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**'Bare Sexuality' and its Effects on
Understanding and Responding to Intimate
Partner Sexual Violence in Goma, Democratic
Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

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Abstract

The paper explores the limited compatibility between the ways that women and service providers understand the experiences and possible responses to intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) in Goma, DRC. Drawing on a range of qualitative methods, the paper develops the concept of bare sexuality to reveal how IPSV interventions reduce women to their experience of sexual violence. Bare sexuality is used as a framework to reveal the reductionist nature of current IPSV interventions. Ultimately, this paper argues that these interventions contribute to a cycle of violence by representing women as absolute victims of sexual violence.

Abbreviations

CRSV – Conflict-related sexual violence

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

FGD – Focus group discussion

IPV – Intimate partner violence

IPSV – Intimate partner sexual violence

VAW – Violence against women

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Introduction

For fifteen years a narrative of exceptionally brutal sexual violence has been a dominant discourse used to represent and understand the conflict and population in the eastern DRC (Autesserre 2012; Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010, 2013). This discourse produces a coherent portrayal of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) that facilitates public understanding and generates an outpouring of attention, funding, and interventions (Heaton 2014). While well-intentioned, this dominant understanding and response is widely critiqued for its simplicity and failure to engage in the underlying causes of sexual violence. As a result, interventions have been limited in effect and resulted in a number of unintended consequences (Autesserre 2012; Douma and Hilhorst 2012; Douma et al. 2016; Heaton 2014; True 2012).

One consequence is that for a long time the most pervasive form of sexual violence – intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) – was largely overlooked and silenced. Studies indicate both an alarming amount of IPSV and a connection between CRSV and IPSV – indicating linkages between conflict, militarisation, and all forms of sexual violence against women (Peterman et al. 2011; Bartels et al. 2010; Østby 2016; True 2012). Research tracking the evolution of sexual violence interventions in the DRC indicates that the interventions have gradually extended their scope, incorporating IPSV and focusing on the gender inequality at the root of these problems (Douma et al. 2016).

IPSV is part of a range of intimate partner violences (IPV), which also include physical, psychological, economic, and verbal forms of violence with past or present intimate partners, including husbands, unmarried partners, boyfriends, and the fathers of children (Buzawa and Buzawa 2013; Mannell et al. 2016). Literature on IPV in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) indicates significant and limiting distinctions between how women and service providers perceive the experiences and possible responses to IPV (Mannell et al. 2016; Campbell and Mannell 2016; Horn et al. 2016). Women typically express a holistic and complicated perception of IPV when assessing possible action. In contrast, service providers operate according to a narrower understanding of IPV that

focuses exclusively on women's experiences of sexual and physical violence without consideration for the context or complexity of women's everyday lives. This generates interventions that may not fit women's realities or desires.

Given the reductionist problem with past CRSV interventions, the expansion of interventions to include IPSV should aim to avoid previous challenges with sexual violence services. As such, this paper aims to build on the existing research by contributing to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences and responses to IPSV and the impact of IPSV interventions. This study seeks to answer: in what ways do women and service providers have differing perceptions of the experiences and possible responses to IPSV and what is the effect? This includes investigating what women in Goma discuss as forms of IPSV and what they perceive to be options and priorities in response.

This paper develops the concept of bare sexuality as the reduction of women to absolute victims of sexual violence, simplistically imagining women's sexuality and intimate relations as mere sources of violence and subordination. Bare sexuality creates a paradox where women are included in interventions and attention through their experience of sexualised violence, while recognition of their full political existence as gendered subjects is excluded. In particular, this suspends a consideration of women's sexuality, intimacy, and love – which are central forces in shaping their identity and everyday lived experiences.

Bare sexuality is used as a framework to show how current interventions for IPSV are more reductive than women's own understandings of the experience and potential response to IPSV. This separation limits the relevance and practicality of many interventions. Furthermore, the paper ultimately concludes that current approaches contribute to cycles of violence by producing a representation of women as absolute victims of sexual violence. This representation denies the ways that women exercise agency even in oppressive relationships. In building this case, I draw on primary empirical data from research conducted between June-July 2017 in Goma, DRC as well as secondary data and theories from multiple bodies of literature.

The paper begins with a contextual background in chapter 1, discussing understandings and responses to IPV and CRSV in SSA and the DRC. Chapter 2 provides a justification of the methodology. Chapter 3 develops the concept of bare sexuality. Chapter 4 uses bare sexuality to analyse service providers' and women's distinct understandings and responses to IPSV in Goma. Chapter 5 discusses the effects of bare sexuality in Goma.

Chapter 1: Background and Context

1.1 Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence

IPV is the most commonly experienced form of violence against women (VAW) around the globe (UN 2015).¹ In SSA, the prevalence of IPV exceeds the global average – making African women more likely to face lifetime IPV (45.6%) and sexual assault (11.9%) (McCloskey et al. 2016: 278). IPV also increases in conflict/post-conflict contexts (True 2012). According to Demographic and Health Survey data for countries in SSA, the DRC has the highest proportion of women – 64% – who have experienced IPV and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (UN 2015). In fact, Congolese women’s greatest risk of violence ‘may come from an intimate partner’ (Tlapek 2015: 2526).

1.1.1 Understanding IPV

While the statistics above indicate a grave situation, it is only the tip of a more pervasive and complex problem. Statistical figures are often used to support dominant narratives that depict a coherent picture of this violence. However, this obscures the highly contextual and varied realities of IPV (Jewkes 2002; WHO 2010). An over-reliance on statistics reduces an understanding of IPV by depending on a set of unreliable and sanitised figures to depict the magnitude of this violence. Attempts to measure IPV, while important, are deeply challenging given the private nature of the violence – resulting in significant underestimations of the violence and its wider harms (WHO 2010). In fact, ‘sexual assault and intimate partner violence are the most under-reported of all crimes’ (Johnson et al. 2008: 3). Studies of IPV in SSA indicate that most women who experience IPV don’t tell anyone, and if they do discuss the experience it is

¹ Girls, boys, and men are also victims of IPSV/IPV, however, this research focuses specifically on women facing IPSV/IPV.

² Given the time constraints and small sample of this project, I follow Braun and Clarke’s (2013) guidance for a ‘GT-lite’ version of grounded theory (186), focused on initial

only to family members or close friends but typically not official authorities (Horn et al. 2016).

Another way the totality of IPV is reduced is through narrowing definitions. The attempt to produce a manageable understanding of IPV leads many studies and interventions to limit IPV to physical and/or sexual violence – excluding the range of other acts and behaviours that contribute to coercive and controlling relationships (Buzawa and Buzawa 2013). While this research focuses on IPSV, it also draws on the broad definition of IPV recognising that women (including the participants in this research) experience these different forms of violence as interconnected and contributing to one another. Collectively, the dependence on statistics and reductive definitions contributes to a conception of IPV that may not fit reality.

An understanding of IPV requires investigating the social context from which it emerges (Jewkes 2002). IPV results from a complex range of contributing factors that interact and contribute to one another. Two particularly significant factors are patriarchy (a collection of structures and ideologies that perpetuate gender norms and relations that keep women subordinated in relationships and society) and settings with a normative use of violence (ibid). These two factors are intimately connected. In particular, in conflict/post-conflict and highly militarised contexts where violence is normalised and spread throughout society, it can promote masculine violence and privilege militarised masculinities – exacerbating VAW (True 2012). This highlights the importance of using a critical gender lens to understand the causes and varied forms of IPV.

1.1.2 Responding to IPV

In contrast to the complex, context-specific nature of IPV, interventions tend to follow pre-established models that result in services not fit to the social context or desires of the women facing IPV. In particular, programs often fail to address structural factors and treat a narrow conception of women's agency as a panacea (Horn et al. 2016; Campbell and Mannell 2016; McCleary-Sills et al. 2016;

Mannell et al. 2016). This leads to many interventions offering services that are either rejected by women or have limited effect.

In SSA, multiple structural barriers – including socio-cultural norms, unequal gender relations, and ineffectiveness/corruption of the police and justice system – limit women's options for action when facing IPSV (Horn et al. 2016; Annan and Brier 2010; Ilika 2005). Although these structural factors are not unique to SSA, they tend to be exacerbated due to legacies of conflict, colonialism, and underdevelopment. Structural factors permit, maintain, and contribute to IPV by encouraging women to stay silent and accept domestic violence as a part of male behaviour (Annan and Brier 2010). Addressing these formative aspects of IPV requires interventions to work at multiple levels rather than just focusing on the most dramatic violence affecting individual women (ibid). Instead, structural barriers are often exacerbated by organisations and community-based approaches that remain embedded in the patriarchal structures that produce VAW (Horn et al. 2016).

