Acceptability of violence, gender, and dating violence

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Acceptability of violence, gender, and dating violence

by

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CHAPTER I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Violence in the romantic relationships of young adults is an all too frequent and serious problem. The most recent estimates suggest that between 30% and 60% of American college students have experienced physical violence in a dating relationship at least once (O’Hearn & Margolin, 2000), with an estimate of 10% to 40% of all heterosexual adults reporting inflicting violence and receiving violence in their relationships (Hendy, Weiner, Bekerofskie, Eggen, Gustitus, & McLeod, 2003). Some research suggests that dating relationships may be even more violent than marital relationships (Straus, 2004). As a result of this increasing awareness, dating violence has become an important focus in the violence literature.

A review of the literature available on dating violence reveals two distinct research areas: individuals who perpetrate violence and individuals who are the victims of violence. Unfortunately, this separation has resulted in a clear division among researchers about where the focus of dating violence research should be aimed: prevention or intervention – which area is more important to examine, and which area will provide more useful information that can be used to decrease the prevalence and incidence of dating violence. Additional controversy still exists about dating violence and gender. While it was once thought that only males were the perpetrators of dating violence and only females were the victims of dating violence, more recent research shows that both men and women perpetrate and are the victims of violence (Kaura & Allen, 2004; Straus, 2004). The present study is an attempt to further the research in both the perpetration and victimization areas for both genders by examining two separate but complimentary research projects that will be outlined and discussed in more detail in the following section.
DISSEYRTATION ORGANIZATION

The organization of this dissertation follows the alternative dissertation format. Chapter 2 contains the first research article titled "Relationship commitment, jealousy, acceptability of violence, and dating violence perpetration: A comparative study of men and women". A second research article follows in Chapter 3 entitled "Dating violence victimization, relationship satisfaction, mental health, and acceptability of violence: A comparison of men and women". These two articles are then reviewed in a brief summary chapter.

The first article in Chapter 2 examines the associations among relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence and their influence on dating violence perpetration by men and women. This article hypothesized that individuals who report higher levels of relationship commitment, higher levels of jealousy, and higher levels of acceptability of violence would report higher levels of dating violence perpetration. While the research available on these variables suggests that these are all plausible relationships, these variables have not been simultaneously examined in the same study. Further, little research is available that has compared these relationships for men and women. The present research also extends the literature by proposing that acceptability of violence moderates the relationships between relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration and between jealousy and dating violence perpetration. That is, higher levels of acceptability of violence were expected to strengthen the associations between these variables.

The second article in Chapter 3 focuses on selected outcomes of dating violence victimization for both men and women. More specifically, this study examines the influence of dating violence victimization on relationship satisfaction and mental health problems of its victims. It was hypothesized that dating violence victimization would be associated with
decreases in relationship satisfaction and increases in mental health problems for both men and women. In addition, acceptability of violence was also added as a potential moderator of the relationships between victimization and relationship satisfaction and victimization and mental health problems. It was expected that higher levels of acceptability of violence would weaken the associations between these variables.

Finally, Chapter 4 contains a general discussion of both articles. This begins with an overall summary of the main findings from both studies. General conclusions that can be drawn from both studies are also included and discussed as it pertains to the directions that future research should follow. Finally, the limitations for each of the research studies are discussed.
RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT, JEALOUSY, ACCEPTABILITY OF VIOLENCE, AND DATING VIOLENCE PERPETRATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MEN AND WOMEN

A paper to be submitted to *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*

Shelby A. Kaura and Brenda J. Lohman

ABSTRACT

Several studies have reported what seems to be a counter-intuitive finding, that dating violence perpetration increases with relationship commitment. A variable closely associated with relationship commitment, jealousy, has also been related to dating violence perpetration. Acceptability of violence, another variable related to violence perpetration, may moderate the influence of both relationship commitment and jealousy on dating violence perpetration. Specifically, for relationships characterized by high levels of acceptability of violence, it was expected that the greater the commitment and jealousy the greater likelihood that dating violence perpetration would occur. In contrast, in relationships where high acceptability of violence was not present, relationship commitment and jealousy were expected to have weaker relationships with dating violence perpetration. Using a sample of 155 male and 417 female college students, t-tests showed that women reported higher perpetration levels than men. Hierarchical regression analyses found that only jealousy was associated with dating violence perpetration – and only for women. Neither relationship commitment nor acceptability of violence was predictive of dating violence perpetration for either men or women. Additionally, acceptability of violence did not emerge as a significant moderator between relationship commitment and dating violence or jealousy and dating violence perpetration for men or women. However, the three-way interaction of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy for dating violence perpetration was
significant for the total sample. In addition, the two-way interaction between jealousy and relationship commitment was significant for the total sample. However, when fully interactive models were run separately by gender, both of the previously significant interactions failed to reach statistically significant levels.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades dating violence has become recognized as a major social problem. Estimates are that anywhere from 20% (Harned, 2001) to 47% (Katz, Kuffel, & Coblentz, 2002) of men and women perpetrate violence against their dating partner in a given year. Some research suggests that dating relationships may be even more violent than marital relationships (Straus, 2004). As a result of this increasing awareness, dating violence perpetration and its antecedents have become an important focus in the violence literature.

One possible antecedent is relationship commitment. This concept refers to how much a person wishes to remain in a relationship with his or her partner and the ability of the relationship to fulfill his or her individual needs (Arriaga, 2002; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). This variable is commonly believed to be a safeguard against violence, yet studies have consistently found that higher levels of relationship commitment predict dating violence perpetration (Arriaga, 2002; Salari & Baldwin, 2002). These studies suggest that violence is more likely to occur in relationships that are more serious, longer in duration, and more emotionally attached (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

A second possible antecedent to dating violence perpetration is jealousy. This can be referred to as being watchful, guarded, or suspicious of a partner and his or her loyalty to the relationship (Bernhard, 1986). Research suggests that individuals who are unable to deal with their jealousy in healthy or constructive ways may react with violence or threats of violence
(White & Mullen, 1989). Consistent with this view, research has found that individuals with higher levels of jealousy are more likely to perpetrate dating violence than individuals with lower levels of jealousy (Johnson, 2001; Rouse, Breen, & Howell, 1988).

Perhaps the most commonly studied antecedent of dating violence perpetration in recent literature is acceptability of violence. Acceptability of violence refers to how much a person agrees that violence is an appropriate behavior to use against a dating partner (Beyers, Leonard, Mays, & Rosen, 2000; Cauffman, Feldman, Jensen, & Arnett, 2000). While this variable has been found to have a direct influence on dating violence perpetration (Beyers et al., 2000; Cauffman et al., 2000; Riggs & O’Leary, 1996), it may also have an indirect effect by strengthening the influence of relationship commitment and jealousy on violence perpetration. That is, to the degree that relationships are characterized by high levels of acceptability of violence, it could be expected that increased commitment and jealousy would be associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration. In relationships where acceptability of violence is low or absent, the influence of relationship commitment and jealousy on dating violence perpetration could be much weaker in comparison. However, since no studies have directly focused on these relationships, the present study tested if acceptability of violence acts as a potential moderator of the influence of relationship commitment and jealousy on dating violence perpetration.

A final factor related to dating violence perpetration is gender. Although the commonly accepted perspective is that men are the perpetrators of dating violence and women the victims, this view may be overly simplistic. Research increasingly shows that women as well as men perpetrate dating violence, and with equal frequency (Harned, 2002; Katz, Kuffel, & Coblentz, 2002). Furthermore, although traditional views of female perpetration suggest that
the primary reason for females to perpetrate violence against a male partner is for self-defense, current findings suggest that the violent actions may not be as reactive as is commonly believed. Many of the predictors of male dating violence perpetration are the same for female dating violence perpetration as well (Moffitt, Robins, & Caspi, 2001). However, very few studies are available that compare predictors of dating violence perpetration directly for males and females, and none examine the relationships among relationship commitment, jealousy, acceptability of violence, and dating violence perpetration.

The goal of the present study was to test a model of the relationships among these variables. It was proposed that higher levels of relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence would be associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration. Furthermore, it was proposed that acceptability of violence would moderate the influence of relationship commitment and jealousy on dating violence perpetration, with stronger relationships associated with higher levels of acceptability of violence.

Dating Violence Perpetration

Violence in intimate relationships is a widespread problem in the United States. Although reports of the frequency with which dating violence occurs vary, estimates are that the rates of violence are quite high. For example, studies of undergraduate college students show that 30-60% of respondents report perpetrating at least one act of violence against their partners (Katz et al., 2002; Katz, Street, & Arias, 1997). Most of the dating violence perpetrated is relatively minor, such as slapping, pushing, or shoving. However, based on research estimates, approximately 3.4 million couples nationwide experience an incident of
severe violence within a given year, such as the beating up of one partner by the other or the use of a weapon (Hines & Saudino, 2002).

While violence can be defined in many ways, one of the most widely accepted conceptualizations is based on the assumption that violence involves the use of physical force against another person, and is defined as an “act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury” (Straus & Gelles, 1986). These types of acts range from throwing something, pushing, grabbing, and shoving to slapping, kicking, punching, and biting to beating up, threatening with weapons, and using weapons (Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985). However, verbal acts such as name-calling and insults, and emotional or psychological violence, which involve threats and intimidation, have also become recognized as important components of dating violence perpetration. Including these additional forms of violence produces more comprehensive definitions of dating violence that incorporate a wide variety of acts ranging from physically striking a romantic partner and causing injury to acts in which there is no physical contact at all such as verbal or psychological violence (Gelles, 1983; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996).

Antecedents of Dating Violence Perpetration

Numerous studies have focused on variables that are all associated with dating violence perpetration. Among those that have been identified are parental violence (Kaura & Allen, 2004; Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987), stress (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998), substance and alcohol abuse (Hammock & O'Hearn, 2002), anger, (Hammock & O'Hearn, 2002), previous experience with dating violence (Swan & Snow, 2002), and low self-esteem (Nadler & Dotan, 1992; Salari & Baldwin, 2002). However,
while these have been the prominent variables historically, three of the most recently studied variables associated with dating violence perpetration are relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence. While these variables have been studied extensively in the dating violence literature, no studies to date have examined the impact of these variables together in one study using a sample of both men and women.

**Relationship Commitment**

Although it was once thought that close, committed relationships would serve to protect a person from violence and harm, it is now recognized that these relationships instead can be the source of violence in the lives of many individuals (Marcus & Swett, 2003). One explanation for this finding is presented by Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, Rushe, Babcock, and Holtzworth-Munroe (1994), who draw on general systems theory and state that relationships that are considered “closed” may be laden with negative emotions and serious violence. Indeed, findings have shown that the level of commitment a person has to their relationship is related to dating violence perpetration, with higher levels of commitment reported in relationships in which violence is perpetrated (Arriaga, 2002; Cate, Henton, Koval, Christopher & Lloyd, 1982; Hanley & O’Neill, 1997). Another explanation for these findings is that as a relationship becomes more serious and commitment levels increase, individuals may perceive a greater right to influence their partner’s behavior by using force. For example, many times partners report violence only after the relationship becomes more serious (Cate et al., 1982; Cleveland, Herrera, & Stuewig, 2003; Gryl, Stith, & Byrd, 1991; Pedersen & Thomas, 1992).

A problem with past research is that most studies of relationship commitment have used duration of the relationship as proxy for commitment (Hammock & O’Hearn, 2002; Rouse et
al., 1988; Stets, 1991), with seriously committed relationships defined as those characterized by both partners having known each other for a longer time (Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1989) and in which both partners expect a long-term future and want the relationship to continue (Agnew, VanLange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). However, commitment goes beyond relationship persistence or merely "sticking it out" (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). It also involves a subjective state that links one partner's emotional well-being to the well-being of the relationship (Agnew et al., 1998). Furthermore, others have argued that relationship commitment includes not only emotional attachment to a partner, but also envisioning a long-term future with the partner and intentions to remain in the relationship through the good times and the bad (Arriaga 2002; Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, & Gaines, 1997; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). According to Rusbult and Buunk (1993), highly committed individuals need their relationships, feel connected to their partners, and have more extended, long-term time perspectives regarding their relationships. Relationship commitment, therefore, is the intent to persist in a relationship, including feelings of psychological attachment (e.g. a sense of "we-ness"; Rusbult et al., 1998). The present study goes above and beyond current literature by testing the association between relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration while controlling for the duration of the dating relationship. Specifically, it was hypothesized that higher levels of relationship commitment would be associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration.

