Intimate Partner Violence and Double Consciousness

A Case Study on Female Perceptions of IPV in Babati, Tanzania

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Abstract

Demographic and Health Surveys from 2015-16 as well as previous research suggest that a majority of women in Tanzania justify intimate partner violence (IPV) and that such violence is very prevalent. Semi-structured interviews with women in rural and urban Babati, Tanzania, were conducted in February-March 2016, in which women gave conditional answers to questions on justification of IPV. The aim of this thesis is thus to offer a theoretical explanation for the ambivalence informants expressed regarding IPV. To do so, the theory of double consciousness, which has not been applied to gender issues before, was applied in a qualitative content analysis of informants’ statements. This thesis will argue that double consciousness offers a plausible explanation for the conditional answers given by informants, since they reflected a two-ness among women, in the form of non-justification of IPV, but ideas about women’s obligations that are incompatible with ideals of gender equality. Women are thus aware of the gender oppression, while they still, to some extent, adapt to it.

Keywords: IPV; gender oppressive norms; patriarchy; perceptions; double consciousness; Tanzania
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1. Introduction and Problem

1.1 Background

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal no. 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and one of the targets is to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres by 2030. The UN reports that violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights as well as an obstacle to development. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of such violence, with data from surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015 in 52 countries indicating that 21% of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past year (United Nations, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2016; 9).

The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) from 2015-16 in Tanzania showed that 58% of women and 40% of men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the following reasons: if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to have sex with him. Furthermore, 30% of ever-married women reported having experienced spousal violence within the past 12 months (Tanzania DHS, 2015-16 - Key Findings).

The Demographic and Health Survey Program is funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by ICF International. It was founded in 1984 and has since worked with conducting surveys and disseminating data on fertility, family planning, maternal and child health, gender, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and nutrition in over 90 less-developed countries (DHS Program). Although these surveys offer vast amounts of cross-country statistical data on important issues, the quantitative nature of DHS data says little about why certain results have been obtained.

1.2 Research Problem and Aim

That women, especially to a greater extent than men, justify something that disadvantages themselves, is indeed puzzling, and has therefore been the focus of several studies on IPV (e.g. Rani et al., 2004; Okenwa-Emegwa et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2013; Schuler et al., 2012; Yount et al., 2011; Jakobsen, 2014). Interviews with women in Babati, Tanzania, however,
revealed that women do not justify IPV in any situation. Instead, they gave conditional answers, in the sense of disapproval of IPV, but nevertheless justified underlying gender oppression to a certain extent.

The question with which this study is concerned, is thus why women gave conditional answers to questions on justification of IPV.

The aim of this study is to offer a theoretical explanation for the ambivalence informants expressed regarding IPV.

It will be argued that informants’ conditional answers can be explained in terms of double consciousness, which is a theory that has not been applied to gender issues before. Therefore, this thesis will offer a new theoretical understanding of women’s perceptions of IPV.

1.3 Disposition
This thesis is divided into six main chapters. After this introduction, a review of extant research will follow. Thereafter, the theoretical framework will be presented before going into the method of the study. Chapter five, on empirical findings and analysis, is organized around seven themes, all of them connected either to previous research or to the theoretical framework, and will be discussed in relation to each other and double consciousness in the final part of the analysis. The concluding chapter will be a discussion of the overall results and their implications, as well as suggestions for further research.

2. Previous Research
Several studies attempting to analyze, compare, and understand DHS and other quantitative data on attitudes towards domestic violence, and wife-beating more specifically, have been conducted. Rani et al. (2004) compared DHS data from seven Sub-Saharan African countries to examine correlates of conditional acceptance of wife-beating among men and women. The independent association between different socio-demographic characteristics and acceptance of wife-beating for breaking certain gender roles was investigated, and the results showed that women justified wife-beating to a larger extent than men in all seven countries (2004: 125). It also showed that attitudes about wife-beating will change with socio-economic development, increased urbanization and better education, but that these indicators will not have a major
effect or ensure that it happens anytime soon. Furthermore, employment or financial independence of women are not sufficient factors for changing women’s attitudes towards wife-beating (2004: 132).

Another study on attitudes towards physical IPV against women in Nigeria based on DHS data found similar patterns, i.e. significantly higher justification among women than among men and reduced likelihood of justification with socio-economic development (Okenwa-Emegwa et al., 2016: 4). In line with previous research on predictors of IPV victimization (Abramsky et al., 2011), this study also found that women exposed to IPV justified physical IPV to a larger extent than un-exposed women (Okenwa-Emegwa et al., 2016: 4). Although it is difficult to determine the cause and effect relationship between these two variables, the correlation calls for further research on the attitudes and perceptions among women. Okenwa-Emegwa et al. draw on normalization theory as well as social learning theory to explain their results (2016: 1-2). These theories suggest that growing up with domestic violence and attitudes supporting wife-beating, among other factors, increase the risk of experiencing IPV. However, these theories can only be applied when the researcher is aware of informants’ personal experiences.