Another problem in IPSV interventions is the reliance on a narrow conception of women's agency as a cure-all. In these interventions agency is understood as an ideal that is limited to overt actions such as reporting violence to authorities or leaving the relationship. This narrow conception fails to account for the social context, including structural and ideological constraints, that women face. Thus interventions operating by this reductive notion of agency may offer support that does not match women's reality or desires. For example, because many women remain financially and socially dependent on partners, women's ideal solution is often to remain in the relationship and hope for behavioural change (Horn et al. 2016). Interventions that neglect the constraints influencing women's decision-making can contribute to the problem by reinforcing trends of women forgoing services or by driving them towards other responses that don't provide adequate safety (ibid).

1.2 IPSV and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

In the eastern DRC, understandings and responses to IPSV cannot be divorced from the issue of CRSV. The patriarchal structures and ideologies combined with the normative use of violence that lies at the foundation of IPSV are exacerbated in war and are key factors in the proliferation of CRSV. Evidence of increased IPSV against women in conflict/post-conflict settings illuminates how sexual violence can become a self-reinforcing culture of violence in these settings (True 2012; Østby 2016). Yet despite this connection, these forms of sexual violence tend to be treated as separate issues, with CRSV receiving the majority of attention and funding – resulting in the relative silencing of IPSV.

1.2.1 Understanding CRSV

The framing of eastern DRC as an epicentre of CRSV produced a flood of attention and led CRSV to be understood as an exceptional form of violence – privileged and separate from other forms of sexual/non-sexual violence (Mertens and Pardy 2017; Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010, 2013; Douma and Hilhorst 2012). While the assertion of exceptionality advanced the fight against CRSV by attracting increased attention and funding, it also hinders the understanding and response to CRSV in significant ways. The language of exception produces a reductionist discourse of *rape as a weapon of war* to make the issue more intelligible and actionable (Mertens and Pardy 2017; Douma et al. 2016). Yet this singular focus does not represent the complexity of driving factors or variety of forms that CRSV entails in the DRC (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010; Cohen et al. 2013; Wood 2006). Instead the fixation on wartime rape privileges particular, stereotypical notions of CRSV over other – more prolific – forms of sexual violence.

1.2.2 Responding to CRSV

The surge of attention and funding produced a dramatic rise in organisations providing assistance to victims of CRSV. However, a number of critical studies have revealed that responses to CRSV have been relatively ineffective and even

produced a number of unintended consequences (Heaton 2014; Autesserre 2012; Douma and Hilhorst 2012; Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010). Based on the reductive conception of CRSV, it is unsurprising that many interventions were based on 'false assumptions and biases' that prioritised short-term solutions over addressing the complex factors at the root of the issue (Douma et al. 2016: vi). Furthermore, the aid economy around CRSV responses led to the commercialisation of rape – creating false victims out of people using rape to access needed assistance or as a bargaining/extortion strategy against armed actors or community members (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010: 51-55; Heaton 2014). While the commercialisation of rape illustrates how some Congolese strategically tapped in to the aid economy, it also contributes to cycles of structural and symbolic VAW. Intervention models that encouraged women to present in victim roles both legitimise and sustain women's position of social subjugation, creating a symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2004). Through their limited efficacy and failure to address the forms of social, economic, and political violence that structure women's subordination in the eastern DRC, many CRSV interventions fell significantly short of addressing the problem, instead contributing to cycles of VAW.

Over time, due to the identification and discussion of these critiques, efforts have been made to improve CRSV interventions and broaden services (Douma et al. 2016). This expansion in services is a response to increasing recognition that the majority of sexual violence is being perpetrated by civilians and intimate partners (ibid; Peterman et al. 2011). According to one well-cited study, twice as many women (approximately 35%) reported experiencing IPSV than rape and women in conflict-affected North Kivu were significantly more likely to report IPSV and rape than women in Kinshasa (Peterman et al. 2011). While it is impossible to know the real numbers of sexual violence against women perpetrated by soldiers/armed actors, civilians, or intimate partners – available evidence indicates a staggering amount of IPSV as well as an indication that conflict exposure heightens the risk and incidence of IPSV (Østby 2016; True 2012). The high level of IPSV in North Kivu combined with the expansion of sexual violence interventions makes investigating IPSV interventions an

important area for research into the effectiveness and appropriateness of these responses.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this dissertation, a qualitative approach was used to explore the ways that women and service providers understand experiences and potential responses to IPSV. A qualitative methodology is appropriate for this research because it takes seriously the 'benefits to exploring, unpacking, and describing social meanings and perceptions of a phenomenon, or a program' (Skovdal and Cornish 2015: 5). Furthermore, qualitative methods provide a means to capture a crucial and often overlooked perspective from the ground (ibid).

This project took an inductive approach to qualitative research, using a *modified* grounded theory² approach to bring together a range of methods, data analysis, and emerging theories in an interactive process that guided the research (Braun and Clarke 2013; Scott 2009). This approach allowed me to develop the meaning of bare sexuality through reflecting on the data and then use the concept to guide my in-depth analysis (Ackerly and True 2010: 204). This emphasis on research as a dynamic, interactive process enabled me to put into practice commitments to feminist research ethics and analysis (ibid). Specifically, I focused on situating the data analysis and emergent theories in their social and historical contexts with attention to power relations, silences and gaps in the data, and my own position as the researcher (ibid). Recognition of my position as a white, western, well-educated, middle class, single woman was an important consideration throughout the planning, research, and analysis. Diligent efforts were made to minimise the disruption and any potential insecurity that my presence could cause to research participants and the research team.

2.1 Study location

Field research was conducted in Goma, DRC in June-July, 2017. Goma was selected as a case study for two reasons. First, the pervasiveness of IPSV in

² Given the time constraints and small sample of this project, I follow Braun and Clarke's (2013) guidance for a 'GT-lite' version of grounded theory (186), focused on initial coding and concept development.

eastern DRC (Peterman et al. 2011), and the abundance of organisations based in Goma that provide sexual violence interventions made it an appropriate site. Second, given the considerable challenges in the eastern DRC, Goma provided a stable location to manage security concerns for the participants/research team. Interestingly, during the process of research it became apparent that sexual violence interventions remain predominantly focused on rural areas where the conflict is more active. This provides the study a unique insight into the urban challenges faced by women seeking services in an overlooked humanitarian site.

I worked with two Congolese research assistants (one male and one female) who were both trained in qualitative research methods at the Centre de Recherche sur la Démocratie et le Développement en Afrique (CREDDA) and the Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (ULPGL). The research team spent one week together in Rwanda planning and conducting two test-focus group discussions (FGD) before commencing the project. All FGDs were conducted in Swahili/French and interviews in a mixture of Swahili, French, and English depending on the participant's choice.

2.2 Methods

FGDs, in-depth interviews, and participatory methods were conducted with female recipients from three different organisations, one non-governmental organisation (NGO) and two faith-based organisations (FBOs), which were targeted based on providing IPSV interventions in Goma. Partnering with these organisations enabled access to participants through existing trusted relationships. I worked with staff members from each organisation to select and invite female recipients from a range of interventions broadly focused on women's rights and protection. Each participant was given information about the nature and purpose of the research, including what their participation would involve, before being asked to participate. In addition, participants were informed that the research was not associated with the organisation, and that their participation would not impact their access to services.

Participants were not selected according to whether or not they had experienced IPSV, but rather based on their exposure to organisations working on this issue. The purpose of the FGDs and in-depth interviews was to explore the nature of women's perceptions about IPSV, including how women define and make sense of IPSV and what are considered appropriate responses. Therefore, participants were asked about their observations of women's everyday experiences in Goma, rather than their own personal experiences.

2.2.1 FGDs and in-depth interviews

The research included three FGDs with 25 total participants covering a range of relationship statuses, ages, socio-economic statuses, and education levels. In addition, I participated in two (one male and one female) faith-based discussion groups on gender inequality and violence in the couple. All participants in these groups provided informed consent. From each FGD (and the 1 female faith-based discussion groups) two participants were invited to participate in further in-depth interviews. This approach enabled repeat contact with participants and optimised the level of trust and engagement in interviews. A total of ten in-depth interviews were held with nine participants.

2.2.2 Participatory Methods

Keeping with the emphasis of feminist and iterative approaches on collaboration (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2012), the research incorporated participatory methods, including mapping exercises in FGDs to chart women's decision-making about responses to IPSV and two participatory feedback sessions (see appendix 3). These methods promoted collective processes of inquiry and provided a feedback mechanism in the development of grounded theory. In the participatory feedback sessions, all 25 participants completed a voluntary survey that provided further feedback in the concept building process. Finally, I presented initial findings of the research to a group of over 40 academics and students from CREDDA/ULPGL. The presentation was used to test concept development and receive feedback from local researchers with depth of knowledge in the social context and local gender relations.

2.2.3 Key-informant interviews

13 key informant interviews were conducted with NGO/FBO practitioners, church leaders, and one academic. The purpose of key informant interviews was to explore the nature of service providers' perceptions and understand how this affected interventions.