**Jealousy**

Jealousy has also emerged from a number of studies as one of the central elements that lead to the perpetration of violence (see White & Mullen, 1989, for review). Indeed many investigations have consistently found that higher levels of jealousy predict higher levels of
violence perpetration (Cano, Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, & O’Leary, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Rouse et al., 1988). Across these studies, jealousy has generally been defined as being watchful, guarded, or suspicious of a partner and their loyalty to the relationship (Bernhard, 1986). It can also refer to the feelings one anticipates with the potential loss of someone important, of being left out, or betrayed by a loved one (White & Mullen, 1989). While a small degree of jealousy may be normal and healthy in romantic relationships, jealousy also involves many negative and destructive factors including possessiveness of the partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Rouse et al., 1988). These characteristics have drawn on perspectives from resource theory that view jealousy as an expression of power and control in a relationship that is a proximal cause of violence (Sugihara & Warner, 2002). As a result, jealousy may lead to attempts to dominate, control, and maintain one’s hold over his or her partner (Mauricio & Gormley, 2001; Sugihara & Warner, 2002).

According to Bernard (1986) jealousy results in an initial “flash” or rush of feelings. These emotions may range from withdrawal or helplessness to anger and rage. While some people are able to rationalize or control these emotions, others are not (Bernard, 1986). The way in which these jealous emotions are dealt with in the relationship will influence whether the incident escalates into violence (White & Mullen, 1989). Typically, when the result is violence, the jealous partner’s reactions are directed toward the object of his or her jealous feelings – their partner (White & Mullen, 1989). Based on the above literature review, it was hypothesized that higher levels of jealousy would be associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration.
Acceptability of Dating Violence

The final variable associated with dating violence perpetration to be tested in this paper is acceptability of violence. Using social norm theory, Roscoe (1985) notes that the use of violence in the family or against a romantic partner is influenced by societally-accepted norms about behaviors. Thus acceptability of dating violence may reflect how much a person agrees that it is all right or appropriate to use violence against a partner in a dating relationship (Riggs & O’Leary, 1996). For instance, Anderson and colleagues found that a substantial percentage of adults accept the use of some form of violence in intimate relationships, particularly when the partner perpetrates violence first (Simon, Anderson, Thompson, Crosby, Shelley, & Sacks, 2001). Others have used acceptability of violence as way to examine a person’s expectations of violence, that is, if violence should be expected under certain situations in which it would seem acceptable for a person to use violence against their dating partner (Cook, 1995; Greenblat, 1985). While the social norms theory is one explanation for acceptability of violence, more recently the term "acceptability" has been used interchangeably in studies examining a person's attitudes, justifications, or tolerance for violence (Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001; O’Keefe & Treister, 1998). These views are based loosely on ideas taken from social learning theory in which attitudes and beliefs about violence may be learned from previous experiences with violence, such as in the family of origin (Bandura, 1973). These beliefs may then carry over into other areas of a person’s life, including his or her dating relationships (Foshee et al., 2001).

Because acceptability of violence has been so broadly defined, it is not surprising that significant relationships have been found between acceptability of violence and dating violence perpetration. For instance, Riggs & O’Leary (1996) found in their study of male and
female college students using a violence survey that a more accepting attitude toward dating violence significantly predicted dating violence perpetration. Beyers and colleagues' (2000) study of college students' perceptions of dating violence using vignettes showed that males and females are just as likely to report willingness to perpetrate violence and report similar levels of acceptability of violence. Similarly, Cauffman et al. (2000) with their sample of high school students found that higher levels of acceptability of violence were related to higher levels of dating violence perpetration. Therefore, the present study hypothesized that acceptability of violence would be positively related to dating violence perpetration.

**Acceptability of Violence, Relationship Commitment, and Jealousy**

As detailed above, not only have independent effects of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration been shown, but studies have also addressed the interactive effects of these key variables. First, as reviewed previously, relationship commitment involves an emotional commitment to the partner and the intent to stay with that person through the good and the bad (Rusbult et al., 1998). Inherent in this view is the idea stemming from exchange theory that commitment involves the degree to which the positive outcomes (rewards minus costs) are greater within the current relationship than those available in another relationship (White & Mullen, 1989). If a person believes that his or her present relationship is better than possible alternatives, he or she is more likely to stay in that relationship. White and Mullen (1989) suggest that the individuals who constantly compare their relationships with their partners with alternate relationships (real or imagined) may have high levels of jealousy.

As a result, individuals in more committed relationships may have a greater fear that the relationship will end. This fear, in turn, enhances a person's level of jealousy as a protective
factor to ward off the fear, because there is “more to lose” (Marcus & Swett, 2003). Nadler and Dotan (1992) found that men and women in committed relationships who perceived a threat to their relationship and acted with jealousy were more likely to perpetrate violence. Similarly, Oner (2001) found that men and women who reported being jealous in their long-term relationships were more likely to perpetrate violence than those who did not report being jealous. Thus, jealousy may be more problematic and lead to violence in more serious, committed dating relationships (Bringle & Gray, 1986). Given this information, the present study investigated the interactive effects of jealousy and relationship commitment on dating violence perpetration.

Second, studies suggest that relationship commitment and acceptability of violence may also be related to each other. For example, violence has been found to be more justified and acceptable in more serious relationships (Bethke & DeJoy, 1993) and in relationships that have higher levels of closeness and intimacy (Cate et al., 1982). More recent research has also found dating violence perpetration to be more likely to occur after the partners have made a strong commitment to one another (Katz et al., 2002). Therefore, the present study investigated the interactive effects of acceptability of violence and relationship commitment on dating violence perpetration.

Third, acceptability of violence may also be related to jealousy. According to Puente and Cohen (2003) when jealousy is given as a motivation for violence, that violence has a tendency to be given greater legitimacy and is more tolerated than violence without jealousy as a motivation. One possible explanation for this is that jealousy-related perpetration of violence may be viewed as an act of love by its recipient (Puente & Cohen, 2003). It is possible, therefore, that jealousy-related violence is perceived as more acceptable to the
perpetrators than violence without the jealousy motivation. It may also be that the association of jealousy with love may change the meaning of the violent act into something more acceptable or understandable (Puente & Cohen, 2003). Therefore, the present study investigated the interactive effects of acceptability of violence and jealousy on dating violence perpetration. Further, because these three variables have not been examined in the same study, the present study also investigated the three-way interactive effects of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration.

Gender

Gender and dating violence perpetration. Numerous studies of dating relationships have demonstrated that both men and women perpetrate violence against their partners (see Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989 for an early review). However, the findings are far from conclusive. First, some studies suggest that men are more likely to perpetrate repeated and long-lasting violence against their female partners (Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Others suggest that the rates and frequencies of violence are the same for both genders (Archer, 2002; Fiebert, 1997; Hines & Saudino, 2002; Moffit et al., 2001; Swan & Snow, 2002). Others still have found that women perpetrate more violence than men (Foshee, 1996; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Schwartz, O’Leary, & Kendziora, 1997; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998; Sorenson, Upchurch, & Shen, 1996). Thus, the potential differences in rates of dating violence perpetration for men and women will be examined in the present study.

Gender, acceptability of violence, and dating violence perpetration. In studies examining acceptability of violence using hypothetical vignettes, the majority of individuals report that violence in dating relationships is unacceptable (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Shlien-
Dellinger, Huss, & Kramer, 2004). However, females are generally less accepting of violence than males in almost every instance. For example, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and colleagues (2004) found that when males and females rated the acceptability of physical violence using vignettes, females were less accepting of the use of physical violence than males. Similar results were found by Feldman and Cauffman (1999). In a follow-up study, Cauffman and colleagues (2000) found that females were less accepting of violence in hypothetical situations regardless of the type of violence.

However, when studies move from the hypothetical to focus on actual perpetration of violence in dating relationships, gender differences between acceptability of violence and dating violence perpetration are less clear. For example, in studies examining men, higher levels of acceptability of violence have been found to be associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration. Greenblat (1985) found that men who were more accepting of violence were more likely to perpetrate violence. O’Hearn and Margolin (2000) examined male perpetrators of violence and found that the majority of the respondents found at least one instance where it was acceptable to perpetrate violence against a female partner. Parrott and Zeichner (2003) found that men who experience high levels of anger and acceptability of violence are more likely to perpetrate dating violence. Similarly, Rietzel-Jaffe and Wolfe (2001) found that acceptability of violence and negative beliefs predicted more dating violence perpetration for men.

In studies that have included women as perpetrators along with men, no gender differences between acceptability of violence and dating violence perpetration rates have been found. For example, Bryant and Spencer (2003) found that both male and female college students who had high levels of acceptability of violence perpetrated more dating
violence. In addition, Simon and his coauthors (2001) found that both male and female
college students who reported being the victim of violence were also more likely to
perpetrate violence against their partner if they were more accepting of violence. This
suggests that acceptability of violence may be equally associated with dating violence
perpetration for both males and females. Thus, gender differences in the associations between
acceptability of violence and dating violence perpetration were explored in the present study.

*Gender, relationship commitment, and dating violence perpetration.* While studies
suggest that the longer men and women have been dating, the more likely they are to use
violence, no direct comparison of male and female levels of commitment and dating violence
perpetration rates have been examined. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) found that seriousness
of the relationship predicted more dating violence perpetration for both men and women.
Pedersen and Thomas (1992) also found that both male and female respondents reported
more dating violence perpetration in relationships with higher commitment and seriousness
levels. Gaertner and Foshee (1999) in their study of dating couples found that both men and
women who reported higher commitment and relationship duration levels reported more
dating violence perpetration. However, one research study suggests that female perpetration
rates may be higher than male perpetration rates in more serious, committed relationships
(Bethke & DeJoy, 1993). However, in another study, Hammock and O’Hearn (2002) found
that male perpetration of dating violence is more strongly influenced by high levels of
commitment than female perpetration. Because of the mixed findings in previous research,
the comparative strength of the association between relationship commitment and dating
violence perpetration was explored for men and women although no hypotheses were
presented.
Gender, jealousy, and dating violence perpetration. Research has suggested that jealousy is a strong predictor of dating violence perpetration for men (White & Mullen, 1989). In Hafner and Boker’s (1982) sample of male dating violence perpetrators, men reported jealousy as the motivation for over 13% of the violence they perpetrated. Buunk (1986) also studied a male sample and found that men were more likely to report resorting to perpetrating violence when they reported being jealous in their relationship. Similarly, Dobash and Dobash (1998) found that men who reported feeling jealous in their relationships were more likely to perpetrate violence against their female partners than those who did not feel jealous.

However, in studies including both male and female samples, jealousy has been found to be even more predictive of dating violence for women than for men. For instance, Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) found that jealousy was a much stronger predictor of the perpetration of dating violence by females than for males. Rouse and colleagues (1988) found females to be higher in levels of jealousy and possessiveness and more likely to perpetrate psychological violence compared to men. Females have reported being jealous in their relationships and perpetrating significantly more dating violence than males (Cano et al., 1998). Still other research suggests that male and female perpetrators of dating violence report similar levels of jealousy (Buss, 1999; Buunk & Bringle, 1987). Thus, in the present study the association between jealousy and dating violence perpetration for both men and women was explored.

Summary

In summary, dating violence perpetration remains a significant social problem not only for violence researchers, but also for the public. Relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence have emerged as three of the most widely examined factors of
perpetration in the dating violence literature. However, no research study to date has included these variables together in one study. In addition, no study has examined acceptability of violence as a potential moderator for dating violence perpetration. Furthermore, little is known about the comparative relationships among these variables for men and women. In the present study, these relationships were addressed through the following research hypotheses:

1. Acceptability of violence would be positively related to dating violence perpetration.
2. Relationship commitment would be positively related to dating violence perpetration.
3. Jealousy would be positively related to dating violence perpetration.
4. Acceptability of violence would strengthen the relationship between relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration and the relationship between jealousy and dating violence perpetration.
5. Gender differences in the rates of dating violence perpetration and in the relationships among relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence will be explored.