The comparability of DHS data between countries has however been questioned (Yount et al., 2011; Abramsky et al., 2011: 2). Yount et al. (2011) found the wide variation in women’s responses to DHS puzzling and therefore explored cross-national variation in survey design and socioeconomic conditions to see if these explained the variation in women’s affirmative responses. Examples of variations they looked at include the referent wording for violence (hitting or beating or only one of them, alternatively hit, beat, kick, or push as in one survey), the addition of behaviors of the wife to which her husband responds with violence, and the referent wording for the woman’s attitude (normal or okay rather than justified). Variation in the preamble and adding new behaviors of the wife related to a higher percentage of women giving affirmative responses, while changing the referent wording for violence, or changing the wording for violence and the wording for the woman’s attitude, resulted in fewer affirmative responses (Yount et al., 2011: 875, 879, 881). Although these findings require confirmation with survey responses, they are of highest relevance for future research within the field and this specific research project.
Others have conducted quantitative studies about gender-based violence (GBV)/IPV and women’s attitudes towards it without using DHS data. Scott et al. (2013) assessed gender inequitable norms and GBV in South Sudan using the Gender Equitable Men scale, which is a questionnaire developed specifically for the purpose of measuring attitudes towards gender equitable norms. It resembles the DHS in the sense that it consists of statements about women’s and men’s roles and asks respondents to state whether they agree, partially agree or disagree (Scott et al., 2013: 3-4). Although the results did not indicate major differences between women’s and men’s levels of acceptance of violence against women (VAW), the authors suggest that the high levels of tolerance of violence among both sexes requires further exploration, with specific attention to the attitudes of women and the younger generation (2013: 6, 8, 10).

A study looking at factors associated with recent IPV used data from ten countries, including Tanzania, included in a WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence (Abramsky et al., 2011: 2). Women who reported having experienced IPV in the past year were compared with women who reported that they had not (2011: 2), and the results support both the social learning theory as well as the normalization theory mentioned earlier (2011: 14). Although the aim of this study was not to understand the attitudes supporting IPV, the finding that endorsement of VAW increases the risk of it, further highlights the importance of understanding these attitudes and perceptions.

Krishnan et al. looked at Tanzanian couples’ perspectives on gender equity, relationship power, and IPV, and they too found that women expressed less equitable attitudes than men and that this was associated with higher risk of IPV (2012: 1). Furthermore, their results suggest that discordance within couples on the aforementioned issues might increase the risk of IPV (2012: 6). The authors propose that more qualitative in-depth examination of young women’s and men’s ideas about gender, identity, and relationships is necessary (Krishnan et al. 2012: 7).

While several studies, including the ones above, have clarified the prevalence of endorsing attitudes towards IPV, fewer studies have attempted to get a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. One study was conducted in rural Bangladesh to obtain qualitative data on men’s and women’s attitudes on IPV (Schuler et al., 2012). Using basic DHS questions, respondents were then asked to explain their understandings of the questions, including words
within the questions and why they gave the answers they did. In addition, they were asked to explain their perceptions about prevailing gender norms in their community and whether they agreed with others in their community on the question of IPV (2012: 1179). Schuler et al. found a tendency among women to express their communities’ norms regarding IPV rather than their own personal beliefs (2012: 1186-7). For example, a 42-year-old woman, when asked if it is right for a man to beat his wife if she neglects the children, answered “No, it is not right, but a husband has the right to beat his wife”, i.e. she personally does not think it is right, but according to the community he is entitled to do so (2012: 1184). The implication of this study is that quantitative data on attitudes towards IPV might not only be incomparable, as argued by Yount et al. (2011), but also that one needs to question the extent to which the affirmative responses reflect women’s own attitudes or ideas about gender equity.

There is in fact an exception from the studies using fixed scenarios and closed-ended questions. In the context of Tanzania, Jakobsen explored how domestic violence and wife-beating is gendered, and related to gender as a theoretical problem (2014: 538). She contends that one cannot simply assume that VAW is equivalent to GBV without analyzing its relation to theories of gender (2014: 539). The qualitative analysis of 27 focus group discussions (FGDs) showed that wife-beating as locally understood and supported by the respondents was linked to different levels of gender. In addition to being based on gender, the violence also enforces the ‘doing’ of gender and ascribed gender roles, maintains gender hierarchies and is in itself a form of ‘ratification’ of gender (2014: 556). Although using a more open interview-design and analyzing arguments both for and against wife-beating expressed in the focus group discussions, FDGs are unreliable for personal opinions and perceptions. Jakobsen also asserts that in order to understand how gender inequalities are extended and maintained, quantitative research that does not draw on theory is insufficient (2014: 556).

While there is clearly much research pointing towards cultures of gender inequity and inequality in the countries studied, Venganai warns against the ‘othering’ and one-sided negative construction of African cultures as inherently backward and more patriarchal in contrast to the West (2015: 145). She argues that “[...] GBV interventions informed solely by the universalistic human rights discourse while marginalizing cultural justice systems, creates a false dichotomy [...]” and that culture, although often appealed to by men only when violating girls and women, can be ‘wielded’ creatively and resourcefully to enhance women’s access to justice (2015: 151). Hence, the discussion regarding patriarchal structures and
gender oppression in this thesis, does not imply that these issues are specific or limited to Babati, Tanzania, but rather that this thesis will look at the manifestations of it and its consequences in this specific case.