2.3 Analysis

The research used grounded analysis; I drew on a number of research guides to develop a six-step process of iterative analysis to fully immerse and engage in the data while identifying and developing emergent themes (Ackerly and True 2010; Esterberg 2002; Braun and Clarke 2013). First, I engaged intensively with FGD transcripts, interviews, and field notes in a process of open coding that analysed data line-by-line to identify themes and categories. Second, in the later half of the fieldwork I developed themes and linkages across these themes. Third, these themes were used to inform the questions asked for in-depth interviews and the participatory feedback sessions, enabling me to test prominent themes and develop them more deeply. I also began incorporating secondary data into my analysis. Fourth, I applied the key themes to all FGDs, interviews, and field notes in a second round of focused coding. Fifth, I sorted and integrated the key themes, focusing on their relevance and the relationships between them using conceptual maps. Finally, I used the writing process to refine the concept of bare sexuality and the emergent themes that support it. I chose to take a first-person narrative, based on my selection of critical feminist research ethics and methods, which makes acknowledging my own positionality and reflexivity in the process of research and writing essential.

This iterative approach and commitment to feminist research ethics encouraged self-conscious interpretation of data, taking seriously the perspective and meanings given by research participants, to avoid forcing data into categories (Ackerly and True 2010). Thus while my thoughts were inevitably shaped by existing theories and literature, my emphasis was on approaching the data with an open mind. This allowed bare sexuality to emerge and develop as its own

concept, more likely to reflect the perceptions, meanings, and articulations of the research participants.

2.4 Ethics

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, there were significant ethical considerations involved. In all cases the safety and well-being of the participants and research team was prioritised. While planning the research, I consulted literature and other researchers with experience conducting research on sexual violence (including IPSV) in the Great Lakes Region. This process informed the research design and helped me develop safety guidelines for the project. Second, the process of participant selection and decision to ask indirect questions was all developed to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation or pressuring women to share private accounts. Third, during the week-long planning process with the research team we revised and improved the safety plan to fit the context of Goma. Another advantage of accessing participants through organisations with existing relationships was that it added an element of emotional support (Horn et al. 2016).

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the London School of Economics and Political Science.

2.5 Limitations

The methodology has several limitations. First, given the small sample and qualitative methodology, this study cannot claim to be representative of the population. However, efforts were made to recruit participants from a range of backgrounds, to account for the impact of intersectionality on women's experiences and meaning-making. Second, the fact that participants were recruited through NGO/FBOs and held at the organisations may have influenced what participants were willing to disclose about interventions. To counter this, efforts were made to ensure a private space and to discourage staff involvement during the discussions. Third, despite the safeguards put in place, there can be no guarantee that discussions did not cause some women stress. Fourth, I

acknowledge that no research is ever unbiased. I actively took attempts to mitigate this by committing to feminist research ethics and analysis and seeking collaboration throughout the research process (Ackerly and True 2010).

Chapter 3: Conceptualising Bare Sexuality

In conceptualising bare sexuality, I start from the recognised need to expand dominant understandings and responses to sexual violence against women. The idea of bare sexuality developed from the stark contrast between the ways that women and service providers described IPSV in Goma. These discussions illuminated a process through which complex aspects of women's experiences were being stripped away. In this way, bare sexuality emerged from the iterative process that combined my analysis of raw data with theoretical insights from two primary fields of literature. First, drawing on Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life and a Foucauldian approach to biopower. Second, making use of feminist theoretical insights on sexuality, intimacy, and love and their influence on women's lived experiences and exercises of agency. As a conceptual framework, bare sexuality enables sexuality, intimacy, and love to be brought into the centre of analysis. While all three of these concepts run the risk of being reduced to essentialisms (Tamale 2011; Hunter 2010; Izugbara 2011), this paper seeks to capture the multiple and contextual meanings attached to these concepts as well as the influential ways that they shape everyday life. In using love and intimacy, I follow Hunter (2010) in recognising both the affective and practical meanings attached to these terms. In consistency with the participants in this research, I recognise different forms of love, including sexual love, material love, social love, and Christian love. The paper follows the World Health Organisation's working definition of sexuality as:

'A central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.'
(WHO 2006)

In using these three concepts, my intention is not to minimise the severity of physical and emotional harm that results from sexual violence. Instead, I argue that taking these three concepts seriously enables a deeper understanding of

sexual relations and their varying degrees of coercion and control (Cole and Thompson 2009: 4; Porter 2017; Oldenburg 2015; Hunter 2010).

3.1 Bare sexuality

Bare sexuality is the reduction of women to their experience of sexual violence. It is a narrow focus on only their acute violent sexual experiences, excluding consideration or recognition of the breadth and reality of their full-lived experience. Specifically, bare sexuality excludes sexuality, intimacy, and love and the role that these aspects play in women's everyday lives. In conceptually stripping women of these three aspects, bare sexuality privileges women's natural (biological) life, while neglecting their political and qualified life as a gendered subject.

Women facing IPSV are exemplars of the reductive power of bare sexuality. Given that women facing IPSV tend to remain in their relationships (Mannell et al. 2016; Horn et al. 2016), sexuality, intimacy, and love are often central considerations for making sense of- and responding to the violence. Excluding these aspects reveals the hidden functions of power that enable decisions to be made about what parts of a lived experience get included, and what gets excluded. Bare sexuality is produced when service providers categorise and manage women's experiences of sexual violence – defining particular parts of their experience as aberrant and worthy of attention and leaving other parts excluded from consideration. As a result, bare sexuality creates a level of incompatibility between service providers' responses to sexual violence versus women's own understandings of their needs, options, and desires. This incompatibility can decrease the uptake of interventions and denies the ways that women can experience their sexuality, intimacy, and love in positive and potentially empowering ways. While women may continue to assert their sexuality, intimacy, and love (including in ways that challenge the reductive discourse and programs of service providers), it may not be enough to overcome the symbolic and structural violence reinforced by bare sexuality.

Bare sexuality provides a paradigm to investigate the distinction between service providers' and women's understandings and responses to IPSV, and the potential adverse effects. I focus on three pillars of bare sexuality: exceptionalism of sexual violence, the constant tension between inclusion and exclusion, and the denial of women's agency. Combined, these pillars illuminate how women are reduced to absolute victims of sexual violence.

3.1.1 Exceptionalism of sexual violence

The perception of sexual violence as an aberrant and exceptional form of VAW illuminates why bare sexuality emerges. Understanding sexual violence as exceptional creates a hierarchy of VAW, promoting sexual violence as distinct and more important than other forms of violence (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2013; Mertens and Pardy 2017). This hierarchical model also extends within forms of sexual violence, leading public, war-related rape to be privileged over everyday forms of sexualised violence, such as IPSV.

The assertion of exceptionality enables sexual violence to be understood and acted on without addressing the structures of gender inequality at the root. Thus perceiving and treating sexual violence as exceptional is a political manoeuvre. The politics of exception increase attention on sexualised violence while rendering mundane forms of VAW as normal and even legitimate (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2013; Quirk and Bunting 2014). Exceptionalism produces a level of comfort around including sexual violence in interventions, allowing the focus to remain narrowly on sexualised violence without challenging the structures underpinning this violence.

3.1.2 Inclusive exclusion

Women facing IPSV in conflict/post-conflict contexts face a constant tension between inclusion and exclusion. I use the tension of inclusive exclusions to expose how sexual violence interventions protect women's biological life while excluding recognition of their qualified, liveable life with sexual rights and affective needs. This results from women being included in interventions based

on the exclusion of the breadth and reality of their lived experiences. This inclusive exclusion arises from the functions of power that enables interventions to categorise and manage women's experiences of sexual violence – making a distinction between bare sexuality and a qualified existence. In conceptualising this inclusive exclusion, I draw from Agamben's (1998) concept of bare life and from Foucault's (1978) theorising on the relationship between sexuality and biopower.

Agamben conceptualises bare life as the contradiction faced by certain marginalised populations whose inclusion in society (as living beings) is based on their exclusion from holding political rights. Thus bare life exposes how a distinction is made between two forms of life: natural, biological life and a political, qualified existence (1998). Agamben and others have shown how some marginalised populations, such as refugees and those depending on humanitarian assistance continue to be reduced to bare life through upholding this distinction between biological life and fully qualified life (Agamben 2002; Piotukh 2015; Hanafi 2009; Schuilenburg 2008; Salih 2013). In taking a nuanced application of this concept, I also draw on Judith Butler's (2004) concept of liveability, which provides a gender-sensitive approach to the idea of distinction between rights and life (McNeilly 2015). Liveability focuses on how gendered 'differences in position and desire' create lives that are more liveable and mournable than others (Butler 2004: 8). I join Butler in taking a more nuanced, gendered lens to the distinction between liveable and unbearable life.

