

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE WITHIN DATING RELATIONSHIPS:
THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF GENDER ROLE STRESS AND
COPING STRATEGIES**

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the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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by

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Abstract

Little is known about the nature and extent of the psychological abuse men experience in their dating relationships, and whether the effects of such abuse are comparable to those experienced by women. The present thesis focused on gender differences in the experience of different forms of psychological abuse, and whether gender role stress and coping strategies endorsed might moderate the relations between experiencing abuse from a partner and its impact, as indicated by levels of depressive affect and the perpetration of abuse. A community sample of male and female participants ($N = 528$; 120 men, 408 women) from across Canada completed a web-based survey comprising measures that assessed the receipt and perpetration of abuse, coping strategies, gender role stress, and depressive affect. Results from analyses of variance and regression analyses revealed that males and females experienced similar levels of psychological abuse, and that abuse, gender role stress, and avoidance coping were associated with depressive affect. Moreover, gender role stress moderated the relations between the receipt of certain forms of psychological abuse and the perpetration of abuse, particularly for males, whereas among females gender role stress was associated with the use of emotion-focused coping. The interpretation and implications of the findings are discussed.

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Although the impact of psychological abuse on women has been extensively examined (Baldry, 2003; Katz & Arias, 2000; Ovara, McLeod, & Sharpe, 1996), psychological abuse that is targeted at men has received much less attention. The studies that have been conducted have made it clear that men are frequently the recipients of abuse (from women), although the impact of physical abuse directed at women is often more severe than that directed at men (Flynn, 1990; Foshee, 1996; Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001).

There are several types of psychological abuse (e.g. controlling a partner, ignoring and withdrawal, verbal belittlement), and it is possible that men and women differ in the forms of abuse they use against, and receive from, their partners, with differing effects on the psychological and physical well-being of the victims. Accordingly, the present study assessed whether men and women differed in their experiences of psychological abuse and examined factors that might influence or moderate responses to the abuse, including adherence to gender roles and the endorsement of particular coping strategies in response to abusive encounters.

The incidence and impact of psychological abuse

The number of individuals in intimate relationships who experience psychological abuse is astounding, with as many as 80% of the participants sampled reporting at least one incidence of psychological abuse, depending on the definition of psychological abuse that is used, the method of questionnaire administration, and the sample from which the data are taken (Arias & Beach, 1987; Hines & Saudino, 2003; White & Koss, 1991). For instance, in a study that examined psychological aggression in sample of male and female college students in dating relationships, it was determined that 82% of males and 86% of

females reported that they had used some sort of psychologically aggressive act against their partner, based on their responses to the Conflict Tactics Scale (Hines & Saundino, 2003). Another study that assessed abuse within dating couples using the Conflict Tactics Scale noted that when analyzing the responses from only one member of the relationship, reports of abuse were as high as 60%, however, when analyzing agreement in responses between both partners in the relationship, the reports of abuse were diminished to 28% (Perry & Fromuth, 2005). Further, in a sample of women who were seeking primary health care for various ailments and were administered brief in-clinic interviews as a screening for interpersonal violence, only 7.5% of the women interviewed reported psychological abuse within their current relationships (Coker, Smith, Bethea, King, & McKeown, 2000). The low incidence of abuse in this sample is possibly a result of the interview setting, which may have elicited an underreporting of the abuse, due to the sensitivity of the questions. Evidently, depending on how the questions are administered and from whom the reports are taken, the reported prevalence of psychological abuse in a relationship can vary dramatically.

Psychological abuse at the hands of an intimate partner can be at least as, if not more so, detrimental as physical abuse, to the physical and emotional well-being of both male and female recipients (Coker, Davis, Arias, Desai, Sanderson, Brandt, et al., 2002; Kasian & Painter, 1992). Female victims of abuse have recounted that psychological abuse has long, lingering effects, and unlike the bumps and bruises resulting from physical abuse that heal over time, the wounds from psychological abuse do not fade readily (Dobash & Dobash, 1981; Kasian & Painter, 1992). Studies on abused women have revealed that psychological abuse has devastating effects on self-esteem and mood,

is often accompanied by a variety of somatic complaints and anxiety, and has been associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Clements, Ogle, & Sabourin, 2005; Marshall, 1996; Ovara et al. 1996). Indeed, battered women who have suffered both physical and psychological abuse have described psychological abuse as the worse of the two (O'Leary, 2001). Evidently, the effects of psychological abuse in women are quite damaging. However, research on the effects of psychological abuse on men is still limited, and thus, requires further investigation.

Incidence of psychological abuse in dating relationships. Not unexpectedly, psychological abuse is often a precursor or an accompaniment of men's physical abuse of women later in the relationship (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; O'Leary, 2001; Straus & Smith, 1990; Tolman, 1989; Walker, 1979). Indeed, Murphy and O'Leary (1989) found that, when studying a longitudinal sample of couples who were in the early stages of marriage, psychological aggression by either partner was a strong predictor of the first incidence of physical abuse in the marriage. Furthermore, in a sample of women who had histories of being in physically abusive relationships, 99% reported experiencing psychological abuse as well (Follingstad et al., 1990). To a considerable extent, the research on abuse, both physical and psychological, has been derived from studies of battered women in married relationships, however, an increasing amount of research has revealed that abuse can begin early in an intimate relationship, including courtship (Arias, Samios, & O'Leary, 1987; Clements et al., 2005; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Hines & Saudino, 2003; Makepeace, 1981; Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999). Considering that psychological abuse is often a precursor to physical abuse and that psychological abuse

can begin during the initial stages of relationships, it is important to consider the factors that contribute to and influence the experience of psychological abuse in its infancy.

Female Victims of Psychological Abuse

The impact of psychological abuse on women has been extensively studied, with findings showing that abuse is associated with feelings of dysphoria, lowered self-esteem, and various health problems (Coker et al., 2002; Sackett & Saunders, 2001; Straight, Harper, & Arias, 2003). However, the impact of psychological abuse can vary depending on characteristics of the victim. For instance, among abused women who adhered strongly to a feminine gender role stereotype, the symptoms of depression were more severe, compared to women who did not adhere to a feminine gender role (Follingstad et al., 1991) It was suggested that women who adhere strongly to a feminine gender role may feel that they must be submissive in the relationship, and that there are no alternative solutions (Follingstad et al., 1991). However, such role adherence might also influence how women perceive the abuse. For instance, DeGregoria (1987) noted that women who adhered to traditional sex roles were less adept at perceiving abuse in a series of written vignettes that depicted psychological abuse (i.e., economic deprivation, social isolation, verbal battering, and social humiliation) than were non-traditional women. This suggests that women who adhere to a traditional gender role stereotype might not be able to detect an abusive situation when it is happening, but simply perceive it as the norm. Consequently, the well-being of traditional women who are experiencing abuse in their relationship may suffer as they are unlikely to obtain the necessary support and resources necessary to escape the abuse, leading to the possibility of an escalating problem, potentially placing the victim in extreme danger.

Traditional gender role expectations portray males as aggressive and females as passive, thus, it would follow that females who adhere to feminine expectations would be less likely to perpetrate either verbal or physical aggression, even in response to their abusive partners' behaviour (Currie, 1998; Jenkins & Aubé, 2002). Others however, have found contrary results. For example, Dietz and Jasinki (2003) found that women who scored high on the feminine identity scale were more likely to indicate that they had perpetrated psychological aggression, compared to those who were lower on this dimension. It should be noted, however, these women were also most likely to indicate that they had been victims of physical assault, and hence the psychological aggression may have been perceived by these women as the only socially acceptable response to their situation (Dietz & Jasinki, 2003).

Male Victims of Psychological Abuse

Although the majority of studies that examined intimate partner abuse have focused on female victims and male perpetrators, an increasing amount of research has acknowledged that in many cases males are just as likely as females to receive abuse from their partners (e.g. Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). For a variety of reasons, men's experience of abuse is likely to be different than women's experiences. Because of the social stigma that continues to be attached to men appearing subordinate to women, a man is less likely than a woman to be inclined to seek support if he is experiencing abuse from a partner (Flynn, 1990; Hines & Saudino, 2003; Migillaccio, 2001). However, it has also been argued that women in abusive relationships are also less inclined to seek social support, typically using avoidance techniques and isolating themselves from others (Kemp, Rawlings, & Green, 1991; Matheson, Skomorovsky, Fiocco, & Anisman, 2007).

It has also been reported that men who are abused by their female partners struggle with the maintenance of a masculine ideal (Migliaccio, 2001; Migliaccio, 2002). Traditionally, masculinity has been defined by characteristics such as independence, strength, and being in control and therefore, when a female abuses a male, his masculinity is called into question (Harris, 1995). Indeed, men who come forward with their experiences of abuse have been faced with ridicule, disbelief, and little support from public agencies (Cook, 1997). In part for this reason, there is little research on the psychological effects of abuse on men, and whether these effects are comparable to those experienced by women. However, there is some evidence that psychologically abused men are at risk for emotional hurt, fear, helplessness, anger, revenge seeking, sadness, shame and humiliation, depression, stress, psychological distress, and psychosomatic symptoms (Follingstad et al, 1990).

In addition, it has been suggested that, like women, men who are abused might react to their abuse through aggression, thereby putting others at risk for victimization as well (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1987). However, unlike female victims of psychological abuse, male victims are more likely to respond to their victimization with physical aggression toward their partners, possibly in an attempt to increase self-confidence, and decrease their self-perceptions of weakness and vulnerability (Kidder, Beoll, & Moyer, 1983). Thus, not only is it important to understand the experience of abuse in males as it relates to their own psychological and physical well-being, but it is also important to consider the effects it can have on their subsequent behaviour toward their partners.

In line with this concern, men who report a fear of expressing emotions, which is indicative of an adherence to the traditional male gender role, are more likely to self-

report overt hostility and anger expression (Jakupcak et al., 2005). Moreover, men who experienced stress related to enacting their gender role imperatives were more likely to use aggressive tactics when settling a dispute with an intimate partner than did men that had not experienced this form of stress (Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002). Taken together, these findings are consistent with the notion that when the culturally prescribed roles for men and women (i.e., male dominance and female dependence) are out of sync, among men for whom these roles form a large part of their identity, violence or aggression may be the means by which men reinstate their dominance. In this regard, it might be considered that certain men might be more vulnerable than others in appraising behaviours as threatening to their gender roles, and in their reactions to such threats.

Masculine Gender Role Stress. Authority, control, and feelings of superiority are considered to be part of a culturally approved masculine ideology (Levant et al., 1992). The stress involved with adhering to these culturally prescribed ideologies can create adverse consequences regarding the psychological and physical well-being in men who are highly committed to their gender role (Eisler, 1995; Jakupcak et al., 2002). Whereas, masculinity can be defined in terms of pro-social characteristics such as self-confidence and independence, Eisler and Skidmore (1987) distinguished masculine gender role stress from masculinity by indicating that masculine gender role stress involves stress and discomfort in situations where masculinity has been called into question (e.g., being outperformed by a woman in male activities, experiencing performance failure with regard to work and sexual activities). Indeed, gender role stress has been associated with physiological stress responses (Kolk & van Well, 2007). For instance when men who were identified as high in masculine gender role stress performed a task and were told

that their performance on that task was indicative of their overall physical condition and sexual performance (male-relevant characteristics), the stress that was endured from performing the task was related to higher blood pressure and heart rate, whereas for men who were not high in masculine gender role stress, the task did not affect these measures.

Although there has been some criticism of identifying gender identity and gender role stress as discrete constructs, empirical evidence suggests that they are indeed separate constructs, albeit significantly related (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Jakupcak et al., 2002; Mahalik, Locke, Scott, Gottfried, & Freitas, 2003). In particular, Cohn and Zeichner (2006) conceptualized masculine identity as ‘a conglomeration of attitudes about masculine norms and the degree to which a man follows prescribed gender role norms,’ and masculine gender role stress as ‘a man’s subjective appraisal of meeting (or not meeting) society’s expectations linked to a traditional masculine gender role.’ Cohn and Zeichner go further to describe male gender role stress as the ‘pathology associated with conformity to masculine identity.’ Indeed, in predicting male university students’ aggressive and violent behaviours toward their female partners, masculine identity, on its own, was not related to aggression, but high levels of masculine identity combined with high gender role stress was associated with increased aggression. Likewise, Moore and Stuart (2004) noted that in intimate relationships in which men’s sense of masculinity was challenged, those men who found this particularly distressing were more likely to try to regain feelings of masculinity by exerting behaviours that were congruent with the male identity (e.g. domineering behaviour). In this regard, the impact of psychological abuse on emotional and behavioural responses might depend of the type of psychological

abuse experienced and whether or not the abuse was construed as threatening to the gender identity of the recipient.

The Different Forms of Psychological Abuse

Defining psychological abuse as a unidimensional construct may be counterproductive given the difficulty in the quantification and operationalization of the many different behaviours that abuse can encompass (Katz & Arias, 1999; Murphy & Cascardi, 1999; Vitanza, Vogel, & Marshall, 1995). A number of different operational definitions are reflected in the measurement of psychological abuse. The most commonly used measure is the Conflict Tactics Scale, which assesses interpersonal conflict and incorporates a number of psychologically abusive behaviours that individuals might use with the intention of distressing, insulting, or hurting a partner's feeling (Strauss, 1979). Although the Conflict Tactics Scale is good measure for determining whether psychological abuse occurs in a physically abusive relationship, the psychological aggression items are limited, incorporating only withdrawal behaviours and verbal aggression. Thus, a number of researchers have striven to embellish on the limited items in the psychological portion of the Conflict Tactics Scale to create more thorough measures of psychological abuse that reflect the multiple forms in which such abuse can be expressed. For example, Tolman (1989) proposed a two-factor model of psychological abuse that separates the abuse into dominance-isolation and emotional-verbal abuse dimensions. The former incorporates behaviours that are aimed at isolating the victims from resources (i.e., financial, social) and demanding subservience, whereas the emotional-verbal dimension incorporates verbally demeaning behaviour and the withholding of affection. Although a number of researchers have used Tolman's two-

factor model in studying psychological abuse (Katz & Arias, 1999; Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997; Schumacher, Slep, & Heyman, 2000), others have found that the two-factor model does not distinguish sufficiently between the various forms of psychological abuse (Murphy & Hoover, 1999; Sackett & Saunders, 2001)

In an attempt to assess psychological abuse as a multi-factorial construct, Murphy and Hoover (2001), performed a systematic review of the literature on psychological abuse in marriage and dating relationships, through which they identified common forms of psychological abuse. An exploratory principal component analysis on items tapping into the multiplicity of behaviours that victims encountered, derived a four-factor solution of behaviour. The first factor, restrictive engulfment, involves behaviours that are used in an attempt to isolate and restrict a partner. The second factor, hostile withdrawal, includes avoidance tactics and withholding emotional availability. The third factor, dominance-intimidation, is used with the intention of creating fear in the victim through threats of aggression. Finally, denigration involves an attack on the self-esteem of the victim. A benefit of considering psychological abuse as a multi-factorial construct is that it makes it possible to assess which types of behaviours are most strongly associated with other variables of consideration. For instance, Murphy and Hoover noted that the two forms of psychological abuse most strongly related to physical abuse were dominance/intimidation and denigration.

