How Power Affects Emotional Communication During Relationship Conflicts

Alonso-Ferres, M.; Righetti, F.; Valor-Segura, I.; Expósito, F.

published in
Social Psychological and Personality Science
2021

DOI (link to publisher)
10.1177/1948550621996496

document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

citation for published version (APA)
Alonso-Ferres, M., Righetti, F., Valor-Segura, I., & Expósito, F. (2021). How Power Affects Emotional Communication During Relationship Conflicts: The Role of Perceived Partner Responsiveness. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *12*(7), 1203-1215. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550621996496

Article

Social Psychological and Personality Science
2021, Vol. 12(7) 1203-1215

DOI: 10.1177/1948550621996496
journals.sagepub.com/home/spp
SAGE

How Power Affects Emotional Communication During Relationship Conflicts: The Role of Perceived Partner Responsiveness

María Alonso-Ferres[1], Francesca Righetti[2], Inmaculada Valor-Segura[1], and Francisca Expósito[1]

Abstract

Prior research indicated that lack of power leads to emotional suppression and low emotional expression during conflicts among strangers. However, little is known about how power affects emotional inhibition in close relationships, where partners are highly interdependent, and achieving one's goals greatly depends on their partner's cooperation. In three studies among romantic couples (total $N = 994$), we examined whether (a) power is related to emotional inhibition during conflicts, (b) perceived partner responsiveness moderates this effect and, (c) which conflict-resolution responses are subsequently enacted. Findings consistently showed that powerless individuals were more likely to inhibit their emotions and consequently to use passive responses during conflicts. However, this only occurred when they perceived lack of responsiveness from their partner. If the partner was perceived as responsive (i.e., showed care, validation, and understanding), power was not related to emotional inhibition and passive resolutions. The importance of partner's responses in relation to power asymmetry is discussed.

Keywords

conflict resolution, emotional expression, emotional suppression, power, perceived partner responsiveness

Relationship conflicts have the potential to elicit strong emotional responses (Righetti et al., 2016), and in those situations, people can decide whether to express or suppress their emotions to their romantic partner (Gross & John, 2002). While the potential (inter)personal consequences of emotional inhibition are well known (e.g., Cameron & Overall, 2018), surprisingly, little is known about the conditions that promote the expression or suppression of emotions during romantic conflicts. A few studies on interactions among strangers have shown that low interpersonal power is a determinant of emotional inhibition (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Van Kleef & Lange, 2020). In fact, powerless individuals tend to inhibit the expression of thoughts and emotions to avoid potential harmful repercussions during conflicts and negotiations (Keltner et al., 2003). However, it remains unclear whether having low interpersonal power also leads to suppression—and low expression—of one's emotions in romantic conflictual interactions. On the one hand, romantic partners are highly interdependent, and achieving one's goals inevitably depends on the partner's cooperation (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). This context can make people highly vulnerable to their partner's rejection and exploitation, which should lead low power individuals to inhibit their emotions during conflicts, even more strongly than we typically observe with strangers. On the other hand, romantic relationships are also characterized by a strong communal orientation (Clark & Mills, 2012) in which partners care about each other's well-being and are responsive (i.e., understand, validate, and care; Reis, 2012) to their needs. Accordingly, low power individuals may also feel comfortable sharing their internal states if they think that their partner will react benevolently. Hence, romantic relationships represent an ideal context to test whether power is related to emotional inhibition and to test under which conditions this association may not occur (i.e., high perceived partner responsiveness [PPR]).

[1] Department of Social Psychology, Mind, Brain and Behavioral Research Center (CIMCYC), University of Granada, Spain
[2] Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Corresponding Author:
María Alonso-Ferres and Inmaculada Valor-Segura, Department of Social Psychology, Mind, Brain and Behavioral Research Center (CIMCYC), University of Granada, Spain.
Emails: maalfe@ugr.es; ivalor@ugr.es

Do Powerless Individuals Express or Suppress Emotions to Their Romantic Partner?

According to the principle of least interest (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), people lack relationship power when they are dependent on others, and they possess power when they are able to control or influence another person's outcomes (Keltner et al., 2003). Although in many romantic relationships partners strive for equality, asymmetries in levels of dependence commonly result in one partner perceiving to have less *relative* power than the other across different interactions (e.g., Simpson et al., 2014). These power dynamics may have important consequences when negotiating conflicts. In particular, while powerful individuals have the potential to influence and retaliate against others by delivering punishments and withholding rewards, powerless individuals' responses do not hold as much weight (Simpson et al., 2014). Consistently, powerless individuals may be more careful in expressing emotions during conflicts because any emotions (either positive or negative; Van Kleef, 2009) convey information about one's welfare and needs and its expression can make them vulnerable and easy to exploit (Barasch et al., 2016; Van Kleef et al., 2010). Thus, powerless individuals may engage in emotional suppression (and withhold expression) to avoid potential negative repercussions and maintain the relationship harmony on which they depend on (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Keltner et al., 2003). Accordingly, previous research among strangers revealed that while powerful individuals usually feel greater freedom to express their emotions, having low power makes individuals express such emotions in more constrained ways (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Catterson et al., 2017; Langner et al., 2012; Van Kleef & Lange, 2020).

Yet, to our knowledge, no prior research has analyzed whether power also influences the expression of emotions in close relationship contexts, where partners are highly interdependent (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and are typically in a communal relationship (Clark & Mills, 2012). Our work investigated whether lower power is associated with emotional inhibition during relationship conflicts and, importantly, whether the way partners respond (i.e., the level of PPR) may moderate this effect. We suggest that, in such interdependent contexts, PPR could reflect the actual risk of being rejected or exploited by the partner and should influence whether low power individuals will be likely to suppress or express their emotions.

To make our predictions, we draw on key perspectives on emotions and close relationships—such as the extended process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 2015) and the risk regulation model (Murray et al., 2006). Both models stress that, beyond power, individuals' emotional communication during conflicts may depend on the potential benefits and risks of being open to their partner. Stated differently, people may adjust their behavior in anticipation of their partner's response, on whether they will be caring or exploitative and rejecting (Murray et al., 2006). Precisely because powerless individuals are more sensitive to potential threats, perceiving low responsiveness from the partner likely increases the signals that the partners will be inattentive or, even exploitative of them, and inhibiting emotions appears to be key to minimize such negative repercussions. In contrast, perceiving their partner to be responsive may buffer this effect, even during conflicts. Supporting this idea, recent research demonstrated that people are more likely to express emotions when partners are perceived as caring (Von Culin et al., 2018) and responsive (Ruan et al., 2019). Conversely, they suppress emotions to partners when they perceived them as unresponsive (Thomson et al., 2018). Extending prior literature, we propose that perceptions of partner responsiveness may precisely determine when low power individuals increase their emotional suppression (withhold expression) to protect themselves from their partner's hurtful behavior during conflicts. Furthermore, analyzing these emotional responses is crucial to understand how conflicts are eventually solved.

