

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT WITH THE OCCURRENCE OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AGGRESSION IN HETEROSEXUAL CLINICAL COUPLES

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This study examined the interaction between relative socio-economic resources, such as income and level of education, and level of perceived social support on couples' levels of physical and psychological abuse. It was hypothesized that individuals with fewer resources than their partner would utilize more aggression, individuals with higher perceived social support would exhibit less aggression, and perceived social support would moderate the relationship between personal resource discrepancy and aggressive behavior. The findings of the current study suggest that the impact of partner resource discrepancies and perceived social support depend on the gender of the perpetrator and the type of abuse considered. The findings also have clinical implications for the importance of gathering information about couples' resources and social support. Implications for future research include analyzing the effects of different types of social support on coping in a sample that includes wider ranges of personal resources and severity of abuse.

THE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES AND PERCEIVED
SOCIAL SUPPORT WITH THE OCCURRENCE OF PHYSICAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL AGGRESSION IN HETEROSEXUAL CLINICAL
COUPLES.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In the field of marriage and family research and therapy, there has been growing attention to and concern with the occurrence and impact of domestic violence. Violence is a part of everyday life both within the privacy and intimacy of the family and outside of it (Archer, 2000; Gelles & Straus, 1979; Straus & Hotaling, 1980). Straus and Hotaling (1980) emphasize this idea when they state that “violence is truly woven into the fabric of American society and into the personality, beliefs, values, and behavioral scripts of most