The Profile of Psychological Abuse (PPA), a measure developed by Sackett and Saunders (2001) based on earlier work of Sackett (1992), also assesses multiple forms of psychological abuse, and appears to subsume similar dimensions as those identified by Murphy and Hoover. While studying the experience of psychological abuse of sheltered

and non-sheltered battered women, Sackett and Saunders developed a five-factor model of psychological abuse, including jealous control, ignoring their partner, ridiculing their partners' characteristics and traits, criticizing behaviour, and instilling a fear of abuse. When looking at the relationship between these different forms of abuse and various variables related to well-being (i.e., self-esteem, depression, and relationship satisfaction), certain forms of psychological abuse had stronger associations than others with various psychological outcomes. For instance, abuse that involves ignoring one's partner had the strongest relation to self-esteem, whereas jealous control had the weakest relation to depression.

Not only do the different forms of psychological abuse vary qualitatively, but certain types may also be experienced as more severe than others, and hence are differentially detrimental to the well-being of the abused. For example, Follingstad et al. (1990) found that diminishing self-esteem through ridicule and other forms of verbal harassment created greater distress among women, relative to other forms of psychological abuse, such as jealousy and isolating behaviours. In contrast, other studies looking at battered women found that, relative to verbal harassment (i.e., being called stupid, crazy, etc.), abuse in the form of emotional and social control was associated with the most psychological damage (Aguilar & Nightengale, 1994). The effects of the different types of abuse may vary depending on when the outcomes are assessed. For example, Katz and Arias (1999) compared the relative effects of dominance/isolation (i.e., demands for compliance and subservience, isolation from social and personal resources) and emotional/verbal abuse (i.e., verbal belittlement, humiliation, and withholding affection) in women and established that the former had a short-term effect

on depressive affect, whereas the latter had a longer-term impact on depressive symptoms. Thus, the effects of the different types of psychological abuse on well-being vary as a function of the qualitative nature of the experience and the time at which the outcome is assessed (i.e., long-term versus short-term).

The studies that have examined the effects of the different types of psychological abuse have focused on women, and the effects of the different forms of psychological abuse on men still remain unknown. In this regard, as noted earlier, males and females might differ in their reactions to different types of abuse, particularly if the abuse is directed at threatening their perceptions of their gender role competency. For instance, domination or jealous control from a female partner is likely to have a strong negative impact on a male who has been taught that men are meant to be the dominant figure and in charge of making decisions. Additionally, ridicule aimed at diminishing traits that are male-identifying (i.e., strength, sexual prowess) is also likely to be very distressing for a man who is especially concerned with maintaining an image of masculinity. On the other hand, being ignored by a partner is likely to be very distressing for a female, as females are characteristically thought to thrive on communication within interpersonal relationships. Thus, different forms of psychological abuse may create greater distress in one gender more than the other, especially for those who are excessively concerned with adhering to their gender role dictations. However, the distress experienced as a result of the psychological abuse may be exacerbated or attenuated depending on how the male or female victim manages the abuse.

Gender Differences in Appraisals and Coping Processes

Numerous studies assessed the role of appraisals and coping processes on the relation between a stressor and psychological well-being. When a stressor is encountered, an individual evaluates whether or not the stressor is threatening (primary appraisal). If the stressor is determined to be threatening to the well-being of the individual, an evaluation of the resources available to cope with the stressor is performed (secondary appraisal). Based on these appraisals, coping strategies are employed to deal with the threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Appraising the threat. Not only might males and females experience different forms of abuse, but their responses might also reflect gender differences in how they appraise stressful situations. For example, gender has been linked to differences in whether a certain situation will be perceived as stressful, how committed one is to resolving the situation, and whether or not it is threatening to the individual's gender identity (Ptacek, Smith, & Zanas, 1994). For example, women are more likely to be affected by the distress of the people around them, as they tend to be more emotionally involved than men in social and family networks (Kessler & McLeod, 1984; Turner, Wheaton, & Lloyd, 1995; Wethington, McLeod, & Kessler, 1987). Men, however, more frequently report stress associated with work and finances (Matud, 2004). Similarly, the biological stress responses of males and females to various stressors have been found to differ. Specifically, when presented with a mathematical challenge (achievement and instrumentality oriented) versus a social-rejection challenge (interpersonally oriented), female participants reacted more (as indicated by increased levels of cortisol) to the social rejection, whereas males reacted more to the mathematical challenge (Stroud, Salovey, & Epel, 2002). Therefore, not only do gender differences exist in self-reported

distress, but there is also evidence that these differences exist in physiological measures of stress as well.

It has been suggested that the impact of gender on the stress process could be a reflection of traditional socialization patterns (Rosario, Shinn, Morch, & Huckabee, 1988). As noted earlier, the traditional female gender role prescribes dependence, affiliation, emotional expressiveness, a lack of assertiveness, and the subordination of one's own needs to those of others. In contrast, the traditional male role prescribes attributes such as autonomy, self-confidence, assertiveness, instrumentality, and being goal oriented. Thus, among individuals who are highly identified with traditional gender roles, situations that threaten their ability to enact these roles might be a cause for distress. With this in mind, the events that are perceived as stressful in the context of an intimate relationship, may also differ for men and women, especially those individuals who are highly identified in their gender role. In this regard, the receipt of psychological abuse, and reactions to this stressor, may differ for males and females as well, especially when the abuse is aimed at or related to traits that are deemed important to their ability to effectively perform the role of man or woman.

Coping processes. Coping has traditionally been divided into categories such as emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping involves efforts involved to manage the emotions and affective responses to the stressor, whereas problem-focused coping reflects a broad range of strategies used by the individual in an attempt to change the situation (e.g., Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Endler & Parker, 1990; Folkman, 1984). It has been found that emotion-focused coping is generally less effective and more likely to be associated with distress than problem-

focused coping (Billings and Moos, 1981; Sigmon, Stanton, & Snyder, 1995). However, depending on characteristics of the stressor and the situation, the type of coping strategy employed may be more or less effective. For instance, in controllable situations, problem-focused coping tends to produce the most beneficial results, but when the situation is beyond the individual's control, emotion-focused coping might be the most effective response to the stressor (e.g., Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1998; Folkman and Lazarus, 1980; Vitaliano et al., 1990). Emotion-focused coping can be further divided into two categories, namely emotional-expressive coping and emotional-avoidance coping. Whereas expressive coping involves seeking emotional support and venting of emotions, avoidance coping incorporates behaviours such as denial, mental and behavioural disengagement, and the use of drugs or alcohol as strategies for alleviating distress (Matud, 2004; Sigmon et al., 1995).

The different coping strategies that are employed in abusive relationships to alleviate distress have found that avoidance coping was a prevalent strategy (Waldrop & Resnick, 2004). It might well be that an avoidance strategy may be effective for women in an abusive relationship in the short-term, yet may engender a dysfunctional outcome in the long-term (Matheson et al., 2007). Specifically, avoidance coping might be employed to alleviate short-term distress in abusive relationships, but such a strategy might also make it difficult to change the situation. Moreover, avoidance coping has generally been shown to undermine well-being and has been associated with symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder in women experiencing relationship abuse (Endler & Parker, 1998; Kemp et al., 1995; Matheson et al., 2007; Vitaliano et al., 1987).

There is general agreement that expressive emotion-focused coping is more common in females than in males (Cronqvist, Klany, & Bjorvell, 1997; Matheson & Anisman, 2003; Platek et al., 1994; Piko, 2001; Renk & Creasy, 2003). However, there has been some inconsistency in the findings regarding gender differences in the endorsement of problem-focused coping and avoidance coping. Some studies showed that males and females were equally likely to engage in a problem-focused response (Matheson & Anisman, 2003; Piko, 2001; Sigmon, Stanton, & Snyder, 1995; Renk & Creasy, 2003), whereas other studies indicated that males were more likely than females to engage in problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Vingerhoets & Van Heck, 1990). Similarly, there has been disagreement regarding the use of avoidance coping by males and females, with some studies reporting that women are more likely than men to use an avoidant coping strategy (Matud, 2004), whereas other findings indicate that males were more likely than females to endorse avoidant coping strategies (Sigmon et al., 1995). It is possible that gender differences in coping reflect the different types of stressors women and men encounter. However, when males and females were subjected to the same stressful experience (giving a speech), males were more likely to endorse the use problem-focused coping strategies, whereas females endorsed emotion-focused coping and social support (Ptacek et al., 1994). Another explanation for the gender differences in coping has been explained in terms of gender role expectations and stereotypes (Matud, 2004; Rosario, et al., 1998). When dealing with stressors, females have traditionally been taught to be emotional and seek social support, whereas males have been taught to be instrumental in their coping (Rosario, et al., 1998).

Given the gender differences in coping propensities, it is possible that, not only might males and females differ in how they respond when their partner is psychologically abusive, but these differences might be exacerbated among those who experience this challenge as a threat to their gender roles. Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that highly masculine men displayed fewer emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies and had more confidence in their problem-solving abilities compared to less masculine individuals (Nezu & Nezu, 1987; Renk & Creasey, 2003). In contrast, highly feminine individuals reported the highest levels of emotion-focused coping (Blanchard-Fields et al., 1991). Excessive commitment to gender roles may further exacerbate these response tendencies (Eisler, 1995; Gillepsie & Eisler, 1992).

The present study

Psychological abuse in intimate relationships is often visible at the initial stages of a relationship and it is not clear as to why the victims of psychological abuse remain in these relationships. Understanding responses at this stage of the relationship is important, as psychological abuse can have profound long-term repercussions on the psychological and physical health of its victims. Research to date has focused predominantly on women as victims of abuse, with little attention directed to male victims of abuse. What little research does exist suggests that men are often the targets of abuse perpetrated by their female partners (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). However, little is known about potential gender differences in the experience of psychological abuse, the factors that contribute to the abuse, its impact, and the methods that are used in an effort to cope with the abuse.

The present study was designed to examine gender differences in psychological abuse in dating relationships, with the aim at clarifying the factors that contribute to the perpetration of abuse and the impact of psychological abuse on its victims, both males and females. Despite similarities with respect to the negative effects of abuse on well-being (i.e. depression), the severity of the negative effects, and the reactions to the psychological abuse may differ by gender. Moreover, the reaction to the abuse may be moderated by factors such as strong adherence to gender roles and the use of particular coping strategies in managing the abuse. It was hypothesized that:

1. Gender differences would exist in the types of psychological abuse experienced.

Stemming from socialized gender roles, women may be more likely to employ verbal forms of abuse, whereas men may be more likely to use dominance and controlling forms of abuse.

2. Gender differences would be evident in the coping strategies endorsed to respond to an abusive situation. Specifically, females would endorse emotion-focused expression coping more often than males, although they might be equally likely to employ problem-focused coping and avoidance coping.
3. Gender differences in coping strategies, and in particular, emotion-focused coping would be moderated by gender-role stress. Specifically, women who are prone to experience gender role stress would be most likely to endorse emotion-focused coping, whereas, men who are prone to experience gender role stress would be less likely to endorse emotion-focused coping.
4. Psychological abuse that was degrading to the individual's competence (e.g., ridicule), or that was aimed at diminishing feelings of dominance (jealous control)

would be associated with the greater distress in males, whereas psychological abuse that threatened relationship quality (e.g. emotional neglect) would be associated with the greater distress in females.

5. The specified gender differences in the relations between different forms of psychological abuse and depressive symptoms would be moderated by gender role stress. Specifically, at higher levels of gender role stress, abuse would be associated with greater symptoms, whereas this relation would be attenuated with lower levels of gender role stress.
6. The relation between experiencing greater psychological abuse and depressive symptoms would be moderated by coping. The use of emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping in abusive relationships would be associated with greater symptoms, particularly for those who report gender role stress.
7. Among men who were high in gender role stress, experiencing psychological abuse would be associated with reporting that they engaged in physically and psychologically aggressive behaviours toward their partners. This relation between experiencing and engaging in abuse would not be evident among men low in gender role stress.
8. Among women who were high in gender role stress, experiencing psychological abuse would be associated with a lower likelihood of engaging in physically and psychologically aggressive behaviours towards their partners. This relation between experiencing and engaging in abuse would not be evident among women low in gender role stress.

Method

Participants

A community sample of male ($n = 120$) and female ($n = 408$) participants from across Canada was recruited to participate in an on-line study on dating relationships. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 57 (females, $M = 28.3$, $SD = 8.1$ yrs; males, $M = 27.9$, $SD = 8.8$ yrs). The majority of participants, 77.2% of females and 70% of males, identified themselves as Caucasian; the second most common reported ethnic identity was Asian, with 18.9% of females and 20.83% of males reporting an Asian ethnicity. The remaining participants were either Middle Eastern (0.7% of females; 3.3% of males), Hispanic (1.5% of females, 2.5% of males), or Aboriginal (1.7% of females, 1.7% of males). Education levels for males and females were similar, with both genders most often indicating the attainment of one to three years of college or university (see Table 1). The majority of females ($n = 241$, 59.1%) and males ($n = 65$, 54.2%) reported being involved in a serious dating relationship. Of the remaining participants, males ($n = 34$, 28.3%) were more likely than females ($n = 73$, 17.9%) to report going out with someone casually, whereas females ($n = 94$, 23.0%) were more likely than males ($n = 21$, 17.5%) to indicate that they were living with an intimate other. The average length of the relationship was 17.9 months for females and 15.7 months for males.

Table 1

Highest level of education achieved as reported by males and females

Males (%)	Females (%)
$n = 120$	$n = 408$

Some high school, but no diploma	5.8	6.9
High school diploma or equivalent	15.5	20.8
1 to 3 years of college/university	45.0	47.5
Undergraduate university degree	24.2	20.1
Master's degree	5.8	3.7
Professional Degree	3.3	0.7

Procedure

Participants were recruited through advertisements posted in the Ottawa area (i.e., various community centres, health centres, men's and women's support groups, libraries, coffee shops, etc.) and through links on various websites (i.e., Canadian Women's Health Network www.cwhn.ca, Gender Relations in Progress www.gripmagazine.org, and The White Ribbon Campaign www.thewhiteribboncampaign.ca). The study was described to potential participants as an online survey of dating relationships. A web link was provided on all recruitment advertisements. Inclusion criteria included being currently in a dating relationship of three years or less, or if participants' most recent relationship had terminated within the past four weeks. Only data from participants who were currently in a dating relationship were analyzed; those who had recently broken off their relationship were excluded from the analysis. As an incentive to participate in the study, an offer of a \$10 gift certificate from one of several retailers was included in the advertisement.