Emotional Communication and Conflict-Resolution Responses

When partners face disagreements, there are four different responses they can enact to solve conflicts (Overall & McNulty, 2017; Rusbult et al., 1986). Two of these responses (voice and exit) are considered active because the individual address and solve the problem, whereas two (loyalty and neglect) are passive since the individual is not directly facing the problem. Specifically, in a constructive manner, partners could actively attempt to generate plans of action to address the causes of conflict (voice-resolution) or passively just wait for conditions to improve to maintain the relationship (loyal-resolution). Alternatively, in a destructive manner, partners could actively threaten or end the relationship (exit-resolution) or passively allow one's relationship to deteriorate (neglect-resolution).

We propose that power and the subsequent display of emotions should play an important role in shaping conflict-resolution responses. This notion is rooted in the research showing the impact that emotional expression and suppression have on people's ability to generate a course of action to solve conflicts (Gross, 2015; Overall & McNulty, 2017). Specifically, prior literature highlighted that open expression of feelings and opinions enhances self-disclosure and partners' ability to generate a plan of action to directly solve the conflict (Low et al., 2019). In contrast, emotional suppression reduces people's ability to perceive and develop solutions to conflicts. For example, previous studies revealed that emotional suppression increases self-monitoring, which reduces attention, distracts individuals from focusing on a plan to address the conflict, and decreases their goal effort and achievement (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Butler et al., 2003; Peters et al., 2014; Richards et al., 2003). As consequence, emotional suppression disrupts couple's communication and the cooperation required to generate a solution to problems and, importantly, impedes individuals to engage and persist in efforts to resolve conflicts (Thomson et al., 2018). Thus, while it may be likely

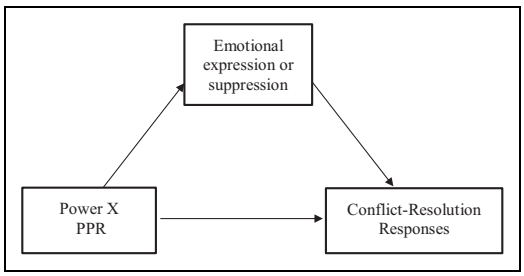

Figure 1. The conceptual model for the indirect effect of lacking power and perceived partner responsiveness on conflict-resolution responses, mediated by emotional expression and suppression.

that individuals who express their emotions may focus on the problem itself and actively deal with it using active conflict-resolution responses such as voice and exit, emotional suppression may be more likely to promote passive conflict-resolution responses, such as loyalty and neglect.

Research Overview

We present three studies, employing questionnaires and laboratory discussions among romantic couples, to test, firstly, whether power was associated with emotional inhibition. We predicted lower power relative to their partner during conflict interactions would be associated with an increase in emotional suppression and a decrease in emotional expression. Second, we examined whether PPR would moderate this effect. We expected that powerless individuals would be particularly likely to inhibit their emotions when they perceive that their partner displays low levels of responsiveness. However, power would not be associated with emotional inhibition when high levels of partners' responsiveness are perceived. Finally, we examined whether power and PPR would influence emotional communication and, in turn, individuals' conflict-resolution responses in moderated mediation models (see Figure 1). Specifically, we predicted that powerless individuals who perceived low partner responsiveness would use higher passive conflict-resolutions and lower active conflict-resolution via increased emotional suppression and decreased emotional expression. Materials, code, and password-protected data are available at Open Science Framework. Access to data requires requesting the password from authors.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Participants were 340 individuals residing in Spain. Originally, 363 participated in the study. Of those, 16 did not meet the inclusion criteria—be involved in a romantic relationship for a minimum of 6 months—and seven were not able to recall a discussion with their partner. Therefore, 23 participants were excluded from the study before data analyses. Participants' mean age was 24.73 years ($SD = 7.95$). On average, they reported being involved in the romantic relationship for 1.39 years ($SD = 1.37$), and 21.1% lived together. A post hoc power analysis (e.g., Lane & Hennes, 2018), using our estimates from the models (see Table 1) as the parameter estimates and a Monte Carlo simulation for 1,000 hypothetical studies, showed 84% and 85% power for the predicted interaction between power and PPR in emotional suppression and expression, respectively.

Measures and Procedure

Participants were recruited via advertisements on internet forums and social networks (e.g., Facebook) linked to Qualtrics Survey Software. After signing an informed consent form, participants who affirmed to have a romantic relationship had access to the questionnaire. First, they indicated their power in the relationship using eight items (e.g., "If I want to, I get to make the decisions," "I can make my partner listen to me"; 1 = *totally-disagree*, 7 = *totally-agree*; Fischer & Evers, 2011). Next, individuals were asked to vividly describe, in writing, a conflict situation that they had experienced with their intimate partner. Then, they completed another short questionnaire about this incident on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *completely*). Specifically, participants indicated to what extent their partner was responsive to them using three items (e.g., "My partner understood me," "My partner appreciated me"; Reis, 2012). Participants also specified to what extent they openly express the emotions during the discussion using three items (e.g., "I shared my emotions with my partner," "I said how I felt"; Fischer & Evers, 2011); and intentionally suppress the emotions they felt using four items (e.g., "I kept my emotions to myself," "I controlled my emotions by not expressing them; Gross & John, 2003). See Online Supplemental Material (OSM) for more information.

Results and Discussion

Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations for all variables are displayed in Table 2. Independent lineal regression analyses were performed to test the predictive contribution of power (mean-centered), PPR (mean-centered), and the interaction between power and PPR to emotional expression and suppression, using SPSS Version 21. When the expected interactions emerged, we performed simple slope analyses to interpret the interactions for high and low ($\pm 1SD$) PPR participants.

Key Analyses

As Table 1 shows, power was positively related to emotional expression and negatively associated with emotional suppression. Moreover, as expected, the effect of power on emotional expression and suppression was moderated by PPR.[1] Simple effects (Figure 2) showed that power was not associated with emotional expression (Panel A, Slope 1) or suppression

Table 1. Power, and PPR as Predictor of Individuals' Emotional Expression and Suppression During the Conflict Discussions.

