

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO? COGNITIVE AND RELATIONSHIP FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIKELIHOOD OF RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION AMONG COUPLES EXPERIENCING MILD TO MODERATE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMON COUPLE VIOLENCE

David S. Curtis, M.S., 2013

Thesis Directed By: Professor N.B. Epstein, Department of Family Science

There has been insufficient attention given to mild to moderate bi-directional intimate partner violence in the literature. Using a secondary dataset in which strict exclusion criteria decreased the likelihood of cases of partner battering being included, this study investigated the association between mild to moderate intimate psychological and physical aggression and steps taken by the recipient to leave an intimate relationship among a sample of 251 couples who sought therapy at a University-based clinic. Based on the relative costs and benefits model, the degree to which relationship satisfaction mediated the association between aggression received and steps taken to leave was tested. The moderating effects of social support from friends and attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems also were investigated. Findings indicated that psychological aggression was a particularly significant predictor of steps being taken to leave by the recipient, and that relationship satisfaction mediated this association, especially for males.

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By

David S. Curtis

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Science

2013

Advisory Committee:

Professor Norman Epstein, Chair

Professor Elaine Anderson

Instructor Carol Werlinich

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people who have provided support, mentorship, and kindness throughout the process of completing this project:

First, I want to express my appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Norman Epstein, who helped to shape this research study from its inception and has provided the constructive feedback necessary for my growth as an aspiring academic. His countless edits will always be remembered as a sign of support.

I would also like to thank Dr. Carol Werlinich. Her reassuring guidance over the last two years has helped me to see my potential in academia and as a person. She is a soft, comforting voice in the midst of a storm of responsibilities and stress.

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Elaine Anderson for her thoughtful and enriching critiques. She offered a fresh perspective that led to insightful discussions about how to make this thesis more coherent and meaningful.

I must also thank those from my cohort with whom I have spent so much of the last two years as we have learned to be better researchers and clinicians. They were always there when I was in need of advice, support, or distraction – especially at the rock-climbing wall.

I would also like to express my gratitude to a myriad of unnamed individuals who have provided a sense of community in my life, especially my extended family and Church. Hopefully, I have adequately thanked them already, but if not, then I do so here, and I will hope it counts.

Finally, I am most grateful to my loving and kind wife, Shalee. She has been my anchor throughout the process to ensure I was not consumed by my thesis. The seemingly endless amounts of writing and research were counterbalanced by a profound happiness achieved through time with my family. This allowed me to find the necessary strength to complete the last two years without unbearable amounts of stress.

I thank my children, Rozlyn and Asher, for the precious moments and abundant laughs that sustained me. Rozlyn – your requests for time and attention were needed breaks. And Asher – if you were not so adorable, I might have said that having a child while completing a thesis was not a wise idea. Nevertheless, I have discovered there is no greater motivation or encouragement than those you love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	viii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	7
Literature Review	8
<i>Theoretical Base for the Study: Social Exchange Theory and the Relative Costs and Benefits of a Relationship.</i>	8
<i>The Effect of Common Couple Violence on Relationship Dissolution.</i> . . .	12
<i>The Effect of Common Couple Violence on Relationship Satisfaction.</i> . . .	15
<i>The Link between Relationship Satisfaction and Relationship Dissolution.</i>	18
<i>The Moderating Effect of Social Support on Relationship Satisfaction for IPV Victims.</i>	20
<i>The Moderating Effect of Social Support on Relationship Dissolution for IPV Victims.</i>	22
<i>Attributions for Aggression in Intimate Relationships</i>	26
<i>Negative Relationship Attributions as a Moderator between the Association of IPV and Relationship Dissolution.</i>	27

<i>Conclusions from the Literature Review</i>	29
Hypotheses	31
Chapter II: Methods.	33
Sample.	33
Measures.	37
<i>Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse Scale</i>	37
<i>Revised Conflict Tactics Scale</i>	38
<i>Marital Status Inventory - Revised</i>	40
<i>Dyadic Adjustment Scale</i>	41
<i>Marital Attitude Survey</i>	42
<i>Perceived Social Support</i>	43
<i>Couple Information and Instructions Questionnaire</i>	44
Procedures.	44
Chapter III: Results.	46
<i>Overview of Data Analysis</i>	46
<i>Findings for Hypotheses 2 and 3</i>	49
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 1</i>	51
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 4</i>	53
<i>Findings for Hypotheses 6 and 7</i>	55
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 5</i>	57
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 8</i>	58
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 9</i>	60
<i>Findings for Hypothesis 10</i>	63

<i>Findings for Hypothesis 11</i>	65
Chapter IV: Discussion.....	68
<i>Summary of Findings</i>	68
<i>Psychological aggression and relationship dissolution</i>	68
<i>Relationship satisfaction as a mediator</i>	71
<i>Physical aggression and relationship dissolution</i>	74
<i>Social support as a moderator</i>	76
<i>Attributions of the causation of aggression as a moderator</i>	78
<i>Limitations of the Study</i>	80
<i>Clinical Implications</i>	82
<i>Implications for Research</i>	84
Appendices.....	88
<i>Appendix A: Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse Scale</i>	88
<i>Appendix B: Revised Conflict Tactics Scale</i>	90
<i>Appendix C: Marital Status Inventory – Revised</i>	92
<i>Appendix D: Dyadic Adjustment Scale</i>	93
<i>Appendix E: Marital Attitude Survey</i>	95
<i>Appendix F: Perceived Social Support</i>	97
<i>Appendix G: Couple Information and Instructions Questionnaire</i>	98
References.....	100

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics of the Sample	36
Table 2: Summary of Findings	48
Table 3: Pearson Correlations among Variables	50
Table 4: Pearson Correlations among Variables	51
Table 5: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Females' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and MDEAS Scores	52
Table 6: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Males' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and MDEAS Scores	53
Table 7: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' DAS Scores Mediated Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores . .	54
Table 8: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' DAS Scores Mediated Association between Females' MDEAS Scores and Males' MSI-R Scores . .	55
Table 9: Pearson Correlations among Variables	56
Table 10: Pearson Correlations among Variables	57
Table 11: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Females' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and CTS2 Scores	58
Table 12: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores . .	59
Table 13: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Females' MDEAS and Males' MSI-R	60

Table 14: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores	61
Table 15: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Females' MDEAS and Males' MSI-R	63
Table 16: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Males' CTS2 and Females' MSI-R	64
Table 17: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Females' CTS2 and Males' MSI-R	65
Table 18: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Males' CTS2 and Females' MSI-R	66
Table 19: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Females' CTS2 and Males' MSI-R	67

List of Figures

Figure 1: Diagram of the Study Design	31
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global social problem, with prevalence rates of victimization ranging from 15% to 71% of women in a sampling of ten countries (World Health Organization, 2005). Although there are several definitions, for the purposes of this study, IPV will be defined as violence between current or former intimate partners that is characterized by physical acts involving aggressive contact with the other person's body and/or by psychological forms of aggression that inflict emotional pain with no bodily contact. Accordingly, IPV may range from scratching, pushing, punching, and choking to humiliating, denigrating, and threatening an intimate partner. In the United States, prevalence rates vary based on the region and the methodology and definition used for assessing it, but the widespread presence of IPV has been thoroughly demonstrated. Reports from The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicated that more than one-third of women and more than one-fourth of men in the U.S. have been raped, stalked, and/or physically assaulted in their lifetime by an intimate partner (Black et al., 2011). The victimization rate is even higher for ethnic and racial minorities (e.g., 43.7% and 37.6% of non-Hispanic Black women and men). In the survey, more than half of the victims reported that the first occurrence happened before the age of 25. Additionally, almost half of all women and men reported being victims of psychological aggression by an intimate partner.

Even higher prevalence rates for physical aggression have been found among clinical samples in research studies, ranging from approximately one-half to over two-thirds of couples reporting at least one act of physical aggression during the past year

(O’Leary, 2008). Several other studies have found similar rates of victimization and perpetration among males and females, most often occurring as bi-directional aggression (DeMaris, 2000; Fortin, Guay, Lavoie, Boisvert, & Beaudry, 2012). These generally milder forms of bi-directional aggression often have been referred to as “common couple violence” (CCV). Although IPV perpetration rates are similar between genders, women are much more likely to be injured and to require hospitalization (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

In the last three decades, a large body of research has investigated IPV prevalence, effects, risk factors, and treatments. One particular area of interest has dealt with why women stay in abusive relationships (Meyer, 2012). Attention has been given to the factors associated with IPV victims’ likelihood of leaving the relationship, including the role of formal and informal support networks (Meyer, 2011; Molina, Lawrence, Azhar-Miller, & Rivera, 2009), financial independence, high self-esteem (Kim & Gray, 2008), rationalizations used with self and others, including self-blame (Eckstein, 2011), alternative options, relationship satisfaction (Stork, 2008), and attachment style (Shurman & Rodriguez, 2006). Most of the samples from these studies were collected from emergency shelters, emergency rooms, police departments, court systems, and child protection service centers. Due to the sampling locations, it is likely that the number of respondents who would be categorized as victims of intimate terrorism (i.e., partner battering) were oversampled when compared with less severe forms of intimate partner violence. Typically, victims of intimate terrorism (IT) are more likely to contact the police, a medical center, or a counselor and are less likely to contact a neighbor than victims of CCV (Leone, Johnson & Cohan, 2007). Additionally, the majority of the

studies did not specify details about the severity of, or the motivation underlying, the IPV. Research findings based on studies using datasets that oversampled cases of battered women may not generalize to victims of mild to moderate IPV (especially bi-directional), and further research on factors associated with leaving relationships characterized by CCV is needed. The present study focused on couples with past incidents of CCV.

The typology of IPV presented by Johnson and Ferraro (2000) has made more focused research possible. In a review of literature from the 1990s, they found that there are four types of IPV: intimate terrorism, common couple violence (sometimes called situational couple violence), violent resistance, and mutual violent control. The majority of IPV that has been identified in studies is either intimate terrorism or common couple violence. At the core of intimate terrorism (IT), or what has often been referred to as wife battering, is the perpetrator's desire to gain control over a partner and the willingness to use physical force to accomplish that goal. It is more likely to be chronic and to result in injury to the abused partner. Most commonly, IT is unidirectional and perpetrated by males toward females, although IT perpetrated by women also has been documented (Hines & Douglas, 2011). Research on IT has been the most prevalent up to this point, which may have led to an inaccurate description of the nature of, effects of, and treatment for IPV in general.

CCV is the most frequent form of IPV among the general population as well as clinical populations. It is less likely to involve severe physical violence, although the severity is not the defining factor; the bi-directional pattern is the major feature. Consequently, each partner often is viewed as both a perpetrator and a victim, which means that researchers should not only assess for violence received, but also violence

perpetrated. For the purposes of the present study, CCV victimization is the primary variable of interest, even though it is understood that victims are also often perpetrators, and the association between an individual's victimization and perpetration is taken into account in the data analysis plan. Also, the purpose of CCV is not to dominate the partner, and it is likely to be used predominantly when an individual is frustrated and angry with a partner. Accordingly, CCV is not as likely as IT to be chronic or to escalate over time.

As already noted, aggressive behavior by males toward females in CCV usually is more physically damaging. In a review of studies on IPV, O'Leary (2008) found that approximately two-thirds of couples in clinical samples reported at least one act of physical aggression in the last year, and that in the majority of the couples the violence was mutual. Due to the high prevalence of IPV in the samples that O'Leary examined and the fact that most of the physical aggression was bi-directional, it is likely that the majority of the cases were of the CCV type. However, O'Leary did find that 13% to 25% of the couples reported the occurrence of severe male-perpetrated aggression, which probably would be categorized as IT.

Violent resistance and mutual violent control have received less attention in the social sciences literature (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000), but they represent a reason why it is important to make distinctions about the type of violence being used. Violent resistance (i.e., self-defense) is aggression that is used in response to IT as a means to protect oneself, and consequently it is more often female-perpetrated. Mutual violent control appears to be a rare couple dynamic in which two partner batterers fight for control. Although both of these types of IPV involve bi-directional aggression, they differ in their

underlying intentions (e.g., gain control over partner versus defend oneself) and severity of violence.

In evaluating previous research, the distinction between CCV and IT should not only be about the severity of the violence, but also about the nature and reason for the violence. In some cases, perpetrators of IT use mild to moderate violence chronically to establish control, with the constant threat of severe violence, whereas CCV can include severe violence (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). In addition, the type of help-seeking behavior used by the victim (e.g., seeking refuge at a women's shelter versus contacting a couple therapist) can be somewhat indicative of the type of IPV. Much of the previous research has used samples recruited from emergency shelters, domestic violence centers, and the judicial system, at which cases of IT are typically overrepresented. Distinctions among the different types of IPV in past research are necessary in order to understand the relevance of research findings.

There are many factors that may influence IPV victims' willingness to leave an intimate relationship. One area deserving more attention is the role of social support by family and friends. Up until now, researchers have not looked specifically at couples with a history of CCV and their decision-making process to stay in or dissolve an intimate relationship. Previous research looking at victims of IT found that social support was a key factor in helping them carry out a decision to leave the relationship (Ballantine, 2005). The amount of perceived social and emotional support likely plays a significant role in helping victims of CCV to decide the future of their relationship, as social support has been found to assist individuals in coping with a variety of life stressors (Puterman, DeLongis, & Pomaki, 2010). It is unclear, however, if social support acts as a resource to

help victims of CCV exit their distressing relationship or as a buffer for relationship distress that helps them to remain in the partnership.

One cognitive variable deserving attention is how the attributions made by an individual regarding the cause of relationship problems (i.e., the degrees to which the individual views the partner or the self as the cause) play different roles in CCV and IT victims' decision to stay in or leave an abusive relationship. Whiting, Oka, and Fife (2012) found that IT perpetrators were more likely to attribute the violence to faults or characteristics of the victim, and that the victim accepted much of the responsibility and minimized the perpetrator's role in the violence. Such attributions often are reinforced by common assumptions within society that a victim has the responsibility to change the situation or else be blamed for staying in the abusive relationship (Taylor & Sorenson, 2007). To the extent that victims do take on that responsibility and hold themselves responsible for continued victimization, self-blaming attributions would seem to predict a lower probability of leaving the relationship. The probability of ending the relationship seems likely to increase as victims experience more frequent and violent partner aggression. However, in CCV, in which partners participate in reciprocal aggressive interactions, it is possible that both partners are more likely to blame the other person rather than the self for relationship problems, and greater blaming of the other person may be associated with greater likelihood of leaving the relationship.

Another important relationship factor that may influence the process of an individual leaving an aggressive relationship is his or her overall level of relationship satisfaction. Psychological and physical aggression both have been found to be negatively associated with marital satisfaction, and at least physical violence is associated with

higher rates of marital dissolution (Testa & Leonard, 2001). Prior research has found that “happy” couples are significantly less likely to end their intimate relationship than very unhappy couples (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). The effect of IPV on relationship dissatisfaction, which then increases the likelihood of relationship dissolution, has been well documented in the literature. Consequently, it was examined as a mediator between IPV and relationship dissolution in this study.

In conclusion, the process of leaving physically violent relationships has received considerable attention in the literature, but the research specifically addressing this process for couples experiencing CCV is sparse. There is a need for focused research in order for the decision-making process of leaving a relationship characterized by CCV to be understood. Some of the possible factors that may affect this decision include perceived social support and the attributions made about the cause of CCV. Due to a lack of studies using well-defined samples, there are gaps in the literature for both of these respective variables. The present study was designed to address those gaps.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to examine how cognitive and relationship factors affect the association between mild to moderate partner aggression (physical and psychological) and steps taken by the victim toward relationship dissolution. More specifically, the study’s aim was to investigate the degree to which relationship satisfaction mediates the correlation between CCV received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution. The roles of perceived social support and attributions for

relationship problems as potential moderators of the association between CCV victimization and relationship dissolution also were examined.

This study adds to prior research findings due to the exclusion criteria for the sample, which differed from most prior studies by excluding couples exhibiting severe physical IPV or couples in which at least one partner is fearful of the other in order to reduce the likelihood of cases of IT being included. In addition, physical and psychological aggression perpetrated and received for both males and females were assessed. Much of the previous literature has only looked at the effects of male-to-female IPV, and when both partners were included as possible perpetrators, the type of IPV (IT or CCV) was not distinguished. Furthermore, many of the previous studies used samples in which participants were recruited from locations where cases of IT were likely overrepresented. The findings from the present research add to the IPV literature on the effects of CCV on relationship outcomes. It is likely that the association between CCV and steps toward relationship dissolution, as well as the influences of contextual relationship characteristics (e.g., attributions about the source of relationship problems) are different from those influencing IT victims' decisions to leave their relationships.