3. Theoretical Framework

The purpose of theory in this study is to facilitate the organization and interpretation of data, as well as to explain why informants gave conditional answers to the question on justification of IPV. It will be argued that women have, to some extent, internalized a view of themselves based on demeaning patriarchal ideas. At the same time, human rights, including women’s rights, are gaining prominence in most parts of the world and women are becoming more aware of them. This entails a sort of ‘double consciousness’ or ambivalence among women in relation to conflicting views and feelings about themselves and their social situation.

3.1 Intimate Partner Violence

Breiding et al. offer the following definition of Intimate Partner Violence

“Intimate partner violence includes 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).”

(2015: 11)

Other terms used when discussing the problem include ‘wife-beating’ and ‘violence against women’, which are terms that reflect a feminist perspective in which gender is assumed to be at the center of the problem. However, since the problem is not limited to husband and wife, and as ‘VAW’ may seem to include other forms of VAW too, than the one intended to examine here, ‘intimate partner violence’ will be the main term used henceforth. That is not to argue that gender is not a central part of the issue. ‘Domestic violence’ on the other hand is too broad as it encompasses violence between other family members as well. Furthermore, this study is delimited to physical IPV.

3.2 Patriarchy

‘Patriarchy’ here refers to “a system where the economic, legal and political power lies with men, most often older men”, and which historically has characterized most societies.
Although patriarchies in this concrete sense are not as common anymore, the long history of
the system has affected and continues to affect the structure of society and people’s lives. The
notion of patriarchy does not encompass all factors that determine a person’s position in
society or even within the family, but will nevertheless remain the focus of this study. Class,
ethnic/cultural background and functionality are examples of other factors that may affect a
person’s position in society (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research).

3.3 Double Consciousness

‘Double consciousness’ was introduced by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois in *The Souls
of Black Folk* and referred to a source of inward ‘two-ness’ among African-Americans
because of the oppression experienced in a white-dominated society (1903, cited in Pittman,
2016). This was during the time of Jim Crow laws in the south of the US, de facto segregation
in the North, and racist violence all over the country. Du Bois was interested in understanding
the socio-historic conditions for African-Americans during that specific time and how these
conditions affected their consciousness and sense of self. The term ‘double-consciousness’
was used in *The Souls of Black Folk* alone, but Du Bois continued developing the idea in later
texts without using that particular term.

Although his texts have been subject to many different interpretations, the main point is that
African-Americans experienced a conflicting sense of self for being American and black
during that time. In the first chapter of his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, which is the most-
referenced passage of his works, Du Bois writes that

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the [African-
American] is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this
American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see
himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-
consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of
measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One
ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a[n] [African-American]; two souls, two thoughts, two
unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps
it from being torn asunder.” (1997 [1903]: 38, cited in Pittman, 2016)

1 Since this text is from 1903, i.e. over a hundred years old, derogatory words that are not used anymore have
been replaced.
In the tenth chapter, he continues

“From the double life every [African] American […] must live, as a[n] [African-American] and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century,—from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality, and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism.” (1997 [1903]: 155–6, cited in Pittman 2016)

Du Bois thus contends that African-Americans can see themselves through the eyes of the dominant culture—‘the other world’—whose perceptions are tinged by racial prejudice. He further argues that since ‘American’ ideals conflict with the ideals of African-Americans, the internalization of those perceptions leads to a feeling of inward ‘two-ness’. As Ernest Allen Jr. and others point out, Du Bois does not define the distinctive ideals of Americans and African-Americans, but Allen argues that “there is a conflict between white racial prejudice and intransigent hostility and exclusion of blacks, on the one hand, and the ideal of civic equality for all emblazoned on the ideological banners of the American republic, on the other” (2002: 38, cited in Pittman, 2016).

Furthermore, Du Bois seems to indicate that double consciousness can also operate in a practical sense, namely when the reactions of the ‘white environing world’ impact on one’s plans and own expectations. Even if one does not necessarily internalize the prejudiced viewpoint itself, it can cause “considerable disturbance of the soul” (1940: 135-6, cited in Pittman, 2016).

Adolph Reed, Jr., in his book *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*, disputes the claim that Du Bois’s ‘double consciousness’ refers to a trans-historical feature of black life in America and contends that a divided identity is not a “generic racial condition” of African-Americans (1997: 125, cited in Pittman, 2016). Molefi Kete Asante argues in similar lines when writing about his personal experience as an African-

Although Du Bois has been criticized for oversimplifying the complexity of ‘the self’ as well as for portraying an unachievable ideal of a ‘true self-consciousness’, John P. Pittman (2016) argues that the idea of ‘double consciousness’ was not supposed to cover all aspects of the reality of human beings or the multiple sources of human social identity, but was rather an attempt to describe part of the experience of being an African-American under conditions of Jim Crow and white supremacy.

Pittman, in his analysis of Du Bois’s works also concludes that Du Bois abandons the term ‘double consciousness’ in later texts partly because he does not want to give the impression that it is only a problem of consciousness, unconnected with any tangible social facts. As he points out, Du Bois argues that the self-criticism of African-Americans is in part grounded in observable realities, such as “death rate, criminal tendencies, poverty, and social degradation” (1940: 180, cited in Pittman, 2016). Even if these realities have “clear and well-known and remediable causes” and are not any more natural to African-Americans than to anyone else, the fact that white Americans are ‘doing better’, still has some effect on the self-consciousness of African-Americans (1940: 173-4, cited in Pittman, 2016).