Predictors	Emotional Expression				Emotional Suppression			
	b	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI
Intercept	3.19	.11	.000	[2.98, 4.41]	3.19	.09	.000	[2.94, 3.30]
Power	0.23	.11	.035	[0.02, 0.44]	−0.24	.09	.011	[−0.42, −0.06]
PPR	0.13	.06	.038	[0.01, 0.25]	−0.09	.05	.099	[−0.19, 0.02]
Power × PPR	−0.14	.06	.014	[−0.26, −0.03]	0.16	.05	.002	[0.06, 0.26]

Note. $N = 340$. The estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. PPR = perceived partner responsiveness.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Study 1 Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Power	—			
2. PPR	.02	—		
3. Emotional expression	.12*	.12*	—	
4. Emotional suppression	−.14*	−.09	−.17**	—
M	4.92	2.76	3.16	3.12
SD	1.01	1.78	2.04	1.76
α	.76	.92	.87	.88

Note. $N = 340$. Higher scores on continuous variables indicate greater standing on the variable (e.g., greater Power). PPR = perceived partner responsiveness. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

(Panel B, Slope 4) for people high in PPR. Conversely, the association between power and both emotional expression (Panel A, Slope 2) and suppression (Panel B, Slope 3) emerged for people low in PPR. In sum, the findings provide preliminary evidence that powerless individuals are more likely to suppress (and not express) their emotions[2]; this does not occur if they perceive high levels of responsiveness from their partners.

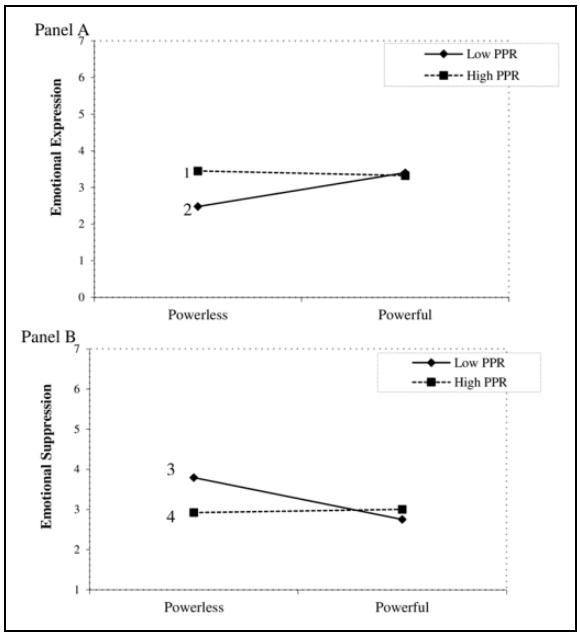

Figure 2. The interaction among perceived power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) predicting emotional expression (Panel A) and emotional suppression (Panel B). *Note.* Study 1. Low and high values for PPR are plotted at 1 *SD* below and above the mean.[1] Simple slope = −0.03, *SE* = .15, $p = .836$, 95% CI [−0.33, 0.27]. [2] Simple slope = 0.49, *SE* = .15, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.79]. [3] Simple slope = −0.52, *SE* = .13, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−0.77, −0.26]. [4] Simple Slope = 0.04, *SE* = .13, $p = .753$, 95% CI [−0.21, 0.30].

Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate previous findings in a controlled setting in which both members of the couple discussed a divergence of interest in the laboratory.

Method

Participants

Participants were 127 couples (including one same-sex dyad; $N = 254$) residing in the Netherlands. Originally, 130 couples involved in the relationship a minimum of 4 months participated in the study, but three couples were excluded before data analyses because they did not follow the instructions properly—the researcher observed they did not take the study seriously. Participants' mean age was 23.26 years ($SD = 3.55$). On average, couples reported being involved in the relationship for 2.88 years ($SD = 2.42$), and 35% lived together. Data come from a larger project on romantic relationships (see OSM). As in study 1, power analyses using our estimates (see Table 3) showed 98% and 46% power to test the interaction between power and PPR in emotional suppression and expression.

Measures and Procedure

Couples were recruited via advertisements on internet forums, social networks, and personal approach. Once in the lab, after signing an informed consent form, partners were separated to different cubicles and asked to complete a battery of questionnaires. Among them, participants reported, "Who is the powerholder in your relationship?" (−1= *My partner*, 1 = *Me*; Righetti et al., 2015). Next, partners were asked to meet in one room and were instructed to discuss a divergence of interest between them while being videotaped. Specifically, they were asked to normally discuss this divergence for 7 min, as they would do at home. Importantly, participants were explained that a "divergence of interest" referred to a situation in which both partners had different preferences (e.g., one partner likes to visit their family, but the other prefers to spend time with

Table 3. Power, and PPR as Predictor of Individuals' Emotional Expression and Suppression During the Conflict Discussions.

Predictors	Emotional Expression				Emotional Suppression			
	b	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI
Intercept	5.45	.08	.000	[5.29, 5.61]	2.41	.08	.000	[2.24, 2.57]
Power[a]	0.04	.08	.623	[−0.12, 0.19]	–0.17	.08	.035	[–0.33, –0.01]
PPR	0.38	.08	.000	[0.23, 0.53]	−0.41	.08	.004	[−0.57, −0.26]
Power × PPR	–0.08	.07	.267	[−0.23, 0.06]	0.18	.08	.019	[0.03, 0.34]

Note. $N = 254$. The estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. PPR = perceived partner responsiveness. [a]–1 = my partner, 1 = me. Thus, high levels of perceived power indicate higher power relative to the partner.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Study 2 Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Power[a]	—			
2. PPR	–.04	—		
3. Emotional expression	.02	.30***	—	
4. Emotional suppression	–.12	−.30***	−.48*	—
M	0.09	5.64	5.47	2.38
SD	1.00	1.05	1.25	1.32
α	—	.80	—	.71

Note. $N = 254$. Higher scores on continuous variables indicate greater standing on the variable (e.g., greater PPR). PPR = perceived partner responsiveness. [a]–1 = my partner (45%), 1 = me (55%). Thus, high levels of perceived power indicate higher power relative to the partner.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

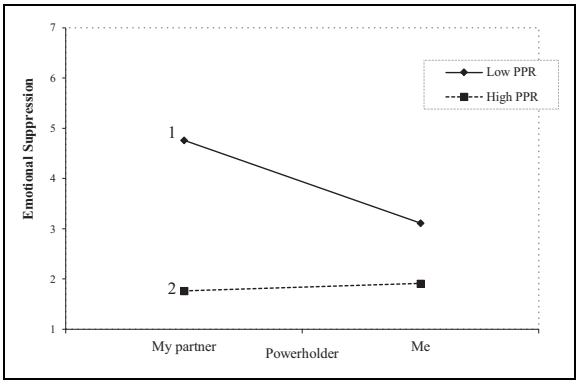

Figure 3. The interaction among perceived power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) predicting emotional suppression. *Note.* Study 2. High levels of perceived power indicate higher power relative to the partner (55%), and low levels of perceived power indicate lower power relative to the partner (45%). Low and high values for PPR are plotted at 1 *SD* below and above the mean. [1] Simple slope = –0.36, *SE* = .12, $p = .002$, 95% CI [–0.59, –0.14]. [2] Simple slope = 0.02, *SE* = .11, $p = .832$, 95% CI [−0.20, 0.25].

common friends). After ending the conversation, partners were separated again to different cubicles and replied some questions about the interaction they just had on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not-at-all*, 7 = *completely*). Participants indicated to what extent their partner was responsive to them using three items (e.g., "My partner understood me," "My partner appreciated me") and to what extent they openly express their emotions during the discussion using one item ("I openly disclosed all my thoughts and feelings to my partner"), and intentionally suppress the emotions they felt averaging two items (e.g., "I did not express certain negative feelings or thoughts I had," "I did not express certain negative feelings or thoughts I had"; see OSM).

