

The Interplay between Relationship Power and Gender Differences on Psychological
Abuse in Dating Relationships and Depressive Symptoms

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by

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Abstract

Psychological abuse can appear early in dating relationships and is perpetrated equally among men and women. This study focused on gender, relationship power and power satisfaction in dating abuse. It also examined whether power and power satisfaction mediated the relationship between abuse and depression. Men ($n=274$) and women ($n=352$) from a student and community sample answered questionnaires on abuse, power perceptions and depressive symptoms. Gender moderated the relationship between perceived power and depression; women reporting low power perceptions exhibited elevated depressive symptoms. Experiencing high levels of psychological abuse was associated with low perceived power and power satisfaction more so among women. In bidirectional abuse, women that perpetrated and received high levels of abuse displayed the highest depressive symptoms, whereas women that were high perpetrators, but low victims displayed the lowest depressive symptoms. Men, regardless of victimization, reported increased depressive symptoms as abuse perpetration increased. The relationship between psychological abuse and depression was mediated by perceived power for women, and satisfaction with power mediated for both genders. These findings suggest that in dating relationships, power and satisfaction with power are important contributors to psychological abuse and depression.

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Table of Contents

Title	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
List of Appendices	vii
Introduction	1
Methods	18
Results	22
Discussion	44
Limitations	54
Summary and Conclusions	55
References	58
Appendices	68

List of Tables

Table 1: Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) as a function of gender and population	23
Table 2: Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse, relationship power and satisfaction with power for depression outcome	25
Table 3: Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse for perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power outcomes	29
Table 4: Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse perpetration for perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power outcomes	33
Table 5: Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on depression outcome	36
Table 6: Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on perceived power outcome	37
Table 7: Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on satisfaction with perceived power outcome	38
Table 8: Moderated mediation estimates for conditional indirect effects of perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power in the relation between psychological abuse and depression and alternative directional path	43
Table 9: Abuse victimization and perpetration on depression outcome for males and females	47

List of Figures

Figure 1. Moderating effect of gender on perceived relationship power and depression	27
Figure 2. Moderating effect of gender on perceived psychological abuse and perceived relationship power	30
Figure 3. Moderating effect of gender on psychological abuse and satisfaction with perceived relationship power	31
Figure 4. Moderating effect of gender on psychological abuse perpetration and perceived relationship power	34
Figure 5. Interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on depression scores	39
Figure 6. Moderated mediation of the relationship between psychological abuse and depressive symptoms (perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power)	42

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Flyer	68
Appendix B – Informed Consent	69
Appendix C – Background Information	70
Appendix D – Conflict Tactics Scale	72
Appendix E – Power Balance Scale	76
Appendix F – Beck Depression Inventory	78
Appendix G – Debriefing	81
Appendix H – Additional Debriefing	82
Appendix I – Contacts	83

The Interplay between Relationship Power and Gender Differences on Psychological Abuse in Dating Relationships and Depressive Symptoms

Psychological abuse of women is recognized as a significant form of partner abuse, often preceding the development of physical abuse and is frequently established in the courtship phase of a relationship (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). Although research regarding abuse has focused on men's perpetration of psychological abuse, women may also be psychologically abusive towards their partners. Indeed, psychological aggression in dating relations is equally, if not more, prevalent among women than men. (Hines & Saudino, 2003; Magdol, Moffitt, & Caspi, 1997; Straus & Sweet, 1992).

Psychological abuse can have consequences that are far more devastating than those caused by physical abuse alone (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). In spite of the severe and often persistent emotional repercussions caused by psychological abuse, it has not been studied as extensively as physical abuse (Murphy & Hoover, 2001). Unlike physical and sexual abuse that involve discrete physical acts inflicted upon another, psychological abuse is more ambiguous, as the boundaries that constitute abuse are often unclear, making it difficult to examine empirically.

Psychological abuse, through the destruction of a person's self-esteem or a sense of safety, often occurs in relationships where there is an imbalance in power or control (Follingstad & Dehart, 2000; Sprecher, 1985). Behaviours such as dominance and isolation have been viewed as a means to gain power in abusive relationships (Arias & Pape, 1999). One partner may have greater emotional involvement than the other and the less emotionally involved individual can then exploit the more involved one (Waller & Hill, 1951). This may occur if one partner is unsatisfied with their perceived level of

power and uses psychological or physical abuse as a means of gaining control. Perhaps not surprisingly, power has been associated with general psychological well-being and both men and women in higher power positions experience less psychological distress than those in lower power positions (Horwitz, 1982).

The current study examined the relationship between psychological abuse, gender and mental health. It investigated relationships between psychological abuse perpetration, victimization, and bidirectional abuse on perceptions of power and satisfaction with power. Moreover, it examined the respective mediating roles of perceived power and satisfaction with power for the relationship between psychological abuse and depression to determine if gender differences existed.

Defining Psychological Abuse

The study of psychological abuse has been challenging, given that it has typically been conceptualized as requiring a pervasive pattern, rather than a single act or event that can be assessed, as in the case of physical or sexual abuse. Hence, the study of psychological abuse has been hindered by different operational definitions that have been used. The traditional definition has focused on verbal aggression as the principal component of psychological abuse, such as insulting, threatening and yelling, as well as name-calling, belittling, or any other cruel verbal behaviour enacted with the intent to lower self-esteem (Follingstad et al., 1990). A second characterization of psychological abuse has focused on the following controlling behaviours: non-physical isolating strategies, restricting contact with others and treating the individual as inferior (Tolman, 1989). Such domination and isolation tactics are enacted in order to gain or maintain control over a partner by means of social control or intimidation. Clearly, these two views

of psychological abuse entail completely different criteria for categorizing an individual as being abused. A more inclusive view, however, is that psychological abuse is performed through callous acts intended to create emotional harm or the threat of harm. These behaviours are not directed towards the bodily integrity of a partner but are instead directed towards damaging the recipient's sense of self (Murphy & Cascardi, 1999).

Marshall (1999) proposed that psychological abuse might also be divided into overt and covert forms of abuse. The former is composed of clearly domineering acts whereas the latter is of a subtle nature. Overt psychological abuse is more obvious and easier for the recipient or an outside observer to recognize as potentially harmful. Overt abuse often causes the victim to become angry and thus arouses negativity towards the relationship and partner (Grasamkee, 2007). However, subtle acts of psychological abuse may be conveyed in a "loving" or "caring" manner, which can be difficult to recognize as potentially harmful, but are nevertheless damaging to one's self-esteem or character. Victims may not be able to identify the specific abusive behaviours or the feelings elicited by the abuse, consequently covert abuse may be the more sinister and destructive form of abuse. Such covert behaviours include undermining actions, which cause the victim to question or feel ashamed of themselves; discounting behaviours, which diminish their sense of self or pride; and isolating behaviours that discourage the victim from communicating with friends, family or other supportive individuals. Due to the subtle nature of covert psychological abuse, victims frequently do not realize they are being abused (Grasamkee, 2007).

Effects of Psychological Abuse on Health

The focus of abuse research was initially directed toward physical abuse in cohabiting and married couples with little consideration paid to dating couples. Furthermore, the view that psychological abuse should be considered as distinct from physical abuse received limited attention. However, Dutton, Goodman and Bennett (1999) established that psychological abuse is, in fact, a common and significant form of interpersonal violence that is enacted frequently, and results in both short-term and long-term effects. Younger women, particularly those involved in dating relationships, may be at greater risk for abuse by their partners, and women in violent relationships identify psychological abuse as more painful and emotionally damaging than the physical abuse (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990). The stronger, more destructive effects of psychological abuse over physical abuse are due to the higher frequency and intent to impact the victim's well-being (Arias & Pape, 2000). Furthermore, victims who experience psychological abuse without physical aggression may be less likely to recognize it as abuse and so they prolong their exposure to it, leading to greater negative consequences (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000).

Women who are the recipients of psychological abuse report increased stress, emotional distress, depressive and PTSD symptoms, suicidal ideation or suicide attempts, frequent serious or chronic illness, decreased relationship satisfaction, increased attempts to leave a partner and lower levels of perceived power (Dutton et al., 1999; Dutton & Painter, 1993; Kaslow et al., 1998, Marshall, 1996; O'Leary, 1999). Furthermore, Arias et al. (1996) found a link between psychological abuse among married women and an increase in problem drinking. In a separate study, psychological abuse was also positively

related to illegal drug use, negative health perceptions and cognitive impairment among college women, when controlling for physical violence (Straight, Harper & Arias, 2003). Paralleling these findings, after controlling for violence, injuries and sexual coercion, PTSD scores among abused women were in the moderate to severe range, and depression scores fell within the moderate range (Mechanic et al., 2008). Additionally, psychological abuse and stalking behaviours were also found to be unique contributors to the prediction of PTSD and depressive symptoms (Mechanic et al., 2008). These results highlight the importance of identifying and studying psychological abuse, particularly in the dating phase when patterns of interaction are being established and before frequent exposure to this abuse induces long-lasting harmful outcomes.

Psychological Abuse as a Precursor to Physical Abuse

Data collected by Statistics Canada suggested that emotional abuse and controlling behaviours were precursors to physical violence (Pottie-Bunge, 2000). Moreover, Statistics Canada (2004) indicated that specific types of psychological abuse were more likely to lead to assault behaviours than other forms. In particular, 60% of women who experienced property damage at the hands of a partner and 57% of those who experienced partner threats also experienced assault. Additionally, 22% of women who experienced checking behaviour, 24% who experienced limiting behaviour and 25% who experienced jealous behaviour by their partner were also victims of assault. Furthermore, the results of the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey reported by Johnson (1996), indicated that being called names and put-down by a partner were among the strongest predictors of spousal violence.

College-aged males often report higher levels of psychologically abusive behaviours as well as elevated levels of physical abuse from their partners. A meta-analysis of sex differences in aggression between heterosexual dating partners revealed that women were somewhat more likely to use one or more acts of physical aggression and use them more frequently than men, whereas males were more likely to inflict an injury on a partner (Archer, 2000). In addition, a longitudinal study of community couples indicated that emotional abuse by either partner was one of the strongest predictors for the first instance of physical abuse by the other partner (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). Women often cite self-defense as a motivation for resorting to physical violence against their partners more often than men; however, Follingstad et al. (1990) found that the major reasons reported by college women for using physical force against their partners was not an attempt to self-defend, but rather to show anger, retaliate for emotional hurt, express feelings nonverbally, and gain control over their partner. In fact, dominance and control have been suggested as the primary motives for female violence (Felson & Messner, 2000).

Women as Perpetrators and Bidirectional Abuse

Considerable research has examined the effects of men's perpetration of violence and psychological abuse towards women, yet exploration of women as perpetrators of psychological abuse in committed relationships is relatively infrequent. There are several proposed reasons for the paucity of research. They include men's decreased ability to identify and reluctance to self-disclose abusive experiences for fear of being ridiculed. Moreover, studying psychological abuse is partly an extension of the earlier work conducted on physical violence against women. However, Kasian and Painter (1992) set

out to assess psychologically abusive behaviours for both men and women. Among a group of 1,625 college-aged males and females, males currently involved in a relationship experienced fewer positive behaviours and were the recipients of higher levels of psychologically abusive behaviours than females. Kasian and Painter presented several hypotheses to explain their results. They suggested that since women were less likely to successfully employ physical violence, they may resort to psychological abuse more frequently than males. Alternatively, some women may use psychologically abusive strategies as a defense during conflict situations, which would result in men reporting this type of behaviour more than women. The study also indicated that for both men and women, the occurrence of psychologically abusive behaviours resulted in lower relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, a lack of positive behaviours was more often associated with relationship termination than the use of negative behaviours. This provides insight into why relationships persist even during abuse, as the presence of positive behaviours might help maintain a relationship in spite of negative or abusive behaviours (Kasian & Painter, 1992). Individuals that experience multiple pleasant interactions during a relationship are more likely to excuse or ignore negative behaviours from their partner. However, when positive behaviours extinguish, the negative behaviours inevitably resurface. Thus, positive and negative behaviours must be evaluated to understand relationships as a whole (Kasian & Painter, 1992).

