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## Differences on the Use of Emotion Regulation Strategies and Intimate Partner Aggression Between Males and Females

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# Examining Differences on the Use of Emotion Regulation Strategies and Intimate Partner Aggression Between Males and Females

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## Background

### Defining Intimate Partner Aggression

- An attempt to harm one's romantic partner via physical, verbal, or sexual means
- Intimate partner aggression is occurring at an alarming rate both within the general population and amongst college students
- Identifying risk factors for IPA perpetration is essential to the development of interventions

### Emotion Regulation Strategies - Definition

- Reappraisal – the act of reassessing an emotion and its intensity (Maldonado et al., 2015)
  - This is an antecedent-focused strategy
  - The literature supports the idea that this emotion regulation technique is effective in reducing aggressive response behavior within intimate partner relationships
- Suppression – deliberately inhibiting unwanted thoughts, feelings, emotions, and associated behaviors (Maldonado et al., 2015)
  - This strategy is focused on the behavioral response
  - In comparison to reappraisal, the research suggests that this technique is less effective, and in fact has the opposite effect

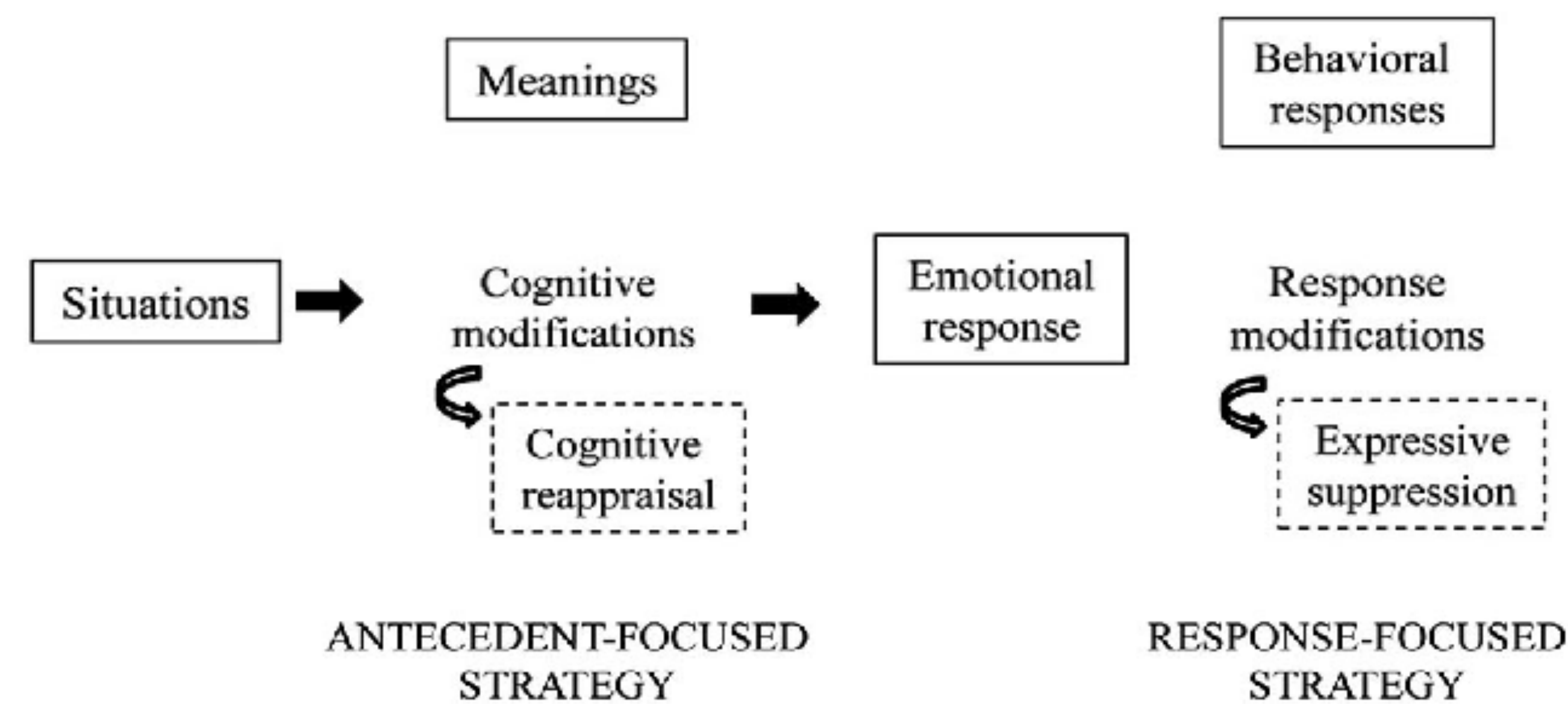


Figure 1. Theoretical model of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies' role in the emotion regulation (Cutuli, 2014).

## Preregistered Hypothesis

For full preregistration, navigate to the link below:  
<https://osf.io/xqb7s>

**Hypothesis 1:** The group composed of males will report higher levels of intimate partner aggression compared to the group composed of females.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be a negative relationship between reappraisal and intimate partner aggression, such that those who report greater use of reappraisal will report less intimate partner aggression. The group composed of females will show a stronger link between reappraisal and intimate partner aggression compared to men.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a positive relationship between suppression and intimate partner aggression, such that those who report greater use of suppression will report greater intimate partner aggression. The group composed of males will show a stronger link between suppression and intimate partner aggression when compared to woman.

## Results

Table 1. Bivariate correlations among variables of interest

	1.	2.	3.
1. Reappraisal	—		
2. Suppression	-.02	—	
3. AWIRS – Overt Violence	-.12**	.04	—
4. IPA Perpetration	-.07	.04	.48***

Note: \*\*p<.01; IPA = Intimate Partner Aggression; AWIRS = Abuse Within Intimate Relationships Scale