Results and Discussion

Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations for variables are displayed in Table 4. Because the data provided by two partners in an ongoing relationship are not independent, multilevel modeling, including two-level cross-model, was used to take into account the nesting of participants within dyads. Our models estimated fixed effects where intercepts were allowed to randomly vary, while slopes were treated as fixed (Kenny et al., 2006). Dyads were treated as indistinguishable, as gender did not moderate any of our findings.[1] We tested the same set of analyses as in Study 1 using MIXED procedure in SPSS. Specifically, we, separately, regressed emotional expression and suppression onto power (–1 = *My partner*, 1 = *Me*), PPR (mean-centered), and the interaction term. When the expected interactions emerged, simple slope analyses were performed to interpret them.

Key Analyses

As Table 3 shows, for emotional expression, there was no significant main effect of power and no significant interaction. However, results revealed that power was related to emotional suppression; that is, participants were more likely to suppress their emotions if they lacked power in their relationship. Moreover, the effect of power on emotional suppression was moderated by PPR. Simple effects (Figure 3) showed that power was not associated with emotional suppression for people high in PPR (Slope 2). Conversely, this association emerged for people low in PPR (Slope 1). Study 2 corroborated the findings of Study 1. Albeit powerless individuals are more likely to suppress their emotions, this does not occur if they perceive high levels of partner's responsiveness.

Table 5. Power and PPR as predictor of Individuals' Emotional Expression and Suppression During the Conflict Discussions.

Predictors	Emotional Expression				Emotional Suppression			
	b	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI
Intercept	3.77	.05	.000	[3.66, 3.87]	3.21	.05	.000	[3.12, 3.30]
Power	0.16	.05	.002	[0.06, 0.26]	−0.13	.04	.004	[−0.22, −0.04]
PPR	0.15	.08	.054	[−0.00, 0.31]	−0.28	.07	.000	[−0.42, −0.15]
Power × PPR	−0.16	.07	.021	[−0.29, −0.02]	0.13	.06	.041	[0.01, 0.25]

Note. $N = 400$. PPR = perceived partner responsiveness; The estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Study 3

Study 3 aimed to replicate the previous findings and extend them by examining whether power and the subsequent displays of emotions, based on the PPR, enact different conflict-resolution responses.

Method

Participants

Participants were 200 heterosexual couples ($N = 400$) residing in Spain. Originally, 203 couples participated in the study. However, three couples did not meet the inclusion criteria—be involved in the relationship for a minimum of 6 months—and they were excluded from the study before data analyses. Participants' mean age was 33.32 years ($SD = 14.51$). On average, couples reported being involved for 10.01 years ($SD = 12.68$), and 64.6% lived together. As previous studies, data showed 90% and 77% power to test the interaction between power and PPR in emotional suppression and expression using our estimates (see Table 5).

Measures and Procedure

Participants were recruited following a snowball sampling procedure. Undergraduate students of a Spanish university underwent basic training about sampling procedures and were provided with booklets to distribute among acquaintances. Once participants were selected, after signing an informed consent form, they were asked to, independently, complete a questionnaire about their conflict dynamics in the relationship (see OSM). First, participants reported their power in the relationship using 20 items (e.g., "I have more influence than my partner does on decisions in our relationship," "I tend to bring up issues in our relationship more often than my partner does"; 1 = *never*, 7 = *always*; Farrell et al., 2015). Then, they indicated to what extent their partner is typically responsive to them using three items (e.g., "How much does your partner really care about you?" "How much does your partner appreciate you?" 1 = *nothing*, 7 = *very-much*). Next, participants were asked to what extent they openly express their emotions to their partner during conflicts using 17 items (e.g., "I display my emotions," "My partner can read my emotions"; 1 = *false*, 7 = *true*; Kring et al., 1994) and intentionally suppress their emotions using four items (e.g., "I keep my emotions to myself," "I control my emotions by not expressing them"; 1 = *strongly-disagree*, 7 = *strongly-agree*; Gross, & John, 2003). Finally, participants indicated their conflict-resolution responses in romantic relationships using 27 items (1 = *never-does-that*, 9 = *always-shows-that-type-of-behavior*; Valor-Segura et al., 2020): voice (e.g., "I talk to him/her about what's going on," "I discuss things with him/her"), loyalty (e.g., "I patiently wait for things to improve," "I say nothing and simply forgive him/her"), exit (e.g., "I discuss ending our relationship," "I consider breaking up"), and neglect (e.g., "I sulk rather than confront the issue," "I ignore him/her for a while").

Results and Discussion

Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations for all variables are displayed in Table 6. We performed multilevel analyses as in Study 2 in which dyads were treated as indistinguishable,[1] intercepts were allowed to randomly vary, and slopes were treated as fixed effects. Firstly, emotional expression and suppression were modeled, separately, as a function of power (mean-centered), PPR (mean-centered), and their interaction term. When the expected interactions emerged, simple slope analyses were performed. Secondly, using the same multilevel approach, conflict-resolution responses were regressed on power, PPR, emotional expression and suppression, and their interactions. Finally, we used the Monte Carlo Method to assess mediation with unstandardized estimates. This simulation method shows 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects using 20,000 simulations (Selig & Preacher, 2008).