The tension between inclusion and exclusion is produced through the functions of power that reduce women to their experience of sexual violence in order to take them up as objects for management and control. In exploring these functions of power, I draw on Foucault's (1978) concept of biopower. Biopower is a productive form of power that operates at two intersecting levels: through discipline of the individual body and through biopolitical control of the population (Foucault 1978; Scott-Smith 2014; Taylor 2017). Sexuality (as a discourse and practice) serves as an important site for operations of biopower because it provides a point of access to individuals and the population (Foucault

1978). As such, sexuality is taken up as an 'object of analysis and as a target of intervention' to manage and regulate how each individual and the population make use of their sexuality (ibid: 26). This allows biopower to produce new sexualities and forms of sexualisation – leading individuals and their relationships to be sexualised in new and exceptional ways (Taylor 2017). These functions of power are particularly evident in the exceptional ways that women are sexualised: reducing women to their sexuality (narrowly understood as a source of violence and/or their reproductive functions) and then treating this limited sexuality as their destiny (Taylor 2017). By reducing women to their experience of sexual violence (as an identity and destiny), women become ideal objects for interventions.

3.1.3 Denying women's agency

Bare sexuality reduces women to absolute victims of sexual violence. This perception is rooted in the women-as-victims representation, which produces an essentialist and homogenising portrayal of women that transforms them from social actors into objects (Long 2001; Moser and Clark 2001). This representation neglects the breadth and complexity of women's lived experiences of sexual violence and prevents women's own, full stories from being heard (Spivak 1988). Furthermore, in rendering women as passive objects, the women-as-victims representation denies women's potential to exercise agency within their oppressive relationships. As a result, women are understood and treated as helpless victims in need of saving.

The denial of women's agency is rooted in the problem of 'victim-agency binarism,' which leads to women being understood either as 'helpless victims or super-women survivors' (Shefer 2016: 216). This conception fails to recognise the complexity of women's situation and the different ways that women exercise agency in oppressive relationships, including investing in- but also resisting forms of domination and violence (Shefer 2016; Mannell et al. 2016; Burgess and Campbell 2016). Instead, this conception suffers from an 'action bias' that obscures the ways women understand and exercise agency in constrained

contexts (Madhok 2013b: 107, 2013a). Furthermore, it conflates individualism with individual self-interest (Evans 2013: 61) and fails to account for how women understand their own interests as connected to their identity as wives and mothers. As a result, the conception neglects the ways that women may engage in critical reflection, calculated decision-making, and bargains within constrained contexts. By bargain, I refer to Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the 'patriarchal bargain,' which elucidates the way women living under different forms of patriarchy use strategies (both active and passive) to maximise their security and optimise their life options (274). In denying the ways that women may exercise agency in violent relationships – including through exploiting positive and potentially empowering aspects of their sexuality, intimacy, and love – women are understood and treated as absolute victims.

Chapter 4: Varying understandings and responses to IPSV in Goma, DRC

This section uses bare sexuality as a framework to explore the emergent themes from women's and service providers' varying perceptions of experiences and possible responses to IPSV. These themes are grouped according to the three central functions of bare sexuality: (1) exceptionalism of sexual violence, (2) inclusive exclusion, and (3) denial of women's agency.

Within each theme, I highlight the discrepancy of perception between service providers and women's perceptions of IPSV. This is used to illustrate where variations occur and give voice to women's own understandings of the experience and potential responses to IPSV. Through this combination, a significant and troubling distinction emerges between the ways that women understand and respond to IPSV, versus the reductive perceptions and interventions offered by service providers. The effects of this will be explored in Chapter 5.

4.1 Exceptionalism of sexual violence

The eastern DRC serves as an epitomical site for the exceptionalism of sexual violence (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010, 2013; Autesserre 2012; Heaton 2014; Mertens and Pardy 2017). Using the FGDs, interviews, and observations in Goma as a case study reveals how the exceptionalism attached to sexual violence has maintained a hierarchy that privileges public forms of sexual violence - upholding a public/private distinction that creates limiting effects on the ways that IPSV is taken up by service providers.

4.1.1 Public Bias

The perceptions and interventions offered by NGOs, FBOs, and churches remain biased towards public forms of sexual violence. In interviews with service providers all but one of the interviewees responded to questions about IPSV by reverting to examples of public forms of sexual violence. When reminded about the research's focus on IPSV, many interviewees chuckled and emphasised the

difficulty of addressing IPSV, explaining that it is still widely understood as a part of the culture (NGO Worker3, FBO Worker1, Church Leader2, Government Employee). In addition, some service providers privileged public forms of sexual violence as being more dangerous for women.

‘War rape is more dangerous because it’s with a person you don’t know, [who] doesn’t care about your future. It’s very harmful. In the home, someone you have children with [means that you’re] supposed to live with the person. Though it is harmful, the context is a bit difference.’ (Church Leader1)

Significantly, other service providers rationalised the prevailing focus on public forms of sexual violence based on their own belief that women lack awareness about IPSV. One FBO worker explained that women ‘still think that sexual violence doesn’t happen in the house, [they] think it is an outside problem’ (FBO Worker2). These perceptions minimize the gravity that women face in relationships thereby contributing to the hierarchical treatment of sexual violence.

Women’s perceptions

In contrast women emphasised the depth and severity of IPSV. For example, one participant explained that ‘most of men have started considering sex as a weapon’ (FGD 3).

Women also acknowledged the continued public bias of service providers. A few participants linked this to the commercialisation of rape, which lures funding and attention to wartime rape and leaves IPSV relatively ignored (FPI8). Furthermore, discussions emphasized the importance of giving more attention to IPSV. After one FGD, the participants expressed their appreciation of the discussion and explained how the focus on wartime rape leads IPSV to be excluded by service providers:

‘I thank you so much for if we would always get this [discussion], but we don’t get people who tell us about how to live in the couple. Others talk about war rape, but not domestic sexual violence. This is really a problem that we have.’ (FGD2)

4.2 Inclusive Exclusion

Service providers' authority over what topics are discussed as part of interventions highlights the tension between inclusion and exclusion that removes the broader aspects of women's lived experience from consideration.

4.2.1 Only violence

Many service providers emphasized the importance of remaining focused on the acute experiences of sexualized violence rather than broader experiences of sexuality, intimacy, and love. Some service providers' felt that these wider aspects of women's relationships were either unrelated or too complex and thus outside the bounds of their services. For example, when I asked two NGO workers whether they discussed aspects of women's broader sexuality - such as pleasure - they answered with laughter and a decisive 'no' (NGO Worker2, NGO Worker4). In fact, when the topic of sexual intercourse does come up, they said it is not dealt with. Similarly, love is not discussed with women who come to the organization due to the complexity of the issue.

Other interventions treat love and sexuality as mere sources of violence for women. As such, discussions about these aspects are considered to threaten intervention objectives. One INGO worker explained that the organisation 'reserves [declines] to talk about this [love] for fear of being in the process of doing family mediation' (NGO Worker1), which is explicitly not part of their intervention because it is considered to contribute back into women's experience of violence and vulnerability.

The reductive understanding of women as unable to know how best to address their situation of IPSV is clearly built into many service providers' authoritative selection of interventions. For example, during one discussion group women strayed from the topic to discuss strategies for negotiating more pleasurable sex. The female facilitator interrupted the discussion telling the women 'do not forget the topic, we are talking about violence' (Obs1). There were two

particularly significant observations in relation to this reminder. First, the volume and engagement level that had increased when discussing sexual pleasure immediately declined when the discussion returned to violence. Second, when one participant explicitly expressed her preference to discuss broader aspects of women's experiences the facilitator continued to steer the conversation back to sexual violence. This illuminates the power that service providers have in determining what parts of women's experiences are included, and which parts are excluded.

Women's perceptions

In contrast to service providers' resistance to discussing sexuality, intimacy, and love, female participants overwhelmingly agreed that women's experiences of sexual violence could not be understood without discussing these issues. In the participatory feedback sessions 72% of the women agreed that if a sensitisation session doesn't discuss 'love, sexual pleasure, being a mother, and being a wife' then it would not address women's reality and experience of IPSV (appendix 3). Women's emphasis on the inclusion of these aspects was based on their significance for establishing women's gender identity and social position and belonging. All of the participants highlighted the significance of women's identity as wives and mothers for providing a source of social respect and protection. As one woman explained:

'It makes you respected, it gives you worth even in the family, even in the society, for here it is supposed that when a person reaches our ages without being married, some people start neglecting them.' (FGD3)

Furthermore, these aspects provided women anchors for making sense of- and decisions about everyday lived experiences of violence. In discussing why service providers should ask about sexuality, intimacy, and love, one participant explained:

'A good listener need[s] to listen to you as a person, a whole person, to understand you in all your details.' (PF2)

The emphasis on needing to capture wholeness illuminates how women linked the act of omitting considerations of sexuality, intimacy, and love to drawing a distinction between a biological life and a fully qualified, liveable life.