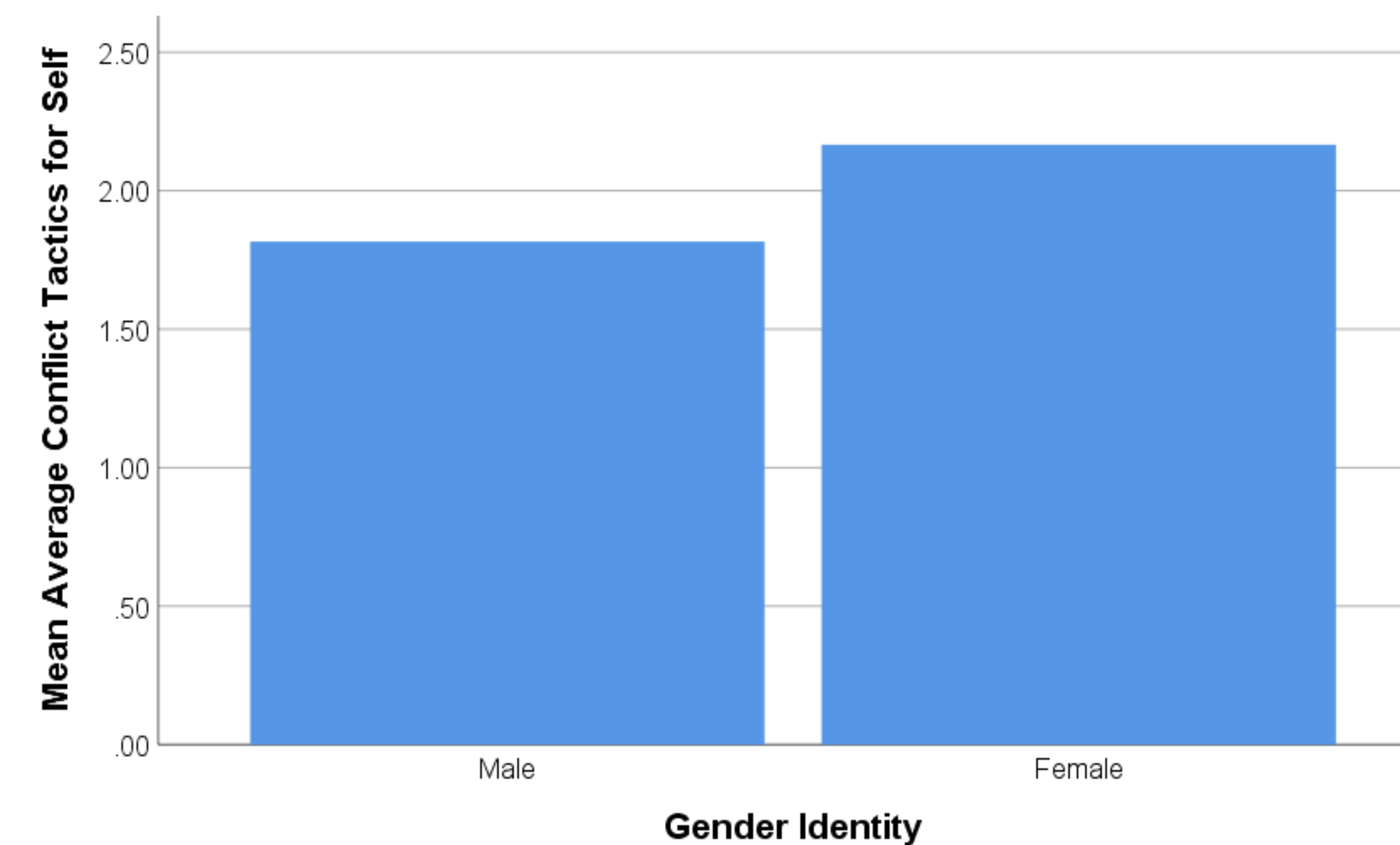


Figure 2. Bar Graph illustrating the reported IPA perpetration for men and women in the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996).