Literature Review

Theoretical Base for the Study: Social Exchange Theory and the Relative Costs and Benefits of a Relationship

For decades, social scientists have tried to determine the factors that influence the decision-making process that individuals engage in regarding remaining in or leaving an abusive relationship. For many years, the fact that many female victims of IPV remained

with their abusive partner was seen as pathological, and even masochistic. This view has gradually shifted over the last three decades, taking into account that there are significant barriers to leaving a relationship (e.g., victims often lack resources to live on their own or fear for their safety if they attempt to leave), and the questions now being asked pertain to the strengths of female IPV victims who leave or end their relationship (Rhatigan, Street, & Axsom, 2006). The resiliency- and strength-based approach now taken by most researchers should certainly be lauded.

One of the theories that has been used to explore the association between IPV and the likelihood of the victim leaving the relationship has been social exchange theory, and more specifically the theory's focus on the relative costs and benefits of the decision. Strube (1988) published an influential article that reviewed the "mini-theories" that are the most promising to describe the decision-making process of IPV victims when considering the act of leaving an abusive relationship. The four mini-theories mentioned were psychological entrapment, learned helplessness, relative costs and benefits, and reasoned action (for a review, see Strube, 1988). The relative costs and benefits model, which was used in this study, proposes that when making decisions, individuals use a cost-benefit analysis to weigh the utility (i.e., the difference between the costs and benefits) of the decision. Furthermore, the costs and benefits include those existing in the present and future (White & Klein, 2008). In an abusive relationship, the costs may include various acts of victimization such as being scratched or punched, being humiliated, developing feelings of worthlessness, or fear of the abusive partner, whereas the benefits may include financial security, a desire for past investments to the relationship to be worthwhile, or a belief that remaining with the partner is in the best

interest of the children. After the initial aggressive behavior, the victim may believe that it will not occur again. However, as the violence becomes more frequent, expectations of a violence-free relationship diminish and the perceived costs increase.

Theoretically, greater violence will be correlated with a greater likelihood of relationship dissolution, as the victim judges that the costs of maintaining the relationship outweigh the benefits. However, this association may be moderated by other variables that either increase or decrease the utility of the current relationship and alternatives. For example, high levels of social support are correlated with an increase in relationship satisfaction, among other positive outcomes (self-esteem, lower rates of PTSD, and anxiety; Mueller, 2006). Because the costs of IPV are sometimes ameliorated by emotional support from friends and family, the perception of relationship costs may also decrease. However, for couples experiencing CCV, as violence becomes more frequent, the costs of staying in the relationship increase and the moderating effects of social support may no longer be sufficient for the victim considering ending the relationship. Furthermore, when relationship aggression becomes severe and individuals from one's social network become confidants about the violence, the role of social support may be to help the victim see possible alternatives to the relationship, through emotional, informational, and financial support. This is likely to occur with the addition of social capital or the "network of relationships with others" (White & Klein, 2008). Individuals with high levels of social capital are able to access other types of capital (e.g., financial) from their networks so that they are presented with more attractive alternatives. In sum, at low levels of IPV, social support will likely buffer the effects of IPV and decrease the victim's desire to leave the relationship. However, as IPV becomes more severe, one's

social network may then become a resource to help the victim conceptualize the possibility of preferred alternatives involving leaving the relationship.

In a follow-up to the Strube (1988) article, Rhatigan et al. (2006) discussed the mini-theories in depth and reviewed relevant recent empirical findings. Similar to the relative costs and benefits model, the theory of reasoned action was presented. With regard to the process of leaving an abusive relationship, victims' decisions are influenced by behavioral intentions (Strube, 1988), which are determined by social norms and outcome expectancies, or the belief that leaving the relationship will achieve a preferred outcome. The parallel between the reasoned action and relative costs and benefits models pertains to the individual's outcome expectancies, as both models focus on an individual's evaluation of the necessary costs and benefits while considering possible alternatives or outcomes.

In support of these theories, Rhatigan and Street (2005) explored the usefulness of the investment model to explain IPV victims' decision to leave an abusive dating relationship. Four constructs were conceptualized within the investment model: relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment level. Significant associations were found between all four constructs and the likelihood of leaving the relationship. Although the purpose of the study was to support the investment model, these findings also attest to the importance of current relationship costs (satisfaction levels) and possible alternatives. Both of these variables are crucial elements to the theories of relative costs and benefits and reasoned action. Surprisingly, no differences were found among measures of the four constructs between victimized and non-victimized women. This finding suggests that IPV victims and non-victims consider

the same variables when deciding to end an intimate relationship. However, for victimized individuals, their satisfaction and the attractiveness of alternatives likely are influenced by the distress associated with aggression from their partners.

Additionally, in a study by McDonough (2010), non-battered and battered women reported about their decision-making process regarding leaving an abusive relationship, as described to them in 71 different vignettes. The two groups were equally likely to report that they would leave an abusive relationship, and there were no significant differences on variables within the vignettes (e.g., severity of violence and presence of children) that affected the decision. This indicates that the decision-making process, or the weighing of costs and benefits, is done in a similar manner for both groups.

Moreover, in support of social exchange theory, when they reported on their own current relationships, battered women reported more costs, a greater wish for alternatives, and fewer benefits than did the non-battered women. The authors did recognize several limitations of the findings. They discussed the possibility of social desirability influencing respondents as they may have responded in the way they felt would have been the most socially acceptable. Also, the participants' decisions were based on information from vignettes, and accordingly the decision-making process was cognitive and hypothetical rather than affective. For victims of IPV, affect likely plays a large role in the decision-to-leave process.

The Effect of Common Couple Violence on Relationship Dissolution

It has been estimated that 45% of all first marriages end in divorce (Lamb, Sternberg, & Thompson, 1997) and that subsequent marriages are even more likely to dissolve. There are many reasons for the high divorce rate today, including dyadic

conflict and incompatibility (Sanchez & Gager, 2000), poor relationship skills, financial problems, liberal divorce laws, tolerant attitudes of divorce (Lowenstein, 2005), children's psychopathology (Wymbs et al., 2008), and infidelity (Steiner, Suarez, Sells, & Wykes, 2011), to name a few. In most cases of divorce, there is not a sole reason that can be singled out, but multiple causes commonly co-exist and may have an additive effect on the likelihood of relationship dissolution. As a more severe form of relationship conflict, IPV appears to have a particularly deleterious effect on the stability of intimate relationships.

There are several studies demonstrating the effects of IPV on relationship outcomes. Using the data of 3,508 couples from the first and second waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), DeMaris (2000) found a positive correlation between physical aggression and relationship dissolution. This finding was only significant for male-perpetrated aggression and not female-perpetrated, which may be due to the more severe effects of male violence (e.g., physical injury). Females in the study were more likely to perpetrate physical aggression than males were (11.1% and 10.1%, respectively), but females were more likely than males to be injured by the violence (3.8% and 2.3%, respectively). The primary purpose of the NSFH was not to understand physical violence in intimate relationships, and therefore the measures assessing the presence of IPV and its consequences were limited.

In another secondary data analysis, using the Buffalo Newlywed Study, the relationship between male-to-female psychological and physical violence was explored among newlyweds (Testa & Leonard, 2001). Measures were completed within weeks of a couple's wedding, and then a follow-up interview was conducted 12-months later. At the

second wave, over a third of the couples reported at least one act of husband-to-wife physical aggression, and almost all couples (98%) reported husband-to-wife verbal aggression. Levels of physical and psychological aggression were both inversely associated with marital satisfaction, whereas only physical aggression was associated with marital dissolution. The sample only included newlywed participants, so the findings may not generalize to cohabiting couples or married couples at later stages of their relationship. Furthermore, only male-to-female aggression was measured.

Due to the complexity of an individual's decision to separate or divorce, there are several variables that likely affect the association between IPV and relationship dissolution. For example, each partner's personality, family history, relationship satisfaction, and social support may affect the decision to stay or leave. Even the neighborhood in which the couple resides has been shown to have an effect on the relationship outcome when there is the presence of IPV (Emery, Jolley, & Wu, 2010). Specifically, the authors concluded that couples living in neighborhoods that are high in legal cynicism (i.e., distrusting the law) and low in traditional values regarding separation and divorce are more likely to dissolve their relationship if IPV is present. This is just one possible factor that needs to be taken into consideration, and the present literature review explores others that research has shown to have an effect on the duration and outcome of intimate relationships.

In sum, the decision to leave an intimate relationship is complex, including many social, relationship, and individual factors. Research has shown that physical violence within intimate relationships is associated with an increased chance of relationship dissolution. It appears that physical violence may have a stronger association with

separation or divorce than psychological violence does. There is a need for additional research to investigate these associations, and the current study addressed this need for more focused research on factors linking CCV and relationship dissolution.

The Effect of Common Couple Violence on Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a complex and multi-faceted variable. One of the most common assessment tools for quantifying an individual's satisfaction with an intimate relationship is the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which assesses four different areas: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression (Spanier, 1976). Although various measures of relationship satisfaction have been used in studies on IPV, the association between IPV and relationship satisfaction has been well demonstrated across studies reported in the literature (Ackerman & Field, 2011; Panuzio & DiLillo, 2010; Shortt, Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2006; Testa & Leonard, 2001). In a meta-analysis, data were included from 32 articles focusing on the relationship between marital satisfaction and discord and intimate partner violence. The authors reported a small-to-moderate effect size (Stith, Green, Smith, & Ward, 2008). Although the article suggested that marital dissatisfaction was a risk marker for future IPV, the data included in the meta-analysis came from cross-sectional studies, and no causal conclusions could be drawn.

An earlier longitudinal study by Murphy and O'Leary (1989) tracked 393 couples from 1 month before their wedding to 30 months post-wedding. Couples reporting any form of physical aggression at the first assessment were excluded from the study. At each assessment point, psychological and physical forms of aggression were assessed, as was relationship satisfaction. Surprisingly, the authors found that neither partner's level of

marital satisfaction predicted future physical aggression. There was a significant negative cross-sectional association between physical aggression and relationship satisfaction, but not a longitudinal relationship. However, the initial presence of psychological aggression did predict which couples would become physically aggressive. The findings from this study are consistent with the present investigator's conceptualization of relationship satisfaction as a mediator between the degree of common couple violence and relationship dissolution. A distressed relationship does not significantly affect the likelihood of physical violence occurring in an intimate relationship, but occurrences of physical IPV do decrease relationship satisfaction.

Similarly, much of the literature has conceptualized lowered relationship satisfaction as one of the effects of IPV. Using a longitudinal study design, Panuzio and DiLillo (2010) looked at the correlation between IPV and relationship satisfaction. At the first wave assessment (T1), over 30% of husbands and wives had been perpetrators of physical aggression, and over 90% of husbands and wives had perpetrated psychological aggression. Additionally, they found that both male and female victims of psychological and physical IPV experienced lower marital satisfaction. When controlling for T1 marital satisfaction, initial (T1) husband- and wife-perpetrated psychological aggression was negatively associated with marital satisfaction at the second (T2) and third wave (T3), whereas wife-perpetrated IPV had a significant correlation with husband's lowered marital satisfaction at T3. When severe bi-directional psychological aggression was present, both partners reported significantly lower marital satisfaction. Consistent with much of the other existing qualitative and quantitative research, psychological aggression

had more negative and consistent consequences than physical aggression, specifically on victims' marital satisfaction.

In the Panuzio and DiLillo (2010) study, no significant gender differences were found between the association of IPV victimization and marital satisfaction. This finding demonstrating the symmetrical outcomes of IPV on relationship satisfaction is part of a larger, controversial debate in the social science literature concerning different outcomes of IPV victimization between genders. Other researchers have found that women report significantly lower relationship satisfaction after being victimized by a partner (Ackerman & Field, 2011). This was also true for same-sex couples; lesbian victims reported larger decreases in relationship satisfaction than gay male victims. The authors interpreted these findings as indicating that the gender of the victim is more important than the gender of the perpetrator in understanding how IPV affects relationship satisfaction. One limitation of the study was that the authors used a secondary data analysis, and so they were limited to a single question assessing the presence of IPV.

In a study conducted by Shortt, Capaldi, Kim, and Owen (2006), 158 couples in their early twenties completed assessments including interviews, questionnaires, and videotaped discussions at the initial visit (T1), and the three year (T2) and six year (T3) follow-ups (assessments were limited at T3). There was a high prevalence of bi-directional psychological and physical aggression, and therefore the occurrence of IPV was coded as a dyadic index. Both partners' relationship satisfaction scores were also combined. The authors found that psychological aggression was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction at T1 and T2. Physical aggression was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction at T2 only. Again, psychological aggression had a more

consistent impact on the victim's relationship dissatisfaction. One explanation for this finding is that psychological aggression occurs more frequently than physical aggression in intimate relationships (O'Leary, 2008) and psychological aggression usually precedes physical aggression (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). It is also more likely to occur in the presence of others, which may lead to additional shame and distress.

The Link between Relationship Satisfaction and Relationship Dissolution

One of the harmful effects of relationship dissatisfaction is an increased risk for relationship dissolution. This is true for both cohabiting and married couples, although relationship dissatisfaction seems to be less of a prerequisite for dissolving an intimate relationship for cohabiting couples (Bouchard, 2006). One reason for this is the greater ease of exiting a relationship when there are no legal requirements and fewer financial burdens associated with divorce. The alternatives to staying in the relationship become more attractive without the lengthy process of divorce. The association between relationship dissatisfaction and relationship dissolution is stronger for married partners. Males may be at greatest risk of relationship dissolution if they are not satisfied with the marriage and perceive better alternatives to the relationship (Sanchez & Gager, 2000).

In further support of the seemingly obvious link between relationship dissatisfaction and relationship dissolution, there are several studies reporting a significant correlation. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Gager and Sanchez (2003) reported that very happy couples were significantly less likely (320%) to end their relationship than very unhappy couples. Husbands' ratings of marital dissatisfaction were more predictive of the likelihood of divorce than were wives' ratings. Because the scales used to measure both of these constructs were rather simple in the

NSFH, a more defined assessment would be needed to increase the construct validity and internal validity of the data and findings. Broman (2002) conducted a secondary data analysis on both waves of the American's Changing Lives survey to assess the relationship between marital satisfaction and divorce. In the survey, two items measured marital satisfaction and a single item measured "thinking of divorce." He found that participants with low marital satisfaction were almost twice as likely to think about getting divorced as those with higher marital satisfaction. This study also lacked well-constructed measures of the study variables and thus does not likely measure the complexity of marital satisfaction or the actual risk for dissolving the relationship. Nevertheless, the findings regarding the link between low marital satisfaction and relationship dissolution were consistent with findings from other studies.

Although it appears that there is an association between relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution, the strength of this association is debatable. One study that may help to understand the relative effects of marital dissatisfaction and IPV on relationship dissolution is a longitudinal study conducted by Rogge and Bradbury (1999). The sample included 56 newlywed couples who completed assessments for physical aggression, communication styles, marital satisfaction, and marital dissolution rates. Four years after the initial assessment, physical aggression was more predictive of marital dissolution than was marital satisfaction; moreover, communication skills were more predictive of marital satisfaction than was physical aggression. Although marital satisfaction did have an effect on relationship dissolution, the authors found that physical aggression added a unique and larger contribution to the outcome of the relationship. One limitation is that the study only followed participants for the first four years of marriage.

For couples at later stages in their relationship, aggression and poor communication could play different roles as partners become accustomed to their relationship patterns and dynamics.

In conclusion, relationship dissatisfaction appears to be a common outcome of CCV. Psychological violence has a particularly consistent association with relationship dissatisfaction, and in longitudinal research, psychological aggression significantly predicted both physical aggression and relationship dissatisfaction (Murphy & O’Leary, 1989). In turn, the correlation between relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution has been well demonstrated in prior research. Accordingly, it seems likely that relationship satisfaction will mediate the relationship between being a recipient of CCV and taking steps to leave the relationship. However, physical violence may have a direct effect on relationship dissolution as well as being mediated by relationship satisfaction (Rogge & Bradbury, 1999). The present study is designed to replicate previous findings demonstrating the negative associations between CCV and relationship satisfaction and between relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution.

The Moderating Effect of Social Support on Relationship Satisfaction for IPV Victims

A study by Beeble, Bybee, Sullivan, and Adams (2009) examined the effects of social support on the quality of life (satisfaction with nine different areas) of 160 IPV victims. Psychological abuse had more severe negative effects on the quality of life than did physical abuse. Social support only moderated the negative outcomes of psychological abuse. The sample was recruited after police intervention from a domestic abuse incident or from a domestic violence program. Accordingly, cases of IT were likely overrepresented; however, the effects of social support were stronger for women who

reported lower levels of psychological abuse. Thus, social support may have especially powerful effects for couples experiencing CCV.