Among male undergraduates, 90% reported being the recipient of verbal aggression or another form of emotional abuse, with 40% reporting at least one act of violence. The most frequent types of emotional abuse experienced by males were jealousy (77%), withdrawal (77%), diminished self-esteem (63%), verbal abuse (60%),

and social/emotional control (49%). Psychological distress levels were elevated in men who encountered emotional and physical abuse during their relationship, and this related to diminished self-esteem. Moreover, experiencing social and emotional control were significant predictors of the amount of variance in overall distress and depression (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998).

Gender differences in the perpetration of psychological abuse have also been found in a younger population (Sears et al., 2007). Upon examination of the occurrence of psychologically, physically and sexually abusive behaviours in adolescent boys and girls, it was found that girls, more than boys, exhibited psychologically and physically aggressive behaviours towards their dating partner, whereas boys more than girls were sexually aggressive. Within their sample, 35% of adolescent boys had used psychologically abusive behaviours compared to 47% of girls; 15% of boys had been physically abusive versus 28% of girls, and 17% of boys were sexually abusive in contrast to 5% of girls. Hence, these results indicate that even early dating activities of adolescents in grades 7, 9 or 11 reflect the physical and psychologically abusive behaviours seen in young adult populations (Sears et al., 2007).

Contrary to these findings, Ogradnik (2007) reported that emotionally abusive behaviours were experienced equally among men and women with 17% and 18%, respectively, occurring during the study period. The most common forms of emotional abuse were name-calling or put-downs, displaying jealous behaviours (e.g. partners not wanting victims to talk to the opposite sex), and finally controlling behaviours, such as demanding to know who the partner is with and where they are at all times. However,

Dauvergne (2002) reported that the negative consequences of victimization were more severe and prolonged in women than in men.

The concept that one partner perpetrates while the other is victimized, is often an oversimplification of the true nature of relationship conflicts. Dating aggression has been characterized as reciprocal, with a number of studies identifying both male and female partners as engaging in abusive behaviours (Marshall & Rose, 1990). A meta-analysis of 83 studies of relational violence found that men and women both perpetrate and are victimized by aggression (Archer, 2000). Individuals engaged in mutually abusive relationships report more violence than one-sided abusive relationships and bidirectional abuse has been associated with more frequent inflicting and receiving of both physical and psychological violence (Sharpe & Taylor, 1999). Some of this bidirectional violence can be attributed to self-defense motives; however, both males and females that engage in abuse do not necessarily have the same motivations for perpetrating and do not have equivalent intent to harm or cause comparable consequences (Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994).

In a study conducted by Swinford et al., (2000) bidirectional effects of perpetration and victimization of abuse were positive, but only the impact of perpetration on reciprocal victimization was significant. Perpetrating violence therefore enhanced the extent to which one was victimized in return. Interestingly, it was reported that women perpetrated psychological and physical violence more than men.

Several attitudes and behaviours have been correlated with male-perpetrated intimate partner violence, including greater expression of anger (Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005), negative attitudes and hostility toward women (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003;

Schumacher et al., 2001), blaming partner for problems (Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2005), dissatisfaction with relationship power (Kaura & Allen, 2004; Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998), and adherence to traditional gender-role beliefs (Stith et al., 2004). Current research has only just begun to identify characteristics associated with female-perpetrated abuse. However, it seems that female perpetration is associated with higher levels of anger expression and less anger control (Dye & Eckhardt, 2000), traditional gendered beliefs (Bookwala et al., 1992), a dissatisfaction with relationship power (Kaura & Allen, 2004), and dominance (Penn, 2002). Psychological and physical abuse can occur in different forms, including systematically perpetrated violence to control others, and perpetration in response to abuse. Gender differences are present regarding motivations and consequences of perpetration, with bidirectional occurring frequently. However, for both men and women, mutual violence has been linked to a greater dislike and distrust of others, especially of women (Swinford et al., 2000).

Relationship Power

After studying dating relationships among college students in the 1930s, Waller (1937) observed a phenomenon, which he referred to as *the principle of least interested*. This principle was developed from the observation that romantic partners often proceed at unequal rates in their level of emotional commitment to each other. As a result, the person who is least involved in the relationship is in a position to take their partner for granted, have greater power in the decision-making process and in extreme situations, exploit their partner. This situation arises when the more emotionally involved partner experiences a greater potential for investment in the success of the relationship, while the less emotionally committed partner does not experience the same level of investment

(Berscheid, 1983). For instance, women in dating relationships who report that they are less in love with their partner perceive themselves as having greater relationship power (Sprecher, 1985).

Control in a dating relationship has also been examined within the context of cybernetic theory. This theory postulates that control is a feedback process where one examines the effects of one's own behaviour and compares them to the outcomes one desires (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Wiener, 1948). According to this perspective, if an individual experiences a diminished sense of control at a given stage in their relationship, often caused by arguments and conflict, they may increase their control over others to maintain a satisfactory level of overall control (Stets, 1993). The most popular theory for measuring power imbalance, particularly in a marriage situation, is resource theory, where greater power is assigned to the individual with greater socio-economic resources (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Since many women often do not have equal access to economic resources compared to men, they may rely on other resources at their disposal, such as providing or restricting the expression of love for their partner, in an effort to acquire greater power in the relationship (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976).

It is possible for both power and love to exist harmoniously in an intimate relationship; however, problems arise when this combination is enacted in unhealthy ways. Harmful power actualization occurs when one partner becomes extremely controlling or psychologically abusive and this can escalate to more severe forms of abuse. Like covert psychological abuse, an oppressed individual may not be fully cognizant of the controlling behaviour exercised by their partner and may even be convinced to remain in an unhealthy relationship despite abusive conditions (Brewster,

2003). Prince and Arias (1994) explored the role of power and control in an intimate relationship and found that perceived control was related to abusive behaviours. They identified men with low self-esteem and low desirability for control as well as men with high self-esteem and high desirability for control as being greatest at risk for perpetrating abuse.

When partners experience equal levels of emotional commitment, regardless of whether it is high or low, they report greater levels of positive emotions and lower levels of negative emotions, along with greater relationship satisfaction (Drigotas, Rubult & Verette, 1999; Le & Agnew, 2001). Not surprisingly, unequal emotional involvement has been associated with the likelihood of relationship dissolution and typically the less emotionally involved partner is the one who terminates the relationship. It should be noted that in some instances the more emotionally involved partner might initiate a breakup due to frustration over having a less committed partner, but this occurrence is much less frequent (Hill et al., 1976). Regardless of which partner initiates breakup, an imbalance in power is linked to increased conflict, psychological distress, dissatisfaction, and increases the likelihood that a relationship will terminate (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984).

Interestingly, perceptions of a relationship power imbalance are common and a study among heterosexual dating participants revealed that more than half the participants believed their relationship to be unequal in power distribution (Felmlee, 1994). The same study examined the imbalance of power based on gender differences, along with other measures directly related to power, such as decision-making, emotional involvement and equity. Both males and females reported that the male partner made more of the decisions, was less emotionally involved and was getting a “better deal” from the

relationship than the female partner. Furthermore, greater longevity of a relationship was found when males were the dominant partners, with a subsequent lower rate of relationship dissolution. These results were mirrored by a study of 231 dating couples, where over half the participants reported an unequal power balance with the man being in a position of greater power (Peplau, 1979). Conversely, Sprecher (1985) did not reveal the same gender differences in the level of perceived power between a sample of 50 men and women, however, a later study by Sprecher and Felmlee (1997) concluded that the balance of power often favours males and male partners tend to see themselves as more dominant. Couples that are female-dominant, tend to be less satisfying for both partners and less accepted by others. In addition, females engaged in this type of power-orientation are more likely to end the relationship, while couples that perceive males in the greater power role, have lower break up rates (Felmlee, 1994).

Satisfaction with Power

Recent research has not only focused on relationship power, but also on the level of *satisfaction* with relationship power, and its role in male's perpetration of relationship abuse. Relationship violence is viewed as a means to gain power; hence greater dissatisfaction with power is associated with conflict and aggressive behaviour in men (Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998). A man's need for power in a relationship has been linked to exploitive views of their partners and the perpetration of abuse (Mason & Blakenship, 1987; Winter & Stewart, 1978). Stets (1993) used the conceptualization of control as a feedback process in which the individuals compare their desired level of control to their actual level of control. When the desired and actual levels do not match, one method to increase control is to exert power over others. Results from her research

showed that when partners lose control as the result of conflict, they tend to compensate for this loss by engaging in controlling behaviours such as setting rules and keeping tabs on their partner. Prince and Arias (1994) found similar results, where a discrepancy between desired and perceived control was related to an increased risk of violence in married men. It has been proposed that this discrepancy is what leads to dissatisfaction with relationship power and may then increase the risk of violent behaviours (Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998).

Adding to this body of research, Ronfeldt, Kimerling and Arias (1998) observed that dissatisfaction with power predicted psychologically and physically abusive behaviours in men, which were enacted to control their intimate partners. Psychological abuse predicted physical abuse, which was identified as a comparable means of achieving relationship control. They further showed that the relationship between power satisfaction and physical abuse was mediated by psychological abuse. In a similar study involving both genders, it was found that relationship power dissatisfaction was associated with the use of physical and psychological violence for men and women alike (Kaura & Allen, 2004). Gender differences in perpetration were not observed, indicating that women were just as likely as men to perpetrate violence if they felt dissatisfied with their relationship power.

Much of the literature has examined the connection between men's perceptions of relationship power, satisfaction with power and the perpetration of abuse. Less attention has been paid to the consequences of relationship power perceptions among women and its connection to abuse perpetration and emotional well-being. These narrow approaches are somewhat surprising in view of the fact that abuse is not always one-sided, and is

frequently bidirectional. The current study focused on relationships between perceptions of power as well as satisfaction with power and abuse perpetration, victimization, emotional well-being and gender. Finally, the relationship between psychological abuse and depression mediated by perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power was examined to identify gender differences.

The Present Study

It is clear that psychological abuse in an intimate relationship has negative repercussions on mental and physical health, particularly on depressive symptoms and relationship satisfaction (Dutton et al., 1999; Kaslow et al., 1998, Marshall, 1996; O'Leary, 1999). Although females are often the recipients of abuse, they are also perpetrators of psychological abuse against males (Kasian & Painter, 1992; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). Yet, the ramifications of such abuse have been addressed relatively infrequently. If power in a relationship is an integral factor that can influence whether or not a partner resorts to psychological abuse, then it might be expected that an individual with low power status is at increased risk of experiencing psychological abuse from their partner, (Ronfeldt, Kimmerling & Arias, 1998). This could lead to decreased satisfaction with their relationship power and increased depressive symptoms. Moreover, individuals dissatisfied with their level of perceived power may perpetrate acts of abuse to gain power (Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998).

It was hypothesized that:

- 1) Women would report greater depressive symptoms than men.
- 2) Experiencing psychological abuse would be associated with high depressive symptoms, but that this relation would be moderated by gender, in that women

experiencing abuse would report higher symptomatology than would men in such a situation.