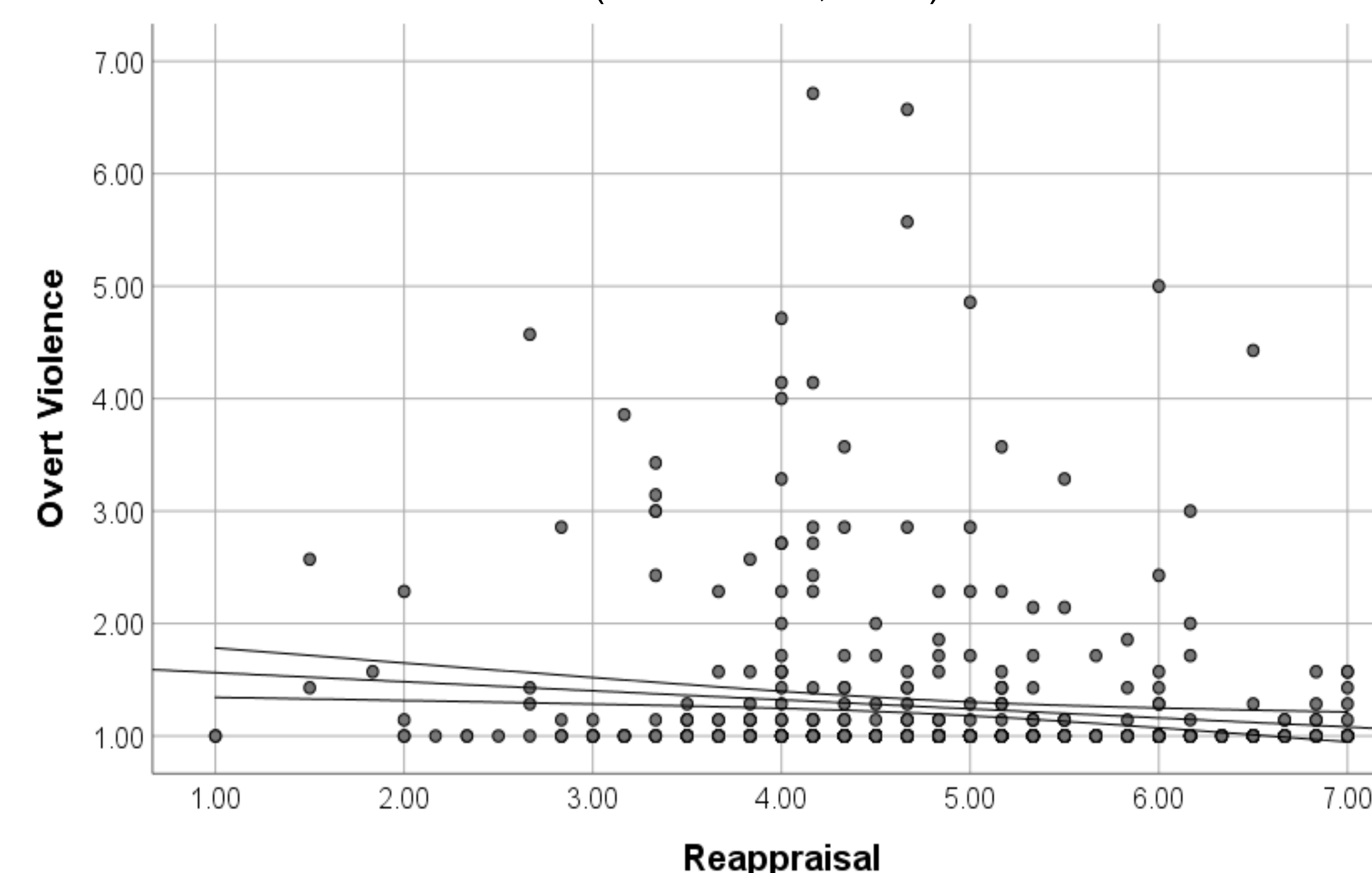


Figure 3. Scatterplot of the negative association between reappraisal and overt violence on the Abuse within Intimate Relationships Scale (Borjesson et al., 2003).

## Methods

### Participants

N=543 Undergraduates

### Procedure

Participants completed multiple self-report questionnaires. The dataset is combined from an online and laboratory study.

**1. Revised Conflict Tactics Scale:** (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) This is a 20-item scale in which participants report how frequently they have abused their partner, from 0 (This never happened) to 7 (Not in the past year, but it did happen before). This scale measures both self and partner reports of intimate partner aggression perpetration.

**2. Abuse within Intimate Relationships Scale:** (AWIRS; Borjesson, Aarons, & Dunn, 2003) AWIRS is a 26-item scale in which participants report how frequently they have abused their partner, from 0 (Never) to 7 (More than once a day). AWIRS consists of five subscales: emotional abuse, deception, verbal abuse, overt violence, and restrictive violence.

## Discussion

### What we found

There was support for hypothesis 1, however it was in the opposite direction to what we preregistered. Women reported more IPA perpetration than men. Additionally, we found that overt aggression had a negative relationship with reappraisal, such that greater self-reported reappraisal was associated with less overt IPA perpetration. Finally, there was no support for hypothesis 2 and 3; so, gender did not moderate the link between either emotion regulation strategy on IPA perpetration.

### Implications

These results indicate that use of reappraisal and suppression emotion regulation techniques did not significantly differ among women and men. More research should be conducted to determine causal factors leading to gender differences in IPA perpetration. These data will aid in determining what interventions to apply to particular groups, and in turn help reduce the occurrence of IPA.

### Limitations

One of the limitations of this study includes how the variables were measured – the scales that were used relied on participants' self-reports. Additionally, this study is more descriptive in nature; future experiments should be conducted to investigate a possible causal relationship between the variables.

## References

Citations provided upon request.

Contact Natalia Rodriguez at [rodriguezronl@vcu.edu](mailto:rodriguezronl@vcu.edu) for citations.