Key Analyses

Firstly, as Table 5 reveals, power was positively related to emotional expression and negatively associated to emotional suppression. Moreover, replicating previous results, the effect of power on emotional expression and suppression was moderated by PPR. As simple effects (Figure 4) showed, power was not associated with emotional expression (Panel A, Slope 1) or suppression (Panel B, Slope 4) for people high in PPR. Conversely, the association between power and both emotional expression (Panel A, Slope 2) and suppression (Panel B, Slope 3) emerged for people low in PPR. Thus, powerless individuals

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Study 3 Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Power	—							
2. PPR	−.18***	—						
3. Emotional Expression	.14**	.05	—					
4. Emotional Suppression	−.11*	−.16**	−.58***	—				
5. Voice	.06	.42***	.14**	−.34***	—			
6. Loyalty	−.18***	−.18***	−.26***	.38***	−.31***	—		
7. Exit	.20***	−.38***	−.03	.09	−.18***	.06	—	
8. Neglect	.22***	−.41***	−.10*	.21***	−.34***	.29***	.43***	—
M	3.84	4.26	3.78	3.19	6.18	4.42	2.52	3.64
SD	1.17	0.71	1.16	1.03	1.51	1.42	1.46	1.44
α	.77	.80	.93	.91	.83	.73	.87	.78

Note. $N = 400$. Higher scores on continuous variables indicate greater standing on the variable (e.g., greater power). PPR = perceived partner responsiveness. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

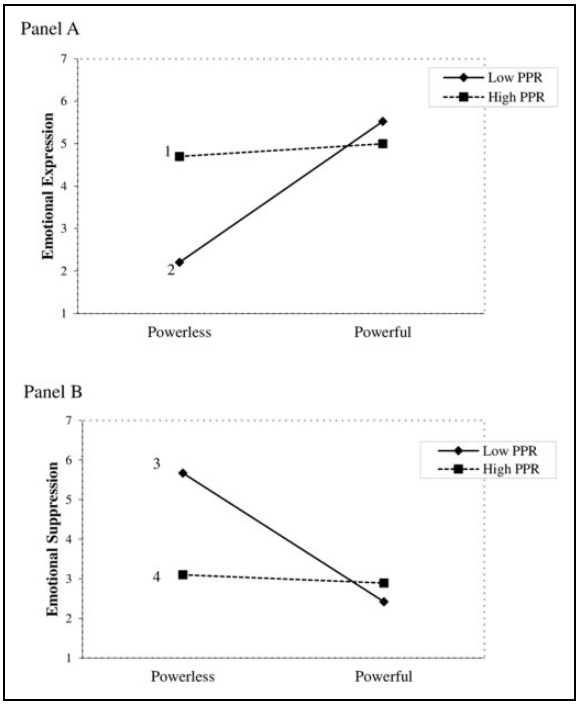

Figure 4. The interaction among perceived power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) predicting emotional expression (Panel A) and emotional suppression (Panel B). *Note.* Study 3. Low and high values for PPR are plotted at 1 *SD* below and above the mean. [1] Simple slope = 0.04, *SE* = .06, *p* = .509, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.17]. [2] Simple slope = 0.27, *SE* = .08, *p* < .001, 95% CI [0.12, 0.42]. [3] Simple slope = −0.22, *SE* = .07, *p* = .001, 95% CI [−0.35, −0.09]. [4] Simple slope = −0.04, *SE* = .06, *p* = .491, 95% CI [−0.15, 0.07].

are more likely to suppress (not express) their emotions. This does not occur if they perceive high levels of responsiveness from their partners.

Subsequently, as Table 7 shows, significant two-way interactions of power with PPR also emerged in voice and loyalty responses. Simple effects (Figure 5) showed that while power was not associated with voice (Panel A, Slope 1) and loyalty responses (Panel B, Slope 4) for people high in PPR, power was positively related to voice (Panel A, Slope 2) and negatively to loyalty responses (Panel B, Slope 3) for people low in PPR. Conversely, no interaction effects of power with PPR on exit and neglect responses were found (see OSM). Thus, powerless individuals are more likely to use a loyal and less voice response to face their romantic conflicts when they perceive a lack of responsiveness from their partners.

Lastly, mediation analyses revealed that power was indirectly connected to voice responses (Figure 6) via emotional expression (95% CI [−0.06, −0.002]) and suppression (95% CI [–0.10, –0.01]), and to loyalty responses (Figure 7) via emotional expression (95% CI [0.01, 0.09]) and suppression (95% CI [0.01, 0.12]). These results indicated that emotional suppression and lower expression explained, in part, why powerless individuals used a loyal (and lower voice) response to face conflicts when they perceived their partner as unresponsive.

Meta-Analysis of Studies 1–3

To gain confidence about our conclusions across diverse methodological studies, we conducted a series of meta-analyses to estimate the size and significance of each effect, including power, PPR, the Power × PPR interaction on emotional expression and suppression, and the simple slopes analyses to interpret the interactions for $\pm 1SD$ PPR. Analyses were conducted using estimated weighted *r* values assuming random-effects models (Cumming & Calin-Jageman, 2017). As Table 8 shows, when evaluated across studies, power was positively related to emotional expression and negatively to emotional suppression. Moreover, the effect of power on emotional expression and suppression was moderated by PPR. The meta-analysis of the simple effects corroborated that power was associated with both emotional expression and suppression for people low in PPR. These associations did not emerge for people high in PPR.

Table 7. Estimation of Predictors of Individuals' Resolution During the Conflict Discussions.

Predictors	Voice				Loyalty				Exit				Neglect			
	b	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	*p*	95% CI
Intercept	6.15	.07	.000	[6.01, 6.30]	4.46	.07	.000	[4.31, 4.60]	2.54	.08	.000	[2.39, 2.69]	3.64	.07	.000	[3.50, 3.77]
Power	0.22	.06	<.001	[0.10, 0.34]	−0.30	.06	<.001	[−0.42, −0.19]	0.16	.06	.005	[0.05, 0.27]	0.19	.06	.001	[0.07, 0.30]
PPR	0.94	.10	<.001	[0.75, 1.14]	−0.47	.10	<.001	[−0.67, −0.27]	−0.67	.10	<.001	[−0.87, −0.48]	−0.76	.10	<.001	[−0.95, −0.57]
Power × PPR	−0.17	.08	.045	[−0.33, −0.00]	0.23	.08	.006	[0.07, 0.40]	.11	.08	.165	[−0.05, 0.27]	−0.02	.08	.820	[−0.18, 0.14]

Note. $N = 400$. The estimates are unstandardized regression coefficient. PPR = perceived partner responsiveness.