For couples experiencing intense conflict or relationship crisis, but not specifically IPV, social support appears to be a resource that buffers some of the negative effects of relationship conflict on satisfaction levels. Similar positive effects of social support were found among a Chinese sample in which married respondents had faced some type of life crisis (e.g., debt, illness, physical violence; Chi et al., 2011). Social support moderated the relationship between the experience of these external stressors and relationship dissatisfaction for both genders. Furthermore, it appears that the benefits of social support exist for other intimate relationship types as well. For example, friendships have many positive effects on members of dating relationships, including increasing partners' self-esteem and relationship satisfaction, and decreasing their fear of intimacy (Kirk, 2002).

A study by Mueller (2006) found that women receiving formal or informal support who encounter high levels of conflict in their marriage are more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction than those without social support. The strongest effect was found when the wife maintained contact with her own friends. The couple's support from mutual friends and in-house contact with nurses and social workers also had a significant positive effect on marital satisfaction. Interestingly, when support received was focused on the marital conflict, the buffer effect was not found. This finding has interesting implications for victims of CCV who may be less likely to talk to their social network or formal social supports than victims of IT. The support is likely different than that given to IT victims, as recommendations to leave the relationship or financial and

informational support to facilitate this may less commonly be given, but it comes in the form of trust, emotional support, and connection. The outcomes of social support for CCV victims include lower levels of IPV, increased relationship satisfaction, and higher self-esteem. In support of this, one study (Coker, Watkins, Smith, & Brandt, 2003) found that female victims of IPV with higher scores on a social and emotional support scale reported less physical and sexual abuse. Because it was a cross-sectional study, no temporal relationships among the variables were established.

In sum, social support plays an important role in buffering the effects of external stressors and relationship conflict on levels of relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, social support may be especially important for victims of CCV due to the high levels of relationship conflict that they experience and their vulnerability to low levels of relationship satisfaction. There is little research looking specifically at the moderating effect of social support on relationship satisfaction for aggressive couples, but it appears that at least the association between psychological violence and relationship dissatisfaction is decreased (Mueller, 2006). However, the existing studies have not investigated the possible moderating effect of social support on the association between IPV and relationship dissolution, and there is a need for further research to test for such an effect. The present study investigates social support as one of the possible moderators of the association between IPV victimization and relationship dissolution.

The Moderating Effect of Social Support on Relationship Dissolution for IPV Victims

The absence of a social network is one of the risk factors for IPV and may predispose one to future violence and more severe mental and physical outcomes. This is especially problematic in IT, where the perpetrator may intentionally decrease the

victim's contact with friends in an attempt to control her or him. With this type of relationship dynamic, the victim's social network plays an important role in helping the victim to leave the relationship (Ballantine, 2005). In fact, due to an already formed connection and intimate knowledge of the victim's strengths and vulnerabilities, friends and family members may be better suited to support IPV victims than formal support networks (e.g., domestic violence shelters), although this is certainly not always the case. Informal support networks often lack the knowledge and training regarding how to approach IPV, and they may blame the victim or apply pressure to the victim to exit the relationship prematurely (Goodman & Smyth, 2011). Additionally, the role of informal support networks depends on the severity of the physical and psychological aggression that is occurring. For couples experiencing mild-to-moderate physical and psychological aggression, the role of social support is unclear. It is likely that mixed messages to the victim would be more common as some members of the person's support network may suggest terminating the relationship while others are discouraging this and may normalize the aggression or advise the victim to change to decrease the risk of future victimization. As previously stated, it is also less likely that victims of CCV will discuss occurrences of relationship aggression with their social network.

It must be stated that the type of social support received may even be a risk factor for future IPV perpetration and victimization. Individuals exposed to high levels of community violence or violence in their social network are at an increased risk of perpetrating IPV (Raghavan, Rajah, Gentile, Collado, & Kavanagh, 2009). Male adolescents whose social networks are small and mostly male are more likely to perpetrate violence than peers who have large social networks consisting of both male

and female friends (Casey & Beadnell, 2010). It is likely that the messages about physical and psychological violence received in the smaller male-dominated social networks are different from those conveyed in social settings devoid of violence or that have networks emphasizing mutual respect and socializing between genders.

Another way in which members of one's social network may become a risk factor for future IPV victimization and perpetration involves the ways in which they respond to a victim's help seeking or reports of aggression. Some family or friends may respond in ways that blame the victim or minimize the violence. Although this seems to be less common than supportive responses, one study found that approximately half of the couples experiencing a marital crisis reported receiving poor emotional and information support from family or friends (Allen-Peck, 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that researchers assess for the type of support received, and gain information about the nature of the social network.

One available source of support is domestic violence support groups (DVSG), through which individuals are able to receive emotional support, advice, and to receive housing, legal, and medical referrals. Molina, Lawrence, Azhar-Miller, and Rivera (2009) conducted a study in which 15 Latina immigrant IPV victims who had completed a DVSG filled out a questionnaire about their experience. They all reported learning "a lot" from the group, feeling supported by the others, receiving help in deciding whether to leave the relationship or not, receiving referrals, and gaining courage to fight for themselves and their children. Most of the focus of previous research has been on victims of wife battering, and it is likely that they look for different types of support from their

social network and receive stronger messages supporting an exit from the relationship than victims of mild-to-moderate bi-directional aggression seek and receive.

It is important that attention be focused on samples comprised of CCV couples, to understand the role that social support plays for this population. Zlotnick, Johnson, and Kohn (2006) provide some clarification of the effects of social support on relationship outcomes for victims of CCV. They analyzed data from two waves of a dataset with a national sample. Approximately half of the participants who reported at least one IPV experience at T1 had left the relationship at T2, five years later. One factor that helped victims to leave was social support, which came in several forms (e.g., child care, recommendations, household support). Although the study did not specifically distinguish between couples reporting CCV and IT, the sample was likely to have included a majority of CCV cases due to their much larger prevalence rate in the general population than IT cases. Accordingly, the specific support that victims receive may differ, but it appears that in some cases the social network may help the victim of CCV to leave aggressive relationships.

In conclusion, the value of a supportive social network is apparent when considering that its existence is associated with higher rates of relationship satisfaction for IPV victims, and that it is predictive of the likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship for IT victims. There is a paucity of research investigating the moderating effect of social support on the association between CCV and relationship dissolution. The literature suggests that social support will be associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction among recipients of CCV, which would likely be associated with lower rates of relationship dissolution. However, some findings indicate that social support is

associated with higher rates of relationship dissolution, but additional research is needed to determine how levels of social support moderate the association between CCV and relationship dissolution.

Attributions for Aggression in Intimate Relationships

Traditionally, society has placed primary responsibility on victims for changing the situation in which they receive aggression, to decrease future aggression. In a community sample, 3,679 adults who read several vignettes describing IPV occurrences reported attributions of fault and responsibility for solutions after a violent incident. Although primary fault was most often assigned to the perpetrator (69% of the cases), the victim was given responsibility for a solution in 83% of the cases compared to 65% for the perpetrator. In 11% of the cases, it was recommended that the victim leave the relationship. Victims who had drunk alcohol prior to the incident, provoked the perpetrator, or had previously been abused received the most blame for the victimization (Taylor & Sorenson, 2007). Although it is beneficial to empower victims to make changes in their relationship so that the chance of future victimization is decreased, giving them primary responsibility for finding a solution implies that they are also at fault for the violence that has occurred.

Similar to societal attributions of responsibility for violence and solutions, victims and perpetrators often blame the victim or at least give the responsibility for change to him or her. In support of this, qualitative researchers using grounded theory methodology explored the attributions that both victims and perpetrators of IPV use (Whiting, Oka, & Fife, 2012). The distortions that were common among perpetrators were denying their intentions or role in the abuse, minimizing the abusive acts, rationalizing it because of

external forces, and blaming the victim. Victims used similar cognitive methods to cope with the aggression, but they used denying, minimizing, rationalizing, and blaming tactics so that the aggressor bore less responsibility, even if it meant that the victim accepted most of the blame. The sample was recruited from domestic violence shelters, and the researchers only looked at male-to-female violence.

Many IT victims have received messages from society, their social network, and from intimate partners that they hold the responsibility for changing their abusive situation if they are not satisfied with it, and in some cases, that they are at blame for the IT that they receive. Accordingly, it appears that many IT victims make attributions for the cause of the violence that hold themselves at fault and may even absolve the batterer.

Negative Relationship Attributions as a Moderator between the Association of IPV and Relationship Dissolution

Theoretically, the victim's attributions for the cause of psychological and physical aggression and other relationship problems would play an important role in influencing their decision to leave the relationship. On one hand, if they believe that they have provoked the violence, then they might look for ways to change themselves to decrease future violence. On the other hand, if they hold the perpetrator solely at fault, they would likely be more motivated to change the relationship, even if this means ending it. In a literature review of 16 studies that had assessed the reasons that partners give for IPV incidents, Flynn and Graham (2010) conceptualized a three-level model describing attributions for violence, including stable characteristics of individuals, life circumstances, and immediate precursors leading to physical aggression. One notable finding was that victims of IPV were much more likely to describe the violence as being

due to their partner's personality characteristics than the perpetrators were to describe the IPV as being due to their own personality. Perpetrators more commonly attributed their violent acts to the victim's characteristics.

Using a clinical sample, Whiting (2008) investigated the attributions couples used to explain the cause of severe conflict. He reported that both males and females used appraisal tactics similar to those found by Whiting et al. (2012) as a way to decrease individual responsibility for previous conflict. The study did not further distinguish between partners' roles in conflict, but it seems likely that in CCV both partners would make negative attributions about the partner, or minimize their own role, as a way to decrease individual responsibility for the aggression.

The findings from prior research have been inconsistent as to whether or not negative relationship attributions lead to future IPV victimization. One study found no association between negative attributions and psychological aggression for men or women, and that the decrease in negative attributions occurring as a result of therapy did not moderate the decrease in reported psychological abuse (Hrapczynski, Epstein, Werlinich, & LaTaillade, 2012). This study did not examine the association between negative attributions and physical aggression.

In support of the association between negative attributions and IPV, O'Leary, Smith, Slep, and O'Leary (2007) found that negative attributions involving blaming one's partner were a risk factor for future psychological and physical aggression, for both men and women. In theory, it would be expected that negative attributions would both lead to and result from couple conflict and IPV. For example, a male who blames his female partner for their relationship problems will be less likely to be empathic and understand

her viewpoint, and his negative, blaming attributions about her seem likely to lead to future conflict. If his partner were to become aggressive with him, then he would find support for his previous beliefs that she is at fault for their relationship problems, and those attributions could become more stable.

Another study (Shurman & Rodriguez, 2006) found that female victims reporting higher amounts of victimization of physical and psychological abuse were more likely to hold negative attributions about their partner's intentions and motivation for the abuse, as well as his blameworthiness. Stronger attributions that the cause of the violence was located in their partner did not significantly predict the attributor's readiness to change when controlling for other variables. IT cases were likely overrepresented in this sample, so the findings may not be generalizable to couples experiencing CCV.

Thus, from previous research it appears that negative attributions regarding one's partner as being responsible for relationship problems, including IPV, are a risk factor for both IPV perpetration and victimization. The research is sparse concerning how IPV victims' attributions for the cause of the aggression affect the likelihood that greater IPV victimization will be associated with more steps taken toward relationship dissolution. Although the research suggests that this is not a significant factor in victims' decision-making process to leave a violent relationship, there has been no research directly testing this possibility. Theoretically, a compelling argument can be made for the moderating effect of relationship attributions.

Conclusions from the Literature Review

In sum, there is a substantial body of literature concerning the effects of IPV victimization on relationship dissolution, relationship satisfaction, social support, and

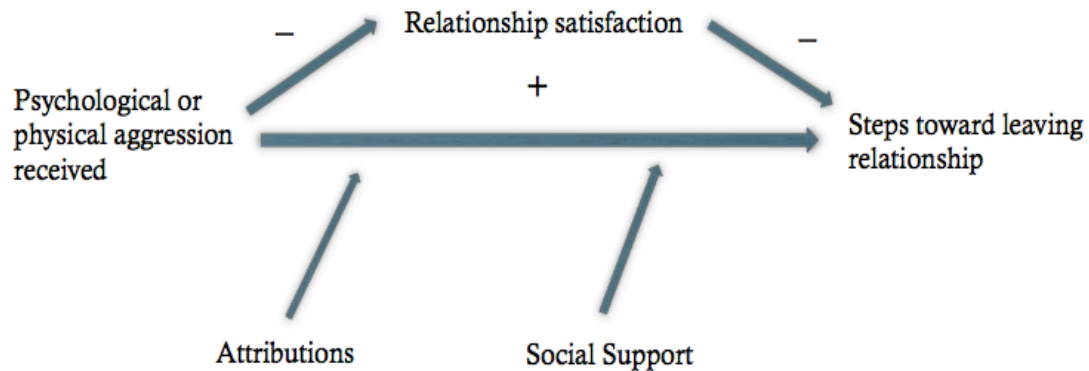
relationship attributions for the aggression. Although the existing IPV research has generally advanced the current understanding of IPV, there are many gaps in knowledge caused by an initial failure to differentiate types of IPV, a sole focus on male-to-female violence, and varying assessment methods.

This study was intended to increase understanding of the association between degrees of physical and psychological CCV victimization and the degree to which the victim has taken steps to leave the relationship. Previous research has found a positive association between these variables. Consistent with previous research, the present investigator conceptualized relationship satisfaction as a mediating variable that would explain part of the association between the occurrence of CCV and relationship dissolution. The concept of costs and benefits within social exchange theory provides a rationale for this relationship. Partners that experience the negative effects of IPV were expected to see these as costs of the relationship and then compare them with the benefits derived from the relationship. When the resulting utility is lower than the acceptable level, relationship dissolution is more likely.

In this study there were two variables hypothesized to moderate the association between CCV and relationship dissolution (specifically that the victim will be less likely to leave the relationship), including: higher levels of social support and lower levels of negative attributions blaming the partner for the aggression. Each of these moderating variables was hypothesized to affect how costs and/or benefits, as well as the quality of alternatives to the relationship, are perceived. For example, recipients of IPV who believe that the aggressive behavior was their own fault may be less likely to view the aggression as a cost of the relationship, but rather experience shame due to their own characteristics

leading to these relationship problems. In this state, the number and quality of alternatives perceived will likely be fewer.

Figure 1
Diagram of the Study Design



Note. Psychological aggression received – MDEAS; Physical aggression received – CTS2; Relationship satisfaction – DAS; Steps toward leaving relationship – MSI-R; Attributions (for cause of aggression) – MAS; Social support – PSS-FR.

Hypotheses

Based on Social Exchange Theory and the prior research findings reviewed, the following hypotheses were tested in the present study:

1. Greater levels of psychological intimate partner violence received by each partner will be associated with the recipient having taken more steps toward dissolving the couple relationship.
2. Greater levels of psychological intimate partner violence received by each partner will be associated with lower relationship satisfaction.
3. Lower relationship satisfaction will be associated with having taken more steps toward dissolving the relationship.

4. Lower relationship satisfaction will mediate the association between level of psychological IPV received and the degree to which victims have taken steps toward relationship dissolution.
5. Greater levels of physical intimate partner violence received by each partner will be associated with the recipient having taken more steps toward dissolving the couple relationship.
6. Greater levels of physical intimate partner violence received by each partner will be associated with lower relationship satisfaction.
7. Lower relationship satisfaction will mediate the association between level of physical IPV received and the degree to which victims have taken steps toward relationship dissolution.
8. Level of psychological IPV received will not be as strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants with a stronger social support network.
9. Level of psychological IPV received will be more strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants reporting higher levels of attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems.
10. Level of physical IPV received will not be as strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants with a stronger social support network.
11. Level of physical IPV received will be more strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants reporting higher levels of attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems.

CHAPTER II: METHODS

Sample

The present study involved a secondary analysis of an existing dataset collected from the years 2000 through 2012 at the Center for Healthy Families (CHF) clinic, which is a teaching and research clinic for graduate students seeking a master's degree in Couple and Family Therapy. Although the CHF is located on the University of Maryland, College Park campus, it is open to the local community and primarily serves couples and families from the communities adjacent to the University of Maryland campus in ethnically diverse Prince George's County. Referrals come from multiple sources, including word of mouth from previous clients, mental health agencies, schools, and the court system. Due to the sampling location, the sample for this study is different from samples that were used in many of the previously published studies on couples experiencing partner aggression, which were gathered from emergency shelters, domestic violence centers, and through police reports. The present sample was from a clinical population of couples who have sought therapy for a variety of relationship problems, often not specifically for partner aggression. Accordingly, they are more likely to have distressed relationships than a community sample, which increases the likely prevalence of psychological and physical aggression. Furthermore, since this was a clinical population, the sample was more likely to be interested in resolving relationship problems than couples would be who have similar levels of distress and aggression but who have not sought professional assistance.