3.4 Extending the Theory to Gender

Double consciousness is a theory of internalization of oppressive norms that also encompasses the actor’s consciousness of self and personal beliefs, unlike notions of ‘false consciousness’. In false consciousness, actors are assumed to be ‘blinded’ by the oppression, incapable of recognizing inequality and therefore consistently misunderstand their ‘true’ interests. This is because views that legitimize such structures have been naturalized in society and internalized by actors who would otherwise have different ideals and interests (Britannica academic, 2017). The concept of false consciousness has been applied to studies on gender oppression, among other issues, but can be problematized since it assumes that actors are incapable of analyzing and understanding their own experiences, which is in itself a form of oppression.
Within feminist literature, there is an ongoing debate regarding autonomy and to what extent women can be considered autonomous if their preferences appear to be based on patriarchal structures. For example, can a woman make an autonomous choice to take on the role as a deferential and subservient wife, or is that ‘preference’ the result of a system of gender oppression (Stoljar, 2015)? False consciousness evidently stands on the latter side of the spectrum, suggesting that preferences consistent with gender oppression and the patriarchy are incompatible with notions of autonomy.

What makes double consciousness theoretically more useful in this case, is that it portrays the actor not simply as an unconscious victim of oppression, but as someone with a complex mind who is indeed affected by the surrounding oppression but still maintains a certain extent of awareness of it and does not internalize its views completely. In the discussion on autonomy, double consciousness is compatible with content-neutral conceptions of autonomy, in that it does not impose any ideals on agents in the name of autonomy. “Content-neutrality allows that the preferences of autonomous agents could be wrong from another perspective, either morally or because they do not align with the agent's best interests” (Benson 2005, cited in Stoljar, 2015). That is, even though actors internalize or adapt to what is clearly oppression, it could be considered an autonomous choice. That, however, does not mean it does not affect actor’s self-consciousness. In fact, Du Bois argues that it can cause “considerable disturbance of the soul” (1940, 135-6, cited in Pittman, 2016).

But the color-line is not the point of focus here. Rather, parallels can be drawn between the white-dominated society and racial oppression described by Du Bois, and the male-dominated society and oppression women all over the world experience today. ‘White – and male-dominated societies’ in this case refer to power-structures and hierarchies wherein African-Americans and women are structurally subordinated. It does not refer to these groups of people as minorities.

As noted above, double consciousness was developed during a specific time in the US when the racial oppression was institutionalized e.g. in the form of Jim Crow laws, which is not exactly what the situation looks like today. Nevertheless, oppressive structures from that time continue to have an impact on people’s lives, just as gender oppressive structures from more
patriarchal times do in most parts of the world, and therefore several observations and points made by Du Bois can be applied to this study, which will be shown in the analysis.

4. Method

4.1 A Case Study Approach

For the purpose of this thesis, a case study was the research strategy adopted. The case in question is one of IPV, and the Babati district, Tanzania, made for a typical case since Tanzania is one of the countries that had a very high prevalence of justification of IPV according to the DHS conducted in 2015-16. Although there are available quantitative and some qualitative secondary data on this matter from Tanzania, with the criticism of previous research taken into consideration, it was deemed appropriate to conduct a qualitative case study and collect primary data through interviews, to explain the puzzle highlighted at the outset. The case study is theory guided as well as theory developing, as it aims to suggest a different case and field of research to which double consciousness can be applied.

Babati is a district of the Manyara region in Tanzania, and Babati town is its administrative capital. Babati town is small but booming and diverse (Mwita, 2015). Although not randomly selected, the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of Babati made it a suitable location for this case study since it helped minimize the risk of only presenting the views of a small homogenous group of people.

4.2 Selection and Interviews

Personal semi-structured interviews with women in Babati were conducted during two weeks in February-March 2017.

Since the research questions regard Babati women’s perceptions, the criteria for choosing informants were few, namely that they had to be women and live in urban or rural Babati. In total, 12 women, of which 8 lived in urban areas and 4 in rural, were interviewed. Since the purpose is not to compare rural and urban women’s perceptions, the number of interviews from respective area is not of great importance. Furthermore, the distinction between rural and urban in this area is quite vague. A group interview with two female Manjo – traditional cultural leaders – was also conducted. All informants were guaranteed anonymity and therefore their names will be excluded from this thesis. The age of informants ranged from 19
to 69 years and the length of the interviews was approximately 20 minutes each.

All interviews were conducted face to face and because of the language barrier, most of the interviews were conducted together with a field assistant who translated from Swahili to English. The interviews were transcribed the same day they were conducted.

The questions asked during interviews regarded their general perceptions about IPV against women, rather than possible personal experiences of it. This was in order to avoid a too sensitive topic and to make it easier for informants to speak openly about their thoughts and perceptions. Unlike the standard DHS question on justification of wife-beating with fixed scenarios for respondents to choose from, respondents in this study were instead asked if there is any situation when it is justified, to avoid asking leading questions.

4.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

The empirical findings will be analyzed using qualitative content analysis as a tool. This implies a careful examination of the data in which patterns appear and are thereafter organized around certain themes and categories. Once the patterns or categories have been identified, they will be interpreted in terms of the theory of double consciousness as well as other previous research. It is the application of a systematic, theory-guided case study, while using a category system, that differs qualitative content analysis from classical quantitative content analysis (Mayring, 2002: 114, cited in Kohlbacher, 2006).