In addition, many women used love as a means to assess relationships and the existence/degree of violence present. In some descriptions, this made love take on an extraordinary character – making all troubles disappear:

‘When there is love in the home, the couple cannot lack anything, all they undertake will work well.’ (FGD2)

Correspondingly, material love also played a role in settling fights and counterbalancing violence in the home. One woman described how material expressions of love gave her the confidence to engage in dialogue after a fight, signifying how love can be used to negotiate experiences of violence (FGD2).

Collectively, the significance and range of meanings that women attributed to sexuality, intimacy, and love illuminates why participants felt that experiences of IPSV could not be understood without discussing these wider aspects. Participants stressed the importance of being able to ‘tell the complexity of the situation, that there is both good and bad’ (FPI2).

Participants also spoke more explicitly about the problem of only discussing acts of violence. Most participants agreed that focusing only on violence prevented both a full understanding of IPSV and finding solutions to the violence:

‘You can give me a good solution if you ask me everything, have to ask about everything, not just violence.’ (FPI4)

Significantly, some participants’ comments also indicated the symbolic violence that women experience from only having space to talk about sexual violence and negative stories. Furthermore, women also stressed the risk of women internalising this stories and accepting victimhood as their destiny.

‘They want us to talk about bad stories; we are victims that need help. They want bad stories because it brings money.’ (FPI2)

‘You are becoming what you are saying you are.’ (FPI2)

'Women start to believe they are victims. [...] Women only think about their husband's violence and thinks there will never be change or [a] solution.' (FPI8)

4.2.2 Men are key

When IPSV is taken up by churches/FBOs in Goma, it is primarily done through positive masculinity interventions – which produces another tension between inclusion and exclusion. Positive masculinity interventions target men as key actors to address IPSV/IPV, based on the understanding that men are the primary perpetrators of violence (Heal Africa 2017; Africa New Day 2015). This results in interventions that focus solely on men, who are understood as the main perpetrators but also the virtuous leaders needed to rescue and protect women (UJN n.d.). As a consequence, women are included as mere victims of violence, excluding the breadth of women's experience. Women's inclusion is based on their need for protection, which requires excluding the complex ways that women understand and pursue their own security. This inclusive exclusion is based on the distinction between protecting a woman's biological life while excluding her qualified, political life. As a result, women are framed solely as victims with no part to play (besides supporting men) in the fight against IPSV. This point was evidenced in the discussion guides used by facilitators of men's/women's discussion groups. Even women's discussion groups were focused solely on women's role in transforming masculinities, as opposed to discussing the role and contributions of femininities (Obs1; Prabu 2016). One discussion guide portrayed women in an infantilising manner to encourage men to act as 'virtuous leader[s]' and 'true warrior[s]' (UJN n.d.: 38). This illuminates how men's strength and virtue depends on women's limited inclusion as weak and subordinate victims.

When asking church leaders and FBO workers about positive femininities, the response was typically laughter and an incredulous stare before reiterating that men are the primary perpetrators and thus key to ending violence (Church Leader1, FBO Worker1, FBO Worker3). This highlights how the tension of inclusive exclusions are built into the patriarchal structure of the church and worship practices in Goma. This nature was apparent in interviews with church

leaders, as well as observations of faith-based men's/women's discussion groups and church services (Church Leader2, Obs2, Obs4, Obs6, Obs7). This results in the church (through worship services and IPSV interventions) sending a message to the congregation that condones women's subordination. As one key informant interviewee expressed,

'Churches are different, but many [are] based on men's rights instead of couple rights. [This] supports some kind of violence, justifies [it], because represents men at top, as chief.' (NGO Worker2)

Women's perceptions

A number of women were aware of the tension between inclusion and exclusion in the faith-based positive masculinity interventions. For example, at two of the main FBOs implementing positive masculinity interventions women have actually come forward and asked for their own positive gender trainings (Church Leader1, FBO Worker3).³ Women's pursuit of their own positive gender role training shows recognition of their own role in actively managing violence and seeking security. One woman recognized the need for their own violence mediation training by remarking:

'What I can say for us women whose husbands learnt, is that you may teach us so that our intelligence may be opened a little bit. For as our husbands come to learn, there is change. [But] if one doesn't want to change in his family, that's his business.' (FPI1)

4.3 Denial of Agency

The IPSV interventions in Goma also typify the third pillar of bare sexuality: denial of women's agency. This denial results from interventions' dependence on

³ At the time of research, one FBO is developing a curriculum for women and the other uses a positive masculinity based dialogue guide (Prabu 2016) with women's discussion groups.

a women-as-victims representation and narrow conceptions of agency that privilege particular actions, such as reporting violence.

4.3.1 Women-as-victims

In Goma, the women-as-victims representation was pervasive. As shown above, this representation provides a foundation for positive masculinity interventions. As a result, these interventions uphold the hierarchical family model where men strive to be providers and protectors of women, who are kept in a subordinate position. One key informant underscored this by pointing out that ultimately the programs are 'still leaving a woman as a victim' (Theology Professor).

Also concerning, was the way that the women-as-victims representation emerged in service providers' assumptions that women lacked knowledge about their own power. Some service providers commented directly on women's (perceived) lack of power, explaining that 'women aren't aware of their power, [...] how they use their power [...] and they] lack the confidence to know their power.' (FBO Worker2). Within the church, this perspective sometimes even gave way to blaming the women themselves for being ill-informed and ignorant to their rights and power. This victim-blaming was evidenced by one church leader, who commented that due to women's lack of confidence 'they contribute to the violence themselves' (Church Leader 1).

Women's perspectives

The women themselves expressed more nuanced views about their power in the couple, agreeing that while women remained subordinated, they also possessed love and sexuality as important sources of power. Thus sexuality simultaneously represents a site of oppression as well as an opportunity for empowerment and increased agency. For example, the majority of female participants expressed a strong conviction about women's sexual rights – including their right to sexual pleasure as 'a natural feeling that God created both men and women with' (FGD3).

In addition, women understood sexuality as an erotic power that could provide them with freedom through the pursuit of sexual pleasure. While most participants opposed directly asking for sex/sexual pleasure, as it can lead to being accused of promiscuity, they discussed in detail different physical codes that were used to express their desires and attract men to provide them with sexual pleasure (FGD3). One participant explained that women have power 'because we attract [men], but they are serving us' (FPI2).

This case study reflects the arguments of many feminist scholars that recognise the potential of women's sexual rights to provide an opening to increase women's rights more broadly (Jolly et al. 2013; Tamale 2008) In Goma, this potential was evidenced in the way that female participants (and many church leaders) used women's (natural/God-given) right to sexual pleasure as evidence for men's and women's equality in the couple. This indicates that rather than ignoring or repressing discussions about sexuality more interventions should work on recognising and exploring the actualisation of women's right to sexual pleasure as an opportunity to exploit in the pursuit of women's rights and equality.

4.3.2 Managing agency

Another theme that emerged was interventions' reliance on a narrow conception of agency, which leads to services that focus on external management of women's decision-making. This objective links back to service providers' notion that women lack awareness about IPSV and therefore need to be guided towards 'good' decision-making. Many interventions operated with preformed, universal ideas about what 'good' and 'bad' decisions were, irregardless of women's context-specific experience. For example, the INGO that explicitly avoids 'family mediation,' has as its main objective to empower women to 'regain decision making power' (NGO Worker1). This objective is pursued through a pre-established plan for IPSV case management, from which women cannot stray. If, for example, a woman insists on family mediation, then the service provider is supposed to provide her guidance on the available options

within the pre-established plan but ultimately terminate support if she does not change her mind regarding mediation (NGO Worker1). This intervention prevents providers from accounting for specific contexts and presupposes that women who remain in violent relationships do not exercise agency. This illuminates how many interventions still operate according to the victim-agency binary (Shefer 2016).

Women's perspectives

In contrast, many women expressed a more complex understanding of how agency and victimhood are interwoven into a messy web. Specifically, participants talked at length about a range of strategies that women use to bargain with their husbands even within the constraints of oppressive relationships. As one participant emphasized, 'women here are smart and have so many strategies' (PF1). For example, women use strategies like encouraging their husbands to drink alcohol from home (rather than a bar) to manage and reduce their partners' violence while pursuing their material and affective needs.

4.4 Conclusion

Using the three functions of bare sexuality as a lens elucidates the incompatibility between service providers' and women's perceptions of and responses to IPSV in Goma. The framework of bare sexuality enables us to better understand the current challenges of IPSV interventions. The next chapter explores the adverse effects of providing services based on the concept of bare sexuality, including how this hinders uptake of services and maintains barriers to support.