Each couple's therapists at the CHF assess the severity of psychological and physical forms of partner aggression, as well as the level of fear that victims feel

regarding contact with a partner. The endorsement of any of the following items, although not a complete list, excluded a couple from participation in the study: (1) I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex; (2) I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight with me; (3) I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner; (4) I choked my partner. Additionally, reported fear of participating in couple therapy or of living with the partner excluded the couple. These exclusion criteria reduced the number of cases that potentially would be classified as IT.

The initial sample consisted of 457 couples, which then was reduced according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In order to be included in the sample, both partners must have completed the measures of the variables of interest in the study (these will be described in the Measures section below). In the case of missing items, the investigator coded item values when there were less than 10% of items left blank according to two methods. For measures where negative behavior was reported (e.g., revised Conflict Tactics Scale, Marital Status Inventory - Revised, Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale), a 0 was marked indicating that this behavior had not occurred. For instruments where responses indicated participants' level of agreement with the item (e.g., Perceived Social Support, Marital Attitude Survey, Dyadic Adjustment Scale), the midpoint was marked because this answer made the fewest assumptions about participants. Based on these criteria, the sample used in the study consisted of 251 heterosexual couples (251 female partners and 251 male partners) whose demographics are summarized in Table 1 below. The average age of females was 31.6 years and for males it was 33.3 years. Regarding relationship status, 53.8% of couples were currently married and living

together, 19.5% were cohabiting, 18.5% were dating and not living together, 8.8% were married and not living together, and 3.6% reported being single. The majority of clients were African American or Caucasian. For female partners, 47.6% were Caucasian, 38% were African American, 14.6% were Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or “other.” For male partners, 46.2% were Caucasian, 39% were African American, 14.6% were Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or “other.” A diverse range of socioeconomic statuses was represented with females making, on average, \$26,870 per year and males making, on average \$37,800 per year. The sample, on average, was well-educated, and each level of educational achievement was fairly well-represented. For females, 38.5% had attained some college while 48% had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. For males, 38.5% had attained some college while 41.6% had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. Overall, higher education levels and African Americans were overrepresented, but the CHF sample of couples was fairly heterogeneous, and consequently the findings are generalizable to a larger clinical population.

Table 1

Demographic Variables	Gender	Males N = 251	Females N = 251
Mean age (in years)		33.3	31.6
Relationship status			
Currently married, living together		133	135
Currently married, separated		21	22
Living together, not married		49	49
Dating, not living together		33	34
Single		12	9
Race			
Native American		5	1
African American		98	95
Asian/Pacific Islander		8	2
Hispanic		11	16
White		116	119
Other		12	17
Personal yearly gross income (in thousands)		\$37,800	\$26,870
Highest level of education			
Some high school		10	12
High school diploma		24	38
Some college		73	75
Associate degree		24	22
Bachelor's degree		34	28
Some graduate education		34	30
Master's degree		38	27
Doctoral degree		15	20

Demographics of the Sample

Measures

Because this study was focused on CCV, which is equally likely to be female-perpetrated as it is to be male-perpetrated, both females and males were included in the sample. The independent variables in this study were degree of psychological and physical IPV victimization. Throughout this section, each participant is referred to as a victim, but due to the bi-directional nature of CCV, it is understood that the victims may also be perpetrators (and that not all will have been victimized). For the purposes of this study, victimization is viewed on a spectrum of aggression received, ranging from none to moderate.

Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse Scale

Psychological aggression was measured using the Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS; Murphy & Hoover, 1999). The MDEAS is divided into four subscales assessing different types of emotional abuse, including Dominance/Intimidation, Restrictive Engulfment, Denigration, and Hostile Withdrawal. Examples of items include the following: “Sulked or refused to talk about issue” (Hostile Withdrawal); “Threatened to throw something at partner” (Dominance/Intimidation); “Called partner a loser, failure, or similar term (Denigration); and “Tried to make partner feel guilty for not spending time together” (Restrictive Engulfment). The subscales have moderate to high internal consistency, ranging from .80 to .92 as reported by self and partner (Murphy & Hoover, 1999).

Overall, the scale includes 28 items, each assessing both the respondent’s and the partner’s specific forms of aggressive actions, for a total of 56 responses (see Appendix A). For each item, the participant reports on the frequency of each behavior occurring

within the last four months, using a 7-point frequency scale. The scale includes the following responses: 0 = never in past 4 months, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 3 = 3-5 times, 4 = 6-10 times, 5 = 11-20 times, or 6 = more than 20 times. In this study, the sum of the male and female partners' reports of each partner's behavior was used to measure the levels of male- and female-perpetrated psychological aggression. By summing the two partners' scores, a more accurate depiction of an individual's levels of partner aggression is captured. For example, in order to measure males' aggression, a total score was calculated by summing self-rating scores on the 28 items assessing male-perpetrated psychological aggression using the males' self-report and their female partners' report of their male partner's behavior. Thus, the total male emotional aggression score is the sum of scores on 56 items, ranging from 0 to 336, with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological abuse perpetrated within the past four months. In the analyses testing the association between victimization and steps taken to leave the relationship, to control for perpetration, each person's perpetration score was entered with their partner's perpetration score.

Revised Conflict Tactics Scale

Physical aggression was measured with the revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS2 has been utilized frequently in the social science literature to explore how each member of a couple responds behaviorally to relationship conflict. The CTS2 includes five subscales: negotiation, psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury. Straus et al. (1996) reported a moderate to high internal consistency for each subscale, ranging from .79 to .95. For the purposes of the present study, the physical assault and

injury subscales were combined to measure the level of physical violence victimization. Some of the examples of the subscale items include “I kicked my partner” (physical assault) and “I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner” (injury).

On the CTS2, participants report on the number of times, on a 7-point frequency scale, each partner in the couple used a specific behavior within the last four months (see Appendix B). The scale includes the following responses: 0 = not in past 4 months, but it did happen before, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 3 = 3-5 times, 4 = 6-10 times, 5 = 11-20 times, 6 = more than 20 times, 9 = this never happened (was recoded as 0). There are 12 items on the physical assault subscale, and 6 items on the injury subscale. The two parts of each item assess both the respondent’s and the partner’s behavior, for a total of 36 responses. For the injury subscale, self-reports indicate the number of times an injury was received, which is consistent with physical violence victimization. In contrast, for the physical assault subscale, self-reports indicate the frequency that physically aggressive behavior is perpetrated on a partner. From the 12 items on the physical assault subscale, 8 were included to measure physical aggression and 4 were used as exclusion criteria. From the 6 items on the injury subscale, 2 were included to measure physical aggression and 4 were used as exclusion criteria. An additional 2 items from the sexual coercion subscale were used as exclusion criteria. Accordingly, the CTS2 perpetration score consisted of the sum total of a respondent’s answers to the 8 items reporting one’s own aggressive behaviors on the physical assault scale and the 2 items reporting injuries that the partner has received. The total score on each of these two subscales may range from 0 to 60. In this study, the sum of the male and female partners’ reports of each partner’s behavior

were used to measure the levels of male- and female-perpetrated physical aggression. For example, in order to measure females' physical aggression, a total score was calculated by summing scores on the 8 items assessing female-perpetrated physical aggression using the females' self-report and the male partners' report of their partner's behavior and the 2 items assessing injuries received by the male partner using the male's self-report and female's report of partner's injuries; thus, the total females' aggression score is the sum of the 20 items, ranging from 0 to 120, with higher scores indicating higher levels of physical aggression within the past four months. By summing the two partners' ratings of each person's behavior, a more accurate depiction of the levels of partner aggression seems likely. The exclusion score was the sum of both partners' ratings from 8 responses from the physical assault subscale (items 21, 22, 33, 34, 43, 44, 61, 62), 4 responses from the injury subscale (items 23, 24, 31, 32, 41, 42, 55, 56), and 4 responses from the sexual coercion subscale (items 19, 20, 47, 48).

Marital Status Inventory - Revised

The steps that each partner has taken toward ending the relationship, which is the dependent variable, was assessed using the Marital Status Inventory – Revised (MSI-R). This scale is an adaptation of the Marital Status Inventory (Weiss & Cerreto, 1980), revised at the Center for Healthy Families so that the language of the items would be more inclusive of non-married couples (see Appendix C). This inventory measures the number of steps that one has taken, both cognitively and behaviorally, toward separation or divorce. There is a total of 18 items, for which respondents mark either “yes” or “no” to indicate if the step has been taken. A “yes” is coded as a 1 and a “no” is coded as 0, which means that the total MSI-R score can range from 0 to 18, with a higher score

indicating more steps having been taken to leave the relationship. The MSI-R is a Guttman-like scale, or in other words, the items are cumulative, and so a score of six would typically mean that the first six steps have been taken. The Coefficient of Scalability is .87, which indicates that this is a unidimensional, cumulative scale (Weiss & Cerreto, 1980). Previous research has demonstrated that a score of four or higher for males and five or higher for females can be used to distinguish between individuals who are dissatisfied with their intimate relationships (Whiting & Crane, 2003). In the present sample, the mean score for females was 5.87 and for males it was 5.04, indicating that, on average, the sample was dissatisfied enough to be seriously thinking about separating. Some of the items on the inventory include, “Had frequent thoughts about separating from your partner, as much as once a week or so” and “Thought specifically about separation, for example how to divide belongings, where to live, or who would get the children.” The MSI-R score from the recipient of aggression was used as the criterion variable to measure the degree to which aggression received predicted steps taken toward leaving by the recipient.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) is the most frequently used measure of relationship satisfaction in the social sciences. The DAS contains 32 items, with total scores potentially ranging from 0-151, with higher scores representing higher relationship satisfaction (see Appendix D). A score of 107 has been used to differentiate distressed and nondistressed couples (Crane, Algood, Larson, & Griffin, 1990).

Accordingly, participants in the sample were dissatisfied with their intimate relationships; females scored, on average, 90.85, and males scored, on average, 95.35. During the initial

construction of the DAS, factor analysis identified four constructs: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. The internal consistency ranged from .73 to .94 on the individual dimensions, whereas the total scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .96. Spanier (1976) also tested the construct validity and found a .86 correlation between the DAS and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

Marital Attitude Survey

The Marital Attitude Survey (MAS; Pretzer, Epstein, & Fleming, 1991) was used to assess the CCV recipient's attributions for the cause of problems in the couple's relationship. There are six subscales on the MAS that assess participants' views regarding the source of relationship problems, but only the following four were used for the present study: Partner's behavior; Partner's personality; Partner's lack of love; and Partner's malicious intent. The internal consistency of those subscales is moderate to high, ranging from a coefficient alpha of .66 to .93. Items from the four subscales were combined to create a single "attributions blaming the partner" scale.

There are a total of eight items on the malicious intent subscale, seven items on the lack of love subscale, and four items each on the attributions to partner's personality and partner's behavior subscales. Examples of items include: "The way my partner treats me determines how well we get along" (Partner's behavior); "It seems as though my partner deliberately provokes me" (Malicious intent); and "When my partner isn't nice to me I feel like he/she doesn't love me." Respondents rated their endorsement of each item based on a 5-point scale, which was coded using the following responses: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree somewhat; 5 = Strongly agree

(see Appendix E). The total score on the attributions blaming the partner scale was calculated based on the sum for the 23 items, and the possible range of scores was from 23 to 115. Higher scores on this scale indicate that more negative attributions blaming the partner are being made to explain relationship problems. In the current study, the degree to which negative attributions about the partner moderate the association between CCV received and steps taken to leave the relationship was tested. MAS scores for the recipient of aggression were used for the analysis.

Perceived Social Support

Participants' perceptions of support received from their social network were assessed with the Perceived Social Support measure (PSS; Procidano & Heller, 1983). There are two subscales on the PSS, one measuring perceived social support from friends (PSS-FR) and the other measuring perceived social support from family (PSS-FA). Due to the likelihood of the participants conceptualizing their partner (i.e., the possible aggressor) within the PSS-FA, only the PSS-FR was used. Accordingly, the study excluded a potentially large portion of participants' support network. The PSS-FR includes twenty items marked on a five-point scale from "Yes" to "No," with 1 indicating that they endorse the item and 5 indicating they do not. Total scores on the PSS-FR are calculated by summing responses to the 20 items, with scores ranging from 20 to 100; *lower* scores indicate greater levels of perceived social support (see Appendix F). Examples of items are, "My friends give me the moral support I need" and "My friends are sensitive to my personal needs." Previous research has shown that the PSS-FR measures a single construct, and that it has an internal consistency of .88 (Procidano & Heller, 1983). In this study, the degree to which social support received from friends

(assessed with the PSS-FR) moderates the association between CCV received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution was tested.

Couple Information and Instructions Questionnaire

Demographic information, including race, gender, relationship status, age, education, and personal yearly income was collected from the participants' responses to the CHF Couple Information and Instructions questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by faculty at the CHF to gather a wide range of demographics (see Appendix G). Because of the likelihood that the availability of financial resources, which are associated with educational level and personal yearly income, can affect the feasibility of pursuing alternatives to the relationship and consequently lead to higher rates of relationship dissolution, both education and income were included as control variables.

Procedures

The present study involved a secondary analysis of data gathered from couples seeking therapy at the CHF. All of the couples who completed the assessment forms from the years 2000-2012 were included.

When clients first make contact with the CHF, they go through a 10- to 20-minute intake procedure in which basic demographic information and the reasons for seeking therapy are collected. Therapist interns are then able to select desired cases and set up a time for the first appointment. Prior to beginning therapy, clients complete a variety of self-report paper assessment forms and fill out forms agreeing to the clinical procedures (e.g., informed consent, fee schedule). For couples, partners are placed in separate rooms to complete the forms so that each one feels comfortable disclosing relationship

information and relationship history. Confidentiality with the responses on these forms is maintained between partners. In addition to the self-report forms, couples complete a semi-structured interview concerning substance use, relationship violence, and fearfulness of being in therapy or alone with partner, and then they come together for a 10-minute communication sample. This is completed over a two day process that may take anywhere from two to five hours. All of the measures utilized in this study are included in the first day of assessments, besides the MAS, which is included on the second day for participants who were screened as eligible for a research study investigating couple therapy for partner aggression and who agree to participate. Consequently, a much smaller portion ($n = 84$ couples) of the sample completed the MAS. Despite this limitation, the variable was included as an initial test of whether attributions of causality for relationship problems is a moderator of the association between receipt of partner aggression and relationship dissolution. The smaller sample was only used to test Hypotheses 9 and 11, and for the remainder of the hypothesis tests the larger sample ($n = 251$ couples) was used.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Overview of Data Analysis

First, Pearson correlations were computed between the level of psychological aggression received by an individual (MDEAS) and the recipient's levels of relationship satisfaction (DAS) and steps taken towards leaving the relationship (MSI-R), separately for males and females. The correlation between level of psychological aggression received and level of psychological aggression perpetrated also was examined. Pearson correlations were also computed between the level of physical aggression received (CTS2) and the recipient's levels of relationship satisfaction (DAS) and steps taken towards leaving the relationship (MSI-R), separately for males and females. The correlation between level of physical aggression received and level of aggression perpetrated also was computed. These Pearson correlations provided tests of Hypotheses 2, 3, and 6, and they indicated whether the criteria for mediation were met so that tests of Hypotheses 4 and 7 could be run.

Next, stepwise multiple regression analyses predicting steps taken to leave the relationship (MSI-R scores) were run in which demographic variables (education and income) were entered at the first step, the individual's own MDEAS scores (perpetration) were entered at the second step, and the partner's MDEAS scores were entered at the final step. This was done separately for males and females, and the results provided tests for Hypothesis 1. Next, to test Hypothesis 4 regarding mediation by relationship satisfaction, stepwise multiple regression analyses predicting scores on the MSI-R were run in which demographic variables (education and income) were entered in the first step, the individual's own DAS score was entered in the second step, and the partner's

MDEAS score was entered in the final step. These stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted separately for males and females.

Next, stepwise multiple regression analyses predicting steps taken to leave the relationship (MSI-R scores) were run in which demographic variables (education and income) were entered at the first step, the individual's own DAS score was entered in the second step, and the partner's CTS2 score was entered in the final step. This analysis was only run for females because the initial Pearson correlations showing no significant relationships between females' CTS2 scores and males' MSI-R and DAS scores indicated that the conditions for mediation by relationship satisfaction were not met.