The previous research presented above has been used both as a basis for developing this study, including interview questions, and will further be used to contextualize and interpret findings from this study.

4.4 Strengths and Limitations

Just like every other research method, this one has its strengths and weaknesses. Some of these will be outlined here, together with a motivation for why certain techniques were chosen over others.

An alternative to personal interviews is focus group discussions. Informants may feel more at ease talking about certain issues in a group because perhaps they do not have to defend their
views the same way as in personal interviews. While FGDs are a useful tool for examining community perceptions and performed social norms, there are still risks for biased results with this method. For example, informants may feel like they need to conform to what they perceive to be the dominant perception of their community, even if they do not personally agree with it. Another risk is that only a few strong voices get heard. Furthermore, the analysis of FDGs can be extremely time-consuming and difficult, especially when taking the limited time available for this study into consideration. Since the interest of this thesis was the claim that women justify IPV, personal interviews seemed like a more appropriate method for examining women’s personal beliefs and perceptions.

It may be argued that DHS, previous research based on quantitative data, and qualitative studies using closed-ended questions while examining IPV, produce a certain kind of result, namely that a lot of women appear to justify it. This can be criticized from a feminist perspective, since the use of preset scenarios and categories within quantitative (and qualitative) research arguably leads to an emphasis on predetermined ideas and thereby silence the voices of women (Maynard, 1998: 18, cited in Bryman and Nilsson, 2011: 374-375). There is thus a gap in the literature that this thesis aims to fill by presenting data from semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, wherein women had the opportunity to openly discuss their personal perceptions.

The use of a translator naturally means that the material collected is a summary of informants’ answers, not verbatim responses. There may have been slight changes in the choice of wording when the questions were translated into Swahili or English, which might have affected informants’ understandings of the questions as well as their answers. A further limitation is that the selection of informants depended completely on the network of the field assistant who arranged all interviews based on aforementioned criteria.

Moreover, there was no possibility to conduct a pilot study in this thesis, which implies e.g. that some new questions and thoughts arose after the interviews had already been conducted and could therefore not be answered in this thesis. Nevertheless, the empirical material collected is enough to say something about women’s perceptions of IPV and thus contribute to the research on IPV.
Although triangulation was not used in this case study, which could be considered a limitation, the transcriptions, as well as the understanding and interpretation of them, were discussed with a fellow student who was present during the interviews. This was to ensure that representations and interpretations were as fair as possible.

There are certain difficulties in assuring reliability and generalizability when it comes to qualitative case studies. Since the social environments and social conditions present at the time of the interviews change all the time, and as the interviewer has a central part in the production of the interview data, replicating this exact study as with quantitative research is difficult, and therefore affects the reliability of it (Bryman and Nilsson, 2011: 352). The same criticism can be applied to the analytical tool, as patterns and categories do not just appear by themselves but are in fact chosen by the researcher as patterns worthy of attention.

However, Kohlbacher (2006) argues that validity is prioritized over reliability in qualitative analysis, since the importance is in the arguments regarding the content and not as much in methodological issues.

The number of interviews conducted in this study naturally means there are limitations to the generalizability of the results. On the other hand, the aim of this study is not to produce generalizable results, but rather to explain this specific case, and it is a fair amount of interviews considering the limited timeframe of this study.

5. Empirical Findings and Analysis

The standard questions asked during interviews can be found in the appendix, but since the method used for this study was semi-structured interviews, there were of course some variations in questions and follow-up questions between interviews. Among other things, informants were asked whether it is common for women to feel unsafe in their homes, whether it is common for women to experience physical violence by their men and if there is any situation when it is justified.
5.1 Prevalence of IPV

“It is common for men to beat their women here. I know someone who has experienced violence by her partner and I have my own experience of it as well, that is why I do not want a boyfriend right now.” (Woman, 23 years old, urban Babati)

Almost all informants said that they believe it is common for women in Babati to feel unsafe in their homes. Most informants also think it is very common for women in Babati to experience physical violence by their men and the main reasons mentioned during interviews were alcohol and cheating, or suspicion of cheating.

“It is very common for women to feel unsafe in their homes because some men are alcoholics, jealous or violent. I know someone who does, I have seen violence among neighbors. The violence occurred because the man was an alcoholic and the woman had too much of a burden and when she asked him for help the violence started. It is very common for women to experience physical violence here, especially in cases like this one.” (Older woman, urban Babati)

Being drunk often leads to wife-beating according to respondents, regardless of whether it is the man or woman who is. However, since this thesis is limited to IPV against women, no conclusions regarding IPV against men can be drawn.

In the case of cheating or suspicion of cheating, similar patterns appeared. If the man or woman has cheated on their partner, the man might beat the woman either to punish her for her mistake or because he gets angry when she asks about his mistake.

“I know many women who feel unsafe at home, most of my friends and neighbors had conflicts with their husbands because the husbands have mistresses and do not bring enough money home, because they spend a lot of money on their mistresses and neglect their family. Every day the woman hears “I saw your husband with his mistress” and so they start to fight.” (Woman, 41 years old, rural Babati)

“I know one woman who did [feel unsafe at home], because I used to stay at her home. Her husband beat her every day because of misunderstandings. He was working
somewhere else and did not trust that she was faithful to him.” (Woman, 30 years old, urban Babati)

Although informants said that IPV is a rather private topic, all the women interviewed knew someone who has experienced it and in many cases, it was their friends or neighbors. One of the reasons why many women keep quiet about it was believed to be that they feel ashamed because people will think it is their own fault for disobeying their husbands.

