explored by Harned (2005). Reasons included: participants believing their own behavior could have prevented the assault or that they consented, perceptions of partner's intentions, caring feelings for the partner, a desire to minimize the event, the perception that the experience is normal dating behavior, and being unsure how to label the experience.

Differences in acknowledgment were not related to whether participants considered IPV behaviors acceptable in relationships or not. García-Díaz et al. (2017) and Ayala et al. (2016) examined whether women's reported tolerance for IPV was related to acknowledgment. Non-abused women had lower tolerance for IPV compared to abused groups. However, there was no difference in tolerance between abused women who acknowledged and who did not.

Process of Acknowledgment

A singular U.S. study (Harned, 2005) explored the process of acknowledgment of sexual violence by a partner. Acknowledgment appeared to be gradual process that occurred over time with only about a third of participants acknowledging violence when it happened. While some participants needed less than a week to acknowledge (29.6%), other participants needed more than a year (1.9%). Participants reported that engaging with supportive others was the most common trigger for recognizing the abuse 68.8%. The remainder needed time to process the experience (25%), experiencing personal growth (6.3%), sobering up after the event (6.3%), realizing that there was harm from the event (9.4%), or realizing that their partner had also abused other women (6.3%). These results suggest that acknowledgment involves individual reflection, an understanding of the partner's behaviors in greater context, and an understanding of how others view the participant's experiences.

Harned also explored the factors that impeded acknowledgment. Women had a variety of reasons for not labeling unwanted sexual experiences. The reasons were focused on their own behaviors, the perpetrator's intentions, behaviors, or feelings, aspects of the incident, minimizing harm, and being unsure how to label the event. This suggests that acknowledgment involves not just comparing experiences to formal definitions but also assessing relationship features and context.

Relationship of Acknowledgment To IPV Prevention Programming

Two articles (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012, 2016) described studies that were intended to test the effects of IPV prevention or awareness programming in Spain. One study (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012) attempted to measure effectiveness of programming by estimating how frequently participants who reported experienced IPV (as measured by the CUVINO) also acknowledged this victimization by answering affirmatively to the question, “Do you feel or have you ever felt abused in your relationship?” The authors found not everyone who reported IPV victimization in their relationships acknowledged IPV. The other study (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016) measured the effect of prevention programming in changing acknowledgment over time by comparing two waves of students over five years apart and finding no differences in acknowledgment. In both studies, the authors concluded that the results indicated that IPV prevention programs have not led to increased acknowledgment. This suggests that increasing awareness of IPV in a society does not necessarily lead to acknowledging one’s own victimization.

Relationship of Acknowledgment to Frequency of IPV

Participants who experienced more frequent abuse acknowledged their victimization. This pattern was found in violence types of detachment, humiliation, sexual abuse, coercion, physical abuse, gender-based violence, emotional punishment, and instrumental violence in one Mexican sample (Ayala et al., 2014). The pattern of acknowledgment of more frequent abuse was also seen with psychological (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012) and physical IPV (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Ayala et al., 2014; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000). It should be noted that the findings for physical abuse were not significant in one study (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi). Additionally, Hamby and Gray-Little and Clements and Ogle (2009) found women who acknowledged IPV reported more severe IPV.

Relationship of Acknowledgment to Participant or Relationship Characteristics

One study examined the relationship between acknowledgment and participant or relationship characteristics. A U.S. study of female university employees (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000) found that Black participants more frequently acknowledged than participants of other races. Hamby and Gray-Little’s study also found that participants who ended the relationship or who reported lower relationship commitment more frequently acknowledged. Additionally, those

participants who acknowledged abuse reported lower partner income than those who did not acknowledge any abuse. There were no analyses of the interaction effects of race with relationship termination, relationship commitment, or partner income. Future research could explore these interactions on acknowledgment.