METHODS

Sample

A sample of 155 male and 417 female undergraduate college students recruited from a variety of human development and family studies courses at a large Midwestern university participated in the study. A total of 853 eligible students were included from the selected classes. Of those, a total of 760 students took surveys to complete, resulting in a screening rate of 89% (e.g., 760 ÷ 853 = .89). A total of 645 were returned for a participation rate of
85% (e.g., $645 \div 760 = .85$), resulting in an overall response rate of 76% (e.g., $.89 \times .85 = .76$). The sample consisted of both male and female students who are currently in or have had a previous heterosexual dating relationship. In this study, “dating” refers to a person of the opposite sex that an individual is currently involved with, but not in a marital relationship. A total of 25 students who reported that they were married and 47 students who reported that they had never been in a relationship were not included in the study.

The sample consisted predominantly of upper classmen (seniors 48.1%, juniors 22.7%, sophomores 21.7%), and Caucasians (87.2%), with the remainder of the sample lower classmen (freshman 7.5%) and minorities (3.2% African-American, 3.7% Asian-American, 2.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 3.2% Other). The majority of the students were from middle class families with over 85% reporting a parental income of over $30,000, and less than 15% reporting a parental income of less than $30,000. The majority of the sample was in their early twenties (97.9%) with only 2% of the sample over age 25.

Beyond basic demographic information, students were also asked detailed questions about their dating relationships. The majority of students who were currently dating someone had been in these relationships for a considerable length of time. Approximately one-quarter (24.9%) of students reported that they had been dating their current partner for over 2 years. Nearly 15% had been dating for 1-2 years, with 10.6% dating for 6-12 months, 5.4% dating for 3-6 months, 5.2% dating for 2-3 months, and 1.8% dating for only 1 month. A total of 208 students reported that they were not currently dating anyone. When asked about the length of their most recent relationship, these students reported a wide range of relationship durations. A total of 12.5% reported that their most previous relationship lasted one month, 17.8% lasted for 2-3 months, 17.3% lasted for 3-6 months, 17.3% lasted for 6-12 months,
16.3% lasted for 1-2 years, and 18.7% lasted for 2 years or more. Those not currently dating were also asked when their most recent relationship ended. Almost 15% (14.4%) reported that their most recent relationship ended 1 month ago, 14.8% 2-3 months ago, 17.2% 3-6 months ago, 21.1% 6-12 months ago, 21.5% 1-2 years ago, and 11% 2 or more years ago.

Procedure

Students were given a 137-item survey to take home and fill out on their own time and were asked to return the completed surveys at the following class period. Students completing the survey were entered into a drawing for one of forty $10 gift certificates to a local restaurant or two grand prize $25 gift certificates to a local mall that were held at the conclusion of the data collection period. Follow-up e-mails to each class were sent out prior to the return date of the survey to remind students to bring their surveys back to class.

Measures

*Dating Violence Perpetration.* The amount of violence perpetrated in the dating relationship was assessed using three subscales of the Relationship Behavior portion of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996). This index taps frequency of occurrence of various types of psychological, verbal, and physical violence that occur in dating relationships. Items are phrased to reflect both respondent and partner as initiators of the specified acts, with response categories for each item ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*more than 20 times*). The scale includes such items as “I pushed or shoved my partner” and “My partner shouted or yelled at me.” The 20 items were summed to create a total perpetration score ranging from 20 to 140 with higher scores indicating higher reported perpetration rates. The present study included only those items that pertain to respondent-initiated verbal, psychological and physical dating violence perpetration. Studies have found the CTS2 to be
highly reliable, with alpha levels well above .70 (Harned, 2002; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Straus et al., 1996). An alpha of .86 was found in the present study.

**Relationship Commitment.** The Rusbult et al. (1998) Relationship Commitment scale was used to assess the level of commitment each partner had with his or her dating relationship. The 7-item scale includes questions such as “I want our relationship to last forever” and “I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship.” Participants responded to each item using an 8-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 8 (agree completely), resulting in a range of 7 to 56 with higher scores indicating greater commitment to the present relationship. High internal reliabilities for this scale have been reported with alpha coefficients at .93 (Rusbult et al., 1998). An alpha of .92 was found in the present study. To control for relationship duration, two items were asked to assess the length of the current relationship for those in a dating relationship and the length of the most recent relationship for those not currently dating. These items were then collapsed into one item and included as a control variable.

**Jealousy.** The 27-item Interpersonal Jealousy Scale (IJS; Mathes et al., 1982) was used in the present study to assess jealousy. Respondents were asked to determine how much they believed each item was true on a 9-point rating scale (1 = absolutely false) to (9 = absolutely true). The scale includes such items as “If my partner admired someone of the opposite sex, I would feel irritated” and “I don’t think it would bother me if my partner flirted with someone of the opposite sex.” Reliability for the scale has been reported at .92 for both men and women (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2003; Mathes et al., 1982). An alpha of .91 was found in the present study.
Acceptability of Violence. The Acceptance of Couple Violence questionnaire developed by Foshee, Fothergill, and Stuart (1992) was used to assess the extent to which violence is acceptable in dating relationships. The scale includes items such as “There are times when violence between dating partners is okay” and “Some couples must use violence to solve their problems.” Participants responded to each item using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores were summed to result in a total acceptability of violence score ranging from 11 to 44 with higher scores indicating higher acceptability of violence. Moderately high internal reliabilities for this scale have been reported with alpha coefficients at .74 (Foshee et al., 1992). An alpha of .91 was found in the present study.

Demographics. Each survey included a demographic portion to obtain the respondent’s gender, ethnicity, parental income, and age. A dummy variable was created for gender (0=female and 1=male). Because of the limited number of Hispanics/Latinos and Asian-Americans, ethnicity was collapsed into a dummy variable (1=Caucasian and minorities =0). Parental income was assessed on a 9-point scale increasing in increments of $10,000 and ranged from 1 ($0-$10,000) to 9 ($80,000 and up). One additional question was also included to control for when their most recent relationship ended. All of these variables were entered into each regression analysis as control variables.

Data Analysis Plan

The data for the present study were examined by using descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlations, and hierarchical regression analyses. First, t-tests were performed to assess potential gender effects for the study variables. Second, correlations were then performed among the indices to determine the initial relationships between the study variables and
determine any potential multicollinearity. Finally, the models were estimated using hierarchical regression analyses. The influence of relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence on dating violence perpetrated was estimated for the total sample and again for men and women separately. These models included age, ethnicity, parental income, length of relationship, and end of most recent relationship as control factors. Following the procedures outlined in Aiken and West (1991), the models were then tested for the potential interactive effects of acceptability of violence on the relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration, jealousy and dating violence perpetration, and for the three-way interaction of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration for the total sample and again for men and women.

RESULTS

The results begin with a descriptive overview of the associations of the main variables with dating violence perpetration. Next, the correlations among the study variables are presented. Then, t-tests are presented among the variables to assess if gender differences exist. Hierarchical regressions are presented to assess the associations among the key study variables (relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability of violence) on dating violence perpetration and the potential interactive effects of these variables on dating violence perpetration for the full sample. Finally, the same hierarchical regressions that were analyzed for the total sample are presented separately for men and women.

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and ranges for the study variables. As can be seen by the means, scores for dating violence perpetration and acceptability of violence were low, while relationship commitment scores were high, and jealousy scores were moderate. Table 2 displays the correlations among these variables. Viewing the correlation
table, one can see that dating violence perpetration was positively related to acceptability of violence \((r = .20, p < .01)\). Dating violence perpetration was also positively correlated with jealousy \((r = .25, p < .01)\), but was not significantly correlated with relationship commitment \((r = .06, p > .05)\). Among the key variables, acceptability of violence was negatively correlated with relationship commitment \((r = -.21, p < .01)\) and positively correlated with jealousy \((r = .10, p < .05)\).

**T-tests for Gender Differences**

Table 3 displays the t-tests for differences between men and women for the study variables. Women reported significantly higher levels of dating violence perpetration than men \((t = -3.27, p < .01)\). Also, women reported significantly higher levels of jealousy \((t = -2.14, p < .05)\) and higher levels of relationship commitment than men \((t = -4.88, p < .001)\). On the other hand, men reported higher rates of acceptability of violence than did women \((t = 3.30, p < .001)\).
Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted next to determine the associations between acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration for the total sample. These regression analyses were then run separately for men and women. Each of these key variables was examined for their potential main effects and their potential interactive effects on dating violence perpetration. In Table 4, gender, ethnicity, parental income, age, length of the relationship, and end of the most recent relationship were entered first as control variables. These controls together account for a significant amount of variance in dating violence perpetration \( R^2 = .21, F = 8.40, p < .001 \), with gender, ethnicity, and length of relationship significant. Specifically, women reported higher rates of dating violence perpetration than men \( (\beta = -.30, p < .001) \) while minorities reported more perpetration than Caucasians \( (\beta = -.14, p < .05) \). Finally, a standard deviation increase in length of relationship was related to a .28 increase in dating violence perpetration, indicating that dating violence perpetration increases significantly as the length of the relationship increases \( (\beta = .28, p < .001) \). As shown in Models 2 and 3 in Table 4, these three control variables were consistently associated with dating violence perpetration across all models.

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Insert Table 4

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As stated in the first three hypotheses, significant main effects for each of the three key variables were predicted. In Model 2, acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy were added into the model. Surprisingly, the amount of variance in dating
violence perpetration explained by the addition of these three variables is not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .02, F = 2.01, p = .11$). Neither acceptability of violence ($\beta = -.04, p = .54$) nor relationship commitment ($\beta = -.06, p = .42$) were associated with dating violence perpetration. Only jealousy was associated with dating violence perpetration ($\beta = .19, p < .001$). Specifically, a standard deviation increase in jealousy was related to a .19 standard deviation increase in dating violence perpetration.

Potential interaction effects were examined to test the hypothesis that acceptability of violence moderates the relationships between relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration and jealousy and dating violence perpetration. These are displayed in Model 3 of Table 4. Each of these was tested independently. We present the fully interactive model here. While the amount of variance explained by the addition of these interactions is significant ($\Delta R^2 = .02, F = 6.28, p < .05$), neither the two-way interactions between acceptability x commitment ($\beta = -.06, p = .66$) nor acceptability x jealousy ($\beta = -.13, p = .20$) were significant. However, the two-way interaction of jealousy x commitment was significant ($\beta = .15, p < .05$).

As shown in Figure 1, when jealousy levels are either low or high, perpetration rates across commitment levels are relatively unchanged. However, when jealousy levels are medium, perpetration rates increase across commitment levels with the highest perpetration associated with high levels of commitment and low levels of jealousy. To facilitate interpretation of this interaction, an analysis of simple slopes was conducted using the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991). This test indicated that only one of the three levels of jealousy, low jealousy ($\beta = -.22, p < .05$) was significantly different from zero, while the slopes for medium jealousy ($\beta = -.07, p = .32$) and high jealousy ($\beta = .07, p = .43$) were not
significantly different from zero. Further analysis of these lines, following the procedures outlined in Aiken and West (1991) indicated that the slopes of each of these lines are significantly different from one another based on the significant main effect found for jealousy ($\beta = .19, p < .001$).

Finally, an examination of the three-way interaction of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration showed that this interaction was significant ($\beta = -.23, p < .01$). Illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the graphs show that levels of commitment and jealousy remain almost unchanged when acceptability of violence is low. However, when acceptability of violence is high, high levels of jealousy and high levels of commitment predict the highest levels of dating violence perpetration. Similar procedures utilized for the significant two-way interaction were also used to facilitate interpretation of this interaction. An analysis of simple slopes was conducted using the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991). This test indicated that when acceptability of violence was low, the simple slopes of the lines for high jealousy ($\beta = .30, p < .05$), and low jealousy ($\beta = .30, p < .05$) were significant. However, when acceptability of violence was high, neither the slope for high jealousy ($\beta = -.16, p = .23$) nor low jealousy ($\beta = -.02, p = .93$) were significantly different from zero. Further analysis of these lines, following the procedures outlined in Aiken and West (1991) indicated that the slopes of each of these lines are significantly different from one another based on the significant two-way interaction effect found for jealousy and commitment for dating violence perpetration.

The separate analyses for men and women are shown in Table 5. As with the analyses for the total sample, the same controls were added in Model 1 for men and women separately. While the controls did not account for a significant amount of variance in dating
violence perpetration for men ($R^2 = .09, F = 1.22, p = .31$), they did account for a significant amount of variance in dating violence perpetration for women ($R^2 = .19, F = 5.76, p < .001$). While only the length of the relationship was significant for men ($\beta = .24, p < .05$), both the length of the relationship ($\beta = .33, p < .001$) and ethnicity were significant for women ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$). As also shown in Models 2 and 3 in Table 5, the control variables that were significant for men and women respectively remained consistently significant across the models.