Chapter 5: Bare Sexuality Effects in Goma

There are many significant effects of bare sexuality. One obvious issue is the material effects of providing services that are not appropriate or practical to women's situation. This results in women not benefiting from intervention services or potentially being driven towards alternative responses that may not offer adequate protection (Horn et al. 2016: 117). However, the incompatibility of providing services based on the reductive perception of bare sexuality also results in further violence towards these women. This reveals the inherent violence in the inclusive exclusions at the centre of bare sexuality (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2013; Žižek 2009). As a result, the distinct lure of sexualised violence ultimately leads interventions to contribute to the violences it was intended to fight. Specifically, bare sexuality contributes to cycles of VAW by producing additional forms of structural and symbolic violence against women. These violences keep women in a subordinated position in society and can further impair their ability to cope with the violent experiences that they face (Wilson 2014).

5.1 Symbolic violence

Symbolic violence arises from perceiving women's experiences in intimate relations as being merely one of victimhood, defined by sexualised violence. As shown, this perception produces a representation of women as absolute victims of sexual violence and denies the complex ways that women can still assert degrees of agency within oppressive relationships (Mannell et al. 2016; Shefer 2016). In Goma, two instances of symbolic violence that arise from current IPSV interventions are: (1) the reliance on the essentialist representation of woman as absolute victims of sexual violence, and (2) only providing space for women to talk about experiences of sexual violence and coercion. This produces a loop of self-perpetuating victimhood that adds to the psychological violence that women face, and maintains women's subjugated position in relationships and society.

When women are limited to a subordinated position of victimhood, it enables service providers to claim an expert knowledge and *speak for* these women's experiences, needs, options, and desires (Spivak 1988). Service providers' claims to interpret and represent women's interests are rooted in the functions of biopower that reduce women to their sexualities (narrowly understood as sexual violence) and produce management and disciplinary responses to these sexualities (Foucault 1978; Taylor 2017; Shefer 2016). This process of managing women according to only their experiences of sexual violence produces a perpetual cycle of victimhood. This is demonstrated by the disciplinary responses that regulate any woman who strays from these predetermined "good" decisions, which may not actually fit the constrained context or desires of these women. In Goma, this disciplinary response was evidenced by the INGO that withdraws support from cases where women ask for family mediation. As a result, women in this circumstance are subjugated to further symbolic violence by the INGOs themselves as the programs deny women's level of personal agency.

Exclusively providing space for women to share accounts of their experiences of IPSV creates a second form of symbolic violence. Forcing women to present merely as victims of sexual violence justifies their own social subjugation (Bourdieu 2004). This pressure to share accounts of sexual violence is rooted in the aid economy around CRSV that encourages organisations to produce exceptional quantities and accounts of wartime rapes to secure funding (Douma and Hilhorst 2012). Thus, service providers solely ask for stories about women's victimhood. In Goma, female participants identified how these selective stories failed to acknowledge their full, qualified existed and produced an inherent symbolic violence. Furthermore, two participants highlighted the risk of this practice resulting in the internalisation of victimhood and potentially contributing to additional psychological violence. Although the research in Goma is a limited case study and context-specific, it is clear from the comments made by participants that this issue should be a priority for further research. Current methods of IPSV interventions, and the reinforcement of victimhood, produce

dangerous forms of symbolic violence, as evidenced by the significance given to the topic by the women in Goma.

5.2 Structural violence

Interventions contribute to forms of structural violence by failing to challenge the structures of gender inequality that underpin and sustain all forms of VAW (Wilson 2014; Merry 2003). In Goma, this results from interventions' superficial engagement with the fight against IPSV, which keeps services narrowly focused on sexual violence without addressing the structures of gendered violence from which IPSV emerges. This is evidenced by interventions' inclusive exclusions that reduce women to absolute victims of sexual violence and deny recognition of women as social actors with a range of experiences, needs, and capabilities (Shefer 2016; Nussbaum 2000). This limits the compatibility between interventions and women's own understandings of their experiences and needs, ultimately upholding structural barriers that undermine women's ability to access the support that they deem appropriate or desirable. In this way, current IPSV interventions in Goma reinforce existing structural violence against women and further negate women's ability to negotiate their position within oppressive relationships and violence that they face.

In Goma, faith-based interventions respond to IPSV without truly challenging traditional gender norms. As such, these faith-based approaches uphold patriarchal ideologies that legitimate and perpetuate hierarchical gender norms and the subordination of women (Wilson 2014). Moreover, the current trend towards positive masculinity interventions further reinforces these gender norms by relying on a representation of women as vulnerable and weak – in need of men's provision and protection. These interventions aim to provide a balancing effect to the women-centred interventions provided by humanitarian organisations, which had created an antagonising effect that contributed to men's existing sense of disempowerment and emasculation from the conflict/poor economy (Lwambo 2013; Dolan 2010; Tankink and Slegh 2016; Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2010). However, the current positive masculinity

interventions sustain VAW by contributing to a benevolent patriarchy⁴, which reinforces the essentialist notions of women as perpetually vulnerable and denies women the opportunity to seek redress for social, economic, and political violence (Kim 2011; Le Roux 2014, 2015).

⁴ Benevolent patriarchy refers to a set of ideal gender relations where the hierarchical power is somewhat 'masked by virtue and love,' as opposed to the more obvious repressive power over women in traditional patriarchal relations (Young 2003: 6; Roald 2013).

Conclusion

Through investigating the ways that women and service providers have differing perceptions about the experience of- and response to IPSV, I have been able to explore the forms of symbolic and structural violence against women that interventions themselves reinforce. This argument finds its basis in the concept of bare sexuality – the reduction of women to their experiences of sexual violence, representing women as absolute victims of sexual violence. In addition, bare sexuality provides a framework, operating through three central functions: the exceptionalism of sexual violence, the constant tension between inclusion and exclusion, and the denial of women's agency.

I have used this framework to identify the significant ways that service providers and women diverge in their understandings of IPSV, illuminating the reductive nature of interventions that reduce women to bare sexuality. In this way, bare sexuality also allows us to extend our vision and see the ways that women exist beyond their bare sexuality - using sexuality, intimacy, and love to make sense of and respond to their lived experiences of violence. Bringing these concepts forward help us see the complexity and nuance of women's experiences of IPSV – a perception that is often excluded in current approaches. This provides the opportunity to better understand how to support women in ways that fit their reality and desires.

Acknowledging the dangers of reducing women to bare sexuality reveals the systematic problems with the current aid economy around sexual violence in Goma, DRC. It ultimately produces interventions that fail to fit women's reality and, as a result, often go underutilised – producing material effects. Furthermore, the inclusive exclusions of bare sexuality produce additional forms of symbolic and structural violence against the women seeking services in Goma. Given the insights that this study presents on the harms of current trends in IPSV interventions in Goma, further research is needed. Specifically, a larger qualitative study on women's grievances and the risk of internalising victimhood narratives can provide a needed perspective and beneficially advance this paper's call to action.

It is a vital time to push for broader conceptions and responses to IPSV, as this form of violence continues to be added to interventions addressing gender-based violence and women's protection. Extending the scope of interventions to accommodate the complex reality of women's everyday lived experiences can produce services that are compatible with how women understand themselves and how they make sense of their situation. Specifically, there is a need to understand how women's experiences of sexual violence are interwoven with sexuality, intimacy, and love in order to support the strategies that women are already using to negotiate IPSV and optimise their situation. As the female participants in this study emphasised, many women in Goma are suffering. Yet, there is a second and more complicated part to these women's stories, which involves complicated acts of agency that women use to optimise their full, liveable lives.

We need to provide space for women's full stories or we will continue to reduce them to bare sexuality and reinforce cycles of VAW.