Relationship of Acknowledgment to Psychological Outcomes

Two studies explored the relationship of acknowledgment to psychological outcomes. Harned (2004) studied whether distress after sexual IPV was due to the event itself or to acknowledgment of the violence. Harned explored whether a model including acknowledgment as a mediator was a better predictor of body shape concerns, psychological distress, substance use, or academic withdrawal than a model predicting these outcomes from the event alone. Harned found that the acknowledging the experience of sexual violence did not predict psychological distress better than the actual experience of sexual violence. This suggests that non-acknowledgment does not mean that harm from sexual IPV has not occurred, that measuring sexual IPV with instruments that require acknowledgment will underestimate IPV, and that using acknowledgment as a requirement for receiving sexual violence services will result in fewer victim-survivors receiving help.

In contrast, Clements and Ogle (2009) found that acknowledgment of physical abuse victimization is associated with less disability and less psychological distress compared to non-acknowledgment. The differences in acknowledgment groups on these outcomes may be due to the association of acknowledgment with receiving social support; those who seek social support may be more likely to acknowledge and to experience less distress. However, it is unclear why there might be a difference in the relationship between acknowledgment and psychological outcomes for sexual violence and physical violence. As such, exploring this relationship further is recommended.

Risk of Bias across Studies

Bias in Representativeness of the Literature

The selected studies were all published in scholarly journals. Since publication in journals may be biased toward significant results, the bias in selection would be toward research which found significance even if the true population of acknowledgment research did not lead to significant results. The studies were written by researchers in the United States, Spain, and Mexico. Therefore, the results may not be

generalizable to women outside of these three countries and cultural practices.

Bias Due to Design

All studies except for one were quantitative. Except for a repeated cross-sectional study, the quantitative studies were single cross-sectional which indicates that research on changes in acknowledgment over time are not well-represented.

Bias Due to Sampling and Selection

Across the 11 studies, all participants attended or worked at a school or university. The U.S. studies had samples that were predominantly White. Little information on disability or sexual orientation was recorded by these studies. Beyond schooling level and age, the demographic information of the non-U.S. samples was not reported.

The relationships studied in these articles may be biased toward shorter and more recent relationships. Four studies had inclusion criteria that participants have a relationship that lasted at least one month (Ayala et al., 2014; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012). Two other studies had criteria related to a recent time frame. One required that the participants dated while at the university (Harned, 2004) and another required that participants dated within the past year (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012).

Bias Due to Methods

All studies included in this review relied upon self-report of experiences and acknowledgment. Therefore, all were subject to response biases such as recall bias. All studies, including the qualitative study, used surveys to collect data, so it is possible that the survey format influenced responses.

The studies may also be subject to social desirability. Five studies in four articles reported procedures to keep responses confidential or anonymous (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012; Ayala et al., 2014; Ayala et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012). Two studies reported that anonymity was not possible using the study procedures, but did not provide information on confidentiality (Harned, 2004, 2005). Four studies did not provide information on anonymity or confidentiality of responses (Clements & Ogle, 2009; García-Díaz et al., 2017; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000; Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016).

Bias in Reporting Results

Quality assessment tools indicated some limitations with reported results. Two articles were missing basic data such

as absolute frequencies, standard deviations, and groups sizes (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2016) or had missing respondents (Ayala et al., 2016). There were limitations due to inconsistency of the report: frequencies not adding up to 100% (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000), text and table reporting different results for the same data point (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012), and missing participants in prevalence results (García-Díaz et al., 2017). One study (Anderson & Kobek Pezzarossi, 2012) did not present the results for all the analyses described in its methods.

Discussion

This systematic review is important because acknowledgment may be an important step in deciding to seek recourse (Liang et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2021), and developing interventions to combat IPV. If there are people who are being victimized yet do not acknowledge this circumstance, such people may be unable to get the help they need. Given that the way that one understands experiences is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1990), women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization should be affected by the sociocultural contexts of patriarchy and other forms of social inequality. That is to say, in the context of gender inequality, women's experiences are not well-represented by collective knowledge, for instance, through research, journalism, or entertainment media that may overrepresent the violent experiences of men. Should women's lived experiences of IPV not be included in collective knowledge of victimization, it would become difficult for women to recognize their own IPV victimization (Jenkins, 2017). As such, it may not be possible to understand acknowledgment from a gender-neutral perspective. For this reason, this review assumed that women's acknowledgment was a unique process and focused on women's acknowledgment. The findings of this review may be useful to counselors, victim advocates, policymakers, and researchers of IPV and victimology who need to design interventions to help women who are experiencing IPV but are in stages of questioning or non-acknowledgment.