“[…] people do not share, it is a private matter. […] they are ashamed, because they think the violence is because they are not obedient to their husbands.” (Woman, 36 years old, urban Babati)

These findings correspond to previous research and DHS studies conducted in Tanzania, that IPV is an extensive problem in Tanzania.

5.2 Justification of IPV

“Wife-beating is not justified for any reason, it is very wrong. Some traditions support it, but now it is not good.” (Woman, 36 years old, urban Babati)

When it came to the central question on justification of such violence against women, almost all women answered similarly to the woman above, namely that IPV is not acceptable under any circumstances.

This is where the findings differ from earlier studies on attitudes towards IPV, which may reflect the interview technique of open-ended questions without suggesting scenarios, unlike DHS and most previous research have done.

To relate this finding to Du Bois’s notion of double consciousness, the non-justification would seem to represent their ‘true ideals’; their consciousness of self as women and the perception of what is right and wrong according to that identity. That is, from a woman’s perspective, IPV is not justified because it is something that disadvantages and harms only herself.
“Women are more aware now, violence is not approved of anymore.” (Woman, 23 years old, urban Babati)

Some informants mentioned a raised awareness among women, which suggests an awareness of the gender oppressive norms prevalent in society. This is, of course, not to argue that they are no longer affected by patriarchal structures and views, but rather, to note a certain extent of awareness among women that previous research seems to have overlooked. A question that arises then is what difference this awareness makes? If women are in fact more aware now, why is IPV still extremely common? What are the concrete consequences of this awareness and how does it help women?

One answer is that more than one study has found that approval of IPV increases the risk of experiencing it (Okenwa-Emegwa et al., 2016: 4; Krishnan et al., 2012: 1), which is a rather strong argument for why women’s awareness matters. Secondly, recognizing women’s awareness and non-justification, even if it does not directly impact on the prevalence of IPV, is an important first step in the attempt to stop portraying women as central to the problem.

5.3 Personal Perceptions versus Community Norms

“Some women can forget to do something they have been assigned to do by their husbands, or they gossip a lot or cheat on their husbands, so sometimes you have to accept beating because it was your mistake. This is the general perception in the community, I do not think it is right because women have too much work and men demand too much of them.” (Woman, 36 years old, rural Babati)

When asked to clarify their own opinion in relation to the community’s general opinion, several women said that while they personally do not think men are ever justified in beating their women, the community sometimes does.

Important to note here is that it was first when informants were asked to clarify, that these distinctions appeared, which conforms with findings from research conducted in Bangladesh by Schuler et al., that women have a tendency of expressing community norms rather than
To give another example of this, one woman when asked if there is any situation when a man is justified in beating his woman, said that

“Yes, he is justified”. The informant was then asked whether this is her own opinion or the community’s, to which she replied “That is the men’s opinion. For the man, it might be okay to beat his woman if she is cheating on him. It is not right, it is not the only solution, they need to sit and talk instead. The general opinion in the community is that it is not okay.” (Woman, 39 years old, urban Babati)

The passage above is an example of how an informant, when asked about her own perception, answered from someone else’s perspective, namely men’s. Another woman who made a clear distinction between her own views and the community’s replied

“My view is that there is no reason that justifies men beating their women. The community’s view depends on the woman’s character. It is okay if she drinks, but in other situations it is not okay.” (Woman, 41 years old, rural Babati)

The implication of such findings is that the extent to which women who have given affirmative responses to questions on justification of IPV in DHS studies and previous research needs to be questioned, as it might not properly reflect women’s own perceptions. Understanding general community perceptions is however not of less importance. The point here is not to undermine the importance of previous research, but rather to problematize the presentation of ‘women’s attitudes towards wife-beating’ in research, that to some extent portrays women as central to the problem.

Situations where the community might approve of IPV against women mentioned during the interviews included women drinking too much alcohol, disobeying their husbands, coming home late and not telling anyone where they have been, and using bad words towards their husbands.
“It is not common that it is justified, only if the women are too much [...]. Women are ‘too much’ if they are not obedient, for example if they come home late and no one knows where they were, or if they are drunk. If she gets beaten [for these reasons] then the community will just say, ‘good, beat her!’” (Woman, 40 years old, rural Babati)

However, many women said that, in general, the community denounces this sort of violence and that people are becoming more aware of women’s rights.

The fact that women expressed views distinct from the community’s is a further indication of women’s consciousness of their ‘true ideals’ as women.

To relate this to double consciousness once more, women appear to be talking about an increased awareness of women’s rights in general, both within the community and among women themselves. However, as the perceptions of women still differ from community norms, it is possible that the general views in society are not changing at the same rate or in the same way as the awareness of women is. Du Bois notes how the “worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing”, but not at the same pace, or in the same way, which must create a strange sense of self and cause doubt and confusion (1997 [1903]: 155–6, cited in Pittman, 2016).