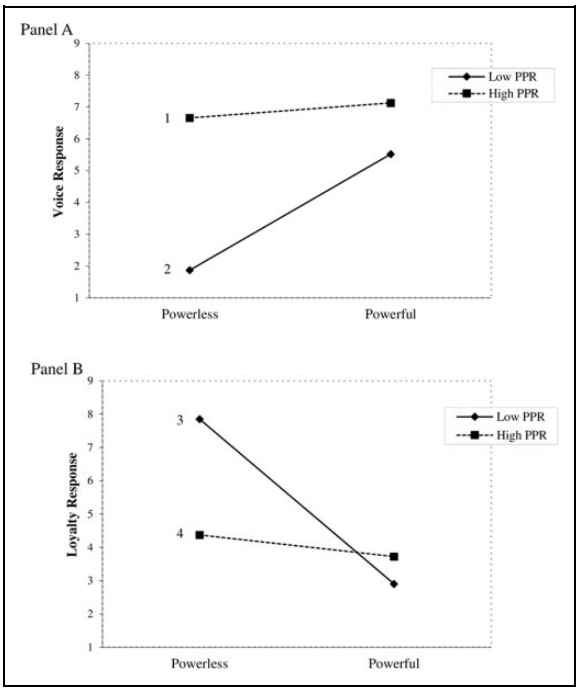

Figure 5. The interaction among perceived power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) predicting voice (Panel A) and loyalty (Panel B) conflict-resolution responses. *Note*. Study 3. Low and high values for PPR are plotted at 1 *SD* below and above the mean. [1] Simple slope = 0.10, *SE* = .07, *p* = .189, 95% CI [−0.05, 0.25]. [2] Simple slope = 0.34, *SE* = .09, *p* < .001, 95% CI [0.16, 0.52]. [3] Simple slope = 0.47, *SE* = .09, *p* < .001, 95% CI [−0.65, −0.29]. [4] Simple slope = –0.14, *SE* = .08, *p* = .072, 95% CI [−0.29, 0.01].

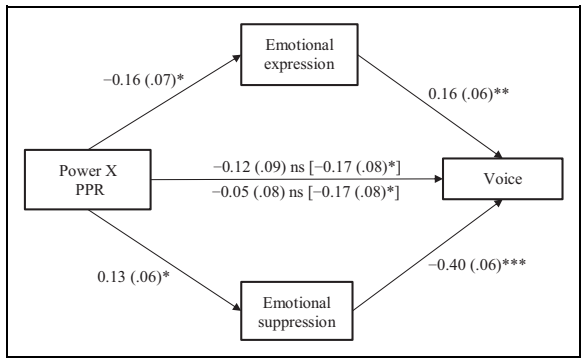

Figure 6. The moderation of power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) on voice-resolution responses, mediated by emotional expression and suppression. *Note*. All reported values are unstandardized estimates (*b* values), with their *SE* reported between parentheses. The total effect of power and PPR on voice responses appears within brackets []. ns = no significant; *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

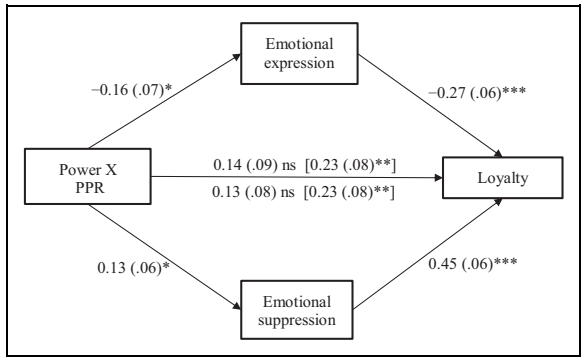

Figure 7. The moderation of power and perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) on loyalty-resolution responses, mediated by emotional expression and suppression. *Note*. All reported values are unstandardized estimates (*b* values), with their *SE* reported between parentheses. The total effect of power and PPR on loyalty responses appears within brackets []. ns = no significant; *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

General Discussion

This work challenged the emerging literature showing that power unequivocally leads to the inhibition of emotional communication. Across three studies, our work revealed that powerless individuals were more likely to suppress (and not express) their emotions *only when* they perceived a lack of responsiveness from their romantic partner. Conversely, when powerless individuals perceived their partner as responsive, they did not inhibit their emotions. Furthermore, we found that emotional suppression could explain, in part, why powerless individuals were more likely to display loyal (and lower voice) conflict-resolution responses when their partner was perceived as unresponsive.

Our findings contribute to the literature that shows the difficulties that powerless individuals face in communicating their emotions (e.g., Catterson et al., 2017; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Langner et al., 2012). However, unlike previous studies that have mostly investigated this research question among people who do not have each other's interest at heart, we tested our hypotheses in the context of romantic relationships, where people are highly interdependent (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and communal orientation is high (Clark & Mills, 2012). We provide novel evidence that, in those circumstances, people adjust their emotional communication based on their partner responses and that power asymmetries do not matter much if people perceived their partner to understand and care for them.

Specifically, our findings consistently showed that powerless individuals do not have to silence their emotions under such responsive context. Conversely, our study suggests that perceiving low responsiveness from the partner increases the signals that it is not safe to express emotions (Murray et al., 2006). Thus, suppressing emotions appears to be key for people to avoid possible retaliations and exploitations (Murray & Holmes, 2008). These findings provide critical evidence that power dynamics in relationships are context-dependent, contingent on the characteristics of the relationship itself (e.g., levels of PPR). Therefore, consistent with Gross's (2015) model of emotion regulation, individuals adjust their behavior not only based on their own social status but also according to the anticipation of others' responses. If they expect their partner to care for them, they might feel free and safe to express their

Table 8. Meta-Analyses of the Effects of Power, PPR, and the Power × PPR on Expression and Suppression During the Conflict Discussions.

	Emotional Expression				Emotional Suppression			
Predictors	*r*	*z*	*p*	95% CI	*r*	*z*	*p*	95% CI
Power	.11	2.93	.003	[0.04, 0.18]	−.15	–4.63	<.001	[−0.21, −0.08]
PPR	.19	2.48	.013	[0.04, 0.33]	−.21	–3.21	.003	[−0.34, −0.08]
Power x PPR	−.11	–3.49	<.001	[−0.17, −0.05]	.14	4.29	<.001	[0.07, 0.20]
Simple Slopes: ± 1 SD in PPR								
High PPR	.00	0.03	.974	[–0.06, 0.06]	–.00	–0.08	.932	[–0.07, 0.06]
Low PPR	.15	4.79	<.001	[0.09, 0.21]	–.19	–6.04	<.001	[–0.25, –0.13]

emotions, even if they have less power than their partner in the relationship.

Importantly, we think that these findings have also implications for contexts outside the realm of close relationships. Although close relationships are characterized by high levels of responsiveness, prior research showed that high power in natural settings can also be associated with feelings of responsibility toward others, which induce power-holders to desire affiliation with others rather than social distance (Smith & Hofmann, 2016). Hence, when they want to affiliate, power-holders may also have the motivation to be responsive to others' needs, even in nonclose relationships. Future research could investigate whether responsive power-holders may mitigate the aversive effects of power on emotional communication in different settings as well. For example, in a business context, employees could feel free to express their emotions, needs, and even ideas when the organization's leaders are perceived as responsive and make them feel appreciated and validated.

The current research also advances the relationship literature by providing important insights to the study of romantic conflict-resolution responses. The existing literature revealed that emotional suppression reduces conflict resolution (Thomson et al., 2018). Our work shows which particular conflict-resolution responses may be affected by both emotional expression and suppression. Specifically, our results suggest that the emotional suppression (and diminished expression) that powerless individuals adopt when they perceive their partner as unresponsive could be a mechanism that guides them to use a passive-constructive response (loyalty-resolution) instead of an active one (voice-resolution) during conflicts. This may occur because the emotional suppression distracts individuals from the problem at hand, depletes available self-regulatory resources, and disrupts the cooperation needed to generate and promote an active solution of the conflict (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Butler et al., 2003; Low et al., 2019; Thomson et al., 2018). Therefore, suppressing emotions might place individuals in a vulnerable position without many other options than accepting the relative difference in power and wait for conditions to improve. In the short run, this could be functional because conflicts may vanish quickly and powerless individuals may maintain the relationship they so strongly depend on (Cameron & Overall, 2018; Low et al., 2019). However, in the long run, serious problems could remain unaddressed (Overall et al., 2010). For example, powerful partners may continue problematic behavior because they remain unaware of the severity of the conflict. As consequence, powerless individuals may live in a negative vicious circle in which they never get their prorelationship efforts reciprocated because they silence their needs and, over the longer term, such submissive responses may adversely impact the individual and the relationship well-being (Pietromonaco et al., 2020). Thus, scientists and therapists should understand which mechanisms could change this submissive pattern. Our studies show that PPR could be key, but it is likely not the only factor. Previous work has also highlighted that individual differences and adherence to certain social norms could shape how individuals respond to power differences (Pietromonaco et al., 2020). For example, men who more strongly endorsed traditional gender role beliefs respond to low power with aggression instead of submission (Cross et al., 2019; Overall et al., 2016). Future studies could also examine how the characteristics of the relationship itself and the adherence to certain beliefs affect how people respond to power.

Finally, some limitations of the current research should be acknowledged. All studies involved cross-sectional data, which limit strong causal conclusions. Future research could complement these findings by using experimental procedures to examine the causal effects of power on emotional inhibition and of emotional communication on conflict-resolution responses. Moreover, although our findings show the important role that the perception of the partner's responsiveness plays, there may be individual differences or situational circumstances (e.g., insecure attachment, relationship threats) that hinder the capacity of individuals to accurately perceive their partner responsiveness. Despite these limitations, we should highlight that the results of the present research were replicated using different methodological procedures in three samples from two different countries (the Netherlands and Spain), increasing confidence in the generalizability of these findings.

Concluding Remarks

Conflicts are inevitable in romantic relationships posing a great challenge to couples' well-being. The results of this research suggest that, during such conflicts, powerless individuals are more likely to suppress their emotions and, consequently, to

increase the enactment of passive conflict resolutions, *when* they perceive a lack of responsiveness from their partner. This does not occur if high levels of partners' responsiveness are perceived. Thus, powerless individuals do not invariably silence their emotions in all interpersonal contexts. Instead, if they perceive to have an understanding and caring partner they can feel free to act naturally, even in conflictual situations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness for the R&D projects (Ref. PSI-2017- 83966-R) and (Ref. PSI2017-84703-R) (MINECO/AEI/FEDER/UE). This work was also supported in part by FPU16/03023 Grant.

ORCID iD

María Alonso-Ferres https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8081-3428

Notes

1. In Studies 1–3, gender did not interacted with power and PPR in predicting emotional expression (95% CI [−0.14, 0.35]; 95% CI [−0.21, 0.39]; 95% CI [−0.11, 0.45]) nor emotional suppression (95% CI [−0.18, 0.25]; 95% CI [−0.23, 0.38]; 95% CI [−0.28, 0.20], respectively).
2. These effects did not substantially differ if positive and negative emotions are considered separately (see OSM).

Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

References

Anderson, C., & Berdahl, J. L. (2002). The experience of power: Examining the effects of power on approach and inhibition tendencies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 1362–1377. http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1362

Barasch, A., Levine, E. E., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2016). Bliss is ignorance: How the magnitude of expressed happiness influences perceived naiveté and interpersonal exploitation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *137*, 184–206. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2016.05.006

Ben-Naim, S., Hirschberger, G., Ein-Dor, T., & Mikulincer, M. (2013). An experimental study of emotion regulation during relationship conflict interactions: The moderating role of attachment orientations. *Emotion*, *13*, 506–519. http://doi.org/10.1037/a0031473

Butler, E. A., Egloff, B., Wlhelm, F. H., Smith, N. C., Erickson, E. A., & Gross, J. J. (2003). The social consequences of expressive suppression. *Emotion*, *3*, 48–67. http://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.3.1.48

Cameron, L. D., & Overall, N. C. (2018). Suppression and expression as distinct emotion-regulation processes in daily interactions: Longitudinal and meta-analyses. *Emotion*, *18*, 465–480. http://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000334

Catterson, A. D., Eldesouky, L., & John, O. P. (2017). An experience sampling approach to emotion regulation: Situational suppression use and social hierarchy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *69*, 33–43. https://doi.org/101016/j.jrp.2016.04.004

Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. R. (2012). A theory of communal (and exchange) relationships. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (p. 232–250). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/104135/9781446249222.n38

Cross, E. J., Overall, N. C., Low, R. S. T., & McNulty, J. K. (2019). An interdependence account of sexism and power: Men's hostile sexism, biased perceptions of low power, and relationship aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *117*(2), 338–363. https://doi.org/101037/pspi0000167

Cumming, G., & Calin-Jageman, R. (2017). *Introduction to the new statistics*. Routledge. https://doi.org/104324/9781315708607

Farrell, A. K., Simpson, J. A., & Rothman, A. J. (2015). The relationship power inventory: Development and validation. *Personal Relationships*, *22*, 387–413. http://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12072

Fischer, A. H., & Evers, C (2011). The social costs and benefits of anger as a function of gender and relationship context. *Sex Roles*, *65*, 23–34. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9956-x

Gross, J. J, & John, O. P. (2002). Wise emotion regulation. In L. Feldman Barret & P. Salovey (Eds.), *The wisdom of feelings: Psychological processes in emotional intelligence* (pp. 297–318). Guilford Press.

Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, *26*, 1–26. http://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781

Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*, 348–362. http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348

Hecht, M. A., & LaFrance, M. (1998). License or obligation to smile: The effect of power and sex on amount and type of smiling. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *24*, 1332–1342. http://doi.org/10.1177/01461672982412007

Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. Wiley.

Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and inhibition. *Psychological Review*, *110*, 265–284. http://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.110.2.265

Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (2006). *Dyadic data analysis*. Guilford Press.

Kring, A. M., Smith, D. A., & Neale, J. M. (1994). Individual differences in dispositional expressiveness: Development and validation of the emotional expressivity scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *66*, 934–949. http://doi.org/ckwLehti

Lane, S. P., & Hennes, E. P. (2018). Power struggles: Estimating sample size for multilevel relationships research. *Journal of Social and*

Personal Relationships, *35*, 7–31. http://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517710342

Langner, C. A., Epel, E. S., Matthews, K. A., Moskowitz, J. T., & Adler, N. C. (2012). Social hierarchy and depression: The role of emotion suppression. *The Journal of Psychology*, *146*, 417–436. http://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2011.652234

Low, R. S. T., Overall, N. C., Cross, E. J., & Henderson, A. M. E. (2019). Emotion regulation, conflict resolution, and spillover on subsequent family functioning. *Emotion*, *19*, 1162–1182. http://doiorg/10.1037/emo0000519

Muller, D., Judd, C. M., & Yzerbyt, V. Y. (2005). When moderation is mediated and mediation is moderated. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*, 852–863. http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.852

Murray, S. L., & Holmes, J. G. (2008). The commitment-insurance system: Self-esteem and the regulation of connection in close relationships. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*, 1–60. https://doi.org/101016/S0065-2601(07)00001-9

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Collins, N. L. (2006). Optimizing assurance: The risk regulation system in relationships. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*, 641–666. http://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.641

Overall, N. C., Hammond, M. D., McNulty, J. K., & Finkel, E. J. (2016). When power shapes interpersonal behavior: Low relationship power predicts men's aggressive responses to low situational power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *111*(2), 195–217. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000059

Overall, N. C., & McNulty, J. K. (2017). What type of communication during conflict is beneficial for intimate relationships? *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *13*, 1–5. http://doiorg/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.03.002

Overall, N. C., Sibley, C. G., & Travaglia, L. K. (2010). Loyal but ignored: The benefits and costs of constructive communication patterns. *Personal Relationships*, *17*, 127–148. https://doi.org/101111/j.1475-6811.2010.01257.x

Peters, B. J., Overall, N. C., & Jamieson, J. P. (2014). Physiological and cognitive consequences of suppressing and expressing emotion in dyadic interactions. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, *94*, 100–107. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2014.07.015

Pietromonaco, P. R., Overall, N. C., Beck, L. A., & Powers, S. I. (2020). Is low power associated with submission during marital conflict? Moderating roles of gender and traditional gender role beliefs. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. https://doi.org/101177/1948550620904609

Reis, H. T. (2012). Perceived partner responsiveness as an organizing theme for the study of relationships and well-being. In L. Campbell & T. J. Loving (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary research on close relationships: The case for integration* (pp. 27–52). American Psychological Association.

Richards, J. M., Butler, E. A., & Gross, J. J. (2003). Emotion regulation in romantic relationships: The cognitive consequences of concealing feelings. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *20*, 599–620. http://doi.org/10.1177/02654075030205002

Righetti, F., Gere, J., Hofmann, W., Visserman, M. L., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2016). The burden of empathy: Partners' responses to divergence of interests in daily life. *Emotion*, *16*, 684–690. https://doi.org/101037/emo0000163

Riguetti, F., Luchies, L. B., van Gils, S., Slotter, E. B., Witcher, B., & Kumashiro, M. (2015). The prosocial versus proself power holder: How power influences sacrifice in romantic relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*, 779–790. https://doi.org/101177/0146167215579054

Ruan, Y., Reis, H. T., Clark, M. S., Hirsch, J. L., & Bink, B. D. (2019). Can I tell you how I feel? Perceived partner responsiveness encourages emotional expression. *Emotion*, *20*, 329–342. https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000650

Rusbult, C. E., Johnson, D. J., & Morrow, G. D. (1986). Impact of couple patterns of problem solving on distress and nondistress in dating relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*, 744–753. http://doiorg/10.1037/0022-3514.50.4.744

Selig, J. P., & Preacher, K. J. (2008). *Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation: An interactive tool for creating confidence intervals for indirect effects* [Computer software]. http://quantpsy.org/medmc/medmc.htm

Simpson, J. A., Farrell, A., Oriña, M. M., & Rothman, A. J. (2014). Power and social influence in relationships. In M. Mikulincer & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology* (pp. 393–420). American Psychological Association.

Smith, P. K., & Hofmann, W. (2016). Power in everyday life. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *113*, 10043–10048. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1604820113

Thibaut, J., & Kelley, H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. Wiley.

Thomson, R. A., Overall, N. C., Cameron, L. D., & Low, R. S. T. (2018). Perceived regard, expressive suppression during conflict, and conflict resolution. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *32*, 722–732. http://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000429

Valor-Segura, I., Garrido-Macías, M., & Lozano, L. M. (2020). Adaptation of the accommodation in romantic couples scale (ARCS) to the Spanish population. *Psicothema*, *32*, 1. http://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2019.123

Van Kleef, G. A. (2009). How emotions regulate social life: The emotions as social information (EASI) model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *18*, 184–188. https://doi.org/101111/j.1467-8721.2009.01633.x

Van Kleef, G. A., De Dreu, C. K. W., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2010). An interpersonal approach to emotion in social decision making: The emotions as social information model. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *42*, 45–96. http://doiorg/10.1016/S0065-2601(10)42002-X

Van Kleef, G. A., & Lange, J. (2020). How hierarchy shapes our emotional lives: Effects of power and status on emotional experience, expression, and responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *33*, 148–153. https://doi.org/101016/j.copsyc.2019.07.009

Von Culin, K. R., Hirsch, J. L., & Clark, M. S. (2018). Willingness to express emotion depends upon perceiving partner care. *Cognition*

and Emotion, *32*, 641–650. http://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2017.1331906

Author Biographies

María Alonso-Ferres is a PhD candidate in the Department of Social Psychology at the Granada University. Her research focuses on emotions, power, and conflict resolution in close relationships.

Francesca Righetti is an associate professor in the Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology at the VU Amsterdam. Her research focuses on close relationships and dual processes.

Inmaculada Valor-Segura is an associate professor in the Department of Social Psychology at the University of Granada. Her main research interests involve gender violence, interpersonal relationships, emotion recognition, economic crisis, and social class.

Francisca Expósito is a professor in the Department of Social Psychology at the Granada University. Her research interests involve sexism, intimate partner violence, forensic psychology, interpersonal relationships, and news forms of gender violence.

Handling Editor: Lisa Libby