- 3) Perceptions of lower power, and lower satisfaction with power in a relationship would be associated with higher depression scores. This outcome would be more prominent in men than in women, as men might place greater emphasis on the importance of power in their relationships.
- 4) Experiencing psychological abuse would be related to lower perceived power and lower satisfaction with perceived power, and these relations would be moderated by gender. Specifically, given the widespread perception regarding gender norms within relationships, men experiencing abuse might feel greater power deficiency and a greater dissatisfaction with their power status.
- 5) Evaluation of depressive symptoms among victims of abuse needs to be contextualized. In many instances, abuse occurs in the context of an argument between the partners in a relationship. Thus, individuals may concurrently be both a victim and a perpetrator of abuse. In this context, depressive symptoms might be exacerbated as the interpersonal conflict may be more intense, and could potentially promote greater misgivings. This said, it is also hypothesized that men and women would not react in a similar fashion. The interactive effects of gender and abuse victimization on depressive symptoms will be moderated by whether the individual perpetrates abuse. Specifically, among women, greater perpetration of abuse will be related to greater depressive symptoms, irrespective of whether they themselves are victimized (i.e., it signifies a dissatisfying relationship). For the same reason, among men who are victimized, perpetrating abuse will be

related to greater depressive symptoms. However, among men who are not victimized, perpetrating abuse will be unrelated to depressive symptoms.

- 6) Perpetration of psychological abuse would be related to increased perceptions of relationship power and increased satisfaction with relationship power. The interactive effects of gender and victimization on power perceptions (and satisfaction) will be moderated by whether the individual perpetrates abuse. Specifically, among women, greater perpetration of abuse will be related to greater power perceptions (and satisfaction), irrespective of whether they themselves are victimized (i.e., it will empower both victimized and non-victimized women). Among men who are victimized, perpetrating abuse could be defensive or could be what caused the women to be abusive in defence; either way, abuse perpetration among men whose partners abuse them will be related to lower power perceptions and satisfaction. Among men who are not victimized, perpetrating abuse will be related to higher power perceptions and satisfaction.
- 7) The relation between experiencing psychological abuse and depression would be mediated by power perceptions and by satisfaction with relationship power. However, given that men might place emphasis on power in their relationship; this mediation effect will be stronger among men than women.

Methods

Participants

Both men ($n=274$) and women ($n=352$) participants (M age=22.15, $SD=6.15$ years) currently involved in a heterosexual dating relationship of 1 month to 3 years ($M=15.67$, $SD=10.46$ months) participated in the online study. The sample comprised both university students ($n=430$) and a community sample ($n=196$). The majority of participants ($n=398$, 63.6%) self-identified as “going out with someone”, whereas ($n=85$, 13.6%) were “living with an intimate partner” and ($n=143$, 22.8%) had “recently broken up” within the past 3 months. Of the participants reporting ethnic status, the majority were Euro-Caucasian ($n=451$, 72.0%) with the remainder indicating that they were Asian ($n=62$, 9.9%), South Asian ($n=25$, 4.0%), Arab/West Asian ($n=23$, 3.7%), Black ($n=19$, 3.0%), Latin American ($n=8$, 1.3%), South East Asian ($n=6$, 1.0%) or Aboriginal ($n=5$, 0.8%).

Procedure

Community participants were recruited by posting advertisements in the form of flyers in the community (see Appendix A) and a Facebook group was created to advertise the study online. Students were recruited from first and second year psychology classes using the Carleton University Psychology Experiment Sign-Up System, which allowed students to sign up for participation in experiments and they received 1% course credits for participation. The flyers and online announcements described the study as an investigation into how people get along with their dating partners and the impacts of relationships on psychological and physical health. Interested students and community

participants were directed to the website in order to complete the study. Upon obtaining informed consent (see Appendix B), participants created a user ID and password.

The procedure was part of a larger study examining psychological abuse and consisted of participants completing several questionnaires including demographics and relationship status (see Appendix C), Conflict Tactics Scale (see Appendix D), power in their relationship (see Appendix E), and a measure of depressive symptoms (see Appendix F). If participants were single for 3 months or less, they were asked to provide responses based on experiences with their most recent partner. Participants were allowed to use their ID and password to log back onto the website if they chose to complete the study over several sessions. Additionally, validity checks were incorporated to ensure responses were legitimate and non-random. Only participants that scored above a certain threshold on the validity checks were used for analysis.

After completion of the study, participants were provided with a debriefing page (see Appendix G) and contact information (see Appendix I) if they wished to seek help regarding their well-being or psychological abuse. In the event that a participant reported any degree of suicidal ideation on the BDI, an additional debriefing was provided with contact information for a distress center (see Appendix H). Upon completion, participants were compensated with a \$10 gift certificate to one of five stores as indicated on the debriefing page or 1% course credit. The ethics review board approved all procedures.

Measures

Abuse. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus et al., 1996, see Appendix C) was used to assess psychological aggression and asked about “things that may have been done to you by your partner within the past month”. This revised 40-item scale is commonly

used to measure various behaviours or tactics individuals use when dealing with conflicts. The negotiation segment of the scale was removed, which assessed actions taken to settle a disagreement through discussion. Additionally, several physical and sexual abuse questions were combined to shorten the questionnaire. One item, “called partner fat or ugly,” was excluded as it was subsumed by the item, “insulted or swore at partner”. Thus, the present study focused on the 7-item psychological aggression subscale, for which participants provided responses on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (more than 10 times in the past month). Scores were averaged and ranged from 0 to 3.23, with a skewness of 1.1. Reliability for the CTS-R psychological abuse subscale was acceptable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$). In addition to assessing the extent to which participants were victimized, their propensity to perpetrate psychological aggression was also measured. Participants indicated how often they had enacted the 7 items using the same 6-point rating scale. Scores ranged from 0 to 3.19 with a skewness of 1.0 and an acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$), with perpetration being strongly correlated with victimization, $r = .85$.

Power. The Power Balance Scale (Felmlee et al., 1994; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Sprecher et al., 2006, see Appendix E) is a composite of 8 items taken from similar measures of subjective power ratings in an intimate relationship. Questions included, “In your relationship, who makes more of the decisions about what the two of you do together?” Participants indicated how much each item scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (my partner) to 7 (myself). Scores were averaged and ranged from 1.43 to 6.36 with a skewness of -0.36, (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$). Individuals’ satisfaction with their perceived level of relationship power (Ronfeldt et al., 1998) was assessed after each of

the 8 power questions and asked, “How satisfied are you with this arrangement?”. A 4-point Likert scale was used with possible responses ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). Scores were averaged and ranged from 1 to 4, with a skewness of -0.71, reliability was acceptable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$) and the correlation between power and satisfaction with power was $r = .42$.

Depressive Symptoms. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, 1967; see Appendix F) was used as an index of depressive symptoms. The BDI is comprised of 21 items, each consisting of 4-6 statements from which participants selected the statement that best described how they currently felt. Ratings for each item ranged from 0 (a lack of symptomatology) to 3 (high symptomatology). This version assessed both a cognitive/affective and a somatic component. Responses were summed to provide an index of depressive affect with possible scores ranged from 0 to 63. Sufficient reliability was demonstrated (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$). Scores were summed and ranged from 0 to 38, with a skewness of 1.45.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Independent sample t-tests indicated that, as expected, females showed elevated depression scores compared to males, $t(624) = -2.82, p < .01$ (see Table 1). In addition, women reported lower levels of perceived power, $t(624) = 2.39, p < .05$. However, gender differences were not evident in perceived power satisfaction, $t(624) = 0.69, ns$, psychological abuse victimization, $t(624) = 0.79, ns$, or perpetration of psychological abuse $t(624) = -1.81, ns$ (see Table 1).

The community and student samples were compared to evaluate possible population differences. As seen in Table 1, the community sample reported significantly greater depressive scores than did the students, $t(624) = 4.89, p < .001$. However, the community and student samples were not significantly different in perceived power scores, $t(624) = -1.86, ns$, and measures of satisfaction with perceived power approached non-significance, $t(624) = -1.99, p < .05$ (see Table 1). This indicated that perceptions of power and satisfaction with perceived power were effectively equal across samples. However, the community sample displayed higher levels of psychological abuse victimization, $t(624) = 2.44, p < .05$, and perpetration, $t(624) = 3.71, p < .001$ (Table 1). Although these differences existed, the community sample was consistently elevated across both abuse and BDI scores and was similar to the student population for both measures of power, thus for further analyses the community and student population were combined.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) as a function of gender and population

	Males (n=274)	Females (n=352)	Students (n=430)	Community (n=196)
Measure	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<i>Beck Depression Inventory</i>	8.12 (7.74)	10.20 (10.1)	8.10(7.94)	11.89(11.0)
<i>Power Balance Scale</i>				
Perceived Power	3.97 (0.71)	3.82 (0.78)	3.92(0.71)	3.80(0.82)
Satisfaction With Perceived Power	3.13 (0.61)	3.09 (0.75)	3.14(0.65)	3.03(0.78)
<i>Conflict Tactics Scale</i>				
Psychological Abuse Victimization	0.83 (0.73)	0.79 (0.74)	0.76(0.69)	0.91(0.83)
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	0.77 (0.69)	0.88 (0.74)	0.76(0.66)	0.99(0.81)

Moderating Models

Predicting depression from psychological abuse victimization and gender. To test the hypothesis that receiving psychological abuse would be associated with elevated depressive symptoms, particularly among women, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. Gender was entered on the first step, standardized scores reflecting perceptions of psychological abuse were entered on the second step and the Gender X Psychological Abuse interaction was entered on the third step.

As expected, a high incidence of abuse was associated with elevated depressive symptoms, $R^2 = .081$, $F(1, 624) = 55.01$, $p < .01$. However, contrary to expectations, the interaction between gender and psychological abuse victimization relating to depressive symptoms was not significant, $R^2_{Cha} = .002$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 1.44$, *ns* (see Table 2). In effect, men and women were equally likely to experience depressive symptoms as a function of experiencing psychological abuse in their relationship.

Perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power. In order to examine the prediction that lower relationship power and lower satisfaction with power would be associated with higher depression scores, particularly among men, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. Gender was entered on the first step, standardized scores reflecting perceived power (or satisfaction with power, in a separate analysis) were entered on the second step and the Gender X Perceived Power (satisfaction with power) interaction entered on the third step.