The next set of analyses examined whether social support from friends or individuals' negative attributions about their partners moderated the association between receiving aggressive behavior from one's partner and taking steps toward leaving the relationship. In order to run these tests, scores from the measures of social support (PSS), negative attributions (MAS), psychological aggression received (MDEAS), and physical aggression received (CTS2) were centered by calculating a difference score between each individual's score on a measure and the group mean on that measure. This centering procedure commonly is used to attempt to reduce the problem of multi-collinearity involving correlations among predictor variables in multiple regression analyses. For the tests of moderation, interaction terms were then created by multiplying the partners' centered MDEAS scores by the recipients' centered PSS scores, the partners' centered MDEAS scores by the recipients centered MAS scores, the partners' centered CTS2 scores by the recipients' centered PSS scores, and the partners' centered CTS2 scores by the recipients' centered MAS scores. Using these interaction term variables, multiple

regression analyses provided tests for Hypotheses 8 through 11. See Table 2 for a summary of whether or not the hypotheses were supported by the study findings.

Table 2
Summary of Findings

Hypothesis^a	Male's Leaving	Female's Leaving
H1: Psychological aggression and relationship dissolution	Supported	Supported, but own aggression is better predictor
H2: Psychological aggression and relationship dissatisfaction	Supported	Supported
H3: Relationship dissatisfaction and relationship dissolution	Supported	Supported
H4: Relationship satisfaction as mediator	Mediated	Partially mediated
H5: Physical aggression and relationship dissolution	Not supported	Supported, but not significant predictor in multiple regression
H6: Physical aggression and relationship dissatisfaction	Not supported	Not supported
H7: Relationship satisfaction as mediator	Not supported	Not supported
H8: Social support as moderator of psychological aggression	Supported for males with stronger support networks	Not supported
H9: Attributions as moderator of psychological aggression	Opposite direction - Males making fewer attributions	Not supported
H10: Social support as moderator of physical aggression	Not supported	Not supported
H11: Attributions as moderator of physical aggression	Not supported	Not supported

Note. Male's Leaving = males' MSI-R as dependent variable; Female's Leaving = females' MSI-R as dependent variable.

^a Variables used in description of hypotheses were written so that the hypothesized association was positive.

Findings for Hypotheses 2 and 3

Hypothesis 2 stated that *greater levels of psychological intimate partner violence victimization reported by each partner will be associated with lower relationship satisfaction*. Hypothesis 3 stated that *lower relationship satisfaction will be associated with having taken more steps toward dissolving the relationship*.

Pearson correlations between male-perpetrated psychological aggression, females' reports of relationship satisfaction, and steps taken toward relationship dissolution, which provided a test of the criteria for the main effect of the model and mediation, are summarized in Table 3. The correlation between females' MSI-R scores and their DAS scores was $-.597$ ($p < .001$), the correlation between females' DAS scores and males' MDEAS scores was $-.523$ ($p < .001$), and the correlation between females' MSI-R scores and males' MDEAS scores was $.386$ ($p < .001$). These findings supported Hypotheses 2 and 3 and demonstrated that males' aggression was negatively associated with females' relationship satisfaction levels and that females' relationship satisfaction levels were negatively associated with the number of steps they have taken toward relationship dissolution. Therefore, the conditions for testing whether females' DAS scores mediated between males' MDEAS scores and females' MSI-R scores were met.

Table 3
Pearson Correlations among Variables

		1.	2.	3.
1. Females' MSI-R	<i>r</i>	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
2. Females' DAS	<i>r</i>	-.597	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001		
3. Males' MDEAS	<i>r</i>	.386	-.523	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	< .001	

Note. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

Pearson correlations between female-perpetrated psychological aggression, males' reports of relationship satisfaction and steps taken toward relationship dissolution, which provided a test of the criteria for the main effect of the model and mediation, are summarized in Table 4. The Pearson correlation between males' MSI-R scores and their DAS scores was $-.582$ ($p < .001$), the correlation between males' DAS scores and females' MDEAS scores was $-.474$ ($p < .001$), and the correlation between males' MSI-R scores and females' MDEAS scores was $.298$ ($p < .001$). These findings supported Hypotheses 2 and 3 and demonstrated that females' aggression was negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction levels and that males' relationship satisfaction levels were negatively associated with the number of steps they have taken toward relationship dissolution. Therefore, the conditions for testing whether males' DAS scores mediated between females' MDEAS scores and males' MSI-R scores were met.

Table 4
Pearson Correlations among Variables

		1.	2.	3.
1. Males' MSI-R	Pearson Corr. Sig. (2-tailed)	--		
2. Males' DAS	Pearson Corr. Sig. (2-tailed)	-.582 < .001	--	
3. Females' MDEAS	Pearson Corr. Sig. (2-tailed)	.298 < .001	-.474 < .001	--

Note. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

Findings for Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that *greater levels of psychological intimate partner violence victimization reported by each partner will be associated with the recipient having taken more steps toward dissolving the couple relationship.* The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores testing this hypothesis are summarized in Table 5. For the analysis that predicted females' steps taken toward leaving the relationship, in the first step the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .112 and $R^2 = .012$, which was not significant; $F(2, 216) = 1.36, p = .258$. In step 2, the females' own MDEAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .447, $R^2 = .20$, and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(1, 215) = 50.45, p < .001$. In step 3, the male partners' MDEAS scores were entered, $R = .457$, and $R^2 = .209$, and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(1, 214) = 2.46, p = .118$. In the final regression model, for females' MDEAS the β was .32 ($t = 3.28, p < .001$), and for males' MDEAS the β was .15 ($t = 1.57, p = .118$). Once the association between females' own psychological aggression and their own steps toward leaving were taken into account, their male partners' psychological aggression did not add to variance in the females' steps toward leaving. These findings did not support

Hypothesis 1. However, this was likely due to the high Pearson correlation (.782, $p < .001$) between male- and female-perpetrated psychological aggression.

Table 5
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Females' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and MDEAS Scores

Model	<i>R</i>	R^2	R^2 Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.112	.012	.012	1.363	2	216	.258
2	.447	.200	.188	50.448	1	215	<.001
3	.457	.209	.009	2.465	1	214	.118

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' own MDEAS scores; and Model 3 = males' own MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

For the stepwise multiple regression analysis that predicted males' MSI-R scores, summarized in Table 6, in the first step the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .187 and $R^2 = .035$, which was significant; $F(2, 223) = 4.04, p = .019$. In step 2, the males' own MDEAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .246, $R^2 = .061$, and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(1, 222) = 6.08, p = .014$. In step 3, the females' MDEAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .313, $R^2 = .098$, and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(1, 221) = 9.18, p = .003$. In the final regression model, for males' MDEAS the β was $-.058 (t = -.58, p = .563)$, and for females' MDEAS the β was $.302 (t = 3.03, p = .003)$. When both male and female-perpetrated psychological aggression were included in the model, females' aggression accounted for a significant amount of the variance while this was no longer the case for males' aggression, which supported Hypothesis 1. In this model, there was also a high Pearson correlation (.764, $p < .001$) between male- and female-perpetrated psychological aggression. One of the characteristics of CCV is that aggression is usually bi-directional. Accordingly, it is challenging to distinguish between the effects of perpetration and victimization. Therefore, a decision was made to

not include perpetration in future analyses because of the high correlation and shared variance accounted for by the two variables.

Table 6
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Males' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and MDEAS Scores

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.187	.035	.035	4.039	2	223	.019
2	.246	.061	.026	6.083	1	222	.014
3	.313	.098	.037	9.180	1	221	.003

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' own MDEAS scores; and Model 3 = females' MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

Findings for Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that *lower relationship satisfaction will mediate the association between level of psychological IPV received and the degree to which victims have taken steps toward relationship dissolution.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis relevant to this hypothesis are summarized in Table 7. In the first step, the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .106 and *R*² = .011, which was not significant; *F* (2, 212) = 1.212, *p* = .300. In step 2, the females' DAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .611, *R*² = .374 and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (1, 211) = 122.05, *p* < .001. In step 3, when the males' MDEAS scores were entered, *R* = .632, and *R*² = .399, and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (1, 210) = 8.916, *p* = .003. In the final regression model, for females' DAS the β was -.527 (*t* = -8.64, *p* < .001), and for males' MDEAS the β was .182 (*t* = 2.99, *p* = .003). Therefore, females' relationship satisfaction *partially* mediated males' psychological aggression and steps taken by females toward relationship dissolution, but male-perpetrated aggression still accounted for a significant amount of the variance in the number of steps to leave

taken by females. Thus, there is some evidence in support of this hypothesis, but relationship satisfaction does not fully account for the association between males' aggression and females' steps taken toward relationship dissolution.

Table 7

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' DAS Scores Mediated Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.106	.011	.011	1.212	2	212	.300
2	.611	.374	.362	122.052	1	211	<.001
3	.632	.399	.026	8.916	1	210	.003

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' DAS scores; and Model 3 = males' own MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis testing whether males' DAS scores mediated the association between females' MDEAS scores and males' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 8. In the first step, the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .196 and *R*² = .038, which was significant; *F* (2, 214) = 4.27, *p* = .015. In step 2, the males' DAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .610, *R*² = .372 and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (1, 213) = 112.94, *p* < .001. In step 3, the males' MDEAS scores were entered, *R* = .610, and *R*² = .372, and the increase in *R*² was not significant; *F* (1, 212) = .027, *p* = .869. In the final regression model, for males' DAS the β was -.586 (*t* = -9.56, *p* < .001), and for females' MDEAS the β was -.01 (*t* = -.17, *p* = .869). Once relationship satisfaction was added into the model, female-perpetrated aggression did not significantly predict the number of steps taken by males toward relationship dissolution. Therefore, in support of this hypothesis, relationship satisfaction acted as a mediator between females' aggression and males' movement toward relationship dissolution.

Table 8

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' DAS Scores Mediated Association between Females' MDEAS Scores and Males' MSI-R Scores

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.196	.038	.038	4.267	2	214	.015
2	.610	.372	.333	112.943	1	213	<.001
3	.610	.372	.360	.027	1	212	.869

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' DAS scores; and Model 3 = females' own MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

Findings for Hypotheses 6 and 7

Hypothesis 6 stated that *greater levels of physical intimate partner violence victimization reported by each partner will be associated with lower relationship satisfaction.* Hypothesis 7 stated that *lower relationship satisfaction will mediate the association between level of physical IPV received and the degree to which victims have taken steps toward relationship dissolution.*

Pearson correlations between male-perpetrated physical aggression, females' reports of relationship satisfaction and steps taken toward relationship dissolution, which provided a test of the criteria for the main effect of the model and mediation, are summarized in Table 9. The Pearson correlation between females' MSI-R scores and their DAS scores was $-.597$ ($p < .001$), the correlation between males' CTS2 scores and females' DAS scores was $.003$ ($p = .967$), and the correlation between females' MSI-R scores and males' CTS2 scores was $.130$ ($p = .039$). The findings indicate that there is no association between male-perpetrated physical aggression and female partner's relationship satisfaction levels, which does not support Hypothesis 6. The negative association reported between females' relationship satisfaction levels and steps taken toward leaving the relationship is the same reported previously, which supported

Hypothesis 3. Furthermore, no association was found between male aggression and steps females have taken to exit the relationship, which does not support Hypothesis 5.

Therefore the conditions for testing whether females' DAS scores mediated between males' CTS2 scores and females' MSI-R scores were *not* met and so no multiple regression analysis was run and Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Table 9
Pearson Correlations among Variables

		1.	2.	3.
1. Females' MSI-R	<i>r</i>			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	--		
2. Females' DAS	<i>r</i>	-.597		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	--	
3. Males' CTS2	<i>r</i>	.130	.003	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.967	

Note. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; CTS2 = revised Conflict Tactics Scale.

Pearson correlations between female-perpetrated physical aggression, males' reports of relationship satisfaction and steps taken toward relationship dissolution, which provided a test of the criteria for the main effect of the model and mediation, are summarized in Table 10. The Pearson correlation between males' MSI-R scores and their DAS scores was $-.582$ ($p < .001$), the correlation between females' CTS2 scores and males' DAS scores was $-.112$ ($p = .084$), and the correlation between females' CTS2 and males' MSI-R scores was $.067$ ($p = .292$). There was no significant association found between either female-perpetrated physical aggression and males' relationship satisfaction level or female aggression and steps males have taken to end the relationship. These findings did not support Hypotheses 5 through 7. Therefore the conditions for testing whether males' DAS scores mediated between females' CTS2 scores and males' MSI-R scores were *not* met, and therefore no multiple regression analysis was run.

Table 10
Pearson Correlations among Variables

		1.	2.	3.
1. Males' MSI-R	<i>r</i>	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
2. Males' DAS	<i>r</i>	-.582	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001		
3. Females' CTS2	<i>r</i>	.067	-.112	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.292	.084	

Note. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; CTS2 = revised Conflict Tactics Scale.

Findings for Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that *greater levels of physical intimate partner violence victimization reported by each partner will be associated with the recipient having taken more steps toward dissolving the couple relationship.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 11. In the first step, the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .105 and $R^2 = .011$, which was not significant; $F(2, 220) = 1.227, p = .295$. In step 2, the males' CTS2 scores and females' DAS scores were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .604, $R^2 = .365$ and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(2, 218) = 60.695, p < .001$. In the final regression model, for females' DAS the β was $-.601 (t = -10.98, p < .001)$, and for males' CTS2 the β was $.059 (t = .26, p = .797)$. No significant association was found between physical aggression received by females and the amount of steps they have taken to exit the relationship, which did not support this hypothesis.

Table 11

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Females' MSI-R Scores from Demographic Variables and CTS2 Scores

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.105	.011	.011	1.227	2	220	.295
2	.604	.365	.354	60.695	2	218	< .001

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' CTS2 scores and females' DAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; CTS2 = revised Conflict Tactics Scale.

Findings for Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 stated that the *level of psychological IPV received will not be as strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants with a stronger social support network.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 12. In the first step, the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .116 and *R*² = .014, which was not significant; *F* (2, 219) = 1.506, *p* = .224. In step 2, the males' centered MDEAS scores and females' centered SS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .411, *R*² = .169 and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (2, 217) = 20.325, *p* < .001. In step 3, the interaction term that was created by multiplying females' SS scores with males' MDEAS scores was then entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .418, *R*² = .175, and the increase in *R*² was not significant; *F* (1, 216) = 1.506, *p* = .221. In the second regression model, for males' MDEAS the β was .398, (*t* = 6.32, *p* < .001), and for females' PSS the β was -.057 (*t* = -.91, *p* = .362). In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was -.077, (*t* = -1.23, *p* = .221). Once males' psychological aggression and females' perceived social support were taken into account, the interaction term was not significantly associated with the number of

steps taken by females toward relationship dissolution; these findings did not support Hypothesis 8.

Table 12

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.116	.014	.014	1.506	2	219	.224
2	.411	.169	.156	20.325	2	217	<.001
3	.418	.175	.006	1.506	1	216	.221

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' centered SS scores and males' centered MDEAS scores and Model 3 = interaction term of females' centered PSS scores and males' centered MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; PSS = Perceived Social Support - Friends; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis that predicted males' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 13. In the first step, the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .183 and $R^2 = .033$, which was significant; $F(2, 223) = 3.847, p = .023$. In step 2, the females' centered MDEAS scores and males' centered PSS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .348, $R^2 = .121$ and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(2, 221) = 11.031, p < .001$. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying males' PSS scores with females' MDEAS scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .385, $R^2 = .149$, and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(1, 220) = 7.085, p = .008$. In the second regression model, for females' MDEAS the β was .266 ($t = 4.45, p < .001$), and for males' PSS the β was -.173 ($t = -2.73, p = .007$). In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was -.166 ($t = -2.66, p = .008$). Males' perceived social support did significantly moderate the association between females' psychological aggression and males' steps toward leaving. A post-hoc analysis was used to explore the pattern of the significant interaction effect. In order to do this, a dummy

variable was created that coded males' PSS scores that were higher than the median as "1" and those that were lower than the median as "0". Cases were then selected that were above the median, and a Pearson correlational test was run with female-perpetrated psychological aggression and males' steps toward leaving. The correlation was .400, which was significant ($p = .001$). Cases were then selected that were below the median, and a Pearson correlation was run with females' psychological aggression and males' steps toward leaving. The correlation was .273, which was significant ($p = .004$). Therefore, males' social support did moderate the association between females' aggression and males' steps toward leaving, which supported this hypothesis. Males who had stronger social support networks were less likely to take steps toward exiting the relationship when they received psychological aggression from a partner.