When participants accessed the website, they were presented with a page that described the purpose of the study as an assessment of how people get along with their

dating partners and the impact of the relationship on psychological and physical health.¹ Once participants had read this page, they continued to a page providing the study details, their rights as participants, and contact numbers of those involved in conducting the study (i.e., all information necessary for participants to be informed in their consent to continue). The online questionnaire was then presented page by page (allowing participants to take a break in their completion of the measures), including, among other measures, background demographics (e.g., age, ethnicity, educational background), a measure of psychological abuse (Sackett & Saunders, 2001), coping strategies (Matheson and Anisman, 2003), the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1967), masculine gender role stress (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) and feminine gender role stress (Gillepsie & Eisler, 1992), and a measure of inflicted abuse on their partners (Strauss, 1979). All measures can be seen in the Appendices. Upon completion of the survey, participants were presented with a debriefing page that included the contact numbers of the researchers, as well as relevant support services. Finally participants were asked to provide an address where their gift certificate could be sent and were assured that this personal information would be kept separate from the rest of their data.

Measures

Psychological abuse. In order to assess the extent to which participants experienced psychological abuse in their current relationships, the Profile of

¹ This page also provided a clear warning that validity checks would be used to assess the sincerity of responses and that only those participants whose data passed the validity checks would be compensated for their time with a gift certificate. Due to the ease of producing random responses in an online survey, the participants' data were validated by checking the duration of completion (the total time to complete should have been at least 30 minutes, as this was the time required to simply read the questions). As well, a cross-validation was performed on twelve questions that were repeated in the study (either directly or in substance) to ensure that the responses to these questions were within two rating points of one another. Only data with at least eight of the twelve questions meeting the criteria were considered valid and used in the analysis.

Psychological Abuse (PPA; Sackett & Saunders, 2001) was administered. The PPA is a self-report scale consisting of 27 items that assess the kind and frequency of psychological abuse experienced by a current intimate partner within the past three months. Participants rated each item on a scale ranging from 0 'never' to 5 'more than 10 times'. Items for the relevant subscales were averaged to create scores reflecting the extent of abuse. The measure consists of 5 subscales; jealous control (e.g., “check up on you throughout the day”), ignoring the individual (e.g., “ignores you when you begin a conversation”), ridicule (e.g., “ridicule the traits you admire most in yourself”), criticizing their partner (e.g., “inspects your work and makes overly critical comments”), and fear of abuse (e.g., “do you do what your partner wants you to do because you feel afraid.”). Internal consistencies of the individual subscales were moderate to high (Table 2). Although, the correlations between the psychological abuse variables for the present were relatively high (Table 1), multicollinearity was not considered problematic, as none of these correlations exceeded .90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Table 2

Intercorrelations between forms of psychological abuse (Cronbach's α s on the diagonal)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Jealous Control	.88				
2. Ignore	.59	.82			
3. Ridicule	.63	.71	.81		
4. Criticize	.59	.51	.62	.75	
5. Fear of Abuse	.71	.63	.68	.62	.84

Masculine gender role stress scale. The Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRSS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) contains forty items that measure the degree to which men cognitively appraise male-relevant situations as stressful. Responses for each item range from 0 (not at all stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful). Responses are averaged and the higher the score, the more the man appraises the situations as being stressful. Examples of some of the items on the scale include: “Being outperformed at work by a woman,” “Appearing less athletic than a friend,” and “Not making enough money.” The MGRS scale yields adequate test-retest reliability ($r = .93$) and has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$; Eisler et al., 1988). For the sample in this study, Cronbach’s alpha was high ($\alpha = .93$).

Feminine gender role stress scale. The Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS; Gillespie & Eisler, 1992) contains 39 items and measures vulnerability to stressors associated with the feminine gender role. The items on the scale relate to unemotional relationships (i.e., “having an intimate relationship without any romance”), physical unattractiveness (i.e., “being perceived by others as overweight”), not being nurturant (i.e., “a very close friend stops talking to you”), behaving assertively (i.e., “negotiating the price of car repairs”), and victimization (i.e., “hearing a strange noise when you are home alone”). Participants were asked to indicate the level of stress that they associate with each statement on a scale from 0 (not at all stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful). The score was obtained by taking an average of all the items. Psychometric properties of the FGRS are acceptable (Gillespie & Eisler, 1992; Martz, Hendley, & Eisler, 1995). Previous research has shown internal consistency, with Cronbach’s

coefficients ranging from .73 to .83. For the sample in this study, Cronbach's alpha was high ($\alpha = .95$).

Coping. The Survey of Coping Profile Endorsement (SCOPE; Matheson & Anisman, 2003) was employed to measure the different coping strategies participants believed they would use if they were presented with a situation of psychological abuse. A written script was presented describing an episode in which one partner was being psychologically abusive towards the other partner, including displays of verbal belittlement, criticism, and hostile withdrawal. Participants were asked to imagine how they would feel if they were in the position of the partner receiving the abuse, and to indicate how they would cope if they were in the situation using a 0 "I would never do this" to 4 "I would almost always do this" rating scale.

The SCOPE is a 50-item measure tapping into 14 different coping strategies including emotional expression, problem-solving, cognitive distraction, rumination, humor, active distraction, social support seeking, emotional containment, passive resignation, cognitive restructuring, other blame, self-blame, religion, and wishful thinking. The internal reliabilities for these 14 coping dimensions have previously been found to be moderate, with Cronbach's α s ranging from .61 to .90 (Matheson & Anisman, 2003; Matheson et al., 2007). The 14 coping strategies were reduced to 3 dimensions through principle components extraction methods. A parallel analysis confirmed the presence of three factors. An oblique rotation resulted in components that were only mildly related (r s = -.12 to -.17), and thus, a varimax rotation was used to identify the subscales comprising each component. Following the varimax rotation, those items with loadings greater than .45 were included to form the three components.

The first component comprised six subscales reflecting emotionally avoidant coping (emotional containment, passive resignation, cognitive distraction, wishful thinking, self-blame, and other-blame). The second component reflected problem-focused coping efforts, including problem-solving, active distraction, cognitive restructuring, and humor). Finally, the third component comprised expressive emotion-focused coping behaviours, namely social support, emotional expression, and rumination. The inter-correlations between the three subscales were moderate (see Table 3) and similar to those found in previous work.

Table 3

Intercorrelations among coping styles (Cronbach's as on the diagonal)

	1	2	3
1. Problem-focused coping	.68		
2. Emotion-focused coping	.27	.73	
3. Avoidance coping	.25	.40	.79

Inflicted Abuse. The Conflict-Tactics Scale Revised was used to assess the degree to which participants inflicted abuse upon their partners. The CTS-R is a 78-item scale that is commonly used to measure psychological, sexual, and physical abuse, as well as instances of negotiation, that are incurred or inflicted by partners in a marital, cohabitating, or dating relationship (Strauss, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The scale is divided into two sections; the first section asks respondents to provide ratings for the frequency with which they themselves had shown a behaviour in

relationship conflicts (perpetrator perspective), and the second section asks respondents to provide ratings for the frequency with which they had experienced the behaviour from their partner (victim perspective). The present study used only the portion of the CTS-R (39 items) that measured reports of perpetrating abuse, and in particular the perpetration of physical assault and psychological aggression. Response options for the items in the scale range from 0 (never) to 5 (more than 10 times), in the past 3 months. A total score was computed for both the physical and psychological dimensions of the scale by summing the responses of the items that constitute each dimension. The Cronbach's alpha for the seven items that made up the psychological subscale (6 items) for the present sample was .74, and the Cronbach's alpha for the physical dimensions (17 items) of the scale was .86.

Depressive symptoms. The 21-item Beck Depression Inventory was used to measure depressive symptoms. The BDI is a widely used instrument for measuring depressive symptomatology in the general population (Beck et al., 1961). The scale is based on a constellation of symptoms that are common to depression, such as disturbing thoughts, dissatisfaction with appearance, and psychosocial problems, etc. Each item has response alternatives, graded by severity, from none (0) to severe (3). A total sum is computed for each participant such that scores could range from 0 to 63. In a meta-analysis of studies that had used the BDI, alpha coefficients for internal consistencies in non-psychiatric samples ranged from .73 to .92 (Beck, et al., 1988). The same meta-analysis revealed strong concurrent and divergent validity for the BDI. For the present study, the internal reliability for the 21 items that make up the Beck Depression Inventory was high ($\alpha = .95$).

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Prior to running the main analyses, a missing values analysis was performed on all variables. This revealed that several participants had missing values for some of the items on the Beck Depression Inventory, the Conflict Tactics Scale, and the Profile of Psychological Abuse. However, these values did not follow a systematic trend. Thus, a linear regression technique based on the participant's responses to the questions that had been completed was used to impute the value for the missing item.

An examination of the univariate outliers indicated that two cases were older than the majority of the participants ($z_s > 4$; ages = 69 & 71), and so these cases were removed from subsequent analyses. For the remaining variables, a few cases (< 5.0%) appeared to be extreme outliers on masculine gender role stress scale, the profile of psychological abuse, the Beck Depression Inventory, and the conflict tactics scale. For these variables, the cases that were extreme outliers were brought within three standard deviation of the mean for the scale, rather than deleting the entire case, as the retention of data was desirable.

In order to assess normality, values of skewness and kurtosis were obtained for all variables. Values of three or more standard errors of skewness and kurtosis were considered extreme. Two of the variables (the perpetrated physical and psychological abuse subscales of the CTS-R) were highly positively skewed and displayed extreme kurtosis. The square root of these variables was computed to determine if such a transformation would reduce the values of skewness and kurtosis. The transformation reduced kurtosis and skewness in the perpetrated psychological abuse scores from 9.81 to

0.52 and from 2.85 to 1.14, respectively. For the perpetrated physical abuse data, the transformation reduced kurtosis from 56.15 to 7.14 and skewness from 6.54 to 2.36. For both data sets the transformation produced scores which were more consistent with the standards of normality. Therefore, the transformed CTS scores were used in the relevant analyses.

An examination of the residual plots involving the predictor variables and the bivariate scatterplots between pairs of variables demonstrated that the relationship between the variables were all linear. The square root transformations on the perpetrated physical and psychological variables improved the linear relationships of these variables substantially. Further, these graphical presentations suggested that homoscedasticity was achieved for each predictor (i.e., there wasn't any systematic pattern or clustering of the residuals).

A bivariate correlational analysis was also performed as part of the preliminary analyses to determine the strength of the associations among the different variables under study. The results from this analysis are presented in Table 4. Upon examination of the correlations, it appears as though similar patterns of relations exist for males and females, for instance, moderate associations between the BDI scores and the different forms of abuse are present for both genders, similarly, gender role stress is moderately correlated with BDI scores for males and females. Although similar patterns also exist for males and females with respect to the relationship between BDI scores and problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, the relationship between avoidance coping and BDI scores was considerably stronger for females compared to males. The association between the perpetration of abuse (both psychological and physical) and BDI scores was moderate for

both genders. With respect to gender role stress, weak correlations existed between gender role stress and the different forms of abuse, although, these relations were somewhat stronger for males compared to females, especially for the form of abuse ignore. There was a weak association between problem-focused coping and gender role stress for both males and females, and although a moderate positive association between avoidant coping and gender role stress was present for both genders, the relationship between emotion-focused coping and gender role stress was stronger for females than males. Weak associations between gender role stress and the perpetration of psychological and physical abuse were present in females, whereas these relationships were moderate for their male counterparts.

Table 4

Pearson Correlations (Bivariate) Assessing Associations among Beck Depression Inventory, Psychological Abuse, Gender Role Stress, Coping Strategies, and Psychological and Physical Abuse Perpetration (Males above the Diagonal, Females below the Diagonal)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. BDI	---	.51**	.47**	.52**	.46**	.56**	.29**	-.16	.19*	.28**	.47**	.48**
2. Jealous Control	.40**	---	.64*	.74**	.71**	.74**	.27**	.02	.16	.35**	.56**	.46**
3. Ignore	.54**	.58**	---	.75**	.68**	.68**	.32**	-.01	.19*	.35**	.51**	.39**
4. Ridicule	.46**	.63**	.70**	---	.74**	.63**	.23*	-.04	.09	.24**	.56**	.50**
5. Criticize	.36**	.52**	.48**	.58**	---	.61**	.21*	.01	.04	.24**	.47**	.49**
6. Fear of Abuse	.50**	.69**	.62**	.70**	.62**	---	.32**	.03	.19*	.37**	.52**	.36**
7. Gender Role Stress	.33**	.18**	.19**	.17**	.15**	.23**	---	.11	.18*	.38**	.35**	.27**
8. Problem-Focused	-.20**	-.13*	-.14**	-.10	-.11*	-.14**	.06	---	.27**	.43**	-.03	.01
9. Emotion-Focused	.22**	.03	.15**	.06	-.01	.12**	.43**	.26**	---	.50**	.22*	.10
10. Avoidance Coping	.52**	.29**	.40**	.37**	.29**	.42**	.35**	.20**	.40**	---	.30**	.16
11. Psych Abuse Perp	.45**	.35**	.45**	.53**	.33**	.40**	.15**	-.12*	.10*	.30**	---	.80**
12. Physical Abuse Perp	.36**	.35**	.39**	.55**	.30**	.38**	.14**	-.06	.12*	.22**	.75**	---

** < .01, *p < .05

Gender Differences

Gender differences in the experience of abuse and the factors that might moderate the relationship between abuse and well-being were assessed in a series of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) and t-tests. A MANOVA assessing gender differences in types of psychological abuse experienced, including jealous control, ignoring behaviours, ridicule, criticism, and reporting a fear of abuse was performed. Results from this analysis indicated a significant multivariate main effect, Pillai's = .06, $F(5, 522) = 6.80, p < .001$. As seen in Table 5, univariate statistics indicated that males reported experiencing jealous control, criticism, and a fear of abuse significantly more often than females although the incidence of psychological abuse in both instances was relatively infrequent, and effect sizes were relatively small.

Table 5

Descriptives (means and standard deviations) for the different subtypes of psychological abuse for males and females and respective univariate statistics.