Similarly, it is possible that the different perceptions between women and the community give rise to similar feelings of doubt and confusion among women. This is because, even if they are conscious of their own ideas of right and wrong, women do not exist separately from their environing conditions. The environing condition or culture in this case, according to respondents, is one of gender oppressive structures and norms, which holds different ideas than those of women themselves. The different perceptions and most importantly, the awareness of these differences, could thus give rise to double consciousness and be a source of the inner two-ness.

5.4 Conditional Approach to IPV

“There is no reason that justifies men beating their women. If the wife is mistaking, then they go to the elders who can warn the woman.” (Woman, 36 years old, rural Babati)
Although most women said that IPV is never justified according to their own opinion, there still seemed to be a perception that women are obliged to behave a certain way and to be ‘good wives’. For example, some women said that rather than using violence, the women should be *warned* if they make a mistake, alternatively be taken to the elders who can warn them. This indicates prevailing gender norms where women are obliged to obey their husbands.

One informant who did in fact justify IPV in some situations said that

> “Men are justified in beating their women in some cases, because some women are very drunk and neglect the children. […] Sometimes they [men] use sticks, belts, knifes. This is not okay [acceptable], only if she does not change even when she has been told before.” (Woman, 20 years old, urban Babati)

What this woman is saying is that men are justified in beating their women in some situations, but they are not allowed to use ‘too much’ violence or dangerous tools, *only* if she has been warned before and does not change her behavior.

There is thus a condition to the basic principles held by women, regardless of whether they justify IPV or not, i.e., that certain ‘rules’ do not apply anymore if the woman repeatedly misbehaves even when she has been warned. This is the conditional dimension of informants’ responses referred to earlier, which appears to reflect a limit to women’s awareness and present conflicting ideals.

### 5.5 Perception of Dependency

> “Some men are violent and the women are afraid to face them. Some men are working and then get home drunk, so it starts there. If the women know they did not bring anything to the home [did not work], they feel like they are dependent and then they feel humiliated. Men are taking advantage of their wealth.” (Woman, 23 years old, urban Babati)
Quite a few women talked about women’s dependency on men and how they perceive this to matter in relation to IPV. For example, some informants said that if women worked and were independent, then men would respect them and violence would be reduced.

“If women had more activities and were less dependent on their men, then violence would maybe be reduced.” (Woman, 30 years old, urban Babati)

Although there is research that contradicts such notion of reduced exposure to IPV with economic empowerment of women (e.g. Dalal, 2011; Rani et al., 2004: 132), perceptions of this issue are still important. Women’s dependency on men, and men’s economic – and decision-making power, in society and, usually, in relationships is an observable reality in Tanzania and Babati (Ellis et al., 2007: 30-31). This, according to Du Bois could be one source of double consciousness for individuals. While women may have an awareness of their rights and an aspiration for equality, it is possible that the understanding of their position in society impacts on their consciousness and causes contradictions within the self.

5.6 Form of Violence Not Dependent on the Conflict

“The form of violence does not depend on the kind of mistake the woman has made, it can be a small mistake and still get a big punishment like with a knife, or it can be a big mistake and not get any punishment. Some men are very violent even if the woman has not made a mistake.” (Woman, 40 years old, rural Babati)

When asked whether the form of violence used by men against women could depend on the situation or the conflict, all informants replied that it does not depend on the woman or her mistake, but always on the man.

“The men do not care about the mistake, sometimes they can beat their women even if they did nothing wrong.” (Older woman, urban Babati)

These statements indicate that women understand that in cases of IPV, the responsibility lies with the perpetrators of it – i.e. men – and not with the victims or their actions. This is another example of some form of consciousness and awareness among women that theories of false consciousness fail to explain.
5.7 Adapting to Oppressive Gender Norms

“If the women see that the husband is annoyed they can keep their mouth shut or even ask for forgiveness even if they have not made any mistake.” (Woman, 41 years old, rural Babati)

Finally, several informants talked about how women try to avoid conflict and violence by always being submissive and respectful to their men.

This implies an internalization of the gender oppression and expectations of the patriarchy, that women are in fact aware of. It can thus be associated with the practical, and gendered, manifestation of double consciousness, in that reactions of men impact on women’s behavior, even though the women know that these reactions and expectations are tinged by sexism.

False consciousness would have been adequate to explain this behavior unless women had also shown an awareness of the patriarchal structures and gender oppression, which they do. Therefore, double consciousness better describes the conflicting ideas of informants that result in conditional answers.

Furthermore, false consciousness denies actors’ ability to make autonomous choices, if these choices do not appear to be consistent with their best interest.

“I have heard about and observed this violence, and many have ended with divorce. Others have not gotten divorced because women are tolerant and want to stay together because of the children.” (Woman, 40 years old, rural Babati)

“Some women don’t want to divorce, they want to solve the problem and for the husband to change his behavior.” (Woman, 41 years old, rural Babati)

Women choosing to stay in difficult and sometimes violent relationships is another example of how they adapt, but it does not necessarily imply that they have no autonomy. However, this is a whole field of research in itself, which there is not enough room to look further into in this thesis.
5.8 A Theoretical Explanation: Double Consciousness

What this case study has found is thus that women think IPV is common and usually know someone who has experienced it. Very few women said that this violence is ever justified, while the majority said they think it never is. There appeared to be a difference between women’s personal opinions and the perceived norms in the community, which was discovered only after asking informants to clarify. Although most women did not justify IPV, they still thought that women are supposed to obey their husbands and be warned if they ‘misbehave’. Women’s economic dependence on men was also perceived to be a common reason for IPV, since it was believed that men do not respect women if they do not generate their own income. All informants recognized that the form of violence used by men does not depend on the conflict or the ‘mistake’ made by the woman, but always on the man himself and his mood. Finally, women try to protect themselves from this form of violence by taking on the role as the ‘good, obedient wife’.