As displayed in Model 2 on Table 5, acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy were added to the model next. Compared to the total model, the amount of variance in dating violence perpetration explained by these variables is not significant for men ($R^2 = .10, F = 0.89, p = .53$), but it is for women ($R^2 = .25, F = 4.90, p < .001$), suggesting that these models are being carried more by the female participants. When the three predictor variables are examined, none of the variables were significantly associated with male dating violence perpetration, and only jealousy was significantly associated with dating violence perpetration for women ($\beta = .25, p < .001$). When the interaction terms were added in Model 3, the amount of explained variance in dating violence perpetration was not significant for men ($^{3}R^2 = .04, F = 3.03, p > .05$) or women ($^{3}R^2 = .02, F = 3.21, p > .05$). In addition, all of the two-way interactions and the three-way interaction failed to reach significance for both men and women.
DISCUSSION

The current study was an attempt to extend the field of research by examining the impact of acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration together in one study. It was hypothesized that each of these three variables would be associated with dating violence perpetration. However, findings from this study show that only jealousy emerged as a significant antecedent to dating violence perpetration. It may be that jealousy is even more important antecedent to dating violence perpetration than acceptability of violence. As stated previously, jealousy involves many negative and destructive factors including possessiveness of the partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1998), that may lead to attempts to dominate or control one’s partner (Mauricio & Gormley, 2001). These destructive factors are emotionally-driven and may be instigated by events that happen in the heat of the moment. Thus, these factors may have an even greater influence over one’s actions during an emotionally-charged argument than whether or not they accept the use of violence.

While jealousy emerged as a stronger antecedent of dating violence perpetration than acceptability of violence, the non-significant findings for the association between acceptability of violence and dating violence perpetration were still surprising, given the extensive research that has found significant associations between high acceptability of violence and high levels of dating violence perpetration (Beyers et al., 2000; Cauffman et al., 2000; Riggs & O’Leary, 1996). However, it may be that individuals in this study were able to understand that the items in the scale were asking them about a behavior that has been deemed socially undesirable. Therefore, they were more likely to respond in a socially desirable manner, thus going against their beliefs and reporting that violence is unacceptable.
When the interactive effects of the study variables were examined, acceptability of violence did not emerge as a potential moderator variable for either jealousy or relationship commitment as hypothesized. However, a significant three-way interaction between acceptability of violence, relationship commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration was found. When these relationships were explored further, it was revealed that higher levels of acceptability of violence interacted significantly with higher levels of jealousy and relationship commitment to produce the most dating violence perpetration. This showed that while no significant main effect or two-way interactive effects for acceptability of violence were found, higher levels of acceptability of violence were still associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration when higher levels of jealousy and relationship commitment were present.

The fact that relationship commitment was not associated with dating violence perpetration was also surprising. Previous research has suggested that higher levels of relationship commitment are associated with higher levels of dating violence perpetration (e.g. Arriaga, 2002; Cate et al., 1982; Hanley & O’Neill, 1997). While reported levels of relationship commitment in the present study were quite high, they were not related to dating violence perpetration. It is possible that the high levels of relationship commitment reported by the participants were actually more consistent with negative aspects of high commitment like control and possessiveness rather than more positive forms of commitment such as feeling a deep emotional bond and wanting to be with the partner long-term. Consistent with the idea of more negative aspects of commitment such as control or possessiveness being more influential than positive forms of commitment, an interaction between jealousy and relationship commitment on dating violence perpetration was found, suggesting that the two
variables together create a new dynamic that affects dating violence perpetration. Given that the highest perpetration levels were associated with high levels of relationship commitment and low levels of jealousy, it may be that the individuals were experiencing a high sense of possessiveness and exerting control over their partner by using force.

While no specific gender hypotheses were proposed, the results of this study show that gender differences exist for all of the main variables in this study. First, women reported significantly more dating violence perpetration than men. This finding is consistent with results being obtained by an increasing number of researchers (Harned, 2001; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Pulerwitz, et al., 2000; Shook et al., 2000). Second, women also reported higher jealousy scores than men, a finding supported by other researchers (Cano et al., 1998; Rouse et al., 1988; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987). Third, women reported higher relationship commitment scores which is also consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g. Bethke & DeJoy, 1993). Only one variable, acceptability of violence, was higher for men than for women. In the present study, men reported higher levels of acceptability of violence than women, which is also consistent with the literature (e.g. Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Rietzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001).

In addition to the three key variables, a number of control variables were added to the model. Of these, gender, ethnicity, and length of relationship emerged as statistically significantly associated with dating violence perpetration. These controls showed that dating violence perpetration was greater for women, minorities, and individuals in longer relationships. A number of research studies have supported the finding that women perpetrate more dating violence than men (Foshee, 1996; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Riggs & O’Leary, 1996; Schwartz et al., 1997). However, research regarding ethnic differences for dating
violence perpetration is less clear. In some studies minorities perpetrate more violence than Caucasians (Allen, 1996; West, 2004), while others have found no ethnic differences in dating violence perpetration (Rouse, 1988). It may be that in addition to racial differences existing, there may have also been cultural differences as well. These cultural differences may influence the ways that dating violence is perceived by men and women in different cultures. Thus, men and women from different cultures may be more likely to use dating violence and report more dating violence perpetration. Finally, one explanation for length of relationship significantly associated with dating violence perpetration is that the longer a person is in a relationship, the greater the opportunity exists for violence to occur. It may also be that a selection effect is present in that data. That is, individuals who are less accepting of violence would end a relationship in which violence occurs early in the relationship. Therefore, the individuals who remain in violent relationships have chosen to remain in that relationship for other reasons, such as greater acceptance of violence. It may also be that as relationship length increases, levels of jealousy and commitment also increase, which could possibly lead to increases in dating violence perpetration.

There are a few limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting these results. The findings of this study are based on a survey administered to predominantly white, middle class college students in their early twenties. Even though this sample represents a major population of dating individuals, further research should include a more diverse sample including a broader age range and more economic and ethnic diversity. As shown by the results, ethnicity was significantly associated with dating violence perpetration. However, the predominance of Caucasians in the sample prevented a more detailed examination of racial
and cultural differences. Thus, future work should strive to include more ethnic minorities in their sample.

Furthermore, participants who may have felt shame or guilt at having perpetrated violence may not have been willing to share that information in the survey. Thus, there is the possibility that the frequency of some reported events may have been misrepresented. However, this most likely would lead to underreporting of dating violence perpetration. In addition, the measure used in the present study to assess dating violence perpetration (CTS2) assesses the lifetime occurrence of violent behaviors. Some individuals who participated in the study reported that they had been in their relationships for a significant length of time and could not remember every instance of violence in their relationship and thus were making rough guesses as estimates of the behaviors. Measures such as limiting the scale to acts occurring in a given period of time, such as one year, should be taken into account in future studies to ensure more accurate reporting of violence. These measures may result even stronger relationships among the variables being reported in the study.

In addition, while associations were found between jealousy and dating violence perpetration, the direction of this relationship is not known. It is not known if increases in an individual’s level of jealousy lead to increases in dating violence perpetration, or if dating violence perpetration increases and individual’s level of jealousy. Therefore, one cannot infer causality from these findings. Rather, the findings suggest only that jealousy and dating violence perpetration are positively related.

Future studies should also include an examination of the length of the relationship. In the present study, individuals who were in longer relationships were more likely to perpetrate violence. As stated previously, a number of possibilities exist that may explain the potential
association between length of the relationship and dating violence perpetration. These potential explanations should be examined in future studies. Finally, future studies should also examine the concepts of enmeshment and possessiveness, variables closely related to jealousy and relationship commitment to determine which concepts are truly associated with dating violence perpetration.

In conclusion, findings from this study suggest the need for continued focus on dating violence perpetration by both men and women to determine the similarities and dissimilarities of patterns. As findings from this and other studies have shown, women are not solely the victims of violence nor are men solely the perpetrators. Sensitivity to the possibility of both genders as perpetrators may be more helpful than the typical focus in dating violence intervention and prevention programs that recognize men as perpetrators and women as victims. Additional studies are also needed to help determine the gender similarities and dissimilarities between the variables associated with dating violence perpetration.
REFERENCES


Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71, 728-740.


school students. Violence and Victims, 12, 295-305.


Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Dating Violence Perpetration, Acceptability of Violence, Relationship Commitment, and Jealousy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dating Violence Perpetration</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>29.34</td>
<td>9.90</td>
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<td>Acceptability of Violence</td>
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<td>3.43</td>
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<td>Relationship Commitment</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>50.11</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>56 (9-63)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>128.51</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>216 (27-243)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Ns vary due to missing or incomplete responses.
Table 2.

Correlations among Study Variables

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<td>-</td>
<td>.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relationship Commitment</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Jealousy</td>
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Note: *p < .05. **p < .01.
Table 3.

T-Tests for Differences$^a$ Between Men and Women for Study Variables

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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>N = 153</td>
<td>N = 414</td>
<td>N = 567</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptability of Violence</td>
<td>13.32 (3.91)</td>
<td>12.26 (3.19)</td>
<td>12.55 (3.42)</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.001***</td>
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<td>N = 153</td>
<td>N = 417</td>
<td>N = 570</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Commitment</td>
<td>45.56 (14.87)</td>
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<td>.001***</td>
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<td>N = 153</td>
<td>N = 415</td>
<td>N = 568</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jealousy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$^{a}$Ns vary due to missing or incomplete responses.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Models for Dating Violence Perpetration for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.29***</td>
<td>-0.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>-0.13*</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Income</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Relationship</td>
<td>0.28***</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>0.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Most Recent Relation</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Variables</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability of Violence</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Commitment</td>
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<td>-0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability x Commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability x Jealousy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jealousy x Commitment</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability x Jealousy x Commitment</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F, Prob&gt;F</strong></td>
<td>8.40***</td>
<td>6.69***</td>
<td>5.80***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R^2</strong></td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05. Note: Betas or standardized coefficients are reported.
Table 5.
Hierarchical Regression Models for Dating Violence Perpetration for Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Relationship</td>
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<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Most Recent Rel.</td>
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<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability of Violence</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Commitment</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability x Commitment</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability x Jealousy</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.14</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy x Commitment</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept. x Jealousy x Comm.</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, Prob&gt;F</td>
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<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>5.76***</td>
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<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05. Note: Betas or standardized coefficients are reported.
Figure 1: Interaction between Jealousy and Commitment on Dating Violence Perpetration for the Total Sample
Figure 2: Interaction between Jealousy, Commitment, and Low Acceptability of Violence on Dating Violence Perpetration for the Total Sample
Figure 3: Interaction between Jealousy, Commitment, and High Acceptability of Violence on Dating Violence Perpetration for the Total Sample
ABSTRACT

Dating violence has become recognized as a major social problem. Two of the most often reported consequences of dating violence are its impact on the victim’s satisfaction with their relationship with their abusive partner, and its impact on the victim’s mental health. Recent research suggests that the strength of these relationships may be moderated by the degree to which the dating violence is acceptable to the victim. However, studies of these relationships have been limited to samples of women victimized by their male dating partners. The purpose of the present research was to examine the relationships among dating violence victimization, relationship satisfaction, mental health problems, and acceptability of violence for a sample that includes both male and female victims. A sample of 155 male and 417 female college students completed dating violence surveys. T-tests for gender differences found that men and women reported similar dating violence victimization levels. Hierarchical regression analyses found that for men, only mental health problems were significantly associated with higher levels of dating violence victimization. For women, dating violence victimization was associated with decreased relationship satisfaction and increased mental health problems. However, contrary to the hypothesis, acceptability of violence was not associated with the relationship between satisfaction and dating violence victimization or the relationship between mental health problems and dating violence victimization for either men or women.
INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, violence in dating relationships has become recognized as a major social problem. Estimates are that anywhere from 20% (Harned, 2002) to 47% (Katz, Kuffel, & Coblentz, 2002) of men and women were victims of violence from their dating partner in a given year. Recent research suggests that dating relationships may be even more violent than marital relationships (Straus, 2004). As a result of this growing awareness and concern, dating violence victimization and its consequences have become an important focus in the family violence literature.