In line with the hypothesis, a perception that one's relationship power was low was associated with higher depressive symptoms, $R^2 = .053$, $F(1, 624) = 35.06$, $p < .001$,

Table 2

Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse, relationship power and satisfaction with power for depression outcome

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Gender	2.05	.67	.12	.011*
Psychological Abuse	2.06	.51	.24	.083**
Gender X Psychological Abuse	0.81	.67	.07	.002
Gender	1.58	.68	.09	.011*
Perceived Power	-0.74	.54	-.08	.049**
Gender X Perceived Power	-2.00	.70	-.18	.012*
Gender	1.71	.65	.10	.011*
Satisfaction with Perceived Power	-3.07	.55	-.35	.152**
Gender X Satisfaction with Perceived Power	-0.51	.68	-.05	.001

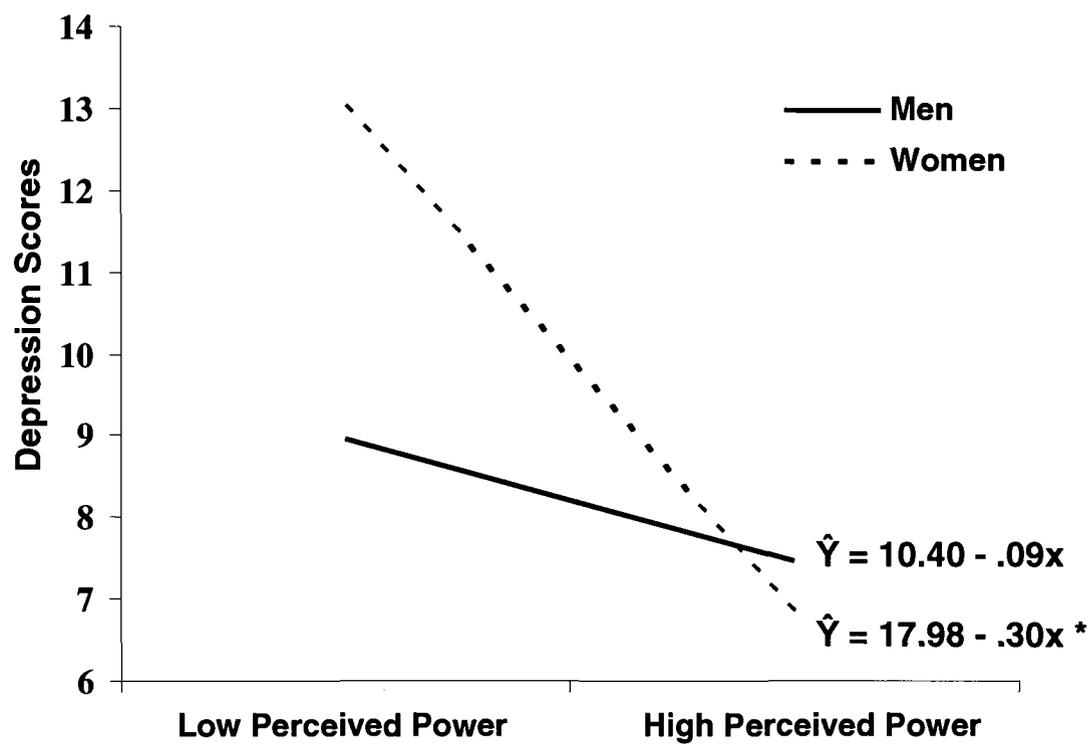
* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

but a significant Gender X Perceived Power interaction was also observed, $R^2_{Cha} = .012$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 8.27$, $p < .01$ (see Table 2). Follow up simple slopes analyses revealed that among women, low levels of perceived power were significantly associated with elevated depression scores, $\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$. However, contrary to expectations, among men, perceived power was not related to depressive symptoms, $\beta = -.09$, $t(622) = -1.36$, ns (see Figure 1).

Decreased satisfaction with perceived power was associated with depressive symptoms, $R^2 = .154$, $F(1, 624) = 113.63$, $p < .001$, but contrary to predictions, gender did not act as a moderator of this relation, $R^2_{Cha} = .001$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 0.57$, ns (see Table 2).¹

Predicting perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power from psychological abuse. It was hypothesized that experiencing psychological abuse would be related to low perceptions of power and low satisfaction with power, and that this relation would be greater for men. These predictions were tested in a series of hierarchical regressions in which gender was entered on the first step, standardized scores reflecting experiences of psychological abuse were entered on the second and the Gender X Psychological Abuse interaction was entered on the third.

¹ These analyses were conducted again at various relationship stages, such as going out with someone, living with a partner and recently broken up. However, no significant gender interactions were found within the three relationship stages.



* $p < .001$

Figure 1. Moderating effect of gender on perceived relationship power and depression.

As expected, high levels of psychological abuse were related to low levels of perceived power, $R^2 = .071$, $F(1, 624) = 47.52$, $p < .001$. In addition, a significant gender by abuse interaction was observed, $R^2_{Cha} = .006$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 4.40$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3). Follow up simple slopes revealed that high levels of psychological abuse were related to lower levels of perceived power for both men and women, but contrary to expectations, this relation was more pronounced in women, $\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$, than in men, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 2).¹

Similarly, high levels of psychological abuse were related to low satisfaction with perceived power, $R^2 = .187$, $F(1, 624) = 143.77$, $p < .001$, and this relationship differed for men and women, $R^2_{Cha} = .006$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 4.80$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3). Simple slopes analysis demonstrated that high levels of psychological abuse were related to lower satisfaction with power for both men and women, but once again, this relation was more prominent among women, $\beta = -.47$, $p < .001$, than in men, $\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 3).¹

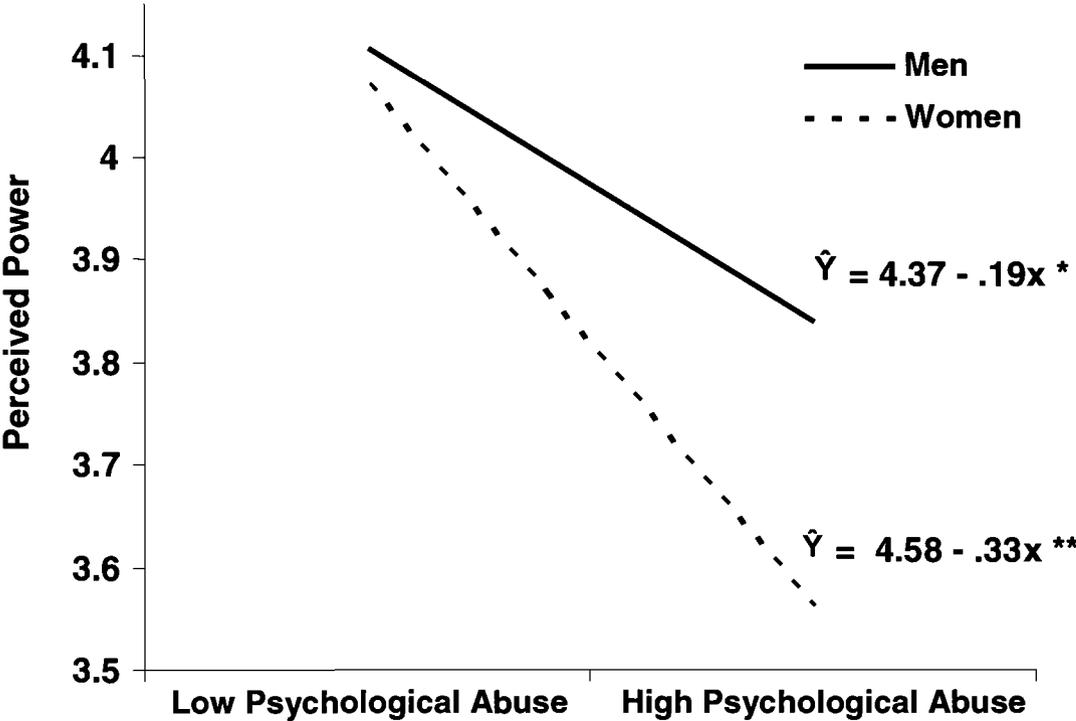
Perpetration of psychological abuse, power and satisfaction with power. The hypothesized relation between perpetrating psychological abuse, in combination with gender on the perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power outcomes were tested by entering Gender on the first step, standardized Psychological Abuse Perpetration scores on the second step and the Gender X Psychological Abuse interaction on the third step.

Table 3

Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse for perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power outcomes

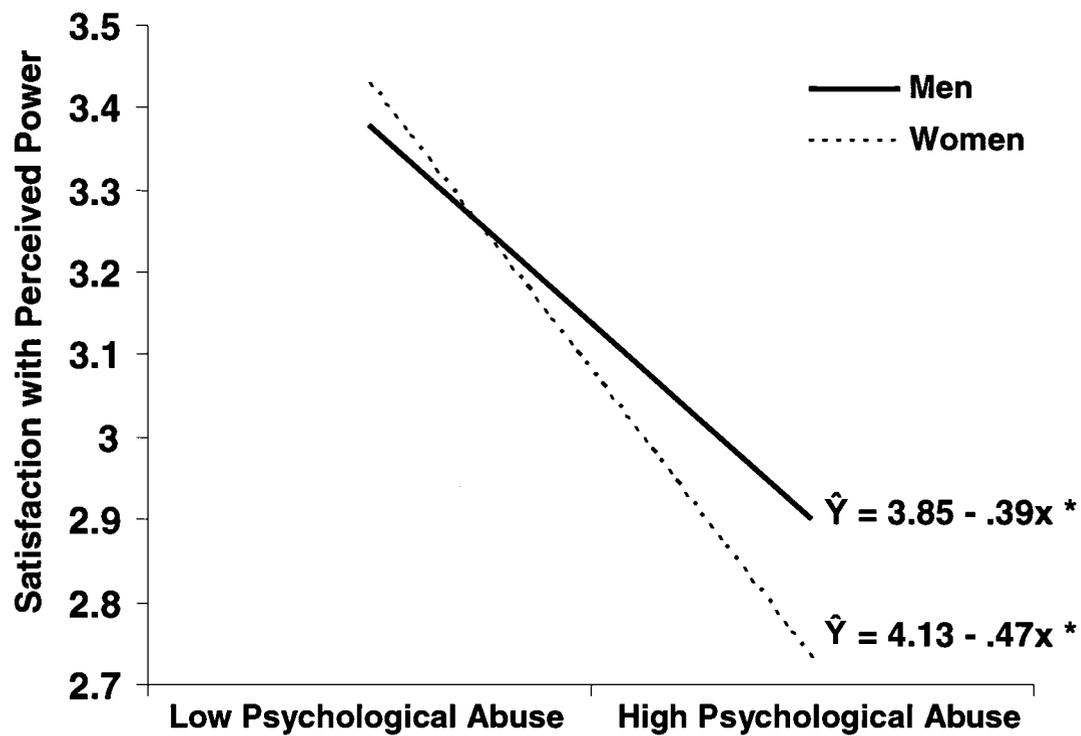
Variable	<i>Perceived Power</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Gender	-.16	.06	-.10	.009*
Psychological Abuse	-.13	.04	-.18	.072***
Gender X Psychological Abuse	-.12	.06	-.12	.006*
	<i>Satisfaction with Perceived power</i>			
Gender	-.06	.05	-.04	.001
Psychological Abuse	-.23	.04	-.34	.188***
Gender X Psychological Abuse	-.11	.05	-.12	.006*

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



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

Figure 2. Moderating effect of gender on perceived psychological abuse and perceived relationship power.



* $p < .001$

Figure 3. Moderating effect of gender on psychological abuse and satisfaction with perceived relationship power.

In contrast to predictions, high levels of psychological abuse perpetration were associated with low perceptions of relationship power, $R^2 = .019$, $F(1, 624) = 11.84$, $p < 0.01$. Gender as a moderator of the relation between perpetration of psychological abuse and perceived power approached significance, $R^2_{Cha} = .006$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 3.75$, $p = .053$, (See Table 4). In order to determine if the trend observed in previous analyses was replicated in this analysis, simple slopes were conducted. Analysis indicated that, among women, higher levels of psychological abuse perpetration were related to low levels of perceived relationship power, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .001$, but this was not the case among men, $\beta = -.04$, $t(622) = -0.60$, ns (see Figure 4). High perpetration of psychological abuse was associated with low relationship power satisfaction, $R^2 = .117$, $F(1, 624) = 82.28$, $p < 0.001$, however, the relationship between perpetrating abuse and satisfaction with perceived power was not moderated by gender, $R^2_{Cha} = .001$, $F_{Cha}(1, 622) = 0.82$, ns (see Table 4).¹