Table 13
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Females' MDEAS and Males' MSI-R

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.183	.033	.033	3.847	2	223	.023
2	.348	.121	.088	11.031	2	221	<.001
3	.385	.149	.027	7.085	1	220	.008

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' centered PSS scores and females' centered MDEAS scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of males' PSS scores and females' MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; PSS = Perceived Social Support - Friends; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

Findings for Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 stated that *level of psychological IPV received will be more strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants reporting higher levels of negative attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 14. In the first step, the demographic variables of

females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .167 and $R^2 = .028$, which was not significant; $F(2, 81) = .028, p = .319$. In step 2, the males' centered MDEAS scores and females' centered MAS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .373, $R^2 = .139$ and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(2, 79) = 5.092, p = .008$. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying females' MAS scores with males' MDEAS scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .388, $R^2 = .151$, and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(1, 78) = 1.105, p = .296$. In the second regression model, for males' MDEAS the β was .279 ($t = .279, p = .013$), and for females' MAS the β was .155 ($t = 1.41, p = .163$). In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was -.122 ($t = -1.05, p = .396$). Thus females' attributions about causation of relationship problems did not affect the association between male aggression and females' steps toward leaving, which did not support the hypothesis.

Table 14

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Males' MDEAS Scores and Females' MSI-R Scores

Model	R	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	$df1$	$df2$	Sig. F Change
1	.167	.028	.028	1.158	2	81	.319
2	.373	.139	.111	5.092	2	79	.008
3	.388	.151	.012	1.105	1	78	.296

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' centered MAS scores and males' centered MDEAS scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of females' MAS scores and males' MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory – Revised; MAS = Marital Attitude Survey; MDEAS = Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting males' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 15. In the first step, the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .230 and $R^2 = .053$, which was not significant; $F(2, 83) = 2.308, p = .106$. In step 2, the females' centered

MDEAS scores and males' centered MAS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .339, $R^2 = .115$ and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(2, 81) = 2.844, p = .064$. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying males' MAS scores with females' MDEAS scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .585, $R^2 = .342$, and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(1, 80) = 27.630, p < .001$. In the second regression model, for females' MDEAS the β was .235 ($t = 2.17, p = .033$), and for males' MAS the β was -.151 ($t = -1.41, p = .163$). In the final regression model, the β of the interaction term was -.537, ($t = -5.26, p < .001$). Once females' psychological aggression and males' attributions for cause of relationship problems were entered into the model, the level males' negative attributions about their partners significantly affected the association between females' aggression and males' steps toward leaving. A post-hoc analysis was used to explore the pattern of the significant interaction effect. A dummy variable was created that coded cases above the median on males' negative attributions as "1" and those below the median as "0". Using the cases above the median, a Pearson correlation was run between females' aggression and males' steps toward leaving and the correlation was .096, which was not significant. Next, cases below the median were selected, and a Pearson correlation was run between females' aggression and males' steps toward leaving. The correlation was .313, which was significant ($p = .019$). Thus, the association between females' aggression and males' steps toward leaving is weaker when males' report higher levels of negative attributions.

Table 15

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Females' MDEAS and Males' MSI-R

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.230	.053	.053	2.308	2	83	.106
2	.339	.115	.062	2.844	2	81	.064
3	.585	.342	.227	27.630	1	80	<.001

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' centered MAS scores and females' centered MDEAS scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of males' MAS scores and females' MDEAS scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory; MDEAS – Multidimensional Emotional Abuse Scale; MAS – Marital Attitude Survey.

Findings for Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis 10 stated that the *level of physical IPV received will not be as strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants with a stronger social support network.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 16. In the first step, the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .140 and *R*² = .019, which was significant; *F* (2, 342) = 3.400, *p* = .035. In step 2, the males' centered CTS2 scores and females' centered PSS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .261, *R*² = .068 and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (2, 340) = 8.888, *p* < .001. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying females' PSS scores with males' CTS2 scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .268, *R*² = .072, and the increase in *R*² was not significant; *F* (1, 339) = 1.230, *p* = .268. In the second regression model, for females' PSS the β was -.101 (*t* = -1.91, *p* = .057), and for males' CTS2 the β was .199 (*t* = 3.73, *p* < .001). In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was -.060, (*t* = -1.11, *p* = .268). Females' perceived

social support did not moderate the association between physical aggression received and the number of steps taken to leave the relationship, which did not support this hypothesis.

Table 16

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Males' CTS2 and Females' MSI-R

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.140	.019	.019	3.400	2	342	.035
2	.261	.068	.049	8.888	2	340	<.001
3	.268	.072	.003	1.230	1	339	.268

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' centered PSS scores and males' centered CTS2 scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of females' PSS scores and males' CTS2 scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory; CTS2 – revised Conflict Tactics Scale; PSS – Perceived Social Support – Friends.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting males' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 17. In the first step, the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .179 and $R^2 = .032$, which was significant; $F(2, 343) = 5.709, p = .004$. In step 2, the females' centered CTS2 scores and males' centered PSS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .234, $R^2 = .055$ and the increase in R^2 was significant; $F(2, 341) = 4.052, p = .018$. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying males' PSS scores with females' CTS2 scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .238, $R^2 = .057$, and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(1, 340) = .708, p = .401$. In the second regression model, for males' PSS the β was $-.117 (t = -2.21, p = .028)$, and for females' CTS2 the β was $.106 (t = 1.97, p = .049)$. In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was $.048 (t = .84, p = .401)$. Males' perceived social support did not moderate the association between physical aggression received and the steps they had taken toward relationship dissolution, which did not support this hypothesis.

Table 17

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' PSS Scores Moderate Association between Females' CTS2 and Males' MSI-R

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.179	.032	.032	5.709	2	343	.004
2	.234	.055	.022	4.052	2	341	.018
3	.238	.057	.002	.708	1	340	.401

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' centered PSS scores and females' centered CTS2 scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of males' PSS scores and females' CTS2 scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory; CTS2 – revised Conflict Tactics Scale; PSS – Perceived Social Support – Friends.

Findings for Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 stated that the *level of physical IPV received will be more strongly associated with steps taken toward relationship dissolution among participants reporting higher levels of negative attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems.*

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting females' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 18. In the first step, the demographic variables of females' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .136 and *R*² = .019, which was not significant; *F* (2, 106) = 1.005, *p* = .369. In step 2, the males' centered CTS2 scores and females' centered MAS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .306, *R*² = .094 and the increase in *R*² was significant; *F* (2, 104) = 4.318, *p* = .016. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying females' MAS scores with males' CTS2 scores was entered into the model. The multiple correlation (*R*) was .327, *R*² = .107, and the increase in *R*² was not significant; *F* (1, 103) = 1.500, *p* = .223. In the second regression model, for females' MAS the β was .264 (*t* = 2.78, *p* = .006), and for males' CTS2 the β was .120 (*t* = 1.27, *p* = .206). In the final regression model, the β for the interaction term was -.119 (*t* = -1.23 *p* = .223). Females' attributions of blame for relationship problems did not moderate the relationship between

physical aggression received and steps taken to leaving the relationship, which did not support Hypothesis 11.

Table 18

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Females' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Males' CTS2 and Females' MSI-R

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.136	.019	.019	1.005	2	106	.369
2	.306	.094	.075	4.318	2	104	.016
3	.327	.107	.013	1.500	1	103	.223

Note. Model 1 = females' level of education and income; Model 2 = females' centered MAS scores and males' centered CTS2 scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of females' MAS scores and males' CTS2 scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory; CTS2 – revised Conflict Tactics Scale; MAS – Marital Attitude Survey.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting males' MSI-R scores are summarized in Table 19. In the first step, the demographic variables of males' education and income were entered. The multiple correlation (R) was .212 and $R^2 = .045$, which was not significant; $F(2, 108) = 2.545, p = .083$. In step 2, the females' centered CTS2 scores and males' centered MAS scores were entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .224, $R^2 = .050$ and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(2, 106) = .280, p = .756$. In step 3, the interaction term created by multiplying males' MAS scores with females' CTS2 scores was then entered into the model. The multiple correlation (R) was .253, $R^2 = .064$, and the increase in R^2 was not significant; $F(1, 105) = 1.548, p = .216$. In the second regression model, for males' MAS the β was $-.049, (t = -.51, p = .609)$, and for females' CTS2 the β was $-.049 (t = -.52, p = .605)$. In the final regression model, for the interaction term the β was $.125, (t = 1.24, p = .216)$. Males' attributions of the cause of relationship problems did not moderate the association between physical aggression received and steps taken to leave an intimate relationship; these findings did not support this hypothesis.

Table 19

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Testing whether Males' MAS Scores Moderate Association between Females' CTS2 and Males' MSI-R

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.212	.045	.045	2.545	2	108	.083
2	.224	.050	.005	.280	2	106	.756
3	.253	.064	.014	1.548	1	105	.216

Note. Model 1 = males' level of education and income; Model 2 = males' centered MAS scores and females' centered CTS2 scores; and Model 3 = interaction term of males' MAS scores and females' CTS2 scores. MSI-R = Marital Status Inventory; CTS2 – revised Conflict Tactics Scale; MAS – Marital Attitude Survey.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Based on the relative costs and benefits model within social exchange theory, evaluations of the utility of an intimate relationship based on the costs and benefits are likely to affect the likelihood of relationship dissolution. Contextual factors of the relationship are considered in the evaluations and will therefore affect an individual's decision-making process to stay in or leave a relationship. This study tested the degree to which more frequent occurrences of physical and psychological aggression are associated with the number of steps taken to end an intimate relationship by the recipient of the aggression. Due to the similarity of the concepts of utility and relationship satisfaction, it was hypothesized that relationship satisfaction would explain or mediate the association between intimate partner aggression received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution. Also, the present investigator hypothesized that both the social support available to the recipient of aggression and the attributions that he or she makes about the cause of relationship problems would affect the perceived utility of the current relationship and either increase or decrease the association between aggression received and the steps taken to end the relationship.

Psychological aggression and relationship dissolution. Overall, findings from the present study support the hypothesis that higher amounts of psychological aggression received are correlated with more steps taken to end the relationship, which is consistent with previous research findings (Yoon & Lawrence, 2013). As is expected with common couple violence, which tends to be reciprocal, females and males' scores on the MDEAS were significantly correlated; this occurred to the degree that much of the variance that

each of the partners' levels of aggression accounted for in either person's steps taken toward leaving overlapped. For females, when psychological aggression that they perpetrated was controlled statistically, psychological aggression that they received was no longer a significant predictor of the steps they took toward leaving. In contrast, after controlling for male-perpetrated psychological aggression, psychological aggression received by males was still a significant predictor of males' steps taken toward relationship dissolution. However, when psychological aggression perpetrated and received by males were both included in the final regression model, male-perpetrated psychological aggression was no longer a significant predictor of males' steps toward leaving, and the β dropped to $-.058$ (the β for aggression received was $.302$).

These findings indicate that female-perpetrated psychological aggression is a more significant predictor of relationship dissolution for both genders than is male-perpetrated aggression. One possible explanation is that females have often been identified in research as carrying a disproportionate share of the responsibility for maintaining couple relationships (e.g., Ragsdale, 1996) and having higher levels of dedication (e.g., Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2006), so when a female becomes upset and psychologically aggressive toward her male partner, the stability of the relationship suffers substantially. Additionally, because females' have traditionally been given responsibility of the stability of the relationship and their commitment level is critical to doing so, acts of psychological aggression committed by the female may be a sign that the level of commitment is waning for the female.

With regard to the general finding that higher levels of psychological aggression received were associated with more steps taken toward relationship dissolution, the

relative costs and benefits model provides additional clarity. Being denigrated or intimidated by a partner, along with receiving other forms of psychological aggression, is an unpleasant, upsetting, and generally negative experience. These acts of aggression received will almost certainly be counted as costs of the intimate relationship, and as they occur more frequently, it likely becomes more challenging for the recipient to notice the relationship's benefits. Before long, the costs will likely outweigh the benefits, leading to a desire to separate oneself from the relationship and to seek a better alternative. Furthermore, the frequency with which psychological aggression occurs seems to have a particularly negative effect on the stability of the relationship, even more than physical aggression, at least when it occurs as infrequently as it did among the sample in the present study. Previous research has also supported the idea that psychological aggression can be more damaging and have longer lasting effects than physical aggression. However, physical aggression is often treated as a more serious relationship problem and receives more attention in research and intervention programs.

Although it is plausible that greater levels of aggression affect the likelihood of relationship dissolution, the direction of causation between variables cannot be identified because the data for this study are cross-sectional. Therefore, it may be the case that partners who have taken steps toward ending the relationship have also behaved negatively toward the partner, eliciting more aggression from the partner through the reciprocal process that is typical of common couple violence. The relationships among perpetrating aggression, receiving aggression, being dissatisfied in the relationship and taking steps to leave the relationship are likely to be complex and *not* unidirectional. Although the results supported a number of the hypotheses, which were unidirectional,

the variables may have mutual influences on one another, which need to be disentangled further in future research.

Relationship satisfaction as a mediator. Hypotheses 2 through 4 dealt with relationship satisfaction as a mediator between psychological aggression received and relationship dissolution. Psychological aggression received was significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, similar to findings from previous research (e.g., Falconier & Epstein, 2010). Additionally, the negative correlation between relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution was significant, consistent with other findings (e.g., Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010). As was previously mentioned, psychological aggression received and relationship dissolution were also significantly positively correlated. These findings provide support for the concept of costs and benefits within the social exchange model. For example, as psychological aggression increases, the recipient is likely to experience several negative outcomes related to the aggression, and their perception of the partner and relationship are likely to become more negative. The process of relationship satisfaction decreasing seems likely to lead to increased thoughts about alternatives, or the recipient taking steps toward ending the relationship.

Because all of the criteria were met, the present investigator then tested to see if relationship satisfaction acted as a mediator between psychological aggression received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution. For female participants, relationship satisfaction only partially mediated the association. Males' psychological aggression accounted for a significant amount of the variance in predicting females' steps toward relationship dissolution. However, this amount was minor ($R^2 = .026$) when compared with the variance accounted for by relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .362$). For male

participants, relationship satisfaction completely mediated the association between psychological aggression received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution. In fact, no additional variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .000$) when the partner's psychological aggression was added to the model. Therefore, the present cross-sectional data suggest that males' level of relationship satisfaction mediates the process by which males decide to leave the relationship after receiving psychological aggression. Thus, after receiving aggression from their female partners, males begin stepping away from the relationship to the degree that they are dissatisfied. However, for females relationship satisfaction helps to understand the association between receiving psychological aggression and relationship dissolution, but it is not sufficient because the level of aggression significantly predicts steps taken toward leaving beyond the amount that relationship satisfaction does. Accordingly, psychological aggression may have a direct effect on relationship dissolution, or there could be other variables that have additional explanatory power within the model.

Although these findings are mixed, they provide support for the relative costs and benefits model – when an intimate partner perpetrates psychological aggression, the recipient is likely to be less satisfied by the relationship due to the increase in costs and decrease in benefits; recipients are then more likely to begin taking steps to end the relationship. In the song, “Should I Stay or Should I Go” by Clash, one partner, presumably a male, repeatedly asks his partner if he should stay or go. It appears that he is putting the decision in her hands with statements such as, “if you don't want me, set me free,” but based on the findings of the present study, one's *own* satisfaction with the relationship may have a more significant affect on relationship stability. Of course,

satisfaction levels will be influenced by messages sent from one's partner, but individual levels of satisfaction with the relationship explain the specific association between aggression received and steps taken to leave the relationship. Accordingly, although it may not have been as lyrically pleasant, Clash could have sung the following words: If I am not pleased, I am going to leave. I just got to decide, should I stay or should I go? However, a female songwriter might have included messages about how society has 'got to let her know' if she should stay or if she should go.

Regarding relationship satisfaction as a mediator between aggression received and steps that one takes to leave a relationship, the gender difference found suggests that relationship dissolution may be a more complex decision for females. Previous studies have shown that relationship dissatisfaction is a stronger predictor of relationship dissolution among males (Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Sanchez & Gager, 2000). This is not surprising when considering the significant body of literature that has addressed the question of why some women remain in relationships characterized by IPV. Although some pejorative explanations have been offered, the present investigator understands the decision to leave process as being multifaceted (e.g., societal expectations, available resources, relationship investment), especially for women, due to the disproportionate demands placed on them for taking responsibility for relationship maintenance. For example, women who perceive that their role is to ensure the stability of the relationship may place greater value on staying in the relationship even when they are unsatisfied so that they can avoid possible shame or a sense of failure. If men, on average, are less likely to perceive that relationship dissolution represents their failure, then they may be

more likely to place greater emphasis on their level of relationship satisfaction than on societal expectations when considering whether to stay or leave.