Type of Abuse	Males (<i>n</i> = 120)		Females (<i>n</i> = 408)		<i>F</i>	η_p^2
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<i>Response Range 0-5</i>						
Jealous Control	0.59	0.82	0.36	0.67	9.90*	.018
Ignore	0.69	0.88	0.67	0.90	0.05	.000
Ridicule	0.46	0.77	0.35	0.71	2.12	.004
Criticize	0.46	0.84	0.20	0.52	17.49***	.032
Fear of abuse	0.76	0.89	0.45	0.75	14.45***	.027

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Gender differences in coping (emotion-focused coping, avoidance coping, and problem-focused coping) indicated a significant multivariate main effect Pillais = 0.06, $F(3,524) = 17.50, p < .001$. Examination of the univariate statistics indicated that emotion-focused coping was uniquely associated with gender, in that, as expected, women were more likely to endorse emotionally expressive strategies than were men (see Table 6)

Table 6

Descriptives (means and standard deviations) for the different strategies for coping for males and females and their respective univariate statistics

Coping Style	Males (n = 120)		Females (n = 408)		F	η_p^2
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)		
Problem-focused	1.90	(0.64)	1.99	(0.63)	1.75	.003
Emotion-focused	1.92	(0.74)	2.43	(0.79)	40.24***	.071
Avoidance	1.69	(0.58)	1.66	(0.66)	0.28	.001

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Possible gender differences were also examined in levels of gender role stress and depression. Independent sample t-tests revealed significant differences between men and women in gender role stress, with women ($M = 3.01, SD = 0.89$) reporting more gender role stress than men ($M = 1.80, SD = 0.75$), $t(526) = -13.63, p < .001$. Significant

differences in depressive symptoms were not found between males ($M = 9.32$, $SD = 9.94$) and females ($M = 9.01$, $SD = 9.14$), $t(526) = .324$, *ns*.

Moderating effects of gender role stress on gender differences in coping. It was argued that the degree to which a male or female experiences stress in relation to behaving in accordance with their gender role stereotype would moderate the gender differences in coping, and in particular, endorsement emotion-focused coping. This hypothesis was examined through a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Each of the three types of coping was regressed onto gender on the first step, the standardized scores of gender role stress on the second step, and the interaction between gender and the standardized scores of gender role stress on the third step. For male participants, male gender role stress was employed, whereas gender role stress among female participants was represented by their scores on the feminine gender role stress scale. As displayed in Table 7, after controlling for gender, gender role stress was significantly associated with the use of emotion-focused coping, $F_{change}(1, 525) = 90.66$, $p < .001$, but the interaction between gender and gender role stress significantly improved the model, $F_{change}(1, 524) = 4.45$, $p < .05$.

Table 7

Assessing the Role of Gender Role Stress in the Relationship between Gender and Emotion-focused Coping

Step	Variable	β	r	R^2_{change}
Step 1				.071**
	Gender	0.12	0.27**	

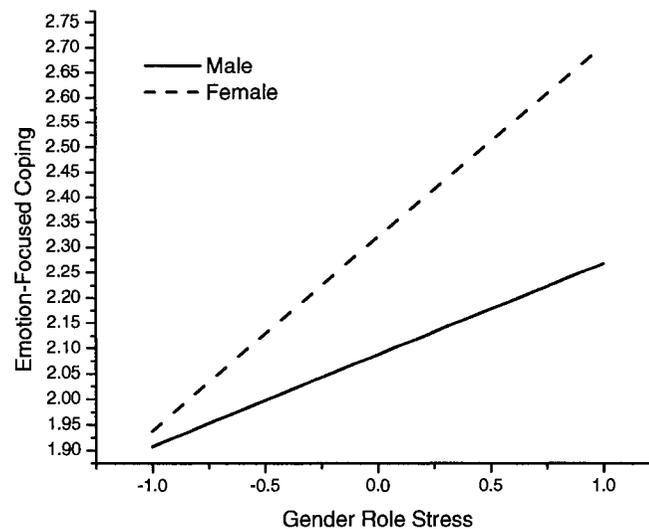
Step 2			.137***
	Gender Role Stress	0.22	0.45**
Step 3			.007*
	Gender*Gender Role Stress	0.20*	0.41**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Follow-up simple slope analyses assessing the relation between gender role stress and emotion-focused coping for males and females, revealed that the use of emotion-focused coping increased significantly for both males ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .05$) and females ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .01$), as gender role stress increased (see Figure 1), but this relation was particularly strong for women. Thus, consistent with expectations women were especially likely to endorse emotion-focused coping when prone to experience gender role stress, but unexpectedly gender role stress in males did not inhibit the use of emotion-focused coping. Note, all figures were created using unstandardized beta coefficients.

Figure 1

The interaction of Gender and Gender Role Stress (Standardized Scores) on the Use of Emotion-Focused Coping



None of gender, $F(1,526) = 1.75, ns$, gender role stress, $F_{change}(1,525) = 2.39, ns$, nor the interaction between them, $F_{change}(1,524) = 0.41$ were significant predictors of problem-focused coping endorsements. After controlling for gender, gender role stress was significantly associated with the use of avoidance coping, $\beta = .45, F_{change}(1, 525) = 90.66, p < .001$. However, the interaction between gender and gender role stress was not a significant predictor in the use of avoidance coping, $F_{change} < 1$.

Predicting Depressive Symptoms as a Function of Abuse

Gender differences in the relations between the types of psychological abuse on depressive symptoms were expected. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted wherein levels of depressive symptoms were entered as the dependent variable, gender was entered as a predictor variable in the first step, the five types of psychological abuse were entered as the predictor variables in the second step, and the products of gender and the different types of psychological abuse were entered in the third step. As noted earlier, there were no significant gender differences in depressive symptoms. However, controlling for gender, the five subtypes of abuse together accounted for 33.1% of the

total variance in depressive symptoms, $F(5, 521) = 51.55, p < .001$. Although the zero-order correlations indicated that all forms of abuse were associated with greater depressive symptoms, examination of the regression coefficients suggested that fear of abuse was the only form of psychological abuse that uniquely accounted for variance in depressive affect. These relations were not moderated by gender, $R^2_{change} = .008, F < 1$.

Table 8

Examining the Moderating effect of Gender in the Relationship between Different Forms of Psychological Abuse and the Outcome Variable Depression using Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Step	Variable	β	r	R^2_{change}
Step 1				.0002
	Gender	0.04	-0.01	
Step 2				.331**
	Jealous Control	0.02	0.43**	
	Ignore	0.28**	0.52**	
	Ridicule	0.07	0.48**	
	Criticism	0.03	0.39**	
	Fear of Abuse	0.26**	0.51**	
Step 3				.008
	Gender*Jealous Control	-0.05	0.34**	
	Gender*Ignore	0.30	0.46**	
	Gender*Ridicule	-0.15	0.40**	

Gender*Criticism	-0.003	0.32**
Gender*Fear of Abuse	-0.07	0.43**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, $p < .05$

Moderating effects of gender role stress. It was argued that gender role stress would moderate the relations between the experience of psychological abuse and depressive symptoms. Due to the large number of variables that would result if the five types of psychological abuse were entered into the same analysis, separate analyses were performed for each type of psychological abuse (Cohen, 1992). For each analysis, depressive symptoms served as the dependent variable, and gender, the subscale of psychological abuse, and gender role stress, along with the two-way and three-way interactions among these variables (with continuous scores standardized) were entered as predictor variables.

The addition of gender role stress into each of the models significantly improved prediction over the use of psychological abuse and gender, in that greater gender role stress was associated with higher depressive symptoms (see Table 9). In addition, gender role stress interacted with being ignored, and experiencing fear of abuse, but neither of these interactions was further moderated by participant gender. Although there appeared to be significant gender by abuse effects, examination of the regression coefficients suggests that this interaction served a suppressor role, as opposed to reflecting a direct relation to depressive symptoms.

Table 9

Regression analyses assessing the moderating effects of gender role stress and gender in the relations between different forms of psychological abuse and the outcome variable depressive symptoms.

	β	r	R^2_{change}
<u>Type of Abuse (Ignore)</u>			
Step 1			.0002
Gender	-0.13*	-.01	
Step 2			.270**
Abuse	0.53***	.52**	
Step 3			.044*
Gender Role Stress	0.22*	.27**	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.012*
Gender*Abuse	0.14**	.22**	
Gender*GRS	0.28**	.07	
Abuse*GRS	-0.12	.46**	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.0001
Gender*Abuse*GRS	-.05	.28**	
<u>Type of Abuse (Fear of Abuse)</u>			
Step 1			.0002
Gender	-0.02	-.01	
Step 2			.262**
Abuse	0.59***	.51**	

Step 3			.039**
	Gender Role Stress	0.11**	.27**
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.014*
	Gender*Abuse	-0.19*	.43**
	Gender*GRS	0.16	.28**
	Abuse*GRS	0.16**	.17**
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.0002
	Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.03	.25**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

GRS = Gender Role Stress

Note. Standardized regression coefficients were taken from the final step of entry.

Simple slope analyses were conducted to assess the relations between abuse and depressive symptoms at high and low levels (1 SD above and below the mean) of gender role stress. To facilitate the interpretation of these results, significant interaction effects have been represented graphically. With respect to the experience of being ignored by one's partner (Figure 2), the relation between this form of abuse and greater depressive symptoms was greatest when participants were higher in gender role stress ($\beta = .48$, $p < .01$), compared to when they were low ($\beta = .27$, $p < .10$). Fear of abuse (Figure 3) was also associated with greater depressive symptoms, but this relation was exacerbated with increasing levels of gender role stress ($\beta = .26$, $p < .10$ at 1 SD below the mean; $\beta = .54$, $p < .001$ at 1 SD above the mean).

Figure 2

The interaction of the form of abuse being ignored and gender-role stress on depressive symptoms

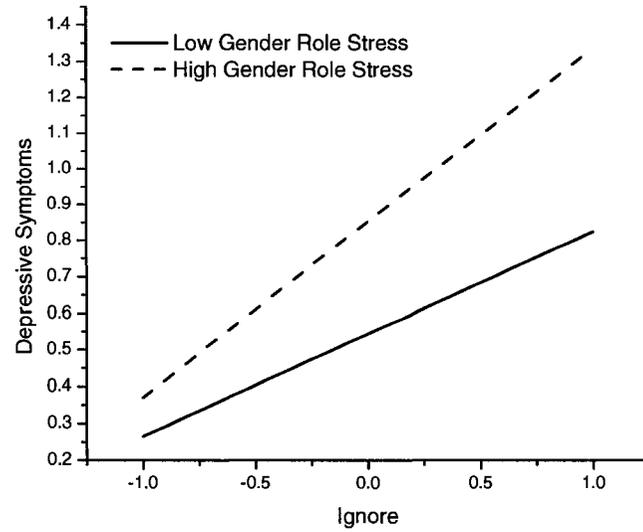
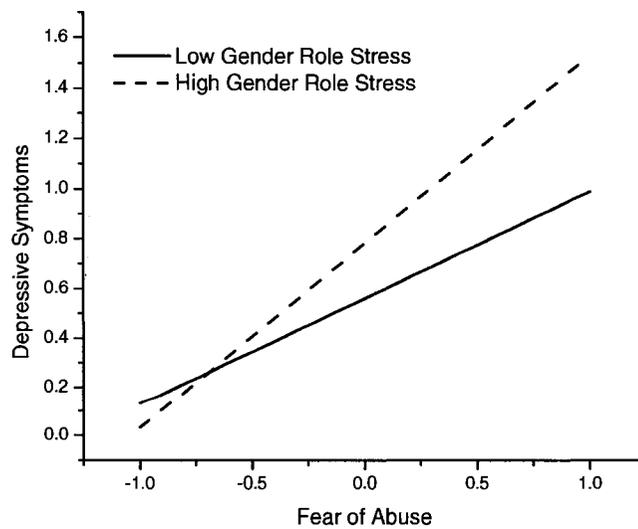


Figure 3

The interaction of the form of abuse "fear of abuse" and gender role stress on depressive symptoms



The Moderating Effect of Coping Styles

To determine if the styles of coping endorsed to respond to an abusive situation moderated the relations between abusive experiences and depressive symptoms, a series of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted. Depressive symptoms were entered as the dependent variable, and gender, each type of psychological abuse (in separate analyses), and the three coping strategies (problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance coping) were entered as predictor variables, along with the two-way and three-way interactions among these variables. The results of this analysis indicated a significant main effect of coping strategies over and above each form of abuse. Even after controlling gender and abuse type, as noted earlier, the use of greater problem-focused coping was related to decreased depressive symptomatology, whereas the use of emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping were related to increased depressive symptomatology. Significant interactions among variables did not exist among any of the variables in the analysis.

The Role of Psychological Abuse and Gender Role Stress in Abuse Perpetration

The relations between experiencing psychological abuse at the hands of one's partner and the use of physical or psychological abuse in resolving relationship conflicts in males and females (with varying degrees of gender role stress) was assessed using a series of hierarchical regression analyses, with each of the perpetration of psychological and physical abuse as the outcome variables. For each analysis, gender was entered on the first step, the standardized score of each form of psychological abuse was entered on the second step (in separate analyses), the standardized scores of gender role stress were entered on the third step, the two-way interactions between the three predictors in the fourth step, and the three-way interactions among the predictors in the fifth step. The

results from the analyses assessing the perpetration of psychological abuse indicated that all forms of psychological abuse and gender role stress were directly related to greater perpetration of psychological abuse. In addition, as seen in Table 10, a significant interaction was present between jealous control and gender; although abuse was more likely to be perpetrated when the individual experienced jealous control from their partners, this relation was stronger among females ($\beta = .82, p < .001$) than males ($\beta = .62, p < .001$) (Figure 4). However, the relation between jealous control and perpetrating psychological abuse was also moderated by gender role stress (Table 13). Simple effects analyses indicated that gender role stress exacerbated the relation between perpetrating psychological abuse and experiencing jealous control from one's partner ($\beta = .41, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* below the mean; $\beta = .82, p < .001$ at 1 *SD* above the mean) (see Figure 5). The three-way interactions among the various forms of abuse, gender, and gender role stress were not significant.