One interpretation of these results is that they reflect an ambivalence among women, in relation to their perceptions of IPV and prevailing gender norms in society. They reflect a certain extent of awareness of patriarchal structures, that are absent in previous research on women’s attitudes towards IPV, and which false consciousness fails to explain, while they also present certain perceptions that are incompatible with ideals of gender equality.

The indicators of such awareness or consciousness include the non-justification of IPV, the recognition of community norms different from personal views, the understanding of the social reality for women, as well as how IPV is not a result of the victim’s actions, but rather of the perpetrator himself.

The contradictions, or conditions, identified include the opinion that women should be warned in cases of ‘misbehavior’, which can be interpreted as a justification of underlying gender oppressive norms, and how women adapt to certain expectations to avoid conflict and violence. Although this adaption is perhaps not very surprising, as it is a defense mechanism, it can in accordance with double consciousness be argued that this causes a contradiction within the self.
Seen in this light, theories of false consciousness are inadequate for understanding these women’s perceptions of IPV and prevailing gender norms, since there is some sort of awareness of gender oppressive structures.

For the purpose of understanding the result of conditional answers given by informants, the theory of double consciousness is more useful. What it means in terms of the theory then, is that the informants are conscious of their own ideals as women, but are not unaffected by the surrounding environment of gender oppression, even though they are aware of it and know it is wrong. The contradictory statements made by the informants may thus reflect a conflicting sense of self, caused by their ability to see themselves through the eyes of the community, which still holds patriarchal ideas of women.

Just like Du Bois wrote about conflicting African-American ideals and American ideals, clarified by Allen (2002: 38, cited in Pittman, 2016), there is a conflict between the gender oppressive norms that allow practices such as IPV on the one hand, and human rights discourses and female ideals of gender equality on the other.

Notions of double consciousness require a recognition of oppression to be distinct from false consciousness, which these findings can be argued to reflect.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the analysis of transcriptions from the interviews, one plausible explanation for the conditional answers given by women can be found in the theory of double consciousness. Double consciousness is useful in explaining informants’ answers since they reflected a two-ness, or ambivalence, regarding IPV, which does not correspond with notions of false consciousness. The indicators of such two-ness and double consciousness included women’s awareness of their rights and ideals as women, combined with expressed perceptions that are incompatible with ideals of gender equality.

The results confirm some aspects of extant research, e.g. that IPV is still a widespread problem and that women have a tendency of expressing community norms rather than personal perceptions of IPV. However, the findings also challenge the perception that most women personally think IPV is justified. It may be argued that previous research on attitudes towards IPV presents a very simplified version of women’s perceptions, which is problematic
in the sense that it reproduces predetermined ideas. To overcome this problem, it is suggested that future research within this field adopts a more open and qualitative research approach.

If the results are interpreted in terms of double consciousness, it could imply something even more serious than false consciousness. That actors adapt to oppressive structures and norms they are unaware of – i.e. false consciousness – is perhaps not very surprising, precisely because they cannot recognize that it is oppression. Being aware of the oppression and still adapting to certain extents, however, must lead to confusion and self-doubt, which is arguably reflected in women’s ambivalent and contradictory responses.

A completely different interpretation of these findings could perhaps be that women experience a two-ness because the community, including women themselves, still holds deeply rooted views supportive of gender oppressive norms, while the international community, including the UN, non-governmental organizations and the human rights discourse are teaching women that IPV is not okay. This interpretation, although very different from the main interpretation of this thesis, would still fit into the notion of double consciousness, since women would still be caught between conflicting ideals. This interpretation may merit further research to examine the sources of women’s perceptions and ideals.

To conclude, the answer to why informants gave conditional answers to questions on justification of IPV, is that they experience an inner two-ness – a double consciousness – caused by their awareness of own ideals as women, as well as their ability to see themselves through the perceptions of the society that conflict with these ideals.

Finally, while this thesis was limited in its scope, it offers a new theoretical explanation for women’s perceptions of IPV. Future research could therefore build upon and develop these ideas to obtain a better and more generalizable understanding of women’s perceptions and awareness. Another topic for future research could be to examine the effects of women’s awareness in practice.
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Appendix

Interview questions

Do you think it is common for women to feel unsafe in their homes?
   - Why?

Do you know anyone who feels unsafe?
   - Why?

Do you think it is common for women here to experience physical violence by their men?
   - Why?

Do you know anyone who has experienced physical violence?
   - What happened in that situation?
   - How did it happen?
   - What did he do?

Are there any situations when a man is justified in beating his woman?
   - If yes: Can you give examples?
   - If no: Why do you think it is still common?

What is your own opinion and what is the community’s general opinion?

Are different forms of violence used in different situations, depending on the conflict?

What do women do to protect themselves from this violence?