One study found that, for females, psychological abuse was significantly negatively correlated with both relationship satisfaction and relationship investment (Edwards et al., 2011). In this study, relationship dissatisfaction was a more significant predictor of relationship dissolution than was relationship investment, but relationship investment accounted for additional variance in predicting relationship dissolution. Consequently, it seems that relationship satisfaction may be the best fit as a mediator between relationship aggression and relationship dissolution for both females and males, but that the process is more complex, especially for females, and relationship investment levels can offer additional clarity. However, the consistent finding that both genders use their evaluations of the relationship to make decisions about remaining together or separating contributes further evidence to support social exchange theory.

Physical aggression and relationship dissolution. Overall, findings from the present study did not support the hypothesis that higher levels of physical aggression would be associated with more steps taken to exit an intimate relationship. Based on a Pearson correlation, male-perpetrated physical aggression was significantly correlated with steps taken to leave ($r = .13, p = .039$), but the β for physical aggression was no longer significant when females' ratings of relationship satisfaction were included in a multiple regression analysis. The overall low level of association between physical aggression received and steps taken to leave the relationship is likely due to the nature of the physical aggression reported among the final sample of couples in this study. Due to conservative criteria designed to ensure that there was a small chance of including cases

of IT, many of the cases of CCV were also likely excluded. The mean scores for physical aggression were 2.31 and 2.35 on the CTS2 for male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated, respectively, which was a sum of both partners' reports. Thus the average scores were actually 1.16 and 1.18, which means that only one act of physical aggression had occurred within the last four months. The restricted range of frequency and intensity of physical aggression likely contributed to low association of that variable with relationship dissolution.

Due to the low occurrence of physical aggression with the couples in the sample, the external validity of the findings from the current study (i.e., generalizability) regarding physical aggression and relationship stability is questionable. However, despite the lack of significant findings, the results may still provide an interesting perspective on couples where mild, infrequent acts of intimate partner physical aggression have occurred. It may be due to the irregularity of physical aggression that many partners do not consider this a significant factor in how satisfied they are with their relationships. Physical aggression has the potential to have larger consequences than many other relationship problems (e.g., psychological aggression, infidelity, sexual problems) when it is severe, but if there has only been one occurrence of mild to moderate violence compared with other problems that may occur several times a day, then it is reasonable that some individuals will discount the importance of the partner aggression. Previous research on couples in therapy has shown that physical aggression is infrequently brought up as a problem area in the relationship compared with its prevalence (O'Leary, 2008).

Contrary to the hypothesis, physical aggression was not significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction for either gender. As noted above, this finding may be due

to the low level of physical aggression in the sample. Furthermore, physical aggression has not been found consistently to be significantly associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Several studies have shown that psychological aggression is a better predictor of relationship satisfaction while physical aggression is a better predictor of relationship dissolution (Rogge & Bradbury, 1999; Testa & Leonard, 2001). In the present study, psychological aggression was a better predictor of both relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution, with the association between physical aggression and relationship satisfaction absent. As stated earlier, couples will seek help for regularly occurring problems more frequently than for dealing with past incidents of physical aggression if it is infrequent, and this may also be true for the evaluations of costs and benefits of the relationship. In other words, the perceived costs of a relationship for a person can include many relationship events and negative outcomes, so acts that are repeated often may carry more weight in the person's appraisal of the relationship, thus being a better predictor of the level of relationship satisfaction experienced.

Social support as a moderator. The findings regarding perceived social support as a moderator between intimate partner aggression received (psychological and physical) were mixed, but they predominantly did not support the hypotheses. The only significant finding was that female-perpetrated psychological aggression was less strongly associated with males having taken steps toward relationship dissolution among males with larger social networks. Similarly, in previous research, social support has acted as a moderator of the association between psychological aggression and quality of life, but not between physical aggression and quality of life (Beeble et al., 2009). The relative costs and benefits model provides a possible explanation for males' social support acting as a

moderator. Males that have a strong social network are more likely to spend time with friends, including at times when they are distressed. Leaving the home for social outlets or contacting friends in other ways is likely to act as a protective factor so that the full effects of stressful situations, including psychological aggression, are not experienced. Therefore, when analyses are made concerning the costs and benefits of being in the relationship, males with high levels of social support would be likely to have a less negative view of the relationship, and consequently, be less likely to dissolve it. However, this theory does not explain why social support did not buffer the negative effects of psychological aggression.

One explanation that may be offered to help make sense of the gender difference is the dissimilar approach to friendships that is often taken by males when compared with females. It has traditionally been more socially acceptable for females to seek solace in their friendships and to share emotionally intimate information. In contrast, male friendships are often viewed as instrumental relationships in which connection occurs through shared activities. Therefore, females would be more likely to share with friends about incidents of psychological aggression occurring in their relationship than would males. One study (Mueller, 2006) found that woman receiving support regarding marital conflict reported lower relationship satisfaction levels than those receiving other types of support. Thus, if females are more likely than males to discuss incidents of intimate partner psychological aggression then they may not receive some of the benefits of social systems. This may be due to conflicting opinions given from friends about high-conflict intimate relationships, statements placing blame on the female, or premature pressure being applied to the female to leave the relationship. One of the weaknesses of the

instrument used to measure perceived social support is that the type of support is not distinguished. An individual may have a strong social network that provides advice and is reliable, but the messages received from the support system might vary substantially. There is a need for further research addressing the types of support males and females seek and receive, and the nature of the messages received by friends regarding CCV experiences.

Attributions of the causation of aggression as a moderator. In general, the current study's findings did not support the hypotheses stating that attributions blaming the partner for relationship problems will act as a moderator between physical or psychological aggression received and steps taken toward relationship dissolution. This finding is consistent with previous research that found that increases in attributing blame and negative intentions to the partner after incidents of relationship aggression were not associated with a higher likelihood of relationship dissolution (Shurman & Rodriguez, 2006). In this study, higher levels of negative attributions were associated with a higher frequency of physical or psychological aggression received. Therefore, the overlap in the effects of aggression received and negative attributions on relationship dissolution may have decreased the amount of variance in relationship dissolution accounted for by negative attributions.

Another possible explanation for the lack of a significant association is that the purpose of the attributions scale is to measure the attributions that individuals make for causes of general relationship problems (i.e., the items do not specify problems with aggression or any other specific issue). It is reasonable to expect that individuals will not use the same attributions for all types of relationship problems. Thus, an instrument that

specifically measures the attributions that partners make about the cause of relationship aggression would provide a better test of this study's hypothesis. Another reason for caution in accepting the study's findings regarding negative attributions is the relatively small sample size of the subset of the study's sample who completed the MAS. The smaller sample for analyses involving the MAS reduced the statistical power of the study for detecting effects.

One significant finding was that males who made *fewer* attributions that blamed their partner for relationship problems were *more* likely to have taken steps to end the relationship after receiving more psychological aggression. This finding was in the opposite direction of that hypothesized. One perspective derived from the relative costs and benefits model is that individuals who report few negative attributions blaming their partner are likely to have a less negative overall evaluation of the relationship. Compared with their counterparts who make frequent negative attributions about their partners' motives, etc., these individuals are less likely to consider problems related to the relationship as being the fault of the partner. However, psychological aggression may be more likely to be interpreted in a way that at least partially holds the partner at fault. It would likely be more difficult for a recipient to overlook acts of psychological aggression, even if he or she is not accustomed to blaming the partner; the attributions made that involve blaming the partner might then be especially meaningful for these individuals, leading to larger negative effects on their evaluations and decisions about the relationship.

Limitations of the Study

Findings from this study should be interpreted with several limitations in mind. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causation to be tested. This is an obvious and serious weakness when considering that the research question dealt with understanding the decision-making process of relationship dissolution and how it was affected by interpersonal and cognitive factors. It may be the case that individuals who have taken steps toward relationship dissolution are more likely to be aggressive with their partner or possibly to devalue the relationship and their satisfaction with it as a means of coping with their decision to experience the major life changes associated with leaving. In order to determine causation among the variables, a longitudinal study design would be necessary.

Next, despite one advantage of the study being that the sample was clearly defined and consisted only of couples exhibiting a range of behavior from low to moderate violence, this ended up being a limitation. In order to ensure that there was a minimal number of cases that could possibly involve IT, there were broad exclusion criteria that ended up omitting many of the cases that would be considered CCV. In particular, this was a limitation for the findings concerning physical aggression, due to the mild forms of aggression in the remaining sample and the minimal amount of variability. In fact, almost two-thirds (63.7%) of the sample did not report a single act of physical aggression in the last four months. However, regarding psychological aggression, the exclusion criteria were an advantage of the study because of the increased confidence in identifying the type of aggression occurring in the sample. Cases consistent with IT were excluded due to severe physically aggressive behavior, and so this sample

was able to reveal more about the experience of CCV cases, at least in terms of psychological aggression. Furthermore, the higher prevalence of psychologically aggressive behavior occurring among the sample ensured that there was sufficient variability in order to successfully perform the statistical procedures.

Because of the exclusion criteria used to construct the sample, results from the study should only be generalized to couples reporting mild to moderate (and mostly mild) levels of physical partner violence, along with varying levels of psychological aggression. Moreover, the couples in the sample had voluntarily decided to come to couple therapy, and consequently, they may be more likely to desire to work through their relationship problems than other couples experiencing similar problems. There may be several steps involved in exiting a relationship that partners will not take until they have tried to improve problems in therapy.

Another limitation of the study is that the instruments used to measure some of the constructs had limitations. For example, the PSS is a useful tool to measure how individuals perceive their social network, but the nature of messages heard or the type of support received (e.g., instrumental, emotional, informational) is not measured. Furthermore, although social support received from family is measured with the PSS, this subscale was not included in the present study. This was intentionally done so that the level of support received from partners would not be included in the social support variable. However, this created a major limitation in understanding the level of perceived social support, because the large role that family support plays for many people was ignored. Future research would benefit from an instrument that specifically measured who the support was received from (including support from family members other than

the person's partner), what type of support was offered, positive and negative experiences with social support, and the size of the support network.

Also, regarding the MDEAS, scores on the four subscales assessing different forms of psychological aggression (Dominance/Intimidation, Restrictive Engulfment, Denigration, and Hostile Withdrawal) were not used separately in this study, in order to keep the number of variables manageable. Not each form of psychological aggression is necessarily associated with relationship dissolution, so it is important to not generalize about psychological aggression as a risk factor for relationship dissolution without testing effects with the separate MDEAS subscales.

Lastly, a limitation of the model noted earlier was that the high correlation between aggression perpetrated and aggression received made it very difficult to distinguish the effects of each source of aggression separately. The amount of shared variance between these two variables reduced the degree to which each one could individually account for variance in relationship satisfaction and steps taken to leave the relationship when both were included as predictor variables in multiple regression analyses (i.e., they produced a major problem with multi-collinearity). It is possible that some spurious associations were found based on perpetration rather than victimization, reducing the internal validity of the findings.

Clinical Implications

With cases of IT, there is a general consensus that the relationship is not healthy and it should not continue in its current state. Mental health professionals are likely to help clients who are victimized to explore the possibility of leaving, provide them with necessary support, and even advocate for survivors of IT. However, there are different

ethical considerations and values regarding psychological abuse and mild forms of physical aggression. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, there needs to be a dialogue about ethical guidelines when working with clients reporting CCV. This seems particularly important when considering the high prevalence of cases that report some form of physical aggression and moderate levels of psychological aggression in clinical settings such as the one used in the present study. Clinicians need to be aware of the need for screening of IPV, and to understand the ethics of therapeutic decisions that may increase the occurrence of physical or psychological aggression among this sample.

Clinicians also need to be familiar with the research evidence that psychological aggression results in many of the same deleterious effects on victims' emotional and physical well-being that are produced by physical aggression, so negative effects of psychological partner aggression should not be discounted. In fact, due to the frequency with which psychologically aggressive behavior occurs, and its significant association with relationship satisfaction, decreasing psychological aggression appears to be a necessary and early step to improving relationship quality that should be given as much attention as physical aggression. It would likely come as a surprise to many couples that occurrences of psychological aggression have such strong consequences, that the receiving partner may even begin to consider leaving the relationship, and that males are very sensitive to psychological aggression from their partners. Ironically, psychologically aggressive behavior often comes from the desire to improve the relationship (criticizing a partner in order to communicate what is preferred or needed). Accordingly, clinicians can help to frame this type of aggression within its appropriate harmful context while helping

each partner learn more effective methods of communication to express needs or desired changes.

Because of the strong association between female-perpetrated psychological aggression and males' steps taken toward leaving when compared with males' aggression and females' steps taken toward leaving, the prevalence and types of female aggression need to be thoroughly assessed. This recommendation is especially significant when considering that male-perpetrated aggression receives the vast majority of attention in the literature and in clinical practice. Although there are many variables that are significantly correlated with males' physical aggression that merit this focus (e.g., injury), a more balanced and comprehensive approach to IPV would be beneficial for the majority of aggressive couples. An additional point of intervention is helping the couple understand the assumptions they hold about females' aggression as well as who is primarily responsible for the maintenance of the relationship. This approach may help to dispel heightened shame caused by gender norms and roles for both males and females. For example, females who are psychologically aggressive may learn in therapy to challenge cognitions (their own and those of their partners) that place additional blame on them for aggression perpetrated, thereby allowing them to focus on learning necessary skills (e.g., communication skills and emotion regulation) to reduce aggression.

Implications for Research

Similar to the present study, future research using samples of couple relationships characterized by CCV should use specific criteria to exclude those in which at least one partner reports being fearful of the partner or when severe acts of aggression have occurred. Ideally, couples would go through a screening process that would allow for a

clinician to make a judgment about the type of violence present in the relationship. This would allow for less conservative exclusion criteria because of the clinician's ability to make a more nuanced judgment call to successfully distinguish between moderate and severe physical violence.

Furthermore, there is a need for longitudinal research to understand how aggression develops and either progresses or decreases in a relationship, and how partner aggression affects relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution. Longitudinal studies would allow for a better understanding of the temporal order of many common variables generally included in IPV research, including physical and psychological aggression, relationship satisfaction, and relationship dissolution. Also, in order to increase the external validity of findings, research should be done with nonclinical samples so that results would be more generalizable to all couples who are experiencing mild to moderate IPV. Although recruitment would be more difficult, community outreach and recruitment would reach a population of couples who are experiencing partner aggression but are unlikely to be seen in therapy, domestic violence centers, emergency shelters, and other locations from which samples have usually been recruited. This seems especially critical with research investigating CCV because the lower likelihood that recipients of CCV search for social services often has resulted in their under-representation in previous research.

In addition, future researchers should investigate the different types of psychological aggression and how they relate to relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution. Results from these types of studies would have valuable implications for clinical practice because they would provide a better understanding of the relative effects

of the different types of aggression. For example, if high scores on the Dominance/Intimidation subscale of the MDEAS had a particularly strong association with relationship dissolution, then clinicians would have additional guidance on critical points of intervention. This research may also provide additional clarity on why female-perpetrated aggression is more strongly associated with relationship dissolution than is male-perpetrated aggression. There could be different types of psychologically aggressive behaviors used primarily by each gender, leading to distinctive outcomes. For example, women are often viewed as the “pursuer” in intimate relationships whereas men are viewed as the “withdrawer.” Pursuers may be more likely to use denigration whereas withdrawers may resort to behavior that would be classified as “hostile withdrawal.” Future research could investigate what type of psychological aggression is most significantly correlated with relationship dissolution.

Findings from the present study lead to many additional questions about the process of relationship dissolution, and what may account for its association with CCV. Future studies may include measures of perceived costs and benefits of relationship dissolution to better understand the process that individuals go through in evaluating the utility of a relationship. This would allow for an investigation of the roles of values and societal expectations in influencing relationship costs and benefits (e.g., how one’s social network would perceive separation, fear of being single). Furthermore, measures assessing relationship commitment and perceived responsibility for relationship maintenance would provide additional exploration of the variables that mediate the association between aggression received and relationship dissolution, for females and for males.

Lastly, additional research is needed to further examine how negative attributions and social support moderate the association between aggression and steps taken to leave a relationship. As was previously mentioned, the instruments should be chosen based on the conceptual definitions of each variable. The instrument for assessing social support should include a broader look at the social network, including family support, and the different forms of support received. With regard to the role of attributions, the instrument could gather more specific information concerning the attributions made about relationship aggression. This instrument change would increase the construct validity of the study and ensure that the measures used are consistent with the theoretical model.

Appendices

Appendix A

MDEAS

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Therapist Code: _____ Family Code: _____

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 did each of these things IN THE PAST 4 MONTHS, and how many times your partner did them in the **IN THE PAST 4 MONTHS**. If you or your partner did not do one of these things in the past 4 months, but it happened before that, circle 0.