Table 10

Regression analyses assessing the moderating effects of gender role stress and gender in the relations between different forms of psychological abuse and the perpetration of psychological aggression

	β	r	R^2_{change}
<u>Type of Abuse (Jealous Control) Betas from fourth step</u>			
Step 1			.002
Gender	0.02	.04	
Step2			.166***

Abuse	0.56**	.40**	
Step 3			.011**
Gender Role Stress	0.27**	.16**	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.014**
Gender*Abuse	-0.24**	.30**	
Gender*GRS	-0.01	.14**	
Abuse*GRS	0.13**	.13**	
Step 5 (three-way)			.0002
Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.01	.22**	

Abuse of Abuse (Ignore) Betas from level of entry

Step 1			.002
Gender	0.04	.04	
Step 2			.235***
Abuse	0.49***	.48**	
Step 3			.006*
Gender Role Stress	0.09*	.18**	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.005
Gender*Abuse	-0.15	.41**	
Gender*GRS	-0.05	.14*	
Abuse*GRS	0.06	.17**	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.0002
Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.03	.25**	

Type of Abuse (Ridicule) Betas from level of entry

Step 1			.002
	Gender	0.04	.04
Step 2			.262***
	Abuse	0.51***	.51**
Step 3			.008*
	Gender Role Stress	0.10*	.18*
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.006
	Gender*Abuse	-0.04	.44**
	Gender*GRS	-0.10	.14*
	Abuse*GRS	0.07	.20*
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.004
	Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.14	.28**

Type of Abuse (Criticism) Betas from level of entry

Step 1			.002
	Gender	0.04	.04
Step 2			.116***
	Abuse	0.35**	.33**
Step 3			.017**
	Gender Role Stress	0.15**	.15**
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.012

Gender* Abuse	-0.04	.28**	
Gender*GRS	-0.06	.14*	
Abuse*GRS	0.11	.11	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.005
Gender* Abuse*GRS	-0.13	.15*	

Type of Abuse (Fear of Abuse) Betas from last step

Step 1			.002
Gender	0.09	.04	
Step 2			.189***
Abuse	0.58***	.42**	
Step 3			.006*
Gender Role Stress	0.08	.18	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.005
Gender* Abuse	-0.12	.34	
Gender*GRS	-0.02	.14	
Abuse*GRS	0.19	.13	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.008*
Gender* Abuse*GRS	-0.20*	.19	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, GRS = Gender Role Stress

Figure 4

The interaction of the form of abuse “jealous control” and gender on the perpetration of psychological abuse

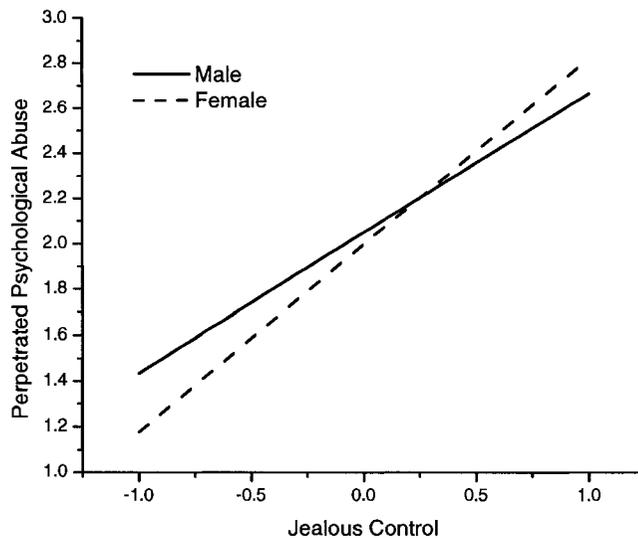
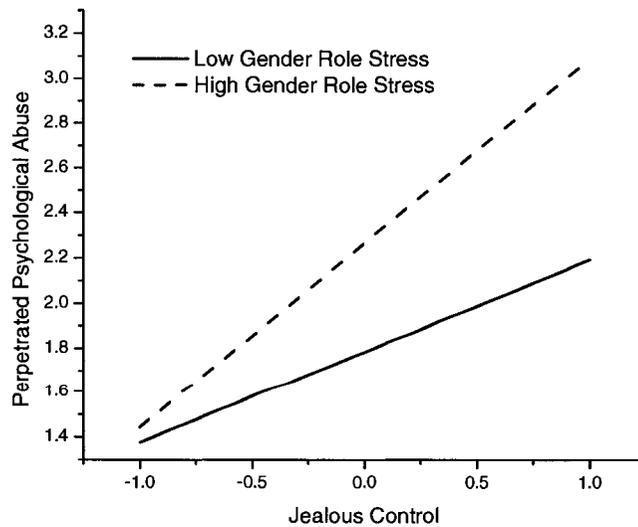


Figure 5

The interaction of the form of abuse “jealous control” and gender role stress on the perpetration of psychological abuse



The results from the analyses assessing the perpetration of physical abuse once again indicated a positive relation with all forms of psychological abuse. However, gender role stress was not related to perpetrating physical abuse over and above any of the forms of psychological abuse experienced (Table 11). However, once again, significant two-way interactions were found between jealous control and gender, and jealous control and gender role stress. Simple slope analyses revealed that males ($\beta = .61, p < .01$), but not females ($\beta = .27, ns$) were more likely to perpetrate physical abuse when they experienced jealous control from their partners (Figure 6). In addition, simple slope analyses assessing the moderating role of gender role stress indicated that the relation between perpetration of physical abuse associated with experiencing jealous control was stronger under increasing levels of gender role stress ($\beta = .42, p > .10$ at 1 *SD* below the mean; $\beta = .81, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* above the mean) (Figure 7). A similar moderating effect of gender role stress was evident in exacerbating the relation between perpetrating physical abuse and experiencing abusive criticism from their partner ($\beta = .19, p > .10$ at 1 *SD* below the mean; $\beta = .87, p < .001$ at 1 *SD* above the mean of gender role stress) (Figure 8)

Figure 6

The interaction of the form of abuse “jealous control” and gender on the perpetration of physical abuse

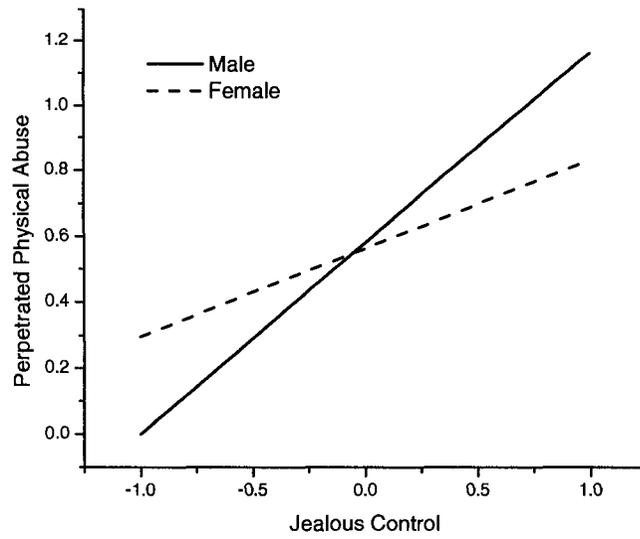


Figure 7

The interaction of the form of abuse “jealous control” and gender role stress on the perpetration of physical abuse

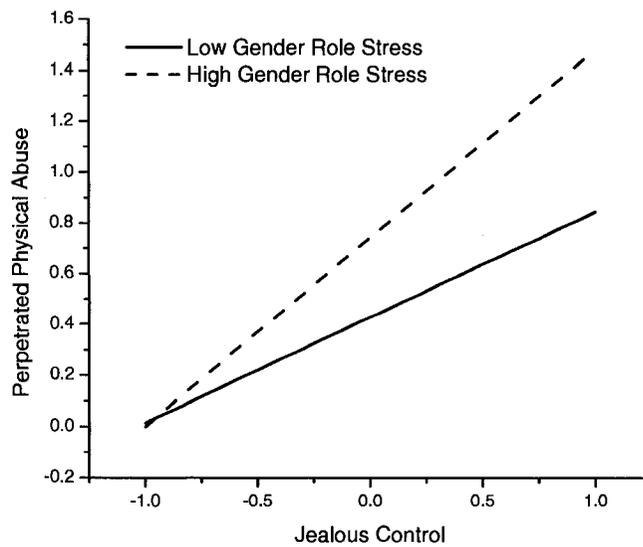


Figure 8

The interaction of the form of abuse “criticism” and gender role stress on the perpetration of physical abuse



Table 11

Regression analyses assessing the moderating effects of gender role stress and gender in the relations between different forms of psychological abuse and the perpetration of physical aggression

	β	r	R^2_{change}
<u>Type of Abuse (Jealous Control) Betas from fourth step</u>			
Step 1			.0002
Gender	-0.01	-.01	
Step2			.150***
Abuse	0.61**	.38**	
Step 3			.014*
Gender Role Stress	0.12	.15**	

Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.031***
Gender* Abuse	-0.35***	.28**	
Gender*GRS	0.02	.12**	
Abuse*GRS	0.20**	.16**	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.003
Gender* Abuse*GRS	-0.11	.21**	

Abuse of Abuse (Ignore) Betas from fourth step

Step 1			.0002
Gender	-0.08	-.06	
Step 2			.173***
Abuse	0.56***	.48**	
Step 3			.007
Gender Role Stress	0.18	.15**	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.015*
Gender*Abuse	-0.24*	.34**	
Gender*GRS	-0.04	.12**	
Abuse*GRS	0.13*	.18**	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.003
Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.14	.22**	

Type of Abuse (Ridicule) Betas from last step

Step 1			.0002
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	Gender	-0.01	-.01	
Step 2				.288***
	Abuse	0.71***	.54	
Step 3				.006*
	Gender Role Stress	0.13	.15**	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)				.009
	Gender*Abuse	-0.13	.46**	
	Gender*GRS	-0.02	.14**	
	Abuse*GRS	0.33***	.23**	
Step 5 (three-way interactions)				.022***
	Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.32***	.27**	

Type of Abuse (Criticism) Betas from fourth step

Step 1				.0002
	Gender	0.03	-.01	
Step 2				.112***
	Abuse	0.57***	.33	
Step 3				.015**
	Gender Role Stress	0.09	.15	
Step 4 (two-way interactions)				.027**
	Gender*Abuse	-0.19*	.23**	
	Gender*GRS	0.02	.12**	
	Abuse*GRS	0.33***	.12**	

Type of Abuse (Fear of Abuse) Betas from last step

Step 1			.0002
	Gender	0.04	-.01
Step 2			.151***
	Abuse	0.55***	.38**
Step 3			.006*
	Gender Role Stress	0.08	.15
Step 4 (two-way interactions)			.010
	Gender*Abuse	-0.14	.31
	Gender*GRS	-0.01	.12
	Abuse*GRS	0.03*	.15
Step 5 (three-way interactions)			.011**
	Gender*Abuse*GRS	-0.23**	.17

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, *GRS* = *Gender Role Stress*

Finally, significant three-way interaction between gender, gender role stress, and the forms of abuse constituting ridicule and fear of abuse were evident in relation to the extent to which individuals perpetrated physical abuse on their partners. Simple slope analyses were conducted by examining the interactions between gender role stress and abuse experienced for each of males and females. Among males (Figure 9), the relation between perpetrating physical abuse and experiencing ridicule was much stronger when higher levels of male gender role stress was reported ($\beta = .20, p > .10$ at 1 *SD* below the

mean of gender role stress; $\beta = .71, p < .01$ at 1 *SD* above the mean). Among the females (Figure 10), levels of gender role stress did not moderate the positive relationship between the experiencing ridicule at the hands of their partners and perpetrating physical abuse ($\beta = .38, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* below the mean of gender role stress; $\beta = .42, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* above the mean). A similar pattern of relations was found when considering the relation between experiencing fear of abuse and perpetrating physical abuse. Specifically, among males (Figure 11) the relation between perpetrating physical abuse and experiencing fear of abuse was much stronger when higher levels of male gender role stress was reported ($\beta = .28, p > .10$) at 1 *SD* below the mean of gender role stress; $\beta = .82, p < .01$ at 1 *SD* above the mean). Among females (Figure 12), once again levels of gender role stress did not moderate the positive relationship between the experiencing fear of abuse from their partners and perpetrating physical abuse ($\beta = .38, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* below the mean of gender role stress; $\beta = .44, p < .05$ at 1 *SD* above the mean).

Figure 9

The interaction of the receipt of ridicule and gender role stress in the perpetration of physical abuse in males.

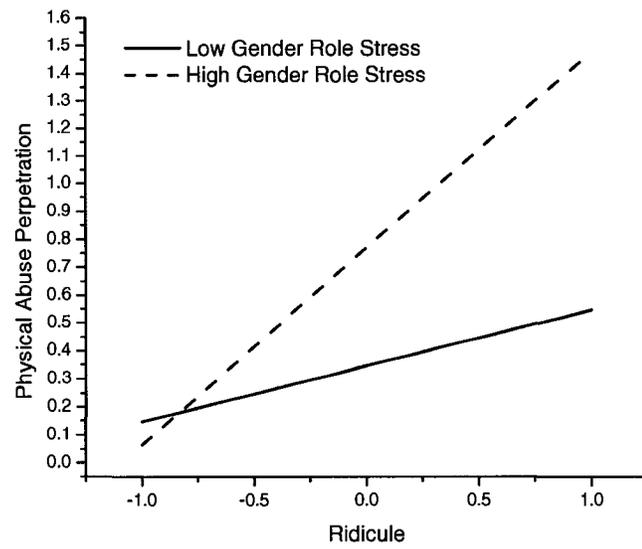


Figure 10

The interaction of the receipt of ridicule and gender role stress in the perpetration of physical abuse in females.

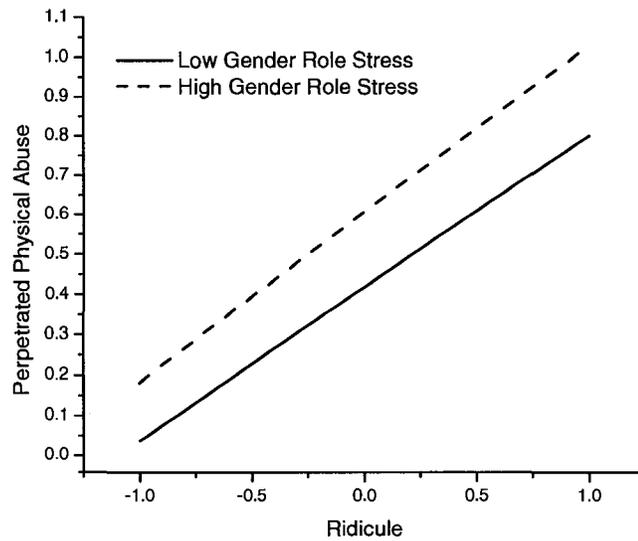


Figure 11

The interaction of the receipt of fear of abuse and gender role stress in the perpetration of physical abuse in males.