One major consequence of dating violence is its effect on victims' satisfaction with their relationships with their abusers. Relationship satisfaction typically refers to the extent that an individual feels positively about his or her relationship and about his or her partner (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), and was first focused on in studies of marital violence. However, studies of dating violence have found that the effects of dating violence victimization on relationship satisfaction are consistent with those found in the marital violence literature, with dating violence victims also reporting lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2003; Dye & Eckhardt, 2000; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002).

Another major consequence of dating violence is its impact on the mental health of its victims. While mental health encompasses a variety of symptoms and types, most of the focus of the mental health effects of violence victimization centers around depression, anxiety, and somatic mental health effects (Coker, Davis, Arias, Desai, Sanderson, Brandt, & Smith, 2002; Golding, 1999; Sutherland, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2001; Whitson & El-Sheikh, 2003). Research has consistently found that victims of dating violence report more mental

An important moderator of the influence of dating violence on the victim’s relationship satisfaction and mental health may be the victim’s acceptability of the violence. In one of the few studies focusing on the influence of a closely related variable, negative beliefs about violence, victims who had fewer negative beliefs about violence in their relationship did not suffer as many mental health problems as victims who had more negative beliefs (Jackson, Cram, & Seymour, 2000). It seems plausible that acceptability of violence may weaken the influence of dating violence victimization on relationship satisfaction as well.

While research is suggesting that relationship satisfaction and mental health may be negatively influenced by dating violence victimization and moderated by the victim’s acceptability of the violence, this research has focused almost exclusively on female victims. However, a few studies show that men are victims of dating violence as well (Harned, 2002; Katz et al., 2002). Unfortunately, most of this research is limited to studies of its prevalence and understanding how often men are the victims of relationship violence. Very little research is available that examines the consequences of dating violence for male victims. Thus, in the present study, the influence of dating violence on the relationship satisfaction and mental health of its victims, along with the possible moderating effects of acceptability of violence, were examined for both female and male victims of dating violence. It was proposed that dating violence victimization would be negatively related to relationship satisfaction and mental health for both males and females, with a stronger relationship for female victims. It was further proposed that acceptability of violence would influence these relationships, with this effect stronger for female victims than male victims.
Dating Violence Victimization

Dating violence victimization has become recognized as a widespread social problem. In one of the first studies of dating violence nearly one third of dating couples reported at least one violent episode in their relationship (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989). In another study, nearly two thirds of individuals interviewed personally knew of someone who had been the victim of violence in their dating relationship (Makepeace, 1981). More recent estimates suggest that anywhere from 20% (Harned, 2002) to 47% (Katz et al., 2002) of men and women were victims of violence perpetrated by their dating partner.

Dating violence victimization includes being the recipient of a partner’s violent acts. These can be physical behaviors that range from minor acts such as slapping or pushing to major acts such as punching, kicking, or using a weapon (Capaldi & Crosby, 1997). Other forms of violence include verbal acts such as name-calling and/or psychological acts such as threatening or destruction of property (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, victims of violence are those whose partners have intentionally used force against them with the potential to cause harm, injury, disability, or death (Smith, Thornton, DeVellis, Earp, & Coker, 2002).

Consequences of Dating Violence Victimization

A number of consequences of dating violence victimization have been identified. These include physical injuries (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998), psychological distress (Carlson et al., 2002; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998), decreases in self-esteem (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998), increased levels of anger (Jackson et al., 2000) and fear (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). However, one prevalent consequence may be the impact of
intimate partner violence on the victim’s satisfaction with their relationship and with their partner.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction stems from the belief that the relationship provides more rewards than costs and that the total amount of positive outcomes in the relationship is greater when compared to other relationships of the same type (Rusbult, 1983; Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995). It also refers to the extent to which a partner feels enjoyment, contentment, love, and being understood and accepted in a relationship (Cramer, 2003; Hendrick, 1988). Relationship satisfaction involves an intrapersonal evaluation of how positive one’s feelings are toward his or her partner and his or her level of attraction to the relationship (Rusbult, 1983; Sacher & Fine, 1996). A person’s level of relationship satisfaction is determined by the balance of positive and negative affect experienced in the relationship and by how much or how little a partner fulfills the individual’s most important needs (Rusbult et al., 1998).

Studies have found that dating violence victimization is significantly related to relationship satisfaction, with higher levels of dating violence predicting lower levels of victims’ satisfaction with their relationships with their abusers (e.g., Capaldi & Crosby, 1997; Cramer, 2003; Testa & Leonard, 2001). These findings have been based on the interdependence and social exchange theory-based ideas of rewards and costs. These theories postulate that violence between partners is experienced as a significant cost to being in the relationship and negatively impacts the level of relationship satisfaction of the person being victimized (Capaldi & Crosby, 1997; Cramer, 2003; Kasiian & Painter, 1992; Kurdek, 1994; Testa & Leonard, 2001).
Mental Health Problems

Another important consequence of dating violence victimization is its impact on the victim's mental health. Research has consistently shown that dating violence victimization is negatively related to mental health (Whitson & El-Sheikh 2003). The relationship between dating violence victimization and mental health has been addressed by social strain theory which states that unfulfilling relationships impede and may actually harm the well-being of the relationship partners, (Whitson & El-Sheikh 2003).

Although mental health encompasses a variety of symptoms and types, most of the focus of the mental health problems resulting from violence victimization is on depression, anxiety, and somatic health effects (Whitson & El-Sheikh, 2003). Of these, the most commonly reported mental health problem related to dating violence victimization is depression (Beach, Jouriles, & O’Leary, 1985; Campbell, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995; Carlson, McNutt, & Choi, 2003; Golding, 1999; Goodkind et al., 2003; Riger, Raja, & Camacho, 2002). Research has consistently shown that victims of dating violence report higher levels of anxiety than nonvictims (Callahan, Tolman, & Saunders, 2003; Carlson et al., 2002; Cascardi, O’Leary, Lawrence, & Schlee, 1995). Somatic mental health symptoms are also commonly reported by individuals who report dating violence victimization. Such symptoms typically include changes in weight, upset stomachs, headaches, and nervousness or dizziness (e.g. Coker et al., 2002; Kimerling & Calhoun, 1994; Lown & Vega, 2001; Straight, Harper, & Arias, 2003; Sutherland et al., 2001).

Acceptability of Dating Violence

Although substantial research shows that dating violence victimization has a significant impact on a person’s relationship satisfaction and mental health, little is known about factors
that might moderate this relationship. One potentially important variable is the acceptability of dating violence to the victim. The term acceptability of violence is equated with one’s attitudes, justifications, or tolerance for violence (Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001; O’Keefe & Treister, 1998). Roscoe (1985), one of the earliest researchers to address the issue, stated that acceptability of violence is a reflection of how appropriate or inappropriate violence is, as prescribed by the social norms. For example, certain situations which call for violence, such as war or self-defense may be justified by social norms, whereas situations including the family or a romantic relationship with an intimate partner may be situations in which violence is much less justified or accepted.

While the social norms theory is one explanation for acceptability of violence, the literature has more recently moved from discussion about acceptability of violence in the global context to acceptability of violence in interpersonal interactions, including dating relationships. In these contexts, acceptability of dating violence refers to the degree to which a person agrees that it is all right or understandable to use violence against a romantic partner in a dating relationship. It reflects the rationalization or justifications a person might give for the experience of violence in dating relationships. Acceptability of violence also reflects a person’s expectations of experiencing violence as a victim, considered appropriate and even expected under certain situations (Cook, 1995; Greenblat, 1985). These views are based loosely on ideas taken from social learning theory in which attitudes and beliefs about violence may be learned from previous experiences with violence, such as in the family of origin (Avakame, 1998; Bandura, 1973). These beliefs may then carry over into other areas of a person’s life, including their dating relationships (Foshee et al., 2001).
Very few researchers have examined the influence of acceptability of violence on the relationships between dating violence victimization and mental health problems and dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction. In fact, only one article was found that examined the effects of acceptability of violence on the relationship between mental health problems and dating violence victimization. Jackson et al. (2000) found a negative association between the level of acceptability of violence and the level of mental health problems resulting from victimization. That is, if a person is the victim of dating violence but is more accepting of that violence, their mental health may not suffer as many negative effects as a person who is the victim of violence but is less accepting of that violence. A careful review of the literature uncovered no research about possible moderating effects of acceptability of violence on the relationship between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction. However, in parallel with the research on mental health, it could be argued that victims who are more accepting of the dating violence they experience may experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction than victims who are less accepting of its use. This is based on the logic that an individual who accepts the use of violence in a dating relationship would not consider their victimization as deviant and as negative as someone less accepting of violence (Capaldi & Crosby, 1997).

**Gender**

*Dating violence victimization.* Traditionally, only women have been considered to be victims of dating violence perpetrated by abusive male partners (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992). However, more recent research suggests that men are equally likely to be the victims of dating violence (Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). Other research suggests that men may actually experience more victimization than women (Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996;
Katz et al., 2002). Despite the increasing number of studies showing that prevalence rates of dating violence victimization of men are substantial, few have directly examined the differences between dating violence victimization for men and women together in one study.

*Relationship satisfaction.* Dating violence victimization has been found to have a strong influence on relationship satisfaction (see review above). However, this research has focused primarily on female victims of dating violence. Female victims report significantly lower relationship satisfaction scores than do women who are not victims of dating violence (Katz et al., 2002; Rusbult et al., 1998). This emphasis on female victims has overshadowed the fact that male victims of dating violence may suffer similar decreases in relationship satisfaction (Capaldi & Crosby, 1997; Dye & Eckhardt, 2000). Once again, no direct comparisons of the effects of dating violence victimization on relationship satisfaction for men and women have been performed.

*Mental health problems.* Research on the mental health problems that result from dating violence victimization has also focused primarily on women (Abel, 2001; Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997; Campbell & Soeken, 1999; Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby, 2004; Howard & Wang, 2003). However, more recent research suggests that the mental health effects of dating violence victimization may be as damaging for men as they are for women (Dye & Eckhardt, 2000; McFarlane, Willson, Malecha, & Lemmey, 2000; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). While the literature on the differential mental health effects of dating violence victimization for men and women is somewhat mixed, the mental health of women may be more affected by dating violence victimization than that of men (Jackson et al., 2000).

*Acceptability of violence and the consequences of dating violence victimization.* As noted previously, research on the moderating effects of acceptability of violence on the
consequences of dating violence victimization is sparse. Even less is available about potential gender differences in these relationships. In the only study obtained reporting gender differences in the influence of acceptability of violence, significant differences were found in the mental health impact of dating violence victimization for males and females (Jackson et al., 2000). In their study females suffered more severe mental health consequences as a result of their victimization than did males. The authors attributed these differences to gender differences in the interpretation of the violent events. Male victims of dating violence were more likely to report feeling “okay” with the violence and were more accepting of the use of violence in their relationships than were the female victims in the study. Thus, it is still unclear how gender may influence the relationships among acceptability of violence, dating violence victimization, and the outcomes of dating violence victimization – relationship satisfaction and mental health problems.

Summary

In summary, consequences of dating violence victimization have become an important focus in dating violence research. Dating violence has been shown to have a negative impact on the relationship satisfaction and a positive impact on the mental health problems of its victims. In addition, in one study, acceptability of violence emerged as a potential moderator of the relationship between dating violence victimization and mental health problems. However, the influence of acceptability of violence on the relationship between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction has never been tested. Similarly, few studies have included men in their samples of dating violence victims. These problems were addressed in the present research by the following hypotheses:
1. Dating violence victimization would be negatively related to relationship satisfaction and positively related to mental health problems.

2. Acceptability of violence would diminish the strength of the relationship between dating violence victimization and mental health problems, and between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction.

3. The relationships between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction, and between dating violence victimization and mental health problems, would be stronger for women than for men.

4. The moderating influence of acceptability of violence on the impact of dating violence on relationship satisfaction and mental health problems would be stronger for men than for women.

METHODS

Sample

A sample of 155 male and 417 female undergraduate college students recruited from a variety of human development and family studies courses at a large Midwestern university participated in the study. Of those, a total of 760 students took surveys to complete, resulting in a screening rate of 89% (e.g., 760 ÷ 853 = .89). A total of 645 were returned for a participation rate of 85% (e.g., 645 ÷ 760 = .85), resulting in an overall response rate of 76% (e.g., .89 x .85 = .76). The sample consisted of both male and female students who are currently in or have had a previous heterosexual dating relationship. In this study, “dating” refers to a person of the opposite sex that an individual is currently involved with, but not in a marital relationship. A total of 25 students who reported that they were married and 47
students who reported that they had never been in a relationship were not included in the study.