- (0) Not in the past four months, but it did happen before (3) 3-5 times (6) More than 20 times
 (1) Once (4) 6-10 times (9) This has never happened
 (2) Twice (5) 11-20 times

Never in past 4 months	Once	Twice	3-5	6-10	11-20	20+	Never in relationship
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

How Often in the last 4 months?

1. Asked the other person where s/he had been or who s/he was with in a suspicious manner.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
2. Secretly searched through the other person's belongings.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
3. Tried to stop the other person from seeing certain friends or family members.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
4. Complained that the other person spends too much time with friends.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
5. Got angry because the other person went somewhere without telling him/her.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
6. Tried to make the other person feel guilty for not spending enough time together.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
7. Checked up on the other person by asking friends where s/he was or who s/he was with.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
8. Said or implied that the other person was stupid.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
9. Called the other person worthless.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
10. Called the other person ugly.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
11. Criticized the other person's appearance.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
12. Called the other person a loser, failure, or similar term.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

Never in past 4 months	Once	Twice	3-5	6-10	11-20	20+	Never in relationship
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

How Often in the last 4 months?

13. Belittled the other person in front of other people.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
14. Said that someone else would be a better girlfriend or boyfriend.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
15. Became so angry that s/he was unable or unwilling to talk.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
16. Acted cold or distant when angry.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
17. Refused to have any discussion of a problem.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
18. Changed the subject on purpose when the other person was trying to discuss a problem.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
19. Refused to acknowledge a problem that the other felt was important.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
20. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
21. Intentionally avoided the other person during a conflict or disagreement.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
22. Became angry enough to frighten the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
23. Put her/his face right in front of the other person's face to make a point more forcefully.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
24. Threatened to hit the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
25. Threaten to throw something at the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
26. Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
27. Drove recklessly to frighten the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
28. Stood or hovered over the other person during a conflict or disagreement.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

How often did this happen?

- 0 = Not in the past 4 months, but it did happen before 4 = 6-10 times in the past 4 months
 1 = Once in the past 4 months 5 = 11-20 times in the past 4 months
 2 = Twice in the past 4 months 6 = More than 20 times in the past 4 months
 3 = 3-5 times in the past 4 months 9 = This has never happened

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
33. I choked my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
34. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
35. I shouted or yelled at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
36. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
37. I slammed my partner against a wall	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
38. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
39. I said I was sure we could work out a problem	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
40. My partner was sure we could work it out	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
41. I needed to see a doctor because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
42. My partner needed to see a doctor because of a fight with me, but didn't	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
43. I beat up my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
44. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
45. I grabbed my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
46. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
47. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
48. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
49. I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
50. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
51. I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but did not use physical force)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
52. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
53. I slapped my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
54. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
55. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
56. My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
57. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
58. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
59. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
60. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
61. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
62. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
63. I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
64. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
65. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
66. My partner accused me of this	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
67. I did something to spite my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
68. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
69. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
70. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
71. I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
72. My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
73. I kicked my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
74. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
75. I used threats to make my partner have sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
76. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
77. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
78. My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

CTS-R.Rev.08/1/11

Appendix C



MSI-R (DAY 1)

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Therapist Code: _____ Family Code: _____

We would like to get an idea of how your relationship stands right now. Within the past four months have you...

- Yes ___ No ___ 1. Had frequent thoughts about separating from your partner, as much as once a week or so.
- Yes ___ No ___ 2. Occasionally thought about separation or divorce, usually after an argument.
- Yes ___ No ___ 3. Thought specifically about separation, for example how to divide belongings, where to live, or who would get the children.
- Yes ___ No ___ 4. Seriously thought about the costs and benefits of ending the relationship.
- Yes ___ No ___ 5. Considered a divorce or separation a few times other than during or shortly after a fight, but only in general terms.
- Yes ___ No ___ 6. Made specific plans to discuss separation with your partner, for example what you would say.
- Yes ___ No ___ 7. Discussed separation (or divorce) with someone other than your partner (trusted friend, minister, counselor, relative).
- Yes ___ No ___ 8. Discussed plans for moving out with friends or relatives.
- Yes ___ No ___ 9. As a preparation for living on your own, set up an independent bank account in your own name to protect your interest.
- Yes ___ No ___ 10. Suggested to your partner that you wish to have a separation.
- Yes ___ No ___ 11. Discussed separation (or divorce) seriously with your partner.
- Yes ___ No ___ 12. Your partner moved furniture or belongings to another residence.
- Yes ___ No ___ 13. Consulted an attorney about legal separation, a stay away order, or divorce.
- Yes ___ No ___ 14. Separated from your partner with plans to end the relationship.
- Yes ___ No ___ 15. Separated from your partner, but with plans to get back together.
- Yes ___ No ___ 16. File for a legal separation.
- Yes ___ No ___ 17. Reached final decision on child custody, visitation, and division of property.
- Yes ___ No ___ 18. Filed for divorce or ended the relationship.

Appendix D

Revised - For Couples Within Families Only

DAS

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Therapist Code: _____ Family Code: _____

Most persons have disagreements in their relationship. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Place a checkmark (✓) to indicate your answer.

	<i>Always Agree</i>	<i>Almost Always Agree</i>	<i>Occasionally Disagree</i>	<i>Frequently Disagree</i>	<i>Almost Always Disagree</i>	<i>Always Disagree</i>
1. Handling family finances						
2. Matters of recreation						
3. Religious matters						
4. Demonstrations of affection						
5. Friends						
6. Sex relations						
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)						
8. Philosophy of life						
9. Ways of dealing with parents and in-laws						
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important						
11. Amount of time spent together						
12. Making major decisions						
13. Household tasks						
14. Leisure time interests and activities						
15. Career decisions						
	<i>All the time</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>More often than not</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation or terminating your relationship?						
17. How often do you or your partner leave the house after a fight?						
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?						
19. Do you confide in your partner?						

(Over)

	<i>All the time</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>More often than not</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?						
21. How often do you or your partner quarrel?						
22. How often do you and your partner "get on each others' nerves"?						

HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING EVENTS OCCUR BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR MATE? CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER.

23. Do you kiss your partner?
- EVERYDAY ALMOST EVERYDAY OCCASIONALLY RARELY NEVER
24. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?
- ALL OF THEM MOST OF THEM SOME OF THEM VERY FEW OF THEM NONE OF THEM
25. I have a stimulating exchange of ideas?
- NEVER LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK ONCE A DAY MORE OFTEN
26. Laugh together?
- NEVER LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK ONCE A DAY MORE OFTEN
27. Calmly discuss something?
- NEVER LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK ONCE A DAY MORE OFTEN
28. Work together on a project?
- NEVER LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK ONCE A DAY MORE OFTEN

THESE ARE SOME THINGS ABOUT WHICH COUPLES SOMETIMES AGREE AND SOMETIMES DISAGREE. INDICATE IF EITHER ITEM BELOW CAUSES DIFFERENCES OF OPINION OR HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS. CHECK "YES" OR "NO."

29. Being too tired for sex. Yes ___ No ___
30. Not showing love. Yes ___ No ___

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

.
EXTREMELY UNHAPPY	FAIRLY UNHAPPY	A LITTLE UNHAPPY	HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	EXTREMELY HAPPY	PERFECT

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? Check the statement that best applies to you.
- ___ 6. I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- ___ 5. I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- ___ 4. I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- ___ 3. It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- ___ 2. It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- ___ 1. My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

DAS.Rev. 8/1/11

Appendix E



MAS (DAY 2)

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Therapist Code: _____ Family Code: _____

Please circle the number which indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement this week, using the rating scale below:

Rating Scale:

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree somewhat
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Disagree somewhat
- 5 = Strongly disagree

1. When we aren't getting along I wonder if my partner loves me..... 1 2 3 4 5
2. My partner doesn't seem to do things just to bother me1 2 3 4 5
3. My personality would have to change for our relationship to improve 1 2 3 4 5
4. My partner intentionally does things to irritate me.....1 2 3 4 5
5. Even if my partner's personality changed we still wouldn't get along any better.....1 2 3 4 5
6. It seems as though my partner deliberately provokes me..... 1 2 3 4 5
7. If my partner did things differently we'd get along better..... 1 2 3 4 5
8. My partner's personality would have to change for us to get along better..... 1 2 3 4 5
9. Any trouble we have getting along with each other is because of the type of person I am..... 1 2 3 4 5
10. I don't think that the things I say and do make things worse between us..... 1 2 3 4 5
11. Any problems we have are caused by the things I say and do..... 1 2 3 4 5
12. I don't think our relationship would be better if my partner was a different type of person..... 1 2 3 4 5
13. Even if my personality changed, my partner and I still wouldn't get along any better.....1 2 3 4 5
14. The way my partner treats me determines how well we get along.....1 2 3 4 5
15. Whatever problems we have are caused by the things my partner says and does.....1 2 3 4 5
16. My partner and I would get along better if it weren't for the type of person he/she is.....1 2 3 4 5
17. My partner doesn't intentionally try to upset me.....1 2 3 4 5
18. When things aren't going well between us I feel like my partner doesn't love me.....1 2 3 4 5
19. Whatever difficulties we have are not because of the type of person I am..... 1 2 3 4 5
20. What difficulties we have don't lead me to doubt my partner's love for me..... 1 2 3 4 5
21. When things are rough between us it shows that my partner doesn't love me..... 1 2 3 4 5

Rating Scale:

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree somewhat
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Disagree somewhat
- 5 = Strongly disagree

- 22. If I did things differently my partner and I wouldn't have the conflicts we have.....1 2 3 4 5
- 23. My changing how I act wouldn't change how our relationship goes.....1 2 3 4 5
- 24. I'm sure that my partner sometimes does things just to bother me.....1 2 3 4 5
- 25. Even when we aren't getting along, I don't question whether my partner loves me..... 1 2 3 4 5
- 26. I think my partner upsets me on purpose.....1 2 3 4 5
- 27. When my partner isn't nice to me I feel like he/she doesn't love me.....1 2 3 4 5
- 28. I'm certain that my partner doesn't provoke me on purpose.....1 2 3 4 5
- 29. Even when we have problems I don't doubt my partners' love for me.....1 2 3 4 5
- 30. The things my partner says and does aren't the cause or whatever problems come up
between us.....1 2 3 4 5
- 31. I doubt that my partner deliberately does things to irritate me..... 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix F

SS

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Therapist Code: _____ Family Code: _____

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Directions: The statements which follow refer to feelings and experiences which occur to most people at one time or another in their relationships with **FRIENDS**. When thinking about friends, please do not include family members. For each statement there are five possible answers (1 through 5) ranging from "Yes" to "No." Please check the answer you choose for each item.

<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>			
1	2	3	4	5	
—	—	—	—	—	1. My friends give me the moral support I need.
—	—	—	—	—	2. Most other people are closer to their friends than I am.
—	—	—	—	—	3. My friends enjoy hearing about what I think.
—	—	—	—	—	4. Certain friends come to me when they have problems or need advice.
—	—	—	—	—	5. I rely on my friends for emotional support.
—	—	—	—	—	6. If I felt that one or more of my friends were upset with me, I'd just keep it to myself.
—	—	—	—	—	7. I feel that I'm on the fringe in my circle of friends.
—	—	—	—	—	8. There is a friend I could go to if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later.
—	—	—	—	—	9. My friends and I are very open about what we think about things.
—	—	—	—	—	10. My friends are sensitive to my personal needs.
—	—	—	—	—	11. My friends come to me for emotional support.
—	—	—	—	—	12. My friends are good at helping me solve problems.
—	—	—	—	—	13. I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of friends.
—	—	—	—	—	14. My friends get good ideas about how to do things or make things from me.
—	—	—	—	—	15. When I confide in friends, it makes me feel uncomfortable.
—	—	—	—	—	16. My friends seek me out for companionship.
—	—	—	—	—	17. I think that my friends feel that I'm good at helping them solve problems.
—	—	—	—	—	18. I don't have a relationship with a friend that is as intimate as other people's relationships with friends.
—	—	—	—	—	19. I've recently gotten a good idea about how to do something from a friend.
—	—	—	—	—	20. I wish my friends were much different.

--OVER PLEASE--

Appendix G

FAMILY/INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION & INSTRUCTIONS

This is the first in a series of questionnaires you are being asked to complete that will contribute to the knowledge about individual and family therapy. In order for our research to measure progress over time we will periodically re-administer questionnaires. Please answer the questions at a relatively fast pace, usually the first response that comes to mind is the best one. There are no right or wrong answers.

4. Date: _____ 1. Case #: _____
2. Therapist's(s') Code: _____
3. _____

The following information is gathered from each family member separately.

Name: (Print) _____ Address: _____
E-mail address: _____ ZIP _____
Phone Numbers: (h) _____ (w) _____
(cell) _____ (fax) _____

5. Gender: M ___ F ___ 6. SSN _____ - - _____ 7. Age (in years): _____
8. You are coming for: a.) Family _____ b.) Couple _____ c.) Individual _____ therapy.

- 9. Relationship Status
1. Currently married, living together
2. Currently married, separated, but not divorced
3. Divorced, legal action completed
4. Living together, not married
5. Separated, not married
6. Dating, not living together
7. Single
8. Widowed/ Widower
9. Domestic partnership

10. Years Together: _____

- 11. What is your occupation?
1. Clerical sales, bookkeeper, secretary
2. Executive, large business owner
3. Homemaker
4. None - child not able to be employed
5. Owner, manager of small business
6. Professional - Associates or Bachelors degree
7. Professional - master or doctoral degree
8. Skilled worker/craftsman
9. Service worker - barber, cook, beautician
10. Semi-skilled worker - machine operator
11. Unskilled Worker
12. Student
12. What is your current employment status?
1. Employed full time
2. Employed part time
3. Homemaker, not employed outside home
4. Student
5. Disabled, not employed
6. Unemployed
7. Retired

13. Personal yearly gross income: \$ _____ (before taxes or any deductions)
14. Race: _____
1. Native American
2. African American
3. Asian/Pacific Islander
4. Hispanic
5. White
6. Other (specify) _____

15. What is your country of origin? _____
What was your parent's country of origin? 16. _____ (father's) 17. _____ (mother's)
How many years have you lived in the USA? _____

- 18. Highest Level of Education Completed: _____
1. Some high school
2. High school diploma
3. Some college
4. Associate degree
5. Bachelors degree
6. Some graduate education
7. Masters degree
8. Doctoral degree
9. Trade school

--OVER PLEASE--

19. Number of people in your Household: _____

20..Number of children who live at home with you: ____

21..Number of children who do not live with you: ____

Names and Phone Numbers of Contact People in case of emergency (minimum 2):

22. What is your religious preference? _____
1. Mainline Protestant (e.g., Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian)
 2. Conservative Protestant (e.g., Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal)
 3. Roman Catholic
 4. Jewish
 5. Other (e.g., Buddhist, Mormon, Hindu) Please Specify _____
 6. No affiliation with any formal religion

23. How often do you participate in organized activities of a church or religious group? _____
1. several times per week
 2. once a week
 3. several times a month
 4. once a month
 5. several times a year
 6. once or twice a year
 7. rarely or never

24. How important is religion or spirituality to you in your daily life? _____
1. Very important
 2. Important
 3. Somewhat important
 4. Not very important
 5. Not important at all

25. Medications: _____ Yes _____ No. If yes, please list the names, purpose, and quantity of the medication(s) you are currently taking. Also list the name and phone number of the medicating physician(s) and your primary care physician:

Medications: _____

Primary Care Physician: _____ **Phone:** _____

Psychiatrist? Yes/No Name & Phone, if yes. _____

Phone: _____

Legal Involvement:

26. Have you ever been involved with the police/legal authorities? Yes/No (circle)

If yes, please explain: _____

27. Have formal, legal procedures (e.g., ex-parte orders, protection orders, criminal charges, juvenile offenses) been brought against you?

Yes/No (circle) If yes, please explain: _____

28..If formal procedures were brought, what were the results (e.g., eviction, restraining orders)? _____

29. Many of the questions refer to your "family." It will be important for us to know what individuals you consider to be your family. Please list below the names and relationships of the people you will be including in your responses to questions about your family. Circle yourself in this list.

(Number listed in family) _____.

Name

Relationship

List the concerns and problems for which you are seeking help. Indicate which is the most important by circling it. For each problem listed, note the degree of severity by checking (✓) the appropriate column.

		4 - Severe	3 - Somewhat Severe	2 - Moderate	1 - Mild
30.	31.				
32.	33.				
34.	35.				
36.	37.				

38. The most important concern (circled item) is # _____.

Y: Family Research/Family Information & Instructions.doc
08/1/11

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