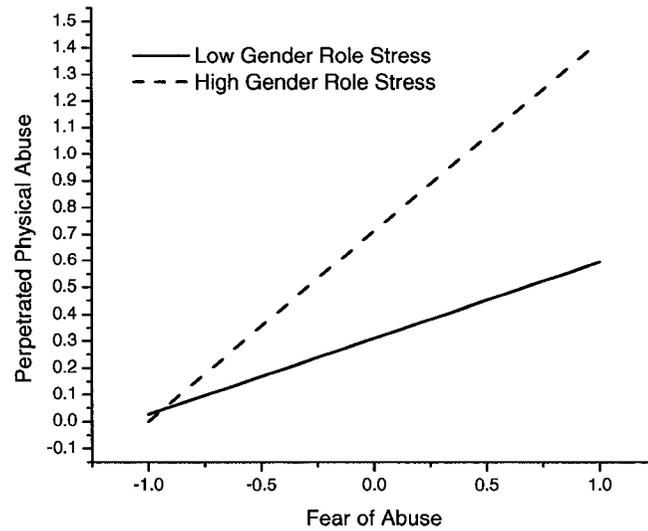
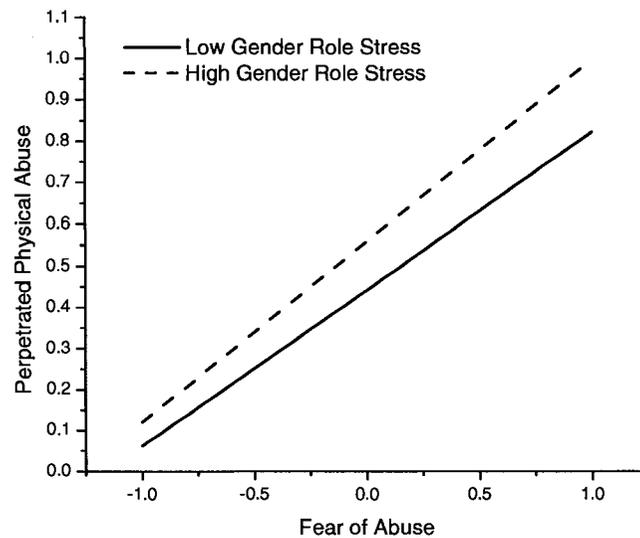


Figure 12

The interaction of the receipt of fear of abuse and gender role stress in the perpetration of physical abuse in females.



Discussion

This present study was designed to investigate gender differences in the experience of psychological abuse, and to identify potential factors, such as gender role stress and coping, that may moderate the relations between the receipt of psychological abuse and its impacts on depressive symptoms and behaviours toward one's partner. The majority of studies that have focused on psychological abuse have considered women as the victims and men as the perpetrators. There is relatively little published research on male victims of psychological abuse. However, the scarce work that has been reported has predominantly found that men and women are equally likely to be the recipients of psychological abuse (Coker et al., 2002; Hines & Saudino, 2003).

In line with previous research that has looked at psychological abuse in dating relationships (Arias et al., 1987; Clements et al., 2005; Makepeace, 1981; Neufeld, et al, 1999), the present study found that occurrences of psychological abuse can appear in dating relationships, and as anticipated both males and females reported that they were the victims of psychological abuse at the hands of their current partners. However, the

extent to which abuse was reported depended on the form it took. Specifically, men and women were equally likely to report abuse in the form of being ignored or ridiculed by their partners. But contrary to expectations, men actually reported experiencing greater psychological abuse in the form of jealous control, criticism, and fear of abuse than did women. It is not clear why men reported more abuse than women, and certainly the effect sizes for these differences were small (ranging from .018 to .032). It is possible that these results are due to chance alone, although the sample size was relatively large. Alternatively, the results may also be a consequence of the self-selected sample, in which the men who chose to participate in the study may have been experiencing problems in their relationship, and were more interested in sharing these problems. Women may have been more interested in participating, irrespective of whether experiencing relationship problems or not, as we often find that women are more willing to volunteer for research studies, and their motives might be quite different from those of men. Finally, it might well be that men do experience some forms of psychological abuse more often than do women. Clearly, replication of these findings is necessary before any general inferences can be drawn.

Although it was determined that gender differences existed in the reporting of some subtypes of psychological abuse, it was also of interest to determine if specific types of psychological abuse were more detrimental than others. All forms of psychological abuse were associated with greater depressive symptomatology, for both males and females. Unexpectedly gender differences did not emerge in predicting depressive symptoms from the various subtypes of psychological abuse. Evidently,

regardless of type, psychological abuse can be equally devastating for both males and females.

Given the relations between abuse and depressive experiences, and the finding that men reported greater abuse than did women, one might have expected the male participants in the present study to report greater depressive symptoms. However, men and women were equally likely to report depressive symptoms. In actuality, this finding is also inconsistent with the majority of literature on gender differences in depression, which has repeatedly noted that women were more likely than men to be depressed (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1990; Radloff, 1975; Weissman & Klerman, 1975). A number of explanations have been suggested to account for the gender difference frequently found in depression, including the differences in the events experienced by men and women, biological differences (i.e., hormonal), differences in coping styles, and a response bias (i.e., the reluctance to report depressive symptoms) (Hunt, Auriemma, & Cashaw, 2003; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Young & Korszun, 1999). With the response bias in mind, the lack of gender differences in depression in the present study may be the result of the nature of the study, where anonymity could be achieved. Men may have been more willing to report their depressive symptoms in the present study, (along with instance of psychological abuse at the hands of their dating partners), as they completed the survey online, and were not subjected to scrutiny of an experimenter. Past researchers have indeed discovered that gender differences in depression reports may only appear within specific contexts (Sigmon et al., 2005; Stanton et al., 1991, but cf. Bryson & Pilon, 1984).

Moderators of the Relations between Psychological Abuse and Depressive Symptoms

Although gender did not influence whether or not a specific type of psychological abuse was associated with depressive symptoms, several psychological factors that might moderate the relations between abuse and symptomatology were considered. A commonly considered moderating variable concerns the individual's coping skills, which were of particular interest in the present study, given that there also exist gender differences in coping (Cronqvist et al., 1997; Matheson & Anisman, 2003; Platek et al., 1994; Piko, 2001; Renk & Creasy, 2003). Indeed, in the present study, women endorsed emotion-focused coping strategies to a greater degree than did men. Evidently, in the face of psychological abuse, women indicated that they would be more likely to seek social support, to be emotionally expressive, and ruminate more often than their male counterparts. Previous researchers have attributed this greater inclination towards emotion-focused coping among women to reflect gender role constraints (Almeida & Kessler, 1998; Barnett et al., 1987; Ptacek et al., 1992; Rosario et al., 1987). For instance, according to Broderick and Korteland (2002), the traditional coping scripts for men are quite rigid (i.e., the "men don't cry" philosophy), whereas women are generally less likely to be constrained by such stereotypes. However, contrary to this notion, proneness to gender role stress in men was positively associated to the endorsement of emotion-focused coping. However, it should be emphasized that these data were correlational, and although it was anticipated that those who are inclined to experience gender role stress would be less likely to engage in emotion-focused coping, it was possible that men who engage in emotion-focused coping might be inclined to experience greater gender role stress as a result of behaving in discordance with their

gender prescribed stereotype. However, it is also possible that the measure of gender role stress used in the present study was not adept at distinguishing between the males who would find behaving in ways that are construed as non-masculine stressful and those who would not. It may have been beneficial to include other measures for assessing gender-related behaviours that might increase the validity of the construct.

It had been expected that coping would serve as a buffer against the negative impacts of experiencing psychological abuse and depressive symptoms. However, it seems that coping served more as a resilience factor, in that, irrespective of whether or not they encountered abuse from their dating partner, for both men and women, greater problem-focused coping, and lower endorsement of emotionally expressive or avoidant coping strategies were associated with lower depressive symptoms. As this coping profile, and in particular, the disinclination to use avoidant coping strategies, was also associated with a lower likelihood of reporting psychological abuse, it may well be that those with strong coping skills were less likely to encounter or remain within abusive relationships. Indeed, avoidant coping is a predominant strategy used in abusive relationships (Matheson et al., 2007), and it is noteworthy that this appears to be the case for both males and females.

Interestingly, the relation between the use of avoidance coping and reporting that one's partner was psychologically abuse was exacerbated under high gender role stress, and is consistent with previous research on the relations between gender role stress and coping (Copenhaver, Lash, & Eisler, 2004). For instance, Copenhaver et al. (2004) examined the coping strategies of males who are prone to experience gender role stress and found that these men often turn to substance abuse (i.e., excessive alcohol

consumption) to alleviate distress, and to help reduce negative emotions. Similarly, Gillespie and Eisler (1992) concluded that women who adhere to the traditional role stereotypes were inclined to cope in a manner that is emotionally oriented or avoidant, rather than problem-focused. Thus, in psychologically abusive relationships, rather than proactively dealing with the stressful situation, men and women who are prone to experience gender role stress might be most inclined to engage in coping behaviours that would temporarily relieve their distress, but could nonetheless lead to larger problems in the future, including depression and the escalation of further abuse.

Unlike coping behaviours, levels of gender role stress did appear to moderate the relation between some forms of abuse, and in addition, appeared to influence the extent to which experiencing some forms of abuse might have translated into perpetrating abuse against their current partners. Evidently, for males and females, being ignored by, and fearing abuse from, their partner coupled with gender role stress was associated with increased distress. This is consistent with the literature which has suggested that gender role stress in males is related to decreased well-being (Eisler, 1995; Jakupcak, 2002) and increased aggression (Jakupcak et al., 2005; Jakupcak et al., 2007). Apparently, as the current findings suggest, this is also true for females, when experiencing abuse, gender role stress exacerbates depressive affect in women. Clearly, gender role stress is something that should be taken into consideration when assessing victims of abuse, as well as perpetrators, as it is inevitably related to and a contributor to the overall negative impact of psychological abuse.

Once again, however, it should be noted that these data were correlational, and it is possible that those who were distressed would perceive any kind of situation as more

negative, compared to those who are not in a negative state of mind. In other words, the perception of psychological abuse and gender role stress may well be a consequence of being depressed. In order to ascertain whether a causal direction exists between these variables, a longitudinal or laboratory study would be necessary to delineate the causal sequence of events.

Although, the relations between gender role stress and aggression had previously been studied in males (Franchina, Eisler, & Moore, 2001), the impacts of gender role stress and aggression among females is less understood. Among both males and females, the receipt of psychological abuse was associated with perpetration of both psychological and physical abuse. This finding is congruent with prior studies which have found strong associations between the self-reports of victimization and perpetration of abuse in both married and dating couples (Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, and Silva, 1998; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). However, the factors influencing the perpetration of abuse may very well have differed for males and females, and indeed, these relations were moderated by gender role stress.

Among females, gender role stress did not influence the relations between the receipt of psychological abuse (i.e., jealous control, ignore, ridicule, criticism, fear of abuse) and the perpetration of physical or psychological abuse. Regardless of whether or not they indicated that they experience distress in situations that are gender incongruent, the women who were the recipients of psychological abuse were more likely to perpetrate abuse than those who did not experience psychological abuse from their partners. The omission of a measure that could assess the motives behind the abuse perpetration is a limitation of the present study, as it is not possible to determine if the women in the

present study were acting aggressively in self-defense. This is indeed a possibility, as has been suggested in previous research (Saunders, 1986; Walker, 1979). Clearly, future research should include a measure of the motivations for abuse perpetration in order to gain a better insight into why women, who are abused, reciprocate the abuse.

Among males, experiencing some forms of psychological abuse (and in particular, jealous control, ridicule, and fear of abuse) was also associated with an increased likelihood of perpetrating physical and psychological abuse, and this was especially true when high levels of gender role stress were reported. This finding is in line with research by Cohn and Zeichner (2006) who examined gender role stress as a moderator in the relationship between provocation and aggression, finding that with increased provocation, those high in gender role stress were the most likely to perpetrate aggression. Evidently, when males, especially those who are prone to experience stress related to their gender role, are maltreated by their partners, they are at risk of reciprocating or escalating the abuse, this was especially true for the forms of psychological abuse ridicule and fear of abuse. It was hypothesized that abuse that was aimed at degrading a man's competencies (i.e. ridicule) would be associated with increased distress in men, and although there were no specific predictions regarding the different forms of abuse in association with gender role stress, it is possible that men who are prone to experience gender role stress would find ridicule (especially aimed at masculine competencies) very distressing and, consequently, would trigger aggressive behavior in these men. It is not certain why the relationship between experiencing fear of abuse and physical abuse perpetration was exacerbated by gender role stress in males. However, it is possible that the stress that is encountered by men with gender role stress,

if threatened by a partner, could bring about aggressive behaviours in men as a way of proving their masculinity. To this end, identifying and treating men who become distressed when placed in situations that are perceived as incongruent with masculine stereotypes, could aid in preventing these men from perpetrating abuse, and moreover improve their psychological and physical well-being.

Limitations

In addition to some of the limitations already noted, there are several other limitations to the present study that should be acknowledged. First of all, the web-based nature of the study restricts the possibility of obtaining a completely random sample of participants. Although computer literacy has grown substantially over the last decade, there still remains a portion of the population who does not use the internet, or has limited access to a computer. An ideal, representative survey requires that everyone in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Dillman, 1991). Thus, the present population could be biased in terms of higher socio-economic status, education, and a younger age group, as these are the individuals who are most likely to use a computer on a daily basis. Additionally, the use of the web-based survey may have inhibited individuals who are living with an abusive partner from completing the survey, in the event that their partner would discover what they were doing.

Another limitation to the present study was the self-report nature of the questions. There is overwhelming empirical evidence that response bias is often inherent in self-report surveys (i.e., Gove & Geerken, 1974). Although confidentiality and anonymity of personal information was emphasized at the onset of the survey, it is possible that the participants were still concerned with responding in an appropriate

manner, particularly those who experience gender role stress who, by nature, are extremely concerned with behaving gender appropriately. One way in which the potential error that may have resulted in the self-report data of the present study could have been reduced would have been to have complimented the self-reports with reports from the partner. However, this would have been difficult to achieve when dealing with situations where the non-responding partner may have been abusive. Not only would response biases play a role in such relationships, but the safety of the victimized partner might also have been compromised.

The omission of a transgender category in which participants could potentially identify themselves is also a limitation of the present study. It is possible that certain participants may have fallen into this category, however were forced to make a choice between identifying themselves as male or female. These individuals may have been particularly prone to experience gender role stress, and therefore, it would have been beneficial to include a transgender category into the analyses. Additionally, only males received the masculine gender role stress scale, whereas females only received the feminine gender role stress scale. It is possible that certain males may not have found the items on the masculine gender role stress scale as stressful, but may have found the items on the feminine gender role stress scale as considerably stressful. Similarly, certain females may have not indicated that they are inclined to experience gender role stress in relation to the feminine gender role stress scale, but may have indeed found the items on the masculine gender role stress scale as stressful. Thus, it is advisable that in future research both the masculine gender role stress scale and feminine gender role stress scale

are administered to all participants, regardless of their gender identification, so that these uncertainties can be addressed.