This review of research on women's acknowledgment of IPV was guided by two questions (a) What are the research practices of studies on women's acknowledgment of IPV? and (b) What is currently known about women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization? By addressing these questions, I was led to three main findings: acknowledgment research is in early stages, acknowledgment research is limited by sampling, and there is variability in acknowledgment.

First, research on acknowledgment is in early stages with 11 studies located. This early stage of research may be because not all aspects of IPV are defined legally, and

formal definitions vary depending on context (i.e., feminist or non-feminist, criminal justice system or advocacy). This can cause challenges for researchers trying to compare participants' self-definitions with formal definitions. There was a range of definitions used both for IPV and for acknowledgment, which suggests the importance of making operational definitions of IPV explicit in acknowledgment research.

Second, research on women's acknowledgment of IPV is limited by sampling. Participants were predominantly sampled from students or university employees. Student populations may come from a socioeconomic background that allows them to attend school rather than work. Women who experienced severe IPV are generally poorer (Pavao et al., 2007; Rennison & Planty, 2003) and thus, the knowledge of a group of women at high risk for severe violence was not represented within the included studies. The reviewed studies show that more frequent and severe violence is associated with acknowledgment, so by focusing on school and university samples, researchers may be capturing a sample with lower acknowledgment compared to more disadvantaged socioeconomic groups.

There may also be differences due to developmental stage and context. Younger people are establishing their first intimate relationships and may have a different perception of IPV compared to older adults. U.S.-based college and university students may be more exposed to anti-sexual violence campaigns on campus, which may increase their recognition of sexual forms of IPV victimization compared to non-sexual forms. However, increased recognition of the problem of IPV may not increase acknowledgment, as Rodríguez-Franco et al. (2016) found that awareness programming for IPV did not increase acknowledgment. However, this study was conducted in Spain and there may be differences in the affects of awareness programming across the U.S. and Spain.

While one study focused on members of a Deaf and hard of hearing community, most studies reported very little information on members of the LGBTQ and disabled communities. It may be that using easily accessible samples such as school- and university-based participants did not result in much variation on these demographic characteristics. This, however, poses a problem with generalizability. IPV, understood from a feminist perspective, is based in social inequalities found in a given society. Therefore, at the intersection of gender and other social identities, there should be different forms of IPV experienced and different informal conceptions of IPV. Given these differences, it follows that there would be differences in acknowledgment for these populations. As such, it would be important to target more diverse samples for future research. For example, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities may face unique challenges to acknowledgment due to cognitive

and communication barriers. Furthermore, future research can consider other forms of social difference that may affect how victim-survivors make sense of abuse, for instance, such as whether Islamophobia and gender roles influences acknowledgment among Muslim women.

Furthermore, researchers and participants were primarily from the United States, followed by Mexico and Spain. Informal conceptions of IPV, acknowledgment, and the processes that affect acknowledgment that may exist in other areas of the world were not represented by the research literature. As acknowledgment is a process informed by social and cultural context (Jenkins, 2017), those societies that differ from U.S., Mexican, and Spanish cultures may use a different understanding of gender roles, appropriate norms in intimate relationships, or violence, all of which could contribute to differences in acknowledging victimization. For instance, Centelles (2024) notes the role of culturally-specific gender norms in resisting some forms of IPV while accepting other forms. As such, studies based in other cultures, and studies which measure sub-cultural affiliations would help develop an understanding of how culture can support or inhibit acknowledgment of IPV victimization.