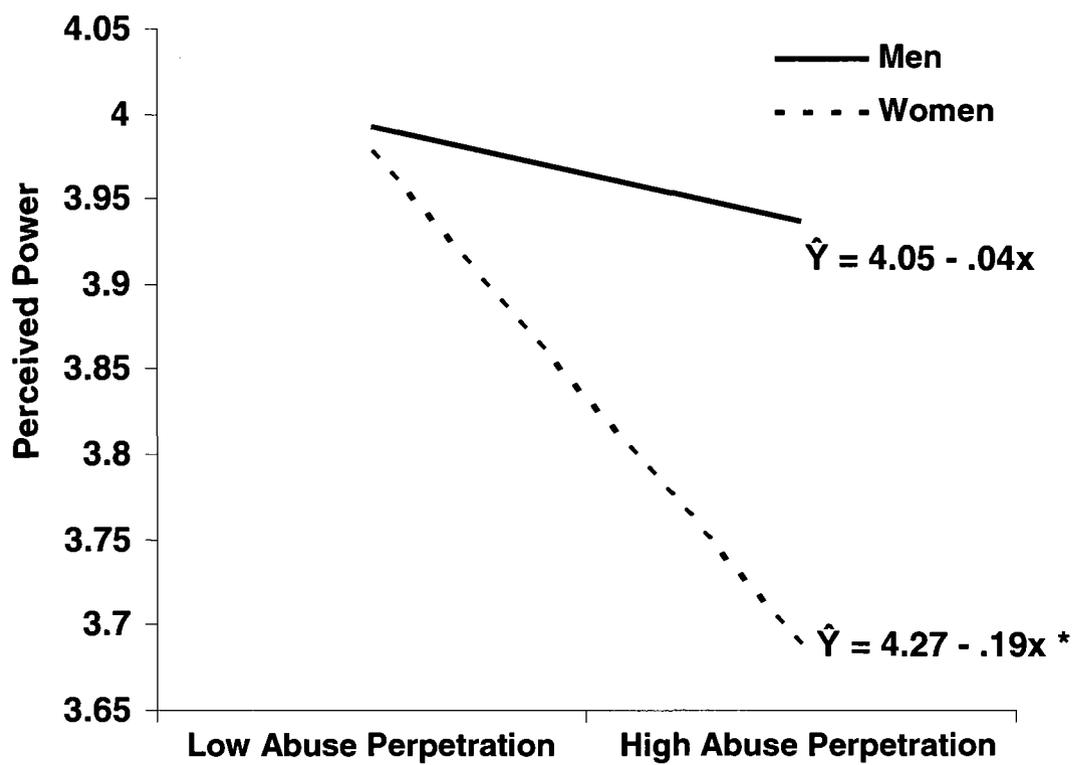
Interactive effects of gender, abuse victimization, and abuse perpetration on depressive symptoms, power perceptions and power satisfaction. The differential implications of abuse victimization and perpetration for women and men on depressive symptoms, power perceptions, and satisfaction were explored through hierarchical regression analysis where gender was entered on the first step, standardized scores of psychological abuse victimization and perpetration were entered on the second step, two-way interactions between gender, abuse victimization, and perpetration were entered on the third step, and finally, the three-way interaction was entered on the fourth step.

Table 4

Regression analysis assessing gender moderated models of psychological abuse perpetration for perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power outcomes

Variable	<i>Perceived Power</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Gender	-.13	.06	-.09	.009*
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	-.03	.05	-.04	.017**
Gender X Psychological Abuse Perpetration	-.12	.06	-.12	.006 [†]
	<i>Satisfaction with Perceived power</i>			
Gender	-.01	.05	-.01	.001
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	-.29	.06	-.30	.116***
Gender X Psychological Abuse Perpetration	-.05	.05	-.05	.001

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$



* $p < .001$

Figure 4. Moderating effect of gender on psychological abuse perpetration and perceived relationship power.

As seen in Table 5, a three-way interaction between gender, victimization and perpetration of psychological abuse on depressive scores was significant, $R^2_{Cha} = .016$, $F_{Cha}(1, 618) = 11.20$, $p < .01$. The interactive effects between victimization and perpetration of abuse were assessed separately for males and females. For females, the victimization and perpetration of abuse significantly interacted, $R^2_{Cha} = .043$, $F_{Cha}(1, 348) = 17.24$, $p < .001$. Examination of simple slopes surprisingly revealed that, as women perpetrated increasingly high levels of psychological abuse (i.e. one SD above the mean of abuse perpetration), victimization was associated with greater depressive symptoms, $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$. As women's perpetration of abuse decreased, the relation between experiencing abuse and depressive symptoms dissipated, $\beta = -.05$, $t(348) = -0.46$, *ns*. In contrast, victimization and perpetration of abuse did not significantly interact for men, $R^2_{Cha} = .001$, $F_{Cha} < 1$ (See Figure 5).

Diverging from expectations, the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization on perceived relationship power was not moderated by perpetration of psychological abuse, $R^2_{Cha} = .003$, $F_{Cha}(1, 618) = 2.01$, *ns* (see Table 6). Likewise, gender, victimization and perpetration of psychological abuse did not interact to influence satisfaction with perceived relationship power outcome, $R^2_{Cha} = .000$, $F_{Cha}(1, 618) = .32$, *ns* (see Table 7). Thus no differences existed regarding perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power when men and women in conflict situations experienced victimization and perpetration simultaneously.

Table 5

Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on depression outcome

Variable	<i>Depression</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Gender	0.15	0.83	.01	.011**
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	2.00	1.05	.23	
Psychological Abuse Victimization	0.56	0.98	.06	.088***
Gender X Perpetration	-1.70	1.32	-.15	
Gender X Victimization	0.56	1.30	.05	
Perpetration X Victimization	-0.18	0.41	-.03	.015*
Gender X Perpetration X Victimization	1.87	0.56	.25	.016**

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

Table 6

Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on perceived power outcome

Variable	<i>Perceived Power</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Gender	-.16	.07	-.10	.009*
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	.37	.09	.49	
Psychological Abuse Victimization	-.41	.08	-.55	.108***
Gender X Perpetration	-.12	.11	-.12	
Gender X Victimization	-.03	.11	-.03	
Perpetration X Victimization	-.03	.04	-.07	.021**
Gender X Perpetration X Victimization	-.07	.05	-.11	.003

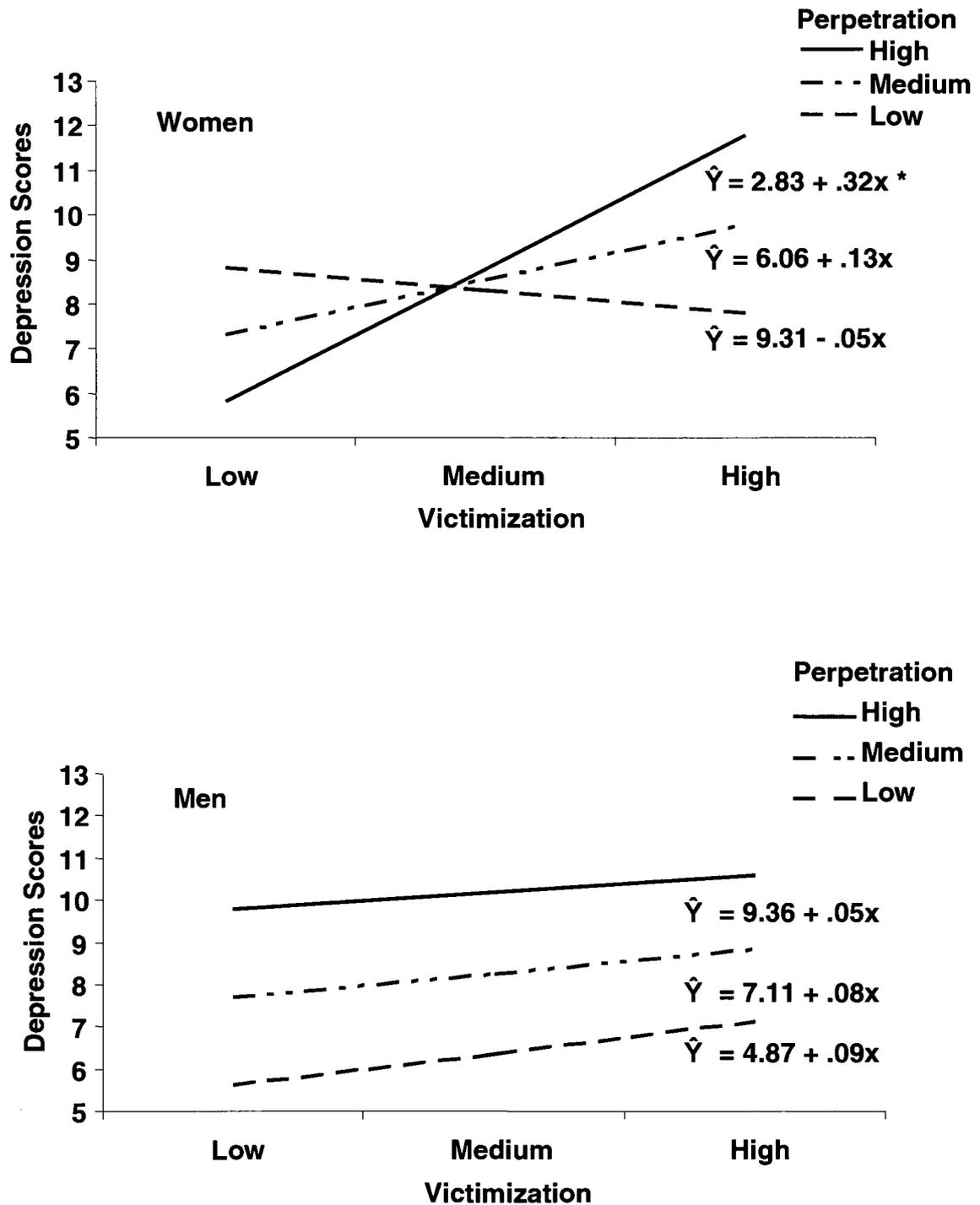
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7

Regression analysis assessing the interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on satisfaction with perceived power outcome

Variable	<i>Satisfaction with Perceived Power</i>			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>
Gender	-0.05	0.06	-.04	.001
Psychological Abuse Perpetration	-0.01	0.08	-.01	
Psychological Abuse Victimization	-0.27	0.07	-.38	.191**
Gender X Perpetration	0.12	0.10	.13	
Gender X Victimization	-0.19	0.10	-.21	
Perpetration X Victimization	0.04	0.03	.09	.010*
Gender X Perpetration X Victimization	-0.02	0.04	-.04	.000

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



* $p < .01$

Figure 5. Interactive effect of gender and abuse victimization moderated by perpetration on depression scores (women in upper and men in lower portion of figure).

Moderated Mediation: The role of perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power across gender. In order to examine whether power perceptions and satisfaction with power mediated the relationship between abuse victimization and depressive symptoms, and whether these relations were moderated by gender, the steps outlined by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) were followed. Each analysis included 5000 bootstrap samples. This procedure employed psychological abuse scores as the independent variable (X), perceived power scores as the mediator (W), gender as the moderator (M) and depressive symptoms as the dependent variable (Y). The interaction term between the independent variable (psychological abuse) and the moderator (males vs. females) was significant, $B = -0.16$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(626) = -2.10$, $p < .05$, as was the interaction between the mediator (relationship power) and moderator (males vs. females) in predicting depression, $B = -2.25$, $SE = 0.93$, $t(626) = -2.42$, $p < .05$, (see Figure 6). As reported in Table 8, the indirect effect of perceived relationship power was significant for females (95% confidence interval: 0.4743 to 1.9866) but not for males (95% CI: -0.1927 to 0.5672).

As these data were correlational, alternative directional paths were also evaluated. When psychological abuse and depressive symptoms were exchanged as the dependent (Y) and independent (X) variables respectively, the interaction term between the independent variable (depressive symptoms) and the moderator (males vs. females) was significant, $B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(626) = -2.35$, $p < .05$. However, the interaction between the mediator (relationship power) and moderator (males vs. females) in predicting psychological abuse was not significant, $B = -0.08$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(626) = -1.02$, *ns*. As reported in Table 8, the indirect effect of perceived relationship power was

significant for females (95% CI: 0.0032 to 0.0106) but not for males (95% CI: -0.007 to 0.0057).