A final limitation of the present study was the correlational nature of the design. Because the different types of psychological abuse were all highly correlated with one another, it is difficult to interpret the results, and to disentangle the effect of one type of psychological abuse on depressive symptoms from another. One way to combat this uncertainty would be to have a longitudinal design where the causal effects of abuse on depressive symptoms and the perpetration of abuse could be identified. A diary study, for instance, where participants would be required to keep a log of their daily encounters with their partners would allow a better assessment of the sequence of events, and whether the abuse causes the depressive symptoms, and who has instigated the abuse.

Implications and Conclusions

The present study provides support to the assertion that males are as likely to be the victims of psychological abuse as women, and that psychological abuse, regardless of form, is associated with reports of depressive symptoms among both men and women. Moreover, the use of avoidance coping and problem-focused coping in the face of a psychologically abusive encounter were reported at similar rates for males and females, with the use of problem-focused coping related to attenuated depressive symptomology whereas, the use of avoidance coping was related to exacerbated depressive symptomology. With respect to the effects of gender role stress, the present study has illustrated, consistent with previous work, that gender role stress is associated with distress for both males and females, and that the use of emotion-focused coping is a more

common coping strategy for those who experience gender role stress than for those who do not.

Despite these commonalities, the present study has also uncovered gender differences in the experience of psychological abuse. For instance, the men in this sample were more likely than the women to report experiencing jealous control, criticism, and fear of abuse. The reason for the greater incidence of these forms of abuse as reported by men is not certain, however, as suggested previously, it may be a consequence of the self-selected sample, or it could be a real occurrence in the general population. Certainly, replication of these findings would provide more assurance that the results are conclusive. It is not clear that the underlying processes that lead up to either perpetrating or reporting abuse are the same for males and females. Indeed, some have suggested that women's abusive behaviour is more likely to be self-defensive, than offensive. The finding that women are less likely than males to increase their perpetration of abuse when experiencing gender role stress, suggests that women are not trying to defend their role as a women when inflicting abuse, which further indicates that women may be behaving aggressively as a way to protect themselves against their abusive male partners. Men, conversely, are more likely to inflict abuse when experiencing gender role stress, which indicates that their acts of aggression may be the consequence of trying to live up to their masculine expectations, and not necessarily as self-defense. However, these men may also be abusive as a way of dealing with their partner's abuse towards them, and because they are under stress, they are acting aggressively, a typical fight or flight response. Clearly, understanding the motivations behind the aggression would shed more light on the situation.

The present research has also confirmed that avoidance coping has detrimental effects, especially when coupled with gender role stress. It is therefore of utmost importance to provide individuals with the necessary information and skills required to cope effectively in a stressful situation, such as an abusive relationship, and to focus on factors that might contribute to maladaptive coping, such as feeling the need to adhere strictly to a socially prescribed gender role.

Furthermore the finding that the perpetration of both psychological and physical abuse is associated with the receipt of psychological abuse indicates that individuals who are receiving abuse are not coping effectively, and rather than seeking the appropriate help, abuse is being reciprocated, leading to an endless cycle of mutual abuse and dysfunctional relationships.

In conclusion, psychological abuse is a prevalent problem in dating relationships. Not only is being the victim of psychological abuse associated with depressive symptoms, but it also related to abuse perpetration. Furthermore, it has been found that certain factors, such as gender role stress and coping contribute to the negative experience of a psychologically abusive relationship. It is quite likely that other factors also contribute to the impact of a psychologically abusive relationship, and therefore, future research should examine other potential variables that would help to explain this well-researched, yet still very perplexing phenomenon.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent has to provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

Study Title: Relationship Interactions among Intimate Partners.

Research Personnel: The following people are involved in this research and may be contacted at any time if you have any questions about the project, what it means, or concerns about how it was conducted:

K. Carroll, Researcher, Department of Psychology, (613) 520-2600, ext. 2683
 S. Hyde, Researcher, Department of Psychology, (613) 520-2600, ext. 7513
 M. Bolton, Researcher, Department of Psychology, (613) 520-2600, ext. 7513
 Dr. Kim Matheson, Faculty Member, Department of Psychology, (613) 520-2684
 Dr. Hymie Anisman, Faculty Member, Department of Psychology, (613) 520-2699

If you have any ethical concerns about how this study was conducted, please contact either of the following:

Dr. J. Mantler, Chair of the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee for
 Psychological Research, (613) 520-2600, ext. 4173

Dr. M. Gick, Chair, Dept. of Psychology, Carleton University, (613) 520-2648

Purpose and Task Requirements: Dating partners may find themselves in a variety of social situations, some of which are more stressful than others. We are interested in the characteristics of your relationship and of you yourself. You'll be asked to respond to a number of questionnaires that ask information about your relationship and how you and your partner relate to one another including how you resolve conflicts and the nature of some of those conflicts (e.g., whether you or your partner ever resort to physical threats or actions). The study also includes questions concerning your personality characteristics and well-being, and about some of your personal experiences and ways of dealing with them, including potential experiences with past traumatic events, such as loss of a loved one, assault, etc. This survey takes about 60 mins to complete. You will receive \$10 in the form of a gift certificate from Tim Horton's, Chapters/Indigo, or Famous Players.

Potential Risk and Discomfort: There are no physical risks in this study. Some individuals may experience discomfort when asked to respond to personal, sensitive questions about themselves or their relationship.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study will be kept anonymous and confidential. Your informed consent form will be separated from your questionnaire and kept in a separate and secured file by one of the research investigators.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to choose to not answer any questions, or to withdraw entirely without penalty.

I have read the above description of the study concerning dating relationships. The data collected will be used in research publications and/or for teaching purposes. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in the study, and this in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights.

Full Name (please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gender: Female / Male (please circle one)

Age: _____

Do you currently live in Canada? No _____ Yes _____

If not, City & Country you're living in _____

What is your Canadian citizenship status?

_____ Canadian citizen

_____ Landed immigrant Since what year? _____ Country of origin

_____ Temporary visa Since what year? _____ Country of origin

_____ None of the above, as I do not live in Canada

What is your ethnic/racial background? _____

What is your religion, if any? _____

Do you have any visible physical disability?

No _____ Yes _____ If so, please specify _____

Do you have any learning disability?

No _____ Yes _____ If so, please specify _____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_____ 8 years or less of elementary school

_____ some high school but no diploma

_____ high school diploma or equivalent

_____ 1 to 3 years of college/university (including study at a technical college or
CEGEP)

_____ undergraduate university degree

_____ master's degree

_____ doctoral degree

_____ professional degree [e.g., medicine (M.D.), dentistry (D.D.S.), law]

0 1 2 3 4
 Never Only once A few times Several times Frequently

In your **current relationship**, has this person ever been physically aggressive toward you?

0 1 2 3 4
 Never Only once A few times Several times Frequently

In your **current relationship**, has this person ever ridiculed, insulted or humiliated you without reason?

0 1 2 3 4
 Never Only once A few times Several times Frequently

In your **current relationship**, have you ever felt afraid of this person?

0 1 2 3 4
 Never Only once A few times Several times Frequently

Prior to your current relationship, how many previous relationships have you had that you would describe as 'serious'? _____

Do you have children? No _____ Yes _____ If yes, how many? _____

Have you ever experienced abuse (either emotional, physical, or sexual)? _____ No;
 _____ Yes

If yes, please indicate the type of abuse you experienced (check all that apply).

- ____ Emotional or Psychological
 ____ Physical
 ____ Sexual

What relationship did you have to the person who was abusive toward you? (check all that apply)

- ____ My **current** romantic partner
 ____ A **previous** romantic partner
 ____ Friend or acquaintance
 ____ Parent or caregiver
 ____ Other relative
 ____ Stranger
 ____ Other (please specify): _____

At what age did this happen?

- ____ Before age 6

- Between 6 and 12
 Between 12 and 16
 After age 16

YOUR HEALTH

Do you currently smoke? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, how many cigarettes/day? _____

Do you drink alcohol? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, How much alcohol do you drink on average? _____ drinks per day

OR _____ drinks per week

Do you take or use any drugs? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, which drugs have you used in the past month? (check as many as apply)

_____ Marijuana/hash; How many times in the past month? _____

_____ Ecstasy; How many times in the past month? _____

_____ Cocaine; How many times in the past month? _____

_____ Heroin; How many times in the past month? _____

_____ Other; Please specify _____;
 How many times in the past month? _____

Are you currently being treated for any physical condition?

No _____ Yes _____ If yes, please specify _____

Have you ever been in psychological therapy or counselling? (please check only one)

_____ No, I have never been in therapy

_____ Yes, but I am no longer

_____ Yes, and still am

If yes, how long ago were you in, or have you been in therapy?

Began _____ month/year and continued until _____ month/year

Appendix C

Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (titled only for ethics)

Please read each of the following situations carefully and indicate the level of stress that you associate with each one. If a statement is not applicable to you today, think ahead into your future to respond. Example: Getting passed over for a promotion. Please use the following scale to rate your perceived level of stress.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Stressful	mildly stressful	somewhat stressful	often stressful	usually stressful	extremely stressful
1.	Admitting that you are afraid of something				_____
2.	Admitting to your friends that you do housework				_____
3.	Appearing less athletic than a friend				_____
4.	Being compared unfavorably to men				_____
5.	Being married to someone who makes more money than you				_____
6.	Being outperformed at work by a woman				_____
7.	Being outperformed in a game by a woman				_____
8.	Being perceived as having feminine traits				_____
9.	Being perceived by someone as "gay"				_____
10.	Being too tired for sex when your lover initiates it				_____
11.	Being unable to become sexually aroused when you want				_____
12.	Being unable to perform sexually				_____
13.	Being unemployed				_____
14.	Being with a woman who is more successful than you				_____
15.	Being with a woman who is much taller than you				_____
16.	Comforting a male friend who is upset				_____
17.	Feeling that you are not in good physical condition				_____
18.	Finding you lack the occupational skills to succeed				_____
19.	Getting fired from your job				_____
20.	Getting passed over for a promotion				_____
21.	Having a female boss				_____

22. Having a man put his arm around your shoulder _____
23. Having others say that you are too emotional _____
24. Having people say you are indecisive _____
25. Having to ask for directions when you are lost _____
26. Having your children see you cry _____
27. Having your lover say that he/she is not satisfied _____
28. Knowing you cannot hold your liquor as well as others _____
29. Letting a woman take control of the situation _____
30. Losing in a sports competition _____
31. Needing your partner to work to help support the family _____
32. Not being able to find a sexual partner _____
33. Not making enough money _____
34. Staying home during the day with a sick child _____
35. Talking with a feminist _____
36. Talking with a woman who is crying _____
37. Telling someone that you feel hurt by what she/he said _____
38. Telling your partner that you love him/her _____
39. Working with people who are brighter than you _____
40. Working with people who seem more ambitious than you _____

Appendix D

Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (titled only for ethics)

Please read each of the following situations carefully and indicate the level of stress that you associate with each one. If a statement is not applicable to you today, think ahead into your future to respond. Please use the following scale to rate your perceived level of stress.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Stressful	mildly stressful	somewhat stressful	often stressful	usually stressful	extremely stressful
1. A very close friend stops speaking to you					_____
2. Bargaining with a salesperson when buying a new car					_____
3. Being considered promiscuous					_____
4. Being heavier than your partner					_____
5. Being perceived by others as overweight					_____
6. Being pressured for sex when seeking affection from your partner					_____
7. Being taken for granted in a sexual relationship					_____
8. Being unable to change your appearance to please someone					_____
9. Being unusually tall					_____
10. Feeling less attractive than you once were					_____
11. Feeling pressured to engage in sexual activity					_____
12. Feeling that you are being followed by someone					_____
13. Finding out that you have gained 10 pounds					_____
14. Having a weak or incompetent partner					_____
15. Having an intimate relationship without any romance					_____
16. Having multiple sex partners					_____
17. Having others believe that you are emotionally cold					_____
18. Having someone else raise your children					_____
19. Having to "sell" yourself at a job interview					_____
20. Having to deal with unwanted sexual advances					_____

21. Having to move to a new city or town alone _____
22. Having your car break down on the road _____
23. Hearing a strange noise while you are at home alone _____
24. Hearing that a dangerous criminal has escaped nearby _____
25. Losing custody of your children after a divorce _____
26. Making sure that you are not taken advantage of when buying a house or car _____
27. Negotiating the price of car repairs _____
28. Not being able to meet family members' emotional needs _____
29. Receiving an obscene phone call _____
30. Returning to work soon after your child is born _____
31. Supervising older and more experienced employees at work _____
32. Talking with someone who is angry with you _____
33. Trying to be a good parent and excel at work _____
34. Trying to get your partner to take responsibility for child care _____
35. Turning middle aged and being single _____
36. Wearing a bathing suit in public _____
37. Your child is disliked by his or her peers _____
38. Your partner is unemployed and cannot find a job _____
39. Your mate will not discuss your relationship problems _____

Appendix E

PPA

We are interested in knowing about your interactions with your **current intimate partner**. *If you aren't in a romantic relationship with anyone at the moment, then please describe your experiences with your most recent partner.* Some of these questions may be hard to answer, but please try to be as accurate as possible, using the rating scale below. For each statement, please indicate how often your partner has behaved this way toward you **in the past 3 months** by writing a number in the space to the right of each statement using the following rating scale:

Responses:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	Twice	3- 5 times	6- 10 times	More than 10 times

How often does your partner:

1. ____ Become angry or upset if you want to be with someone else and not with him/her?
2. ____ Ignore your need for assistance when you're sick, tired, or over-worked?
3. ____ Tell you that you are a horrible lover, worthless, or no good?
4. ____ After you've cooked or cleaned, tell you it's not right and ask you to do it over again until he/she decides it's done right?
5. ____ Make you feel guilty or ashamed for something he/she demanded that you do?
6. ____ Intercept your mail, telephone calls, or drill you about who called you, who wrote you a letter, or what you were talking about?
7. ____ Make the TV, a magazine, the newspaper, or other people seem more important than you are?
8. ____ Ridicule the traits you admire or value most in yourself?
9. ____ Inspect your work and make overly critical comments?
10. ____ Make you account for every minute you spend away from the house?
11. ____ Become jealous about your friends, family or pets?
12. ____ Complain or ridicule you if you are upset or ask for emotional support?