Third, this review found that there is variability in acknowledgment. Every study in this review found that there were women who met formal definitions of IPV victimization but did not acknowledge their experiences as such. Reasons for non-acknowledgment included: the victim-survivors' behaviors, perceptions of partner's intentions, affection for the partner, a desire to minimize harm, and being unsure how to make sense of the experience. Those participants who focused on their own behaviors tended to assign responsibility for the abuse on themselves and those who minimized the abuse tended to emphasize that the event was not serious enough to be considered abuse, or not harmful. This may reflect a tendency to internalize victim-blaming narratives or to dismiss women's concerns, which often hold women responsible for their own victimization or deny that victimization even occurred. Those who minimized the violence also included women who believe that the experience was not violence because they considered it normative for dating behavior. Again, this may reflect a women's internalization of social messages that there is an acceptable threshold of violent behavior directed at women in intimate relationships. Gender roles which place responsibility for maintaining intimate relationships on women may have encouraged participants to focus on their affection for their partners and try to understand the violence as something that can be overcome. Additionally, participants may be accustomed to minimizing their own experiences in favor of considering the perspective of men, and this may explain why some women who did not acknowledge did so after trying to understand their partner's intentions.

The literature also shows that IPV awareness programming has not led to increased awareness of own's own IPV victimization. This suggests that disseminating the formal definition of IPV is not sufficient for acknowledgment. Because of the limited sampling across studies, this review's findings should be limited to describing the acknowledgment experiences of younger women associated with schools who are predominantly heterosexual and White. However, because social context affects sensemaking, I would anticipate that future research would show that women of other ages, community contexts, sexual orientations, and disability statuses would also demonstrate variability in acknowledgment.

Research Implications and Future Directions

See Table 5 for a summary of implications for practice, policy, and research. One implication of this review is that non-acknowledgment may be an ordinary phenomenon among some women experiencing IPV. Therefore, programs which require acknowledgment to receive IPV intervention may inadvertently exclude some women who would be appropriately served. This exclusion can be avoided by incorporating IPV prevention and intervention in other community and health programming aimed at women. This way, a woman does not need to specifically seek IPV interventions in order to receive assistance.

Another implication is that IPV interventions should account for how a woman's acknowledgment status might affect their receptiveness to some forms of help. That is, a woman's acknowledgment status may affect their sense of which solutions seem most appropriate. Safety planning and intervention should be offered after careful assessment of each woman's particular needs to ensure greater receptivity.

Because one study found that discussions with others preceded acknowledgment, helpers may need to aware that not all women experiencing IPV, even those who seek help, recognize their level of risk. As such, programs and counselors serving women may help abused more by instituting a blanket policy to conduct an IPV assessment for most people. Furthermore, for programs that already assess IPV victimization, assessment tools can be reviewed to ensure they do not require acknowledgment, as this may reduce the assessment's effectiveness.

The findings of this systematic review suggest that there are two main directions for the future of acknowledgment research. One branch can be aimed at increasing epistemic justice through greater inclusivity (i.e., representativeness) of target populations and greater participatory diversity in scientific inquiry. To address incomplete representation of people affected by IPV, future research should add more diverse sampling frames. For instance, future research

could include women, men, and transgender and non-binary individuals, including people of color, people who have disabilities, people from across socio-economic statuses, and people in same gender relationships. As the current literature focuses on people associated with colleges and universities, future research can recruit participants outside of these sites. Additionally, it is important for people of different social positions to contribute to the research process as inquires. To allow researchers and stakeholders to assess women's equitable participation in the research process, research teams may consider including positionality statements. Such statements can also be used to assess how researcher and participant positionality may affect research results.

The other branch can expand on the current literature by exploring additional aspects of acknowledgment such as the course of the acknowledgment process across time and the social and phenomenological influences on acknowledgment. By researching acknowledgment across time, studies could determine whether there are pre-cursor events to moving from non-acknowledgment to acknowledgment. Furthermore, understanding how demographic characteristics interact with relationship characteristics to influence acknowledgment can shed light on the way culture and society interact with individual circumstances to promote or impede acknowledgment. Advocates, counselors, and awareness programs could use this information to help women recognize their victimization sooner and recognize the need for assistance.