When the mediating role of satisfaction with relationship power was considered, the interaction term between the independent variable (psychological abuse) and the moderator (males vs. females) in relation to satisfaction with perceived power was significant, $B = -0.15$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(626) = -2.19$, $p < .05$, but the interaction term between the mediator (satisfaction with relationship power) and moderator (males vs. females) in predicting depressive symptoms was not, $B = -0.64$, $SE = 1.10$, $t(626) = -0.60$, *ns*, (see Figure 6). As observed in Table 8, the indirect effect of satisfaction with relationship power was significant for both females (95% CI: 1.3701 to 3.2836) and males (95% CI: 0.6042 to 2.0616). Alternative directional paths were also evaluated, however no significant moderated mediations were found.

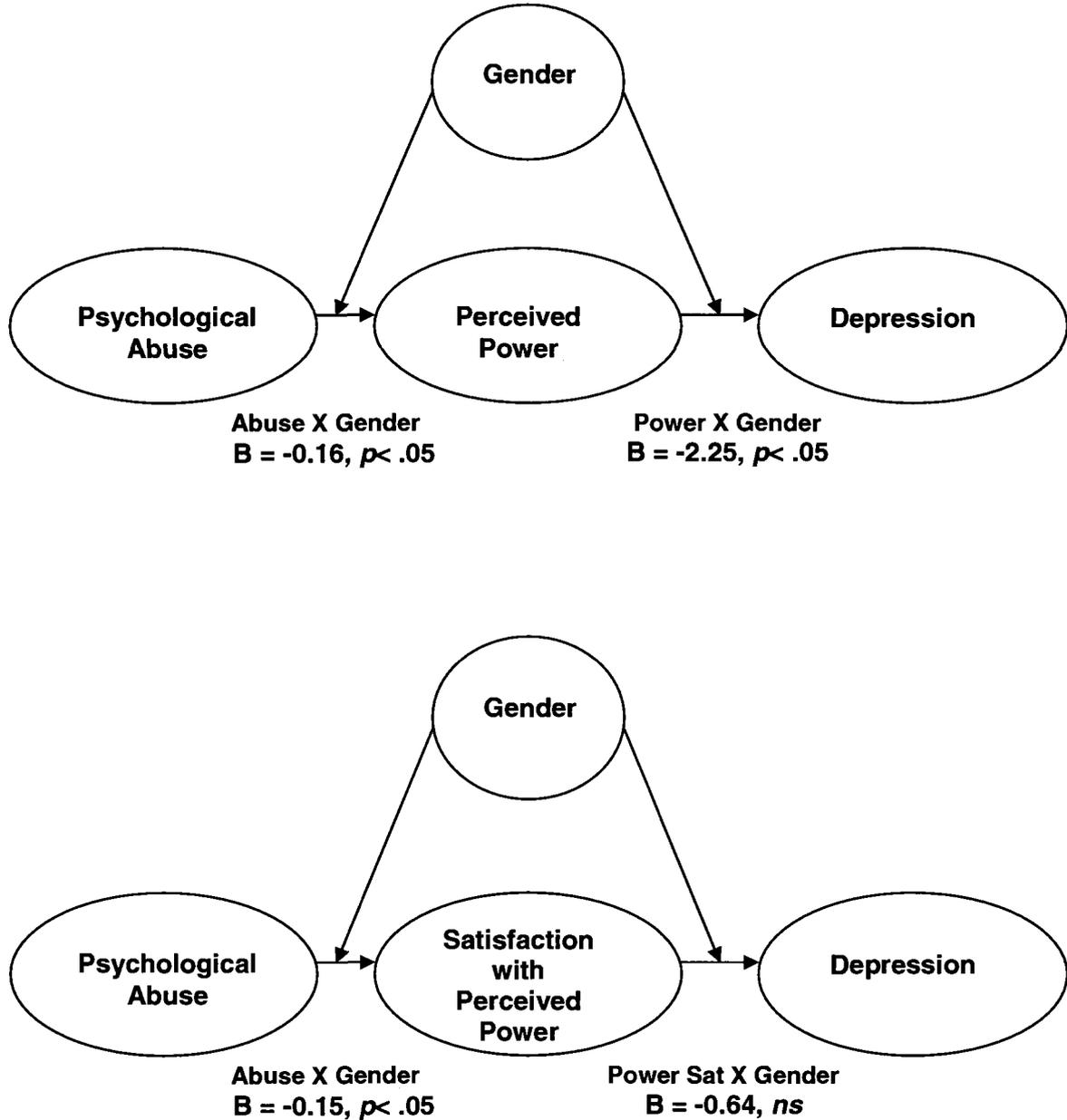


Figure 6. Moderated mediation of the relationship between psychological abuse and depressive symptoms (perceived power as the mediator in upper and satisfaction with perceived power in lower portion of figure).

Table 8

Moderated mediation estimates for conditional indirect effects of perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power in the relation between psychological abuse and depression and alternative directional path

Outcome	Perceived Relationship Power				
	Moderator	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot z	Boot p
Depression	Men	0.09	.18	0.50	.6209
	Women	0.93	.32	2.87	.0041
Psychological Abuse	Men	0.00	0.00	0.93	.3534
	Women	0.01	0.00	3.26	.0011
Depression	Satisfaction with Perceived Relationship Power				
	Moderator	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot z	Boot p
Depression	Men	1.20	.38	3.16	.0016
	Women	2.03	.43	4.67	.0000

Note. Boot indirect effect = unstandardized regression values.

Discussion

Much has been written about the negative physical and psychological consequences associated with abusive relationships. However, relative to physical abuse, psychological abuse has not been as extensively examined and limited emphasis has been placed on effects that occur in men and women engaged in dating relationships.

Likewise, studies concerning power have mainly focused on men's perceptions of power and perpetration of abuse, whereas minimal attention has been devoted to the importance of female power perceptions in relationships and conflicts. The purpose of the present study was to examine the impact of relationship power and satisfaction with power on depressive symptoms and psychological abuse among men and women in dating relationships.

Depression

As one of many symptoms exhibited by victims who experience abuse, the occurrence of depression is of particular significance given the high frequency of this illness, especially among women (Dienemann et al., 2000). In line with this report, the current study showed an association between increased psychological abuse and increased depression. However, the prediction that this would be more evident in women than in men was not confirmed. In fact, the present finding was contrary to previous reports that the negative consequences of psychological abuse were more severe in women than in men (Dauvergne, 2002). In spite of such reports, the ramifications of partner abuse among men should not be trivialized, as the consequences of experiencing abuse frequently include fear, anger, sadness, shame, depression, humiliation, and stress (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Indeed, it has been reported that emotional abuse is

experienced equally by men and women and levels of psychological distress are elevated in men who encounter emotional and physical abuse (Ogrodnik, 2007; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998).

In general, it seems that the emotional repercussions of abusive relationships occur in both males and females and the present findings raise concerns given that the study was primarily restricted to couples in the dating phase and only focused on psychological abuse. Both men and women who experienced psychological abuse could more easily leave the abusive relationship because they were not legally bound to their partner nor were they burdened with the responsibilities of having to support children.

Although dating abuse can often be one-sided, bidirectional abuse is also common and dating aggression has been identified as reciprocal (Marshall & Rose, 1990). Such relationships have been associated with more frequent physical and psychological violence (Makepeace, 1981; Pedersen & Thomas, 1992). Moreover, previous studies found sex differences in the receipt of abuse when bidirectional conflicts occurred (Mason & Blankenship, 1987). Specifically, women reported more distress in abusive relationships than men and responded by inflicting abuse on their intimate partner. These women did in fact report that they were subject to more physical and psychological abuse and a high correlation between inflicting and receiving abuse was present for women but not for men. This indicates that a woman striking out can be a dangerous response given that they are more likely to receive abuse in return (Mason & Blankenship, 1987). Thus, it was expected that among women, greater perpetration of abuse and the consequent reciprocation, would be related to greater depressive symptoms. However, it was

expected that among men who were not victimized, perpetrating abuse would be unrelated to depressive symptoms.

Contrary to prediction, it was found that as abuse perpetration increased, depressive symptoms also increased for men, regardless of the level of victimization they had experienced. Even more surprising was that women who were low perpetrators of abuse maintained moderate levels of depression, regardless of the abuse that they experienced. However, women that were high perpetrators and low recipients of abuse, reported low depressive symptoms, whereas women reporting both high victimization and perpetration had markedly high depressive symptoms (See Table 9). Hence, a combative situation may be more distressing for women than merely receiving abuse without retaliating. Perpetrating violence has been linked to enhanced victimization in return and higher levels of physical violence are reported in these bidirectional abusive relationships (Sharpe & Taylor, 1999; Swinford et al., 2000). Other factors that relate to relationship dynamics and perpetration of abuse could also account for the observed results. These may include gender differences in power and satisfaction with power, which are often related to perpetration of abuse and may also influence depressive symptoms.

Power

Several factors concerning relationship dynamics are important in determining satisfaction and overall emotional well-being. Relationship power has been identified as one of these factors. Although relationships in which power is equally distributed between partners are most satisfying for both members, an imbalance in power favouring one partner is common (Felmlee, 1994). Since an individual's view of a relationship is

Table 9

Abuse victimization and perpetration on depression outcome for males and females

Women			
	Depressive Outcome		
	Low Victimization	Medium Victimization	High Victimization
Abuse Perpetration			
Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
High	Low	Moderate	High
Men			
	Depressive Outcome		
	Low Victimization	Medium Victimization	High Victimization
Abuse Perpetration			
Low	Low	Low	Low
Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
High	High	High	High

based, in part, on experiences and gender roles, behaviour in relationships might be evaluated through traditional gender-role lenses. Males may perceive their interactions with their partner as more competitive and with a power-oriented perspective (Welsh et al., 1999). Additionally, as males are predominately viewed as the partner with greater relationship power (Peplau, 1979; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997), men may place greater emphasis on its importance. Accordingly, it was hypothesized that low perceived power would be associated with higher depressive symptoms, particularly among men. However, the pattern of findings did not match these predictions. As expected, low perceptions of power were related to high depressive symptoms. Yet, contrary to

expectations, this relationship was greater in women than in men. Males maintained low levels of depression irrespective of their perceived power and females that perceived themselves as possessing high power exhibited similar depression levels to the males. In contrast, females that perceived themselves as possessing low power exhibited significantly elevated depression scores compared to men. Interestingly, work conducted by Welsh et al., (1999) showed that among 18 to 19 year olds engaged in romantic relationships, females were more sensitive to issues of relationship power and they perceived themselves as being more likely to influence their boyfriend's opinion and were more successful in making them concede to what they wanted. Males, in contrast, seemed unaware of power struggles with their partner and did not view inequality in power-related areas (Welsh et al., 1999). Hence it is possible that young men simply do not recognize power imbalances as acutely as do young women and thus do not experience the same emotional distress.

Cultural narratives and gender roles often state that men possess and wield more power in relationships, and power is frequently gained by perpetrating abuse (Adams et al., 2008; Welsh et al., 1999). It was predicted that especially among males, receiving psychological abuse would be related to low perceived power. Although it appeared that being the recipient of high levels of psychological abuse was associated with decreased perceived power for both genders, this outcome was actually more pronounced in women. This reinforces the notion that females might be more sensitive to power issues, whereas males may be less cognizant of power imbalances (Welsh et al., 1999). This finding is unlike the data from married couples, where males are characterized as more likely to be the dominant partner (Steil, 1994). It is possible that such power imbalances

may not occur in the dating phase but rather develop later, as males become more confident in their relationship and other disparities or dependencies come into play (Welsh et al., 1999).