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Focus Group Discussions

FGD No. (reference in text)	Date	Place	Participants	Recruitment	Language
FGD1	20 June 2017	Un Jour Nouveau	8 beneficiaries	Through organisation	French and Swahili, transcribed in French and translated by researcher
FGD2	28 June 2017	Wamama Simameni, Heal Africa	8 group members	Through organisation	French and Swahili, transcribed in French and translated by researcher
FGD3	4 July 2017	Dynamique des Femmes Jurists	9 beneficiaries	Through organisation	French and Swahili, transcribed in English
Test FGD1	17 June 2017	ULPGL	9 participants	Recruited through CREDDA research students	French and English, notes taken but not transcribed
Test FGD2	18 June 2017	ULPGL	6 participants	Snowball sampling from research centre	French and Swahili, notes taken but not transcribed

Participatory Feedback Sessions

Participatory feedback No. (reference in text)	Date	Place	Participants	Recruitment	Language
PF1	15 July 2017	Catholic church, Virunga District, Goma	11 Participants	Participants from observation1, plus additional participants snowball sampling	French and Swahili
PF2	17 July 2017	Ndosho District	14 Participants	Participants from FGD2, plus additional participants snowball sampling	French and Swahili

Interviews

Female participants

Female participant interview no. (reference in text)	Date	Recruitment	Language
FPI1	21 June 2017	Snowball through FGD1	French and Swahili
FPI2	21 June 2017; 12 July 2017	Snowball through FGD1	English and French
FPI3	7 July 2017	Selected from FGD2	French and Swahili
FPI4	7 July 2017	Selected from FGD2	French and Swahili
FPI5	11 July 2017	Selected from FGD3	French and Swahili
FPI6	12 July 2017	Selected from FGD3	French and Swahili

FPI7	14 July 2017	Selected from faith-based discussion group (Obs1)	French and Swahili
FPI8	14 July 2017	Selected from faith-based discussion group (Obs1)	English and French
FPI9	12 July 2017	Through Catholic church women's group	French and Swahili

Key informants

Key informant interview No.	Reference in text	Date	Interviewee details	Language
KI1	NGO Worker1	19 June 2017	Senior program officer, GBV and Women's Protection, INGO	French and English
KI2	FBO Worker1	28 June 2017	Leader, Wamama Simameni	French and English
KI3	Church Leader1	22 June 2017	Baptist pastor; coordinator of faith-based IPSV dialogue program	English
KI4	FBO Worker2	27 June 2017	Program Manager, FBO that provides IPSV services	English
KI5	Church Leader2	27 June 2017	Catholic priest	English
KI6	Theology Professor	26 June 2017, 10 July 2017	Dean of Theology, ULPGL	English
KI7	NGO Worker2	26 June, 2017	NGO lawyer	English
KI8	Government Employee	27 June 2017	Coordinatrice, Maison de la	French and English

			Femme	
KI9	FBO Worker3	19 July 2017	Chief of Program, SOC	French and English
KI10	NGO Worker3	11 July 2017	Point Focal Nord Kivu, Marche Mondiale Des Femmes	French and English
KI11	Church Leader3	10 July 2017	Female chief of Wamama Mwangaza, Catholic women's group	Swahili and English
KI12	Community Leader	25 June 2017	Faith-based discussion group leader	Swahili and English
KI13	NGO Worker4	26 June, 2017	NGO lawyer	English and French

Observation Sessions

Reference in text	Activity	Place	Date	Language
Obs1	Faith-based women's discussion group	Catholic church, Virunga	9 July 2017	Swahili and French, accompanied by translator
Obs2	Faith-based positive masculinity discussion group	Ndosho District	25 June 2017	Swahili and French, accompanied by translator
Obs3	Catholic church service	Goma	17 June 2017	English
Obs4	Catholic priest ordination ceremony	Carracholi Church	25 June 2017	Swahili
Obs5	Protestant church service	Un Jour Nouveau Church	2 July 2017	French

Obs6	Potestant church service	Un Jour Nouveau Church	9 July 2017	English
Obs7	Baptist church service	Heal Africa Church	16 July 2017	English and Swahili
Obs8	Baptist church service	Mission Evangelique pour la Servetage	16 July 2017	Swahili, accompanied by translator

Survey

Location	Date	Participants	Sampling	Language
Virunga District Women's Group	15 July, 2017	11	Participants in participatory feedback session	Swahili and French, translated into English by researcher
Ndosho District Women's Group	17 July, 2017	14	Participants in participatory feedback session	Swahili and French, translated into English by researcher
Total survey responses				25

Appendix

1. Information and Consent for Participants

Written (in English and French) and verbal (in Swahili) information about the research was provided to all participants before obtaining consent.

Perceptions of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in a Humanitarian Context

Department of International Development

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Information for Participants

Thank you for considering participating in this research, which will take place from 7 June to 18 July 2017. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

Research topic

The aim of this research is to study the influence that different service providers for conflict-related sexual violence (through programming and communications) has on perceptions of intimate partner sexual violence and domestic gender relations. The research will use qualitative methods, including focus group discussions, interviews, and participatory methods (such as mapping).

Decision to take part

It is up to you to decide whether or not to participate in this research. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form at the beginning of the focus group discussion or interview.

Participant role

Participants will take part in focus group discussions and/or interviews, which will include answering questions, reflecting on and discussing one's own perception, and may include physical activities such as creating drawings or maps to show perceptions. Participants will be briefed on the length and content of the focus group discussion and/or interview before it begins. All responses will be based on participants' own perceptions and there is no need for previous knowledge or additional information. Participants' involvement and responses will always be kept completely confidential.

Withdrawing from the research

You can withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. You do not have to give any reason for changing your mind. If any questions during the focus group discussion or interview make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them and you can withdraw from the groups or conversation at any time and for any reason.

Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. I will retain the information from your participation, unless you tell me that you would prefer it to be destroyed.

Use of information

I will use the collected information to write a master's dissertation, and potentially for an academic paper thereafter. Information will be anonymised in the dissertation and any subsequent paper. All information will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher and the researcher's adviser.

Confidentiality

The records for this study will be kept as confidential as possible and you are given the option of full anonymity. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All digital files, transcripts, and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Any hard copies of research information will be kept in a locked file at all times and all soft copied will be kept secure with a password. Only myself and my academic supervisor will have access to the files and the digital records/audio tapes.

Questions or complaints

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the researcher. If you have concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the LSE Research Governance Manager (research.ethics@lse.ac.uk)

If you are willing to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached.

Perceptions of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in a Humanitarian Context

Department of International Development

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Consent Form

I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

I am free to decline to participate in this research study, or I may withdraw my participation at any point without penalty. My decision whether or not to participate in this research study will have no negative impacts on me either personally or professionally.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	YES / NO
I agree to my named or anonymised responses and information being used for the researcher's dissertation and further academic publication.	YES / NO
I agree to the interview / focus group discussion being audio recorded	YES / NO

Participant Name:

Signature: _____

Date:

Interviewer Name:

Signature: _____

Date:

For information, please contact Heather Zimmerman, h.zimmerman@lse.ac.uk

2. Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction

Significance of couples and relationships

2. What is the importance of being in a couple/relationship for women?
 - Are women treated fairly in relationships?
 - Who and what teaches/influences women and men how to live as a couple?

Love

3. What is the importance of love in a relationship for the woman and how does it get expressed/shown?
4. Can love give women resilience and hope? How?

Partner violence

5. Is there violence in a relationship/between a couple?
 - What counts as violence in a relationship/between a couple?
 - Domestic violence
 - What about domestic sexual violence?
6. When there is violence in a relationship/between a couple is there also love?
 - When can love and violence exist together? When do love and violence not exist together?
 - *Different case example – show agree/disagree that violence and love can coexist in the situation? Why?*

Responses to IPV/IPSV

7. Who/where **can** women go for support and services?
 - *List*
 - Who/where **should** women go for support and services?
8. What actors' and organisations' messages and advice do women **willingly accept and adopt** in their own thinking, attitude, and response to IPSV? Why?
9. What actors' and organisations' messages and advice do women **resist and reject** in their own thinking, attitude, and response to IPSV? Why?

Where can ^{should} women go to get services and support for violence conjugale/IPSV?	Friends	Family	INGOs	Faith-Based Organisation	Church	(local) Government	Traditional Healers
What forms of wrongdoing or violence should a woman go to these places for? What reason should a woman go to these places for?							
What services and support is expected from these places?							
Does their services and support talk about love? About the relationship?							
What are the advantages and disadvantages of the services and support offered at each place?							
How do women decide what support and services to take and not to take?							
Why do women make these choices? How do these services enable women to have hope for the future?							

3. Participatory Feedback Sessions

Two participatory feedback sessions were held with a total of 25 woman, some of whom had participated in the FGDs and in-depth interviews, and others who were voluntarily recruited by members of the group. The participatory feedback sessions were the result of requests made by participants from two FGDs, who wanted the information and research to be shared with their larger women's groups. These sessions provided a valuable opportunity to increase participant collaboration in the research by discussing and testing the emerging themes. In addition, a voluntary survey was collected from the 25 participants.

Survey

All answers will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Age: _____

Status: Civil marriage Church marriage Customary marriage

Free union Single Divorced Widowed

Age of relationship: _____

Number of children: _____

Education: Primary school Secondary school Diplomé

Bachelors degree Uneducated

1. Have you received sensitisation or training about public sexual violence or war rape before? Yes No

2. Have you received sensitisation or training about intimate partner sexual violence before? Yes No

3. A group (NGO, Church, Government) provides sensitization and training on IPSV **without** discussing about love, sexual pleasure, being a mother, and being a wife.

Would this sensitization address women's reality and experience of IPSV?