The sample consisted predominantly of upper classmen (seniors 48.1%, juniors 22.7%, sophomores 21.7%), and Caucasians (87.2%), with the remainder of the sample lower classmen (freshman 7.5%) and minorities (3.2% African-American, 3.7% Asian-American, 2.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 3.2% Other). The majority of the students were from middle class families with over 85% reporting a parental income of over $30,000, and less than 15% reporting a parental income of less than $30,000. The majority of the sample was in their early twenties (97.9%) with only 2% of the sample over age 25.

Beyond basic demographic information, students were also asked detailed questions about their dating relationships. The majority of students who were currently dating someone had been in these relationships for a considerable length of time. Approximately one-quarter (24.9%) of students reported that they had been dating their current partner for over 2 years. Nearly 15% had been dating for 1-2 years, with 10.6% dating for 6-12 months, 5.4% dating for 3-6 months, 5.2% dating for 2-3 months, and 1.8% dating for only 1 month. A total of 208 students reported that they were not currently dating anyone. When asked about the length of their most recent relationship, these students reported a wide range of relationship durations. A total of 12.5% reported that their most previous relationship lasted one month, 17.8% lasted for 2-3 months, 17.3% lasted for 3-6 months, 17.3% lasted for 6-12 months, 16.3% lasted for 1-2 years, and 18.7% lasted for 2 years or more. Those not currently dating were also asked when their most recent relationship ended. Almost 15% (14.4%) reported that their most recent relationship ended 1 month ago, 14.8% 2-3 months ago, 17.2% 3-6 months ago, 21.1% 6-12 months ago, 21.5% 1-2 years ago, and 11% 2 or more years ago.
Procedure

Students were given a 137-item survey to take home and fill out on their own time and were asked to return the completed surveys at the following class period. Students completing the survey were entered into a drawing for one of forty $10 gift certificates to a local restaurant or two grand prize $25 gift certificates to a local mall that were held at the conclusion of the data collection period. Follow-up e-mails to each class were sent out prior to the return date of the survey to remind students to bring their surveys back to class.

Measures

Dating Violence Victimization. The amount of violence experienced as a victim in the dating relationship was assessed by of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996). This index taps frequency of occurrence of various types of psychological, verbal, and physical violence that occur in dating relationships. Items are phrased to reflect both respondent and partner as initiators of the specified acts, with response categories for each item ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (more than 20 times). The 20 items were summed to create a total victimization score ranging from 20 to 140 with higher scores indicating higher reported victimization rates. The present study included the three subscales of the Relationship Behavior portion that pertain to respondent-experienced verbal, psychological and physical dating violence victimization. Studies have consistently found the CTS2 to be highly reliable, with alpha levels well above .70 (Harned, 2002; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Straus et al., 1996). An alpha of .87 was found in the present study.

Mental Health Problems. The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI-18; Derogatis, 2000) was used to measure mental health problems. The scale items were totaled for a global mental health score. The 18-item scale includes items such as “How much were you distressed or
bothered by feeling tense or keyed up?” Participants responded to each item using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (extremely) with higher scores indicating higher mental health problems. High internal reliability for the scale has been reported with alpha coefficients over .89 (Derogatis, 2000). An alpha of .92 was found in the present study.

**Relationship Satisfaction.** The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988) was used to assess relationship satisfaction for each participant. The 7-item scale includes items such as “How well does your partner meet your needs?” and “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” Participants responded to the seven items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). High internal reliability for the scale has been reported with alpha coefficients ranging from .79 (Cramer, 2003) to .86 (Hendrick, 1988). The RAS also has a .80 correlation to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). An alpha of .83 was found in the present study.

**Acceptability of Violence.** The Acceptance of Couple Violence questionnaire developed by Foshee, Fothergill, and Stuart (1992) was used to assess the extent to which violence is accepted in dating relationships. The 11-item scale included items such as “There are times when violence between dating partners is okay”. Participants responded to each item using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores were summed to create a total acceptability of violence score that ranged from 11 to 44, with higher scores indicating higher acceptability of violence. Moderately high internal reliabilities for this scale have been reported with alpha coefficients at .74 (Foshee et al., 1992). An alpha of .91 was reported for the present study.

**Demographics.** Each survey included a demographic portion to obtain the respondent’s gender, ethnicity, parental income, and age. A dummy variable was created for gender (0 =
female and 1 = male). Because of the limited number of Hispanics/Latinos and Asian-Americans, ethnicity was collapsed into a dummy variable (0 = minorities and 1 = Caucasian). Parental income was assessed on a 9-point scale increasing in increments of $10,000 and ranged from 1 ($0-$10,000) to 9 ($80,000 and up). To control for relationship duration, two items were included to assess the length of the current relationship for those in a dating relationship and the length of the most recent relationship for those not currently dating. These items were then collapsed into one item and included as a control variable. One additional question was also included to control for when their most recent relationship ended. All of these variables were entered into each regression analysis as control variables.

Data Analysis Plan

The data for the present study were examined by using descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlations, and hierarchical regression analyses. First, t-tests were performed to assess potential gender effects for the study variables. Second, correlations were then performed among the indices to determine the initial relationships between the study variables and determine any potential multicollinearity. Third, the models were estimated using hierarchical regression analyses. These models included age, ethnicity, parental income, length of relationship, and end of most recent relationship as control factors. The main effects of dating violence victimization on relationship satisfaction and mental health problems were examined. Finally, the influence of acceptability of violence on the relationship between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction and the relationship between dating violence victimization and mental health problems were estimated for the full model. These relationships were then examined again using hierarchical regressions separately for men and women.
RESULTS

The results begin with a descriptive overview of the associations between dating violence victimization and the outcomes of relationship satisfaction and mental health problems. Next, the correlations among the study variables are presented. Then, t-tests are presented to determine gender differences among the study variables. Finally, hierarchical regressions are presented to determine the associations among dating violence victimization and the outcomes of relationship satisfaction and mental health problems and the potential interaction effects between acceptability of violence and dating violence victimization on the outcomes for the total sample and again for men and women separately.

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and ranges for the study variables. As can be seen by the means, scores for dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were low, while relationship satisfaction scores were high, and mental health problem scores were moderate. Table 2 displays the correlations among these variables. Viewing the correlation table, one can see that dating violence victimization was positively related to acceptability of violence ($r = .22, p < .01$) and mental health problems ($r = .19, p < .01$). In addition, dating violence victimization was negatively related to relationship satisfaction ($r = -.21, p > .01$). Among the key variables, acceptability of violence was negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction ($r = -.29, p < .01$) and positively correlated with mental health problems ($r = .16, p < .01$).
T-tests for Gender Differences

Table 3 displays the t-tests for differences between men and women for the study variables. No significant gender differences in dating violence victimization were reported ($t = -0.90, p > .05$). Women reported greater satisfaction with their relationship ($t = -2.70, p < .01$), and more mental health problems than did men ($t = -2.94, p < .01$). Only on one variable, acceptability of violence, did men report higher levels than women ($t = 3.30, p < .001$).

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine the influence of dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence on relationship. Each of these key variables was examined to determine their potential main effects and any interactive effects of dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence on either relationship satisfaction or mental health problems. When the potential interactions between dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were examined, no significant interactions were found. Regression analyses were conducted first for the total sample, and then separately for men and women. Results will be discussed first for relationship satisfaction, and then for mental health.
Relationship satisfaction. In Model 1 of Table 4, gender, ethnicity, parental income, age, length of the relationship, and end of the most recent relationship were entered as controls first. These controls accounted for a significant amount of variance in relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .17, F = 6.54, p < .001$), with age and length of relationship significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. Specifically, a standard deviation increase in age was related to a -.23 standard deviation decrease in relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.23, p < .01$). A standard deviation increase in length of the relationship was related to a .36 standard deviation increase in relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .36, p < .001$).

In Model 2, dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were added to the model. These variables also accounted for a significant amount of variance in relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .29, F = 9.73, p < .001$). This indicates that the addition of the predictor variables added significantly more to the model of relationship satisfaction than the controls alone ($\Delta R^2$ Change $= .12, F = 31.69, p < .001$). However, only dating violence victimization was significantly associated with relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.37, p < .001$), in that a standard deviation increase in dating violence victimization was related to a -.37 decrease in relationship satisfaction.

The separate analyses for men and women are also shown in Table 4. Once again, length of the relationship emerged as associated with relationship satisfaction for both men ($\beta = .50, p < .001$) and women ($\beta = .25, p < .01$). However, age was no longer significant for either
men or women. When dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were added in Model 2, the amount of variance in relationship satisfaction explained by these variables was significant for both men ($R^2 = .40, F = 6.02, p < .001$) and women ($R^2 = .25, F = 5.73, p < .001$). As with the total sample, dating violence victimization emerged as a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction for both men ($\beta = -.24, p < .001$) and women ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$). However, as with the total sample, acceptability of violence was not predictive for either gender.

*Mental Health Problems.* Consistent with the model for relationship satisfaction, gender, ethnicity, parental income, age, length of the relationship, and end of the most recent relationship were entered as controls for the total sample first (See Table 5, Model 1). However, unlike relationship satisfaction, the controls did not account for a significant amount of variance in mental health ($R^2 = .06, F = 2.00, p > .05$). However, gender emerged as a significant predictor of mental health problems ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$) suggesting that women suffer from more mental health problems than men.

---

*Insert Table 5*

---

In Model 2, dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were added to the model. These variables did account for a significant amount of variance in mental health problems ($R^2 = .09, F = 2.29, p < .05$). However, the change in explained variance failed to reach significance ($\Delta R^2 \text{ Change} = .002, F = .38, p > .05$). As with relationship satisfaction, only dating violence victimization emerged as a significant predictor of mental health
problems ($\beta = .18, p < .05$), with a standard deviation increase in dating violence victimization related to a .18 standard deviation increase in mental health problems.

The separate analyses for men and women are also shown in Table 5. None of the control variables were significant predictors of mental health problems. When dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence were added in Model 2 for men and women, the amount of variance in mental health problems explained by these variables was not significant for men ($R^2 = .10, F = 0.99, p > .05$), but it was for women ($R^2 = .11, F = 2.12, p < .05$). As with the total sample, dating violence victimization emerged as the sole significant predictor of mental health problems; however, only for women ($\beta = .22, p < .05$). Specifically, a standard deviation increase in dating violence victimization was related to a .22 standard deviation increase in mental health problems for women. Once again, acceptability of violence was not predictive for either gender.

DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted to extend the field of research by examining the impact of dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence on relationship satisfaction and mental health problems for both men and women. It was hypothesized that dating violence victimization would be associated with relationship satisfaction and mental health problems, and that acceptability of violence would moderate these relationships. Findings from this study show that only dating violence victimization emerged as significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and mental health problems. This is consistent with the literature that suggests that dating violence victimization has a significant impact on relationship satisfaction and mental health problems (Carlson et al., 2003; Cramer, 2003, Testa & Leonard, 2001).
However, while it was hypothesized that acceptability of violence would moderate the relationships between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction and dating violence victimization and mental health problems, these interactions did not reach statistical significance. The present study was the first attempt to determine if acceptability of violence moderated the relationship between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction. When researching this hypothesis, no other research was found that examined this relationship. It was proposed that victims of dating violence who were more accepting of that violence would not experience the same decreases in relationship satisfaction that individuals who were less accepting of violence experience. It may be that some variable other than acceptability of violence may influence this relationship. Potential variables that may account for this finding include self-esteem or social support. It may be that individuals who have high levels of self-esteem are able to separate themselves from their victimization and not internalize it as some problem with who they are. Likewise, individuals who have high levels of social support may be able to rely on others to help them process their victimization in ways that allow the person to cope with the stress and fear this may cause and still feel positively toward their relationship. Additionally, these variables may act as buffers for the effects of dating violence victimization and decrease its impact on negative consequences.