Given that abuse has often been identified as a means to maintain power in a relationship (Adams et al., 2008), it was predicted that increased abuse would be related to increased perceptions of power. Contrary to expectations, increased perpetration of psychological abuse was, in fact, related to decreased perceptions of power. It is possible that participants who felt less power in their relationship, perhaps caused by conflict, did not perpetrate abuse to maintain power (Stets, 1993), but rather to gain control when perceptions of power were low (Arias & Pape, 1999). Of course, these data are correlational and causality cannot be inferred.

Although it was predicted that perpetration of abuse would relate to increased perceptions of power for men more so than women, this hypothesis was not confirmed. Specifically, men maintained a high sense of power regardless of whether or not they were perpetrators of abuse. In contrast, among women, power perceptions declined as perpetration of abuse increased. A possible explanation for this result is that given women's greater sensitivity to power balances, if their control is challenged during a conflict, the female perpetrators may respond abusively if they perceive that power has been lost (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987). However, a small amount of variance was accounted for, thus these findings ought to be considered cautiously.

Satisfaction with Power

Studies examining the relationship between power and abuse perpetration have commonly focused on the absolute amount of power possessed, or the distribution of

power between partners. However, these constructs have inconsistently predicted relationship abuse perpetration (Ronfeldt et al., 1998). It has been suggested that dissatisfaction with power is a more critical factor for determining dating violence and has been associated with greater relationship conflicts (Ronfeldt et al., 1998). Moreover, a perceived inequality or dissatisfaction with power may result in perpetrating psychological abuse to gain control, especially given that individuals with lower perceived power exhibit higher psychological distress than those with higher perceived power (Horwitz, 1982). As anticipated, dissatisfaction with relationship power was related to greater depressive symptoms, and was a stronger predictor of depression than perceived power. This was the case for both males and females.

It was hypothesized that experiencing abuse would be related to decreased satisfaction with relationship power, particularly for males, since experiencing abuse might create a feeling of greater power deficiency. This prediction was derived from the gender stereotype that males perceive their interactions with their partners from a power standpoint (Welsh et al., 1999). Although psychological abuse victimization was related to relationship power dissatisfaction for both genders, this result was actually more pronounced in women than in men. It appears that among women experiencing abuse, power satisfaction is diminished, which may help explain why low perceptions of power are related to elevated depressive symptoms for women, but not men. Indeed, among the repercussions of psychological abuse, such as emotional distress and relationship dissatisfaction, abused women have reported lower levels of power and control (Dutton et al., 1999; Kaslow et al., 1998, Marshall, 1996; O'Leary, 1999).

Examining the relationship between satisfaction with power and perpetration of psychological abuse is critical given that psychological abuse has been found to mediate the relationship between satisfaction with power and physical abuse among men (Ronfeldt et al., 1998). As predicted, high perpetration of psychological abuse was related to dissatisfaction with relationship power, and was in fact, more strongly related to abuse perpetration than perceived power. This is similar to the results of Ronfeldt et al. (1998), where satisfaction with relationship power, but not the amount of perceived relationship power, was related to abuse for men. The few studies that have examined power dissatisfaction have frequently limited their focus to males' abuse perpetration. However, this study did not observe gender differences between psychological abuse perpetration and dissatisfaction with relationship power. Hence, high perpetration of psychological abuse and low perceived power followed the trend of being more salient for women, but abuse perpetration and power dissatisfaction was relevant for both genders. This result is consistent with findings of a study including both genders, where relationship power dissatisfaction was associated with the use of physical and psychological violence in dating relationships for men and women alike (Kaura & Allen, 2004).

Given that bidirectional abuse is common and that abusive interactions are related to perceptions of power (Arias & Pape, 1999; Marshall & Rose, 1990; Stets, 1993), it was hypothesized that sex differences in perceived power and power satisfaction would occur in reciprocally abusive relationships. The interaction between gender and abuse victimization, moderated by perpetration, for the respective outcomes of power and satisfaction were not apparent. Thus, victimization and perpetration occurring simultaneously in a relationship do not appear to have a unique impact on perceptions of

power and satisfaction with power for either gender. This is in line with the idea proposed by Swinford et al. (2000), that dissatisfaction with relationship power was a characteristic related to bidirectional abuse for both men and women. These conclusions, however, are gleaned from individuals' perception of their own victimization and abuse perpetrated. Clearly, it will be necessary to evaluate the perceptions of both partners in an ongoing relationship.

Power and Satisfaction Moderated Mediation

It has been established that experiencing psychological abuse is related to depressive symptoms (Mechanic et al., 2008); likewise, psychological abuse has been associated with perceptions of power. In particular, experiencing psychological abuse has resulted in decreased relationship satisfaction and decreased feelings of power (Dutton et al., 1999; Kaslow et al., 1998, Marshall, 1996; O'Leary, 1999). Low perceptions of relationship power have also, not surprisingly, been associated with higher psychological distress in both men and women (Horwitz, 1982). Moreover, power and power satisfaction are related constructs, but power dissatisfaction has a stronger relationship with psychological and physical abuse (Ronfeldt et al., 1998). Given cultural norms and gender stereotypes, it was thought that men would place more emphasis on relationship power dynamics than women (Peplau, 1979; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). In light of this previous research, it was hypothesized that the indirect effect of psychological abuse and depression through perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power respectively would be moderated by gender.

The mediating effect of perceived power for psychological abuse and depressive symptoms was significant among women. This result further reinforces the contention

that women may exhibit greater sensitivity to relationship power than men and that their emotional well-being is subject to power perceptions (Welsh et al., 1999). Hence, among women, the indirect effect of elevated psychological abuse and elevated depression through low perceived power is stronger than the direct relationship between abuse and depression.

Satisfaction with perceived power acted as a mediator between psychological abuse and depressive symptoms, but a gender difference did not occur in the mediating relationship. When examining the directionality of the mediation, psychological abuse was related to low satisfaction with perceived power and low power related to increased depressive symptoms. This result mirrors the previous findings that abuse victimization, perceived power and depression are salient among women, while satisfaction with perceived power and depression are salient for both genders.

Since moderated mediation models were correlational, alternative directional paths were evaluated and one was found significant. Specifically, the relationship between depression and psychological abuse was mediated by perceived power for women only. It is conceivable that women experiencing depressive symptoms were more likely to perceive themselves in lower power positions, hence being more susceptible to experiencing psychological abuse. Since both directional paths of the model were significant for perceived power, the present findings preclude causal conclusions concerning the directionality of the effect and it would be premature to conclude that the proposed model is the only acceptable path for explaining the relationship.

Limitations

There are several possible limitations that should be noted. Given that all assessments were self-reports and direct information was not gathered from partners, it is not possible to disentangle the directionality of various relationship conflicts that may exist. Additionally, the present study does not allow causal inferences to be made between experiences of psychological abuse, power perceptions, satisfaction with perceived power and depression levels. Individual reports of perceived relationship power may not have been equivalent to the actual degree of power possessed in the relationship.

The type of participants willing to partake in the study may have generally experienced healthy and more satisfying relationships. They may have been more willing to participate in a study of this nature, whereas those who experienced high levels of abuse might hesitate to participate in such a study. The reluctance to divulge their situation is understandable. However, this does not belie the problem that the sample represented was a self-selected one, with all the problems that are inherent as a result.

Although the study included relationships at various stages of commitment, the cross-sectional nature did not allow for a dynamic study of relationships over time. For example, perceptions of power and psychological abuse may change as relationships evolve or power balances may adjust as partners become more comfortable in their relationship. Clearly, a static analysis of dynamic events might not provide fundamental components that contribute to abuse and power satisfaction.

Another limitation was that only participants' current dating relationships were considered. As reported in women, past assaultive experiences, including childhood

abuse or neglect and threats of violence or partner abuse, have been associated with a greater likelihood of entering and remaining in another abusive relationship (Coffey et al., 1996; De Bellis, 2001; Matheson et al., 2007). It is possible that past assaultive experiences may contribute to current appraisals of relationship power, abuse and depressive symptoms; however this was not examined in the present study.

Finally, some of the findings pertaining to power and satisfaction with power comprised small effect sizes and although significant, accounted for a very small proportion of variance and thus their contribution to the overall effect was modest and should be interpreted with caution.

Summary and Conclusions

The current study investigated factors that contributed to psychological abuse and depressive symptoms, such as gender differences and power perceptions. Specifically, low perceived power in a relationship was related to elevated depressive symptoms for women, but not for men. Similarly, receiving high levels of psychological abuse was associated with low perceptions of power and satisfaction with power among women more so than in men. Perhaps, women are more sensitive to power imbalances (Welsh et al., 1999), especially when psychological abuse is experienced, which diminishes their perceptions of power and satisfaction with power.

High perpetration of psychological abuse was correlated with low perceptions of power. Specifically, as abuse perpetration increased, women reported lower levels of perceived power than men. In bidirectional abuse, women displayed the highest depressive symptoms when both perpetrating and receiving high levels of psychological abuse. Conversely, women that were predominately perpetrators of abuse and

experienced low victimization displayed the lowest depressive symptoms, perhaps reflecting a sense of empowerment. Men, regardless of victimization, reported increased depressive symptoms as their psychological abuse perpetration increased. Finally, the relationship between psychological abuse and depression was mediated by perceived power among women. As well, this relationship was mediated by satisfaction with perceived power for both genders.

In conclusion, the data of the present study suggest the need for continued focus on dating abuse in both men and women to determine the similarities and differences of perpetration and victimization. Findings from this and other studies have demonstrated that women are not solely the victims of abuse, nor are men solely the perpetrators. Limiting investigations by the concept that one gender perpetrates and the other is victimized may hinder the understanding of abuse dynamics, and may even provide inexact information that perpetuates negative gender stereotypes. Recognizing men as victims and females as perpetrators, or a greater sensitivity to the possibility that both genders can perpetrate, may increase the effectiveness of programs designed to improve the health of couple interactions.

Findings from this research identified perceived relationship power as a prominent factor, primarily for women, whereas dissatisfaction with relationship power was important for both genders. These results highlight the necessity of continuing to study relationship power and satisfaction with power for couples engaged in a dating relationship. The study also demonstrated the need to investigate how a discrepancy between perceived power and satisfaction with perceived power may be related to perpetrating abuse and the expression of depressive symptoms. Future research should

focus on gaining a further understanding of the interaction between relationship power or power dissatisfaction and gender. Specifically, the investigation of gender differences in the appraisal of relationship power and its association with abuse and depression would be of interest. Coping mechanisms employed by each gender when dealing with low satisfaction and perceptions of power may also help elucidate the observed similarities and differences.

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Appendix A – Flyer

Dating Relationships and Your Health

We are looking for people who are 18 years of age or older and who are currently in a dating relationship or have been within the past 3 months.

We are conducting a study to look at how people get along with their dating partners and the impacts of relationships on psychological and physical health. This study is entitled “Appraisal of a Conflict Situation: who is at fault?” It involves completing a number of questionnaires about your relationship, how you and your partner relate, your personality characteristics and experiences. This includes potentially stressful experiences, such as loss of a loved one, assault, etc. It also asks you to evaluate situations presented in online audio clips. The study takes approximately 60 minutes to complete. Upon valid completion of the study, you will receive \$10 in the form of a gift certificate for Tim Horton’s, HMV, Famous Players, Chapters Indigo or Second Cup as a thank you for your participation in the study.



If you're willing to participate, please take a tab and visit the website. If you have any questions, please call us at (613) 520-2600 x 4199, or email us at lziebel2@connect.carleton.ca or scwayne@connect.carleton.ca

The survey itself can be completed on our website at:

www.copewell.carleton.ca

**The Centre for Research
On Stress, Coping, and Well-Being**



Appendix B – 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: Appraisal of a conflict situation: who is at fault?