Yes No

Would this sensitization have provided useful information? Yes No

4. If a group is sensitizing about IPSV, they should discuss:

Only IPSV

IPSV and violence conjugale

(Check **all** that are true)

IPSV and violence conjugale plus:

- Love
- Intimacy
- Sexual pleasure
- Sexual desires
- Being a mother
- Being a wife
- Women's sexual health (including family planning)

Other: _____

5. What makes you feel like a woman? (Check **all** that are true)

- Being a mother
- Being a married woman
- Having paid work
- Being loved
- Doing housework
- Dressing up (including wearing makeup and jewellery)
- Having sexual relations
- Being in a relationship (romantic)
- Being loved

6. What gives women power in society and in a couple? (Check **all** that are true)

- Having children
- Being respected by your husband
- Being autonomous and independent
- Having a husband
- Having sexual pleasure
- Having paid work

- Being loved by the husband

Other: _____

7. Do you believe that women and men should have equal rights and equality in the couple? Yes No

8. Why do you believe that women and men should be equal in the couple? (Check **one**)

- The bible and God's word
- The law
- Because you have seen women with equality in the couple

Other: _____

9. Do you believe that talking about equality between men and women in the couple is easier and more convincing when using Bible passages?

- Yes No

4. Additional quotes supporting primary themes

Theme	Code	Example Quotes
Exceptional sexual violence	Public bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ '[It's] easier to talk about public rape [there is] no direct relationship, but it's heavier with family' (FBO Worker2) ➤ 'They assume that it [IPSV] cannot happen here, but we have many cases in Goma. [...] [It's a] problem of some women not knowing or minimising their violence' (NGO Worker2) ➤ 'The IPSV cases are very delicate to manage and have because women do not denounce this [form of violence].' (NGO Worker1) ➤ <i>About most organisations working on public rape/war rape</i> 'We don't have to think that it is only somewhere there [referring to villages], we also have plenty here in Goma' (Professor)
	Women's suffering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'Women of Goma suffer a lot about sexual intercourse... and money.' (PT1) ➤ 'If we look at Goma, we'll say that a lot of, a high percentage of women suffer. Every woman suffers her way, in her own way.' (FGD3)
Inclusive exclusion	Only Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'The [organisation's] approach to responding to the IPSV is to always sit on the side of the survivor and avoid family mediation. Because family mediation strengthens the situation of violence or makes women more vulnerable obliging her to stay in her home with her husband who subjects her to violence.' (NGO Worker1) ➤ <i>About organisations only focusing on violence</i> 'Its normal, they focus on the urgent situation' (Professor) ➤ 'They want us to talk about bad stories, we are victims that need help' (FPI2)
	Women's opposition to only violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'The person that talks about violence only is not a normal person.' (FPI9) ➤ 'It's okay to talk about good and bad [parts of the relationship]. [I] can't talk about violence only because need to deepen the discussion and information. [...] Because if you talk about violence, you have to give the solution.' (FPI5) ➤ 'I'm not obliged to live as my past [...] they were not good, but we must forgive them, to live a good life.' (FPI2)

	Love-violence balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'A lot of men, so many things done by men have existed for long, a lot of things. It shouldn't hurt your heart, as we say about the church, the Bible tells us that love covers a lot of evil, a lot of wrong doings. He does this, such things, because you have that love it will cover those wrong doings. If we agree with the church it means that the couple will go well.' (FGD3) ➤ 'This is violence because there is no love in this act.' (FGD2) ➤ 'It [love] helps us stay there because men have strategies. Today he treats you badly, tomorrow he wants to take you back where you were, the former love. He remembers that you loved when he brought you something; he does that so that you may be fine. And that helps you, and so days go and go. You are counting years.' (FGD3). ➤ 'When there is love, one doesn't even know that their rights are violated. When you have felt love.' (FGD3) ➤ 'We feel bad when there is emptiness of love. There we start to see, he does this, it's against this. Now seeing things, when we feel emptiness of love, emptiness of affection.' (FGD3) ➤ 'Love makes a woman worthy of love, respect, protection. When women are valued they will not be raped. [...] Where there is good love in the couple [they] need to agree when they want to play sex, not by force.' (Church Leader1) ➤ 'It [the church] recognises unity. When there is love in the couple, there is unity. All flows. [...] even when someone did you wrong, you try to find a way to understand [...] you'll feel that you forgive him because you love.' (FGD3) ➤ 'When there is love in the home, the couple cannot lack anything, all they undertake will work well.' (FGD2) ➤ 'If man loves you it is the strength of marriage because God is above you. Even if when he is angry, when he is with his wife, he will not manifest it because there is love.' (FGD1) ➤ 'But we must think about two questions, the good and bad' (FPI2)
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	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'I'm proud to be a woman. Proud to take care of my family, to take care of my kids.' (FPI6) ➤ 'Love makes a woman worthy of love, respect, protection. When women are valued they will not be raped. [...] Where there is good love in the couple [they] need to agree when they want to play sex, not by force.' (FGD2) ➤ 'Being in the family life makes us respected as women.' (FGD1) ➤ 'The first importance is respect because when I have a husband, no one can blame me or neglect me.' (FGD 2). ➤ 'I'm proud to be a woman. Proud to take care of my family, to take care of my kids.' (FPI6) ➤ 'It makes you respected, it gives you worth even in the family, even in the society, for here it is supposed that when a person reaches our ages without being married, some people start neglecting them.' (FGD3) ➤ 'Because a wife and an unmarried woman have never had the same consideration. Especially when you have reached a certain age, [that is] supposed to be the age of marriage, without you being married. You will be humiliated by everyone. If I say, it is knowingly, [because] I am elderly, a forty year old without marriage. So if I say it, I know what I'm talking about. I will start from my personal experience. You will find that a married woman has more consideration in society than a woman of the same age who is single.' (FGD1) ➤ 'According to our tribe, one must marry for the offspring, to have children. Like my mother gave birth to me, I must also have children.' (FGD2)
	Wives/mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'We tell her that she is a mother [and] has to take care of [her] husband and children. [It is] her duty to keep the family together, to keep the unity.' (Church Leader3) ➤ 'I am happy because I got married and had children, that makes me feel like a woman. If I got married but no children, [I am] not a woman.' (FPI9).

	Sex without preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'The sexual act requires preparation. What is done without preparation is no longer love. We just do it because we already have children and we cannot go home anymore.' (FGD1) ➤ 'You go into the bedroom, there isn't any preparation; he arrives and says: 'my wife forgive me for what I did, just understand!' He enters as a wrestler. And there you'll wonder if you're an animal or what. He doesn't know that sexual love is prepared psychologically first.' (FGD3) ➤ 'The refusal to go through the preliminaries, because many of the husbands like to go directly to the act without having made caresses. This is not good because the woman will not be prepared. It is violence. [...] Men want us to touch them where they want but they are not ready to do the same for women.' (FGD1)
	Sexual pleasure rights/power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'Because it's a natural feeling that God created both men and women with. So everyone has that right.' (FGD3) ➤ 'Because we attract them, but they are serving us.' (FPI2) ➤ '[We] tell the women the unity that is in the couple comes from sexual intercourse. [...] Sexual intercourse is sacred. [...] If a woman is forced [to have sex] this is not love.' (Church Leader3)
	Men are key (benevolent patriarchy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Excerpt from a faith-based discussion guide</i> 'It is the quality of one who uses his energy to protect, especially the weak, for a virtuous cause. Those who mistreat and abuse women and children demonstrate their weakness. If a man wants to show his strength, he must take someone who is equal in strength and power' (UJN n.d.: 36-39). ➤ 'If women are given all these rights, will we remain the father of [the] home? The chief of [the] home?' (Obs2)
	Forms of love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Material love</i> 'That [gift] will really prove that he still loves me, you know we women are too sensitive to gifts. Even if he offered me a 100CF [Congolese Francs] candy, that would be enough. And I will use this moment of love demonstration to tell him that what he did the day before was not well and negotiate it so that this time he starts thinking about going home

		<p>early when he's going to take beer.' (FGD2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'If a husband loves his wife he will bless her in the morning when she goes out to go shopping and the woman will make a profit. It strengthens you and brings you luck.' (FGD2) ➤ 'We have in our community different perceptions of love. Even if love is not so strong, people have different motivations for staying in the relationship. You cannot judge people.' (NGO Worker2) ➤ 'In the couple, the collaboration in money management is a solid proof of love.' (FGD1)
	Church Patriarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 'Love will be expressed by the simplicity, the submission of the woman, she avoids being proud to her husband to show the man that he is loved.' (FGD2) ➤ 'The one who keeps the house is the woman; husbands, God created them differently.' (FGD3) ➤ 'Remember the day of marriage in front of the priest, remember [the] marriage vow: 'I'll be with you in pain, joy, [and] suffering.' [You] promised to God and to the church. Even this experience is not the end of life; you can find a way to deal with it. It's your own cross [to bear]. This helps women understand that they must bear it [IPSV], because part of Christian life is suffering.' (Church Leader2) ➤ 'The church helps but not in a practical way because we are only going to be asked to pray.' ➤ 'The pastor teaches love and patience to respond to marital violence but when the husband is not ready to change his behavior it is not easy to practice and continue to suffer.' (FGD2)