Because it seems that acknowledgment involves community conceptions of IPV and victims, I suggest that research be conducted on how social norms of IPV and victimization may be related to acknowledgment. Many social norms studies have found that individuals' perceptions about group norms are often incorrect when compared to actual groups norms (Perkins & Perkins, 2018). This finding has been identified in IPV related work (Neighbors et al., 2010; Witte et al., 2017; Witte & Mulla, 2013). If individuals believe that IPV perpetration is common or accepted, then they might be less likely to perceive of themselves as a victim or less likely to think others would perceive of them as victims or perceive themselves as victims. Combining social norms research with research on acknowledgment may provide insight into the acknowledgment process. Furthermore, understanding social norms may provide an avenue for increasing acknowledgment and help-seeking.

Future research could include qualitative examination on the discourse and process of acknowledgment. For instance, future research could explore the discourse used when women describe their partner violence experiences and their labeling of these experiences. Such research can be used by victim services agencies in improving outreach and screening.

Table 5 Implications for practice, policy, and research

Practice	Policy	Research
Increasing IPV screening in community and health programming in order to detect IPV among non-acknowledging victim-survivors.	Programs that support underrepresented people to learn and conduct social science research.	Future acknowledgement research should use more diverse sampling frames such as targeting men, non-binary people, LGBTQ people, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, people with disabilities. Research teams should include positionality statements in research reports.
IPV interventions should account for how a woman's acknowledgement status might affect their receptiveness to some forms of help.		Future research should include qualitative examination on the discourse and process of acknowledgement.
Programs and counselors should institute a blanket policy to conduct an IPV assessment for most people.		Study the process of acknowledgement across time.
IPV screening tools can be reviewed to ensure they do not require acknowledgement.		Research should be conducted on how social norms of IPV and victimization may be related to acknowledgement.
		Study the relationship of acknowledgement with help-seeking behaviors.
		Study the relationship of acknowledgement of different IPV types with psychological outcomes
		Study the interaction of demographic characteristics and relationship features on acknowledgement.

A final suggestion is to study the relationship of acknowledgment with help-seeking behaviors and with psychological outcomes. Harned (2005) found that women reported that receiving social support led them to acknowledge unwanted sexual experiences with a partner. This demonstrates that informal help-seeking may influence acknowledgment status. Future studies can explore whether acknowledgment is necessary before seeking help, or whether help-seeking influences acknowledgment. It is unclear whether the association of acknowledgment with social support helps improve psychological well-being for those who acknowledge the violence.

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study was limited by its search strategy. It excluded articles that were not written in English. No studies reported the inclusion of transgender women. Therefore, cisgender women were overrepresented.

This review was also limited by method. Best practices indicate that systematic literature reviews should be performed by teams with articles coded by multiple reviewers independently of each other (Boland et al., 2017). This review was performed solely by the author and not any additional researchers. Therefore, this study is limited because a lack of multiple coders could potentially lead to bias in selection and assessment of article quality standards. I attempted to control for this bias by creating selection rules in advance and testing it on an initial scoping search before using it with the full search. To help minimize bias in quality assessment, two publicly available quality assessment tools were used. These tools were developed based on

consensus among researchers on which items were appropriate to assess research quality (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018; Downes et al., 2016).

This systematic review had several strengths. It was the first known attempt to synthesize the literature on women's acknowledgment of IPV victimization. By focusing on various study methodologies, this review adds to an understanding of women's participation or exclusion from creating the body of knowledge of IPV. The creation of a PICOS model and systematic use of search terms and procedures helped reduce selection bias. The reporting of systematic eligibility criteria makes this review reproducible. The search included databases on criminal justice, psychology, sociology, a general research database, and a database of dissertations and theses. This increased the chances of locating gray literature in addition to peer-reviewed literature.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review located 11 studies across 10 articles published since 2000. All studies found that some of the women who met formal definitions of IPV victimization did not acknowledge their experiences as IPV victimization. This non-acknowledgment presents a potential problem in providing help to victims. Extant research on acknowledgment of IPV victimization among women is in its initial stages with a variety of definitions used for IPV and for acknowledgment. Sampling was limited to mostly young, White women who are students. Future researchers are encouraged to design future studies with more inclusive samples including women, men, transgender and non-binary

people, to investigate the relationship of demographic and relationship features with acknowledgment, and to collect data on people at different levels of acknowledgment.

Declarations

Competing Interest The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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