13. ____ Check up on you throughout the day? (calls you every 15 minutes, comes home early from work, has others tell him/her your whereabouts, etc.)
14. ____ Request that everything be done in a precise way or it will be unacceptable to him/her?
15. ____ Threaten to hurt a prized possession, pets, friends, or relatives if you don't comply with his/her wishes?
16. ____ Suggest you're crazy or stupid?
17. ____ Keep you up late yelling at you, either accusing you of having affairs or accusing you of other things?
18. ____ Make you feel you as if you are "walking on egg shells" when you are around him/her?
19. ____ Ignore your suggestion to have sex or not do what excites or satisfies you?
20. ____ Call you names with sexual connotations such as "slut" or "whore" or "cunt" (or if you're male, names like "fairy", "faggot", or "homo")?
21. ____ Ignore you when you begin a conversation?
22. ____ Make fun of your triumphs, discourage your plans, or minimize your successes?
23. ____ Ask for detailed reports of your hourly activities?

How often:

24. ____ Do you worry that what you do will make your partner angry?
25. ____ Do you do things your partner wants you to do because you feel afraid?
26. ____ Do you fear that your partner will hit you if you don't comply with his/her wishes?
27. ____ Do you try to second-guess how your partner will act?

Appendix F

CTS-R

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have fights because they are in a bad mood, tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. Now we would like to ask you about some of the methods YOU have used to settle disputes in your relationship. For each statement, please indicate how often you have behaved this way toward your partner **in the past 3 months** by writing a number in the space to the right of each statement using the following rating scale:

In the past 3 months...

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	Twice	3 – 5 times	6 - 10 times	More than 10 times

1. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed. _____
2. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner. _____
3. I insulted or swore at my partner. _____
4. I threw something at my partner that could hurt. _____
5. I twisted my partner's arm or pulled his/her hair. _____
6. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me. _____
7. I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue. _____
8. I made my partner have sex with me without a condom. _____
9. I pushed or shoved my partner. _____
10. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex with me. _____
11. I used a knife or gun on my partner. _____

12. My partner passed out from hitting her/him on the head in a fight. _____

In the past 3 months...

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	Twice	3 - 5	6 - 10	More than 10
		times	times	times	

13. I called my partner fat or ugly. _____

14. I punched or hit my partner. _____

15. I destroyed something belonging to my partner. _____

16. My partner went to a doctor because of a fight we had. _____

17. I choked my partner. _____

18. I shouted or yelled at my partner. _____

19. I slammed my partner against a wall. _____

20. I said I was sure we could work things out. _____

21. My partner needed to see a doctor because
of a fight we had, but he/she didn't. _____

22. I beat up my partner. _____

23. I grabbed my partner. _____

24. I used force on my partner
(like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon)
to make him/her have sex. _____

25. I stomped out of a room, house, or yard
during the disagreement. _____

26. I insisted on sex when my partner didn't want
to (but I didn't use physical force). _____

How many times in the past 3 months?

0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	Twice	3 – 5	6 - 10	More than 10
		times	times		

27. I slapped my partner. _____

28. My partner had a broken bone from a fight we had. _____

29. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex. _____

30. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement. _____

31. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose. _____

32. I insisted on having oral or anal sex
(but didn't use physical force). _____

33. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover. _____

34. I did something to spite my partner. _____

35. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner. _____

36. My partner felt physical pain that hurt the next day
because of a fight we had. _____

37. I kicked my partner. _____

38. I used threats on my partner to make her/him have sex. _____

39. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement
my partner had suggested. _____

Appendix G

SCOPE

We would like you to consider the following situation. Imagine yourself in this position, and how you would feel and react.

You come home at the end of the day, and you're feeling really tired. You had a meeting with your boss today that you don't think went well, and you're worrying about how you're going to face your boss tomorrow. Your partner (boyfriend or girlfriend) got home before you, and is lying on the couch watching TV. When your partner sees you and how upset you look, she or he says "Great...just what I want to see is you moping around again. Face it, the problem is you're not that smart to begin with, so who cares what you do. If you look at all competent, it would be a miracle". You decide to ignore the comment for now, and go to the kitchen to make yourself something to eat, because you've been too stressed to eat all day. Your partner follows you into the kitchen, saying "The least you could do is offer to make something for me while you're at it. You're not the only one who's had a hard day. Besides haven't you noticed that no matter how much you eat, it doesn't make you any smarter, just fatter". You turn around and glare at him or her. S/he says "screw you. I'm not hanging around when you're like this", and leaves the apartment, slamming the door.

Try to imagine that your current partner has just done this to you. If this happened to you,

How much control do you feel in the situation described above?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None at all						Total
control						

To what extent do you think you brought this situation on yourself?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None at all						Entirely my
own doing						

How threatening is this event to the success of your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None at all						Extremely
threatening						

How important is achieving a good resolution to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None at all						Extremely
important						

Would this be an isolated event, or do you feel that it is indicative of your relationship as a whole?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Isolated						Reflects relationship as a whole

How likely do you think it is that this kind of situation would happen again in the future?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely likely

How stressed would you feel about this event?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None at all						Extremely

The following is a list of things that people may do to cope with a stressful situation. Please consider the **situation just described and imagine that this has just happened** between you and your partner. Please read each item and then indicate the extent to which the statement describes what you did to cope with this event.

Which of the following strategies do you think you would find yourself using in response to this situation?

<i>In response to this event, you would have...</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Almost always</i>
1. Accepted that there was nothing you could do to change your situation?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Tried to just take whatever came your way?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Talked with friends or relatives about your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Tried to do things, which you typically enjoy?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Sought out information that would help you resolve your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Blamed others for creating your problems or making them worse?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Sought the advice of others to resolve your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Blamed yourself for your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Exercised?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Fantasised or thought about unreal things (e.g., the perfect revenge, or winning a million dollars) to feel better?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Been very emotional compared to your usual self?	0	1	2	3	4
12. Gone over your problems in your mind over and over again?	0	1	2	3	4
13. Asked others for help?	0	1	2	3	4
14. Thought about your problems a lot?	0	1	2	3	4
15. Became involved in recreation or pleasure activities?	0	1	2	3	4
16. Worried about your problems a lot?	0	1	2	3	4
17. Tried to keep your mind off things that are upsetting you?	0	1	2	3	4
18. Tried to distract yourself from your troubles?	0	1	2	3	4
19. Avoided thinking about your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
20. Made plans to overcome your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
21. Told jokes about your situation?	0	1	2	3	4
22. Thought a lot about who is responsible for your problems (besides yourself)?	0	1	2	3	4
23. Shared humorous stories etc. to cheer yourself and others up?	0	1	2	3	4

<i>In response to this event, you would have...</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Almost always</i>
24. Told yourself that other people have dealt with problems such as yours?	0	1	2	3	4
25. Thought a lot about how you have brought your problems on yourself?	0	1	2	3	4
26. Decided to wait and see how things turn out?	0	1	2	3	4
27. Wished the situation would go away or be over with?	0	1	2	3	4
28. Decided that your current problems are a result of your own past actions?	0	1	2	3	4
29. Gone shopping?	0	1	2	3	4
30. Asserted yourself and taken positive action on problems that are getting you down?	0	1	2	3	4
31. Sought reassurance and moral support from others?	0	1	2	3	4
32. Resigned yourself to your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
33. Thought about how your problems have been caused by other people?	0	1	2	3	4
34. Daydreamed about how things may turn out?	0	1	2	3	4
35. Been very emotional in how you react, even to little things?	0	1	2	3	4
36. Decided that you can grow and learn through your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
37. Told yourself that other people have problems like your own?	0	1	2	3	4
38. Wished you were a stronger person or better at dealing with problems?	0	1	2	3	4
39. Looked for how you can learn something out of your bad situation?	0	1	2	3	4
40. Asked for God's guidance?	0	1	2	3	4
41. Kept your feelings bottled up inside?	0	1	2	3	4
42. Found yourself crying more than usual?	0	1	2	3	4
43. Tried to act as if you were not upset?	0	1	2	3	4
44. Prayed for help?	0	1	2	3	4
45. Gone out?	0	1	2	3	4
46. Held in your feelings?	0	1	2	3	4
47. Tried to act as if you weren't feeling bad?	0	1	2	3	4
48. Taken steps to overcome your problems?	0	1	2	3	4
49. Made humorous comments or wise cracks?	0	1	2	3	4
50. Told others that you were depressed or emotionally upset?	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix H

BECK INVENTORY

On this questionnaire are groups of statements. Please read the entire group of statements in each category. Then pick out ONE statement in that group which best describes the way you feel. Check off the number beside the statement you have chosen.

1. ___ 0 = I do not feel sad
 ___ 1 = I feel sad or blue
 ___ 2a = I am blue or sad all of the time and I can't snap out of it
 ___ 2b = I am so sad or unhappy that it is very painful
 ___ 3 = I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it

2. ___ 0 = I am not particularly pessimistic or discouraged about the future
 ___ 1 = I feel discouraged about the future
 ___ 2a = I feel I have nothing to look forward to
 ___ 2b = I feel I won't every get over my troubles
 ___ 3 = I feel that the future is hopeless and things cannot improve

3. ___ 0 = I do not feel like a failure
 ___ 1 = I feel I have failed more than the average person
 ___ 2a = I feel I have accomplished very little that is worthwhile or that means anything
 ___ 2b = As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures
 ___ 3 = I feel I am a complete failure as a person

4. ___ 0 = I am not particularly dissatisfied
 ___ 1a = I feel bored most of the time
 ___ 1b = I don't enjoy things the way I used to
 ___ 2 = I don't get satisfaction out of anything anymore
 ___ 3 = I am dissatisfied with everything

5. ___ 0 = I don't feel particularly guilty
 ___ 1 = I feel bad or unworthy a good part of the time
 ___ 2a = I feel quite guilty
 ___ 2b = I feel bad or unworthy practically all of the time now
 ___ 3 = I feel as though I am very bad or worthless

6. ___ 0 = I don't feel I am being punished
 ___ 1 = I have a feeling that something bad may happen to me
 ___ 2 = I feel I am being punished or will be punished
 ___ 3a = I feel I deserve to be punished
 ___ 3b = I want to be punished

7. ___ 0 = I don't feel disappointed in myself
___ 1a = I am disappointed in myself
___ 1b = I don't like myself
___ 2 = I am disgusted with myself
___ 3 = I hate myself
8. ___ 0 = I do not feel I am any worse than anybody else
___ 1 = I am very critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes
___ 2a = I blame myself for everything that goes wrong
___ 2b = I feel I have many bad faults
9. ___ 0 = I don't have thoughts of harming myself
___ 1 = I have thoughts of harming myself but I would not carry them out
___ 2a = I feel I would be better off dead
___ 2b = I have definite plans about committing suicide
___ 2c = I feel my family would be better off if I were dead
___ 3 = I would kill myself if I could
10. ___ 0 = I don't cry anymore than usual
___ 1 = I cry more now than I used to
___ 2 = I cry all the time now. I can't stop it
___ 3 = I used to be able to cry but now I can't cry at all even though I want to
11. ___ 0 = I am no more irritated now than I ever am
___ 1 = I get annoyed or irritated more easily than I used to
___ 2 = I get irritated all the time
___ 3 = I don't get irritated at all the things that used to irritate me.
12. ___ 0 = I have not lost interest in other people
___ 1 = I am less interested in other people than I used to be
___ 2 = I have lost most of my interest in other people and I have little feeling for them
___ 3 = I have lost all my interest in other people and don't care about them at all
13. ___ 0 = I make decisions about as well as ever
___ 1 = I am less sure of myself now and try to put off making decisions
___ 2 = I can't make decisions anymore without help
___ 3 = I can't make decisions at all anymore
14. ___ 0 = I don't feel I look any worse than I used to
___ 1 = I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive

___ 2 = I feel that there are permanent changes in my appearance and they make

me look unattractive

___ 3 = I feel that I am ugly or repulsive looking

15. ___ 0 = I can work about as well as before

___ 1a = It takes extra effort to get started at doing something

___ 1b = I don't work as well as I used to

___ 2 = I have to push myself very hard to do anything

___ 3 = I can't do any work at all

16. ___ 0 = I can sleep as well as usual

___ 1 = I wake up more tired in the morning than I used to

___ 2 = I wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get back to sleep

___ 3 = I wake up early every day and can't get more than 5 hours sleep

17. ___ 0 = I don't get anymore tired than usual

___ 1 = I get tired more easily than I used to

___ 2 = I get tired from doing anything

___ 3 = I get too tired to do anything

18. ___ 0 = My appetite is no worse than usual

___ 1 = My appetite is not as good as it used to be

___ 2 = My appetite is much worse now

___ 3 = I have no appetite at all any more

19. ___ 0 = I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately

___ 1 = I have lost more than 5 pounds

___ 2 = I have lost more than 10 pounds

___ 3 = I have lost more than 15 pounds

20. ___ 0 = I am no more concerned about my health than usual

___ 1 = I am concerned about aches and pains or upset stomach or constipation or other unpleasant feelings in my body

___ 2 = I am so concerned with how I feel or what I feel that it's hard to think of much else

___ 3 = I am completely absorbed in what I feel

21. ___ 0 = I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex

___ 1 = I am less interested in sex than I used to be

___ 2 = I am much less interested in sex now

___ 3 = I have lost interest in sex completely

Appendix I

Debriefing

Intimate partner abuse may begin early in a relationship, and among university women, one-third report having experienced physical abuse from their dating partners in the past six months, and almost 80% report a psychologically abusive incident. Incidence rates for men are less reliable, as men are often especially unwilling to report experiencing abuse. However, it has been suggested that men are just as likely to experience abuse at the hands of their intimate partners, although not as severely. Not surprisingly, experiencing abuse, whether physical or psychological, can have serious effects on well-being, including loss of self-esteem, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and even lower academic performance.

Several factors may increase the risk of becoming involved and remaining in an abusive relationship. Some of these include a history of previous abuse or neglect within the family home, having friends who have experienced date abuse and/or who see such behaviour as acceptable, and higher levels of drinking with peers. It's possible that these factors influence how a person interprets an abusive experience when they encounter it, and how they choose to cope with. For example, some people in abusive relationships interpret such events as normal, or acceptable because things 'could be worse'. Others interpret abusive behaviors as 'joking around', or even as a sign of love and affection. When interpreted like this, it's unlikely that someone who is being abused will end the relationship, and so they may become vulnerable not only to further abuse, but their own well-being suffers.

The present investigation is aimed at examining the relation between the quality of their dating relationships and well-being in young men and women. In addition, particular attention is devoted to determining the role of appraisals (interpretations) and coping processes that are adopted to respond to relationship conflicts.

While many of you who have participated in this study may not be in abusive relationships, some of you are. If you believe you may be in an abusive relationship, or have other concerns related to your well-being or to this study, we have attached some numbers you may contact to get more information and/or help.

Thank you for your participation in this study.