Similar to the research on the moderators of dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction, only one study was found that examined the effect that acceptability of violence had on the mental health problems of the victims of dating violence. While Jackson et al. (2000) found that victims of violence who are more accepting of their violence suffer fewer mental health problems, no other research was found to support this claim. It
may be that similar to relationship satisfaction, variables such as self-esteem or social support networks may act as buffers for the mental health problems that result from dating violence victimization. Once again, individuals who have high levels of self-esteem and larger support networks may be able to process their victimization in ways that do not internalize their victimization, which can damage mental health. Current research conducted on the self-esteem of victims and their social support networks has lent support to this hypothesis (e.g. Abel, 2001; Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby, 2004; Cramer, 2003).

When results were examined for gender, partial support for the hypotheses of the study was found. While the present study proposed no gender hypothesis for dating violence victimization, the results of this study showed that men and women report similar rates of dating violence victimization. This is consistent with other researchers (e.g. Simonelli & Ingram, 1998) who suggest that men and women are equally likely to be the victims of dating violence. In regards to the two outcome variables, women reported significantly higher relationship satisfaction scores and more mental health problems than men. Similarly, results lend support to hypothesis 3, in that the associations between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction and dating violence victimization and mental health problems were stronger for women than for men. However, in the present study, men reported higher levels of acceptability of violence than women, which is also consistent with the literature (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Rietzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001). The findings of these studies and the present study lend support to the theories of gender socialization which suggest that men are socialized to be more aggressive and violent, while women are socialized to be more passive (Lisak, 2005; Mahlstedt & Welsh, 2005).
In addition to the key variables, a number of control variables were added to the model. Of these, age and length of relationship emerged as significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and gender emerged as significantly associated with mental health problems. These controls showed that relationship satisfaction was lower for older individuals suggesting that in comparison to the younger portion of the sample, those who were in their later twenties were less satisfied with their relationships. However, the limited age range of this sample makes it difficult to determine at what age these effects are present. The controls also revealed that relationship satisfaction was higher for individuals in longer relationships. It may be that as relationships increase in length, partners may become complacent or stuck in a rut and do not feel strong emotions that were present as earlier stages of the relationship.

There are a few limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting these results. The findings of this study are based on a survey administered to predominantly white, middle class college students, in their early twenties. Even though this sample represents a major population of dating individuals, further research should include a more diverse sample including a broader age range as well as more economic and racial diversity. As shown by the results, age was significantly associated with dating violence victimization suggesting that older individuals experienced more dating violence victimization. However, the majority of students were in their early twenties, with only 2% of the sample over 25. Further research should examine the dating violence experiences of older adults to explore why victimization rates are higher in older samples.

Furthermore, participants who may have felt shame or guilt at having been the victim of dating violence may not have been willing to share that information in the survey. Thus, there is the possibility that the frequency of some reported events may have been
misrepresented. However, this most likely would lead to underreporting of dating violence victimization. In addition, the measure used in the present study to assess dating violence victimization (CTS2) assessed the lifetime occurrence of violent behaviors. Some individuals who participated in the study and had longer relationship lengths reported that they could not remember every instance of violence in their relationship and were making rough guesses as to the extent of their victimization. Measures that can be taken such as limiting the scale to acts occurring in a given period of time, such as one year, should be done in future studies to ensure more accurate reporting of violence.

In addition, while associations were found between dating violence victimization, relationship satisfaction, and mental health problems, the direction of these relationships is not known. It is not known if increases in an individual’s level of dating violence victimization leads to decreases in relationship satisfaction and increases in mental health problems, or if decreases in relationship satisfaction and increases in mental health problems lead to increases in dating violence victimization. Therefore, one cannot infer causality from these findings. Rather, the findings suggest only dating violence victimization, relationship satisfaction, and mental health problems are related.

In conclusion, findings from this study suggest the need for continued focus on dating violence victimization for both men and women to determine the similarities and dissimilarities of patterns. As findings from this and other studies have shown, women are not solely the victims of violence nor are men solely the perpetrators. Sensitivity to the possibility of both genders as victims may be more helpful than the typical focus in dating violence intervention and prevention programs that recognize men as perpetrators and women as victims. Additional studies are also needed to help determine the gender
similarities and dissimilarities between the variables associated with dating violence victimization. While the relationships present in these results suggest that the outcomes of dating violence victimization are stronger for women, the outcomes of male dating violence victimization are becoming important to recognize and examine.
REFERENCES


Family, 56, 923-934.


Rusbult, C. E. (1983). A longitudinal test of the investment model: The development (and


Table 1.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Dating Violence Victimization, Acceptability of Violence, Relationship Satisfaction, and Mental Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Dating Violence Victimization</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>28.76</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>81 (20-101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability of Violence</td>
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<td>12.55</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>33 (11-44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
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<td>5.50</td>
<td>28 (7-35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>30.56</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>72 (18-90)</td>
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</table>

*Ns vary due to missing or incomplete responses.*
Table 2.

Correlations among Study Variables

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<td>-.21**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
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<td>.16**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relationship Satisfaction</td>
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<td>-.23**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mental Health</td>
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Note: *p < .05. **p < .01.
Table 3.

T-Tests for Differences* Between Men and Women for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>12.55 (3.42)</td>
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<td>N = 153</td>
<td>N = 417</td>
<td>N = 570</td>
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<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
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<td>26.66 (5.50)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N = 152</td>
<td>N = 415</td>
<td>N = 567</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
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<td>31.33 (10.32)</td>
<td>30.56 (10.29)</td>
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<td>N = 154</td>
<td>N = 417</td>
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*p < .05., **p < .01., ***p < .001.

*Ns vary due to missing or incomplete responses.
Table 4.
Hierarchical Regression Models for Dating Violence Victimization on Relationship Satisfaction for Total Sample, and for Men and Women

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<td></td>
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<td>Model 1</td>
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<td>-0.19</td>
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<td>0.50***</td>
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<td>.35</td>
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***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05. Note: Betas or standardized coefficients are reported.
Table 5.

Hierarchical Regression Models for Dating Violence Victimization on Mental Health Problems for Total Sample, and for Men and Women

<table>
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<th>Men</th>
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<th>Women</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
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***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05. Note: Betas or standardized coefficients are reported.
CHAPTER IV: OVERALL SUMMARY

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The first article was an attempt to determine the associations between relationship commitment, jealousy, and acceptability on the levels of dating violence perpetration by men and women. Specifically, it was expected that individuals who report high levels of relationship commitment, high levels of jealousy, and high levels of acceptability of violence would report higher levels of dating violence perpetration. It was also expected that acceptability of violence would moderate the relationships between relationship commitment and dating violence perpetration and jealousy and dating violence perpetration. That is, higher levels of acceptability of violence would strengthen the associations between these variables.

Results from the first article suggest that only jealousy was significantly associated with dating violence perpetration. In addition, this finding was only significant for women. Neither relationship commitment nor acceptability of violence emerged as significantly associated with dating violence perpetration for either men or women. Acceptability of violence also did not emerge as a moderator between either relationship commitment or jealousy and dating violence perpetration. However, a two-way interaction between relationship commitment and jealousy was significant for the total sample. Further analysis of this interaction revealed that when jealousy levels were either low or high, perpetration rates across commitment levels were relatively unchanged. However, when jealousy levels are medium, perpetration rates increased across commitment levels with the highest perpetration associated with high levels of commitment and low levels of jealousy. Finally, an examination of the three-way interaction of acceptability of violence, relationship
commitment, and jealousy on dating violence perpetration showed that this interaction was
significant. The results suggested that levels of commitment and jealousy remained almost
unchanged when acceptability of violence was low. However, when acceptability of violence
was high, high levels of jealousy and high levels of commitment predicted the highest levels
of dating violence perpetration.

The second article examined the outcomes of dating violence victimization for both men
and women, specifically, relationship satisfaction and mental health problems. It was
hypothesized that dating violence victimization would be associated with decreases in
relationship satisfaction and increases in mental health problems for both men and women. In
addition, acceptability of violence was also added as a potential moderator of the
relationships between victimization and relationship satisfaction and victimization and
mental health problems. It was expected that higher levels of acceptability of violence would
weaken the associations between these variables.

Findings from this study show that only dating violence victimization emerged as
significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and mental health problems. When the
potential interactions between dating violence victimization and acceptability of violence
were examined, no significant interactions were present for either relationship satisfaction or
mental health problems. While the present study proposed no gender hypothesis for dating
violence victimization, the results of this study showed that men and women reported similar
rates of dating violence victimization, a finding which supported previous research
(Simonelli & Ingram, 1998). In regards to the two outcome variables, partial support for the
hypotheses was found in that women reported significantly higher relationship satisfaction
scores and more mental health problems than men. Similarly, results lent support to
hypothesis 3, in that the associations between dating violence victimization and relationship satisfaction and dating violence victimization and mental health problems were stronger for women than for men. Only one variable, acceptability of violence, was reported at higher levels for men than for women.

LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting these results. The findings of these studies are based on a survey administered to predominantly white, middle class college students, in their early twenties. While this college student sample was representative of a large number of dating individuals, a more racially and economically diverse sample should be examined in future research. As shown by the results of the first article, ethnicity was significantly associated with dating violence perpetration, with minorities reporting more dating violence perpetration than Caucasians. However, the predominance of Caucasians in the sample prevented an examination of more complex racial differences. In the second study, older individuals experienced more dating violence victimization. However, only 2% of the sample was over age 25, limiting the examination of the effects of age on victimization in the analyses.

Furthermore, effects of social desirability may have limited the amounts of dating violence perpetration and victimization that participants were willing to report. Thus, there was the possibility that the frequency of some reported events may have been misrepresented. However, this most likely would lead to underreporting of dating violence perpetration and victimization. For example, the violence measure used in the present study to examine dating violence (CTS2) only assessed the lifetime occurrence of violent behaviors. Individuals with longer relationship lengths reported that they could not remember
every instance of violence in their relationship and were making rough guesses as to the extent of their perpetration and victimization. Limiting the scale to acts occurring in a given period of time, such as one year, should be done in future studies to ensure more accurate reporting of violence.

In addition, while associations were found among the variables in each study, the direction of these relationships is not known. For example, it is not known if increases in an individual’s level of jealousy lead to increases in dating violence perpetration, or if dating violence perpetration increases and individual’s level of jealousy. Therefore, one cannot infer causality from these findings.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As stated previously, future research is needed to determine if these findings hold for more diverse populations. Samples with wide ethnic variation are needed to determine the racial and cultural differences on the variables in this study. Future studies should also include a wider age range to determine if the findings hold for both younger and older individuals in dating relationships. Additionally, future studies should include an examination of the length of the relationship. In the first study, individuals who were in longer relationships were more likely to perpetrate violence. It may be that a greater opportunity to perpetrate violence occurs the longer a person is in a relationship with their partner. Conversely, a selection effect may have been present in that data. That is, individuals who are less accepting of violence would end a relationship in which violence occurs early in the relationship. Therefore, the individuals who remain in violent relationships have chosen to remain in that relationship for other reasons, such as greater acceptance of violence. It may also be that as relationship length increases, levels of jealousy and commitment also increase,
which could possibly lead to increases in dating violence perpetration. Finally, future studies should also examine the concepts of enmeshment and possessiveness, variables closely related to jealousy and relationship commitment to determine which concepts are truly associated with dating violence perpetration.

In conclusion, findings from this study suggest the need for continued focus on dating violence victimization for both men and women to determine the similarities and dissimilarities of patterns. As findings from this and other studies have shown, women are not solely the victims of violence nor are men solely the perpetrators. Sensitivity to the possibility of both genders as perpetrators and victims may be more helpful than the typical focus in dating violence intervention and prevention programs that recognize men as perpetrators and women as victims. Additional studies are also needed to help determine the gender similarities and dissimilarities between the variables associated with dating violence perpetration and victimization.
REFERENCES


and mental health: The role of social support and other protective factors. *Violence Against Women, 8*, 720-745.


Foshee, V. A., Fothergill, K., & Stuart, J. (1992). Results from the teenage dating abuse


APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
TO: Shelby Kaura

FROM: Human Subject Research Compliance Office

PROJECT TITLE: Acceptability of violence, gender, and dating violence

RE: IRB ID No. 05-005

TYPE OF APPLICATION: Modification

APPROVAL DATE: May 9, 2005

REVIEW DATE: May 9, 2006
CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: January 26, 2006

Your human subjects research project application, as indicated above, has been approved by the Iowa State University IRB #1 for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on the application form. All research for this study must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved by the IRB. If written informed consent is required, the IRB-stamped and dated Informed Consent Document(s), approved by the IRB for this project only, are attached. Please make copies from the attached "masters" for subjects to sign upon agreeing to participate. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your study files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject.