Study Personnel: Laura Ziebell (Researcher, 520-2600 ext. 7513)
 Sarah Carolyn Wayne (Researcher, 520-2600 ext. 7513)
 Dr. Hymie Anisman (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600 ext. 2699)

If you have any ethical concerns about this study please contact: Dr. Anne Bowker, Chair of Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 613 520-2600 ext. 2648 or Dr Avi Parush, Chair of Dept. of Psychology, 613 520-2600 ext. 6026

Purpose and Task Requirements: The purpose of this study is to assess how experiences of stress and observed conflict between individuals influence physical and psychological health and well-being. We will be asking you to fill out a number of questionnaires regarding your personal characteristics and your psychological and physical health. Examples of these questions include “Do you take use any recreational drugs such as cocaine; how many times in the past month?” and “Have you ever been in psychological therapy or counselling?” You will then listen to 3 audio clips portraying a conflict, which you will be asked to evaluate, along with completing additional questionnaires. The entire study will take approximately one hour to complete. You may complete the study in two separate sittings if you wish. The point at which you may stop and continue later will be specified when you reach it. For your participation in this study you will be awarded a \$10 gift certificate.

Potential Risk and Discomfort: There are no physical risks in this study. There may be some emotional pain or discomfort when thinking about negative aspects of your past and present relationships, as well as emotional distress when listening to the audio. The audio content is meant to be realistic and includes swear words and coarse language that may be offensive to some participants.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study will be kept 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 who will keep this information confidential. It will be associated with a code, and only this code will identify your questionnaires.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw. I have read the above description of the study. I understand that the data collected will be used in research publications and/or for teaching purposes. Clicking on “I agree”, below, indicates that I agree to participate in the study, and this in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights.

I agree / I do not agree

Appendix C - Background Information

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Remember that you have the right to terminate your involvement in this study at any time and that all information provided will be confidential.

Sex: Female / Male

Age: _____

What is your citizenship status?

_____ Canadian citizen

_____ Landed immigrant

Since what year? _____ Country of origin _____

_____ Student visa

Since what year? _____ Country of origin _____

What is your ethnic/racial background? _____

What is your religion, if any? _____

What is your relationship status? (please check the one that applies best to you)

_____ Single, and not seeing anyone

_____ Going out with someone

_____ Living with an intimate other

_____ Married

_____ Have recently broken up...

Please specify how many weeks ago you broke up _____

Please specify who initiated the break up:

_____ me _____ my partner _____ mutual decision

How long have/had you been in this relationship? _____ years

OR _____ months

If you are currently involved with someone,

Does the person live in Ottawa?

No _____ Yes _____ If no, where does (s)he live? _____

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?** _____

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 use any recreational drugs? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, which drugs have you used in the past month? (check all that 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? _____

Have you ever been in psychological therapy or counselling? (please check the one that best applies to you)

_____ 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

Are you currently being treated for any physical condition?

No _____ Yes _____ If yes, please specify _____

Appendix D – Conflict Tactics Scale

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with each other, 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. Below is a list of things your partner might have done to you, or that you may have done to your partner. For each statement, please indicate how often you or your partner has behaved this way in the past month by selecting a number value for each statement using the following rating scale. If you are not currently in a relationship, please answer the questions in relation to your most recently ended relationship:

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

1. I swore at, insulted, or put down my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

2. My partner swore at me, insulted me, or put me down.

0 1 2 3 4 5

3. I grabbed my partner, twisted his/her arm, pulled his/her hair, or threw something at him/her.

0 1 2 3 4 5

4. My partner grabbed me, twisted my arm, pulled my hair, or threw something at me

0 1 2 3 4 5

5. I had a sprain, bruise, or cut because of a fight with my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

6. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or cut because of a fight with me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

7. I made my partner have sex without a condom.

0 1 2 3 4 5

8. My partner made me have sex without a condom.

0 1 2 3 4 5

9. I pushed or shoved my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

10. My partner pushed or shoved me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

11. I used a knife or gun on my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

12. My partner used a knife or gun on me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

13. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight.

0 1 2 3 4 5

14. My partner passed out from being hit on the head by me in a fight.

0 1 2 3 4 5

15. I punched, hit, slapped, or kicked my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

16. My partner punched, hit, slapped, or kicked me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

17. I purposely destroyed something that belonged to my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

18. My partner purposely destroyed something that belonged to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

19. I went to a doctor, or should have gone to a doctor, because of a fight with my partner

0 1 2 3 4 5

20. My partner went to a doctor, or should have gone to a doctor, because of fight with me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

21. I shouted or yelled at my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

22. My partner shouted or yelled at me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

23. I beat up or choked my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

24. My partner beat me up or choked me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

25. I stomped out of the room or house during a disagreement with my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

26. My partner stomped out of the room or house during a disagreement with me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

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

0 1 2 3 4 5

28. My partner insisted on sex when I didn't want to (but didn't use physical force).

0 1 2 3 4 5

29. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

30. My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

31. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose.

0 1 2 3 4 5

32. My partner burned or scalded me on purpose.

0 1 2 3 4 5

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

0 1 2 3 4 5

34. My partner accused me of being a lousy lover.

0 1 2 3 4 5

35. I purposely did something to annoy, frustrate, or humiliate my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

36. My partner purposely did something to annoy, frustrate, or humiliate me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

37. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5

38. My partner threatened to hit me or throw something at me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

39. I used threats or force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex.

0 1 2 3 4 5

40. My partner used threats or force to make me have sex.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E – Power Balance Scale

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 within.*

1a. Who would you say is more emotionally involved in the relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
my partner is		we are both	equally	involved	I am much more	
much more involved					involved	

1b. How satisfied are you with this arrangement?

1	2	3	4
Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied

2a. In your relationship, who do you think has more control over whether the relationship continues and how emotionally committed it becomes?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have much		we both have	equal	control	my partner has	
more control					much more control	

2b. How satisfied are you with this arrangement?

1	2	3	4
Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied

3a. In your relationship, who has more power?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have much		we are both	equally	powerful	My partner	
more power					has much more	
than my partner					power than I do	

3b. How satisfied are you with this arrangement?

1	2	3	4
Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied

4a. In your relationship, who makes more of the decisions about what the two of you do together?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I make most		we both	equally		my partner	
of the decisions		make	decisions		makes most of	
					the decisions	

Appendix F – Beck Depression Inventory

On this questionnaire are groups of statements. Please read the entire group of statements of 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
12. ___ 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 G - Debriefing

In this study we were interested in assessing individuals' ratings of a conflict situation between dating partners when verbal psychological abuse was either present or was not present. Psychological abuse renders a victim emotionally insecure about their own self-worth and often causes them to become helpless against further psychological abuse or other forms of abuse, leaving feelings of hurt, anger, fear and degradation. We aimed to determine if your past experience in dating relationships influenced your ratings of the conflict. Different types of potential outcomes were envisaged. One such outcome is known as the "Black Sheep Effect" in which individuals of the same group criticize more harshly poorly behaving members of the same group. We also wanted to identify how experiences of relational stress and relational power (being dominant or not in your own relationships) you have experienced, and observing a conflict between individuals influenced your psychological well-being and feelings of distress.

In this study we had you fill out a number of questionnaires regarding your personal characteristics, psychological and physical health. You then listened to an audio clip portraying a conflict, which may or may not have contained abusive behaviour. You were then asked to evaluate the scenario, and fill out further questionnaires.

While many who participate in this study have not experienced psychological abuse, some have. If you believe that you are in an abusive relationship, it is important to be able to recognize it, to prevent further escalation of abuse, and it is important to understand that you are not to blame. If you have concerns related to your own well-being or this study, we are providing some numbers and information about services and people that you can contact for more information and/or help.

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. You were a very important collaborator and without your outstanding commitment to the study, this research certainly would not have been possible. Thank you!

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

Due to the ease of producing random data responses, validity checks will be implemented to determine sincerity of responses. Only those participants who provide us with valid responses will be granted a gift certificate.

Please let us know which one of the following gift certificates (valued at \$10) you would like to be sent:

- Indigo/Chapters Books
- Second Cup Coffee
- Cineplex (redeemable at Famous Players)
- HMV
- Tim Horton's

Thank you for completing our study.

Appendix H - Additional Debriefing

(for those with high BDI scores on suicidal intent)

Depression is a stress-related response that can occur for many reasons, including workplace stressors, traumatic life events, as well as discrimination. Approximately 10-15% of people will suffer some degree of depression during their lifetime. With advances in modern medicine, most people can readily be treated for this illness, which if unattended can be long lasting and affect many aspects of one's life. The symptoms of depression comprise:

- Poor or depressed mood, or a reduction in the pleasure gained from otherwise positive experiences
- Sleep disturbances
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite, or overeating despite not being hungry), which may be linked to weight changes
- Lack of sexual interest
- Fatigue and lethargy (you don't feel like doing anything)
- An inability to focus (e.g., you have a hard time reading)
- Reduced interactions with family and friends
- Thoughts of suicide

Someone who is depressed may experience several (3-4), but not necessarily all of the above symptoms.

It is likewise the case that 60% of individuals will encounter a severe traumatic event in their lives and of these people, a fair number will develop symptoms that cause severe anxiety. Illnesses of this nature, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be treated. Once again, if unattended, the repercussions can be severe. Symptoms include:

- Hyperarousal (e.g., feelings of anxiety and reactive even to minor situations)
- Intrusive thoughts (the event comes into your head frequently)
- Avoiding thoughts or stimuli related to the event

These symptoms can persist for more than a month following the event, and influence your day-to-day functioning.

Your responses to this survey suggest that you may be experiencing one of the above disorders. If you are not already receiving attention for this problem, it is suggested that you contact your family physician. It is not a good idea to allow problems to fester, as ruminating over these problems will typically not make them go away. Your family physician or counsellor will usually be able to help you or to refer you to someone who can. If you do not have a family physician, then you can contact either of the following:

Ottawa Distress Centre: (613) 238 1089, Web Site: www.dcottawa.on.ca

Distress Centre of Toronto: (416) 408 help, Web Site: www.torontodistresscentre.com

Appendix I - Contacts

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

Laura Ziebell, Researcher, Department of Psychology

Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 7513

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Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 7513

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Dr. Hymie Anisman, Faculty Member, Department of Psychology

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e-mail: hanisman@ccs.carleton.ca

If you have any ethical concerns about how this study please contact: Dr. Anne Bowker, Chair of Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 613 520-2600 ext. 2648 or Dr. Avi Parush, Chair of Dept. of Psychology, 613 520-2600 ext. 6026

If you have any worries/concerns about your personal well-being, you can contact the following services:

Ottawa Distress Line. Crisis line: volunteers available for anonymous consultation and referrals to a variety of services: 238-3311, 24 hours/day. More info at: <http://www.dcottawa.on.ca/About%20Us.htm>

Tele-aide. Crisis line: French language volunteers available for anonymous consultation and referrals to a variety of services: Ottawa-Gatineau 741-6433, Outaouais-Quebecois Rural 1-800-567-9699 or email plume@tel-aide-outaouais.org, 7am-2am, 7days/wk. More info at: <http://www.tel-aide-outaouais.org/>

Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre. Crisis line: counselors available for anonymous crisis calls: 562-2333, 24 hours/day. More info at: <http://orcc.net/>

Sexual Assault Support Centre. Call 725-2160 to find out about support groups, and/or accompaniments to police, court, or hospital. 24 hour support line: 234-2266. More info at: <http://www.sascottawa.org/index.html>

Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre. Aids in access to services and resources required for health and wellbeing. Includes the Program Against Abuse which offers individual support, information, crisis intervention, on-going counselling and first-stage and second stage group services for women who are or have been abused by their male or female partner. Have you been psychologically or physically abused? For more information call 591-3686, email info@communityresourcecentre.ca or visit the website at: <http://www.communityresourcecentre.ca/counsellingandreferral.html>