If this study is sponsored by an external funding source, the original Assurance Certification/Identification form has been forwarded to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI's responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing Investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB Identification number provided and the study title.

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

HSRO/ORC 9/02
Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected comply with the University’s Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

C: Brenda Lohman
HDFS
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM

Dear ISU Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study for my doctoral dissertation that I am conducting with Dr. Craig Allen in the ISU Human Development/Family Studies Department. This study focuses on dating relationships and processes involved in couple interaction. This survey will take about 40–45 minutes, and is to be completed at a convenient time and place of your choosing before next class.

There are no known risks, discomforts, or inconveniences stemming from participation in this study (other than the use of your time). Your answers will remain confidential and anonymous. When you return the survey next class period, you will detach your signed consent form from the questionnaire so that you can be given class credit for this activity, and your questionnaire will be put in a separate location. There is no identifying information on the questionnaire that could be used to link you to the study in any way. Data will be available only to the researchers.

Participation is voluntary and your choice to participate will not affect your course grade. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Please contact either of us by email (listed below) if you have any questions about the study and your participation.

Your signature (below) indicates that you have read and understand the information provided, you willingly agree to participate in the research, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. If you would like a copy of this consent form sent to you via e-mail, please include your e-mail address below. In addition, if you would like a summary of the findings of the study when completed, please provide an e-mail address where these can be sent.

Again, thank you for participating, your help is greatly appreciated. If you decide to participate in this study, there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained from the study will be used to increase understanding about dating processes and to help improve dating relationships.

Shelby A. Kaura, M.S.  
Doctoral Candidate  
shelby@iastate.edu

Craig M. Allen, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
callen@iastate.edu

If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, or research-related risk/injury/discomfort, please feel free to contact:

Human Subjects Research Office  
2810 Beardshear Hall  
515.294.4566  
austingr@iastate.edu

Office of Research Compliance  
2810 Beardshear Hall  
515.294.3115  
dament@iastate.edu

Student Counseling Service  
2223 Student Services  
515.294.5056
PRINT NAME: ___________________________ Date: ___________

SIGNATURE: ____________________________

EMAIL ADDRESS (optional): ________________
APPENDIX C

RELATIONSHIP DIMENSIONS SURVEY
Relationship Dimensions Survey

1. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female

2. Age:
   a. under 18
   b. 18-20
   c. 21-22
   d. 22-24
   e. 25-30
   f. 31 and over

3. Year in College:
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
   e. Graduate student
   f. Other

4. Ethnic Background (please circle one):
   a. Caucasian
   b. African-American
   c. Asian-American
   d. Hispanic/Latino
   e. Other

5. Parents’ Current Yearly Income:
   a. 0 - $10,000
   b. $10,000 - $20,000
   c. $20,000 - $30,000
   d. $30,000 - $40,000
   e. $40,000 - $50,000
   f. $50,000 - $60,000
   g. $60,000 - $70,000
   h. $70,000 - $80,000
   i. $80,000 and up

6. Have you ever been in a relationship?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Stop – thank you for your time)

7. Are you currently married?
   a. Yes (Please go to question 11)
   b. No

8. If not married, length of current relationship:
   a. Never been in a relationship
   b. Not currently dating anyone
   c. 1 month
   d. 2-3 months
   e. 3-6 months
   f. 6-12 months
   g. 1-2 years
   h. 2-5 years
   i. 5 or more years

   If you are in a current relationship, please skip to question 11
   (leave questions 9 and 10 blank on the survey).

9. If you are not in a current relationship, what was the length of your most recent relationship?
   a. 1 month
   b. 2-3 months
   c. 3-6 months
   d. 6-12 months
   e. 1-2 years
   f. 2-5 years
   g. 5 or more years

10. How long ago did your most recent relationship end?
    a. 1 month
    b. 2-3 months
    c. 3-6 months
    d. 6-12 months
    e. 1-2 years
    f. 2-5 years
    g. 5 or more years
Following is a list of problems some people experience. Please enter the response that best describes how much that problem distressed or bothered you.

1 = Not At All  
2 = A Little Bit  
3 = Moderately  
4 = Quite A Bit  
5 = Extremely  

How much have you been bothered by....

11. Faintness or dizziness?  1  2  3  4  5
12. Feeling no interest in things?  1  2  3  4  5
13. Nervousness or shakiness inside?  1  2  3  4  5
14. Pains in your heart or chest?  1  2  3  4  5
15. Feeling lonely?  1  2  3  4  5
16. Feeling tense or keyed up?  1  2  3  4  5
17. Nausea or upset stomach?  1  2  3  4  5
18. Feeling blue?  1  2  3  4  5
19. Suddenly feeling scared for no reason?  1  2  3  4  5
20. Trouble getting your breath?  1  2  3  4  5
21. Feelings of worthlessness?  1  2  3  4  5
22. Spells of terror or panic?  1  2  3  4  5
23. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body?  1  2  3  4  5
24. Feeling hopeful about the future?  1  2  3  4  5
25. Feeling so restless that you couldn’t sit still?  1  2  3  4  5
26. Feeling weak in parts of your body?  1  2  3  4  5
27. Thoughts of ending your life?  1  2  3  4  5
28. Feeling fearful?  1  2  3  4  5

Please circle the appropriate number for each depending on whether you disagree or agree with the statement.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

29. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.  1  2  3  4
30. At times I think I am no good at all.  1  2  3  4
31. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.  1  2  3  4
32. I am able to do things as well as most other people.  1  2  3  4
33. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.  1  2  3  4
34. I certainly feel useless at times.  1  2  3  4
35. I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.  1  2  3  4
36. I wish I could have more respect for myself.  1  2  3  4
37. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.  1  2  3  4
38. I take a positive attitude toward myself.  1  2  3  4
Please indicate which of the following corresponds with your personal beliefs.

*1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree*

39. A guy angry enough to hit his girlfriend must love her very much
39. **1** 2 3 4
40. Violence between dating partners can improve the relationship
40. **1** 2 3 4
41. Girls may sometimes deserve to be hit by the guys they date
41. **1** 2 3 4
42. A girl who makes her boyfriend jealous on purpose deserves to be hit
42. **1** 2 3 4
43. Guys sometimes deserve to be hit by the girls they date
43. **1** 2 3 4
44. A girl angry enough to hit her boyfriend must love him very much
44. **1** 2 3 4
45. There are times when violence between dating partners is okay
45. **1** 2 3 4
46. A guy who makes his girlfriend jealous on purpose deserves to be hit
46. **1** 2 3 4
47. Sometimes violence is the only way to express your feelings
47. **1** 2 3 4
48. Some couples must use violence to solve their problems
48. **1** 2 3 4
49. Violence between dating partners is a personal matter and people should not interfere.
49. **1** 2 3 4

For each of the following items, please indicate the degree to which you feel SATISFACTION in your current or most recent relationship. (If you are responding to your most recent relationship, please think back to the time when you were happiest with your relationship and answer accordingly):

*1 = Low Satisfaction
2 = Somewhat Low Satisfaction
3 = Moderately High Satisfaction
4 = High Satisfaction
5 = Extremely High Satisfaction*

50. How well does your partner meet your needs?
50. **1** 2 3 4 5
51. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
51. **1** 2 3 4 5
52. How good is your relationship compared to most?
52. **1** 2 3 4 5
53. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?
53. **1** 2 3 4 5
54. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
54. **1** 2 3 4 5
55. How much do you love your partner?
55. **1** 2 3 4 5
56. How many problems are there in your relationship?
56. **1** 2 3 4 5

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current or most recent relationship using the following scale. (If you are responding to your most recent relationship, please think back to the time when you were happiest with your relationship and answer accordingly):

*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*

Do Not Agree

At All

Agree Somewhat

Agree Completely

57. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
57. **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
58. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
58. **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
59. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
59. **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
60. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
60. **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
61. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

62. I want our relationship to last forever
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

63. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following is currently true of your current or most recent relationship:

1 = Absolutely False   4 = Slightly False
2 = Definitely False   5 = Neither True nor False
3 = False             6 = Slightly True
7 = True              8 = Definitely True
9 = Absolutely True

64. If my partner were to become exuberant and hug someone of the opposite sex, it would make me feel good that he/she was expressing his/her feelings openly.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

65. The thought of my partner kissing someone else drives me up the wall.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

66. If someone of the opposite sex lit up at the sight of my partner, I would become uneasy.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

67. I like to find fault with my partner’s old dates.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

68. I feel possessive toward my partner.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

69. If I saw a picture of my partner and an old date, I would feel unhappy.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

70. If my partner were to accidentally call me the wrong name, I would become furious.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

71. If my partner were to see an old friend of the opposite sex and respond with a great deal of happiness, I would be annoyed.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

72. If my partner went out with same-sex friends, I would feel compelled to know what he/she did.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

73. If my partner admired someone of the opposite sex, I would feel irritated.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

74. If my partner were to help someone of the opposite sex with his/her homework, I would feel suspicious.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 = Absolutely False 4 = Slightly False 7 = True
2 = Definitely False 5 = Neither True nor False 8 = Definitely True
3 = False 6 = Slightly True 9 = Absolutely True

75. When my partner likes one of my friends, I am pleased. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
76. If my partner were to go away for the weekend without me, my only concern would be with whether he/she had a good time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
77. If my partner were helpful to someone of the opposite sex, I would feel jealous. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
78. When my partner talks of happy experiences of his/her past, I feel sad that I wasn’t part of them. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
79. If my partner were to become displeased about the time I spend with others, I would be flattered. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
80. If my partner and I went to a party and I lost sight of him/her, I would become uncomfortable. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
81. I want my partner to remain good friends with the people he/she used to date. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
82. If my partner were to date others, I would feel unhappy. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
83. If I noted that my partner and a person of the opposite sex have something in common, I would become envious. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
84. If my partner were to become very close to someone of the opposite sex, I would feel very unhappy and/or angry. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
85. I would like my partner to be faithful to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
86. I don’t think it would bother me if my partner flirted with someone of the opposite sex. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
87. If someone of the opposite sex were to compliment my partner, I would feel that the person was trying to take my partner away from me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
88. I feel good when my partner makes a new friend. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
89. If my partner were to spend the night comforting a friend of the opposite sex who had just had a tragic experience, my partner’s compassion would please me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
90. If someone of the opposite sex were to pay attention to my partner, I would become possessive of him/her. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please circle how many times you or your partner did each of these things in your current or most recent relationship.

How often did this happen?

1 = This has never happened
2 = Once
3 = Twice
4 = 3-5 times
5 = 6-10 times
6 = 11-20 times
7 = More than 20 times

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91. I insulted or swore at my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92. My partner insulted or swore at me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>93. I threw something at my partner that could hurt.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>94. My partner threw something at me that could hurt.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>95. I twisted my partner’s arm or hair.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>96. My partner twisted my arm or hair.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>97. I pushed or shoved my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>98. My partner pushed or shoved me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>99. I used a knife or gun on my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>100. My partner used a knife or gun on me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>101. I called my partner fat or ugly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>102. My partner called me fat or ugly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>103. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>104. My partner punched or hit me with something that could hurt.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>105. I destroyed something belonging to my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>106. My partner destroyed something belonging to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>107. I choked my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>108. My partner choked me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>109. I shouted or yelled at my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110. My partner shouted or yelled at me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>111. I slammed my partner against a wall.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>112. My partner slammed me against a wall.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113. I beat up my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114. My partner beat me up.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115. I grabbed my partner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116. My partner grabbed me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How often did this happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 = This has never happened</th>
<th>2 = Once</th>
<th>3 = Twice</th>
<th>4 = 3-5 times</th>
<th>5 = 6-10 times</th>
<th>6 = 11-20 times</th>
<th>7 = More than 20 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>117. I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118. My partner stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119. I slapped my partner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120. My partner slapped me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122. My partner burned or scalded me on purpose.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124. My partner accused me of being a lousy lover.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125. I did something to spite my partner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126. My partner did something to spite me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128. My partner threatened to hit or throw something at me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129. I kicked my partner.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130. My partner kicked me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please feel free to include any other information you may want to share about your dating experiences (feel free to write on the back of this survey or attach a separate sheet).

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After you are finished with the survey, please remember to bring with you to your next class period. Thank you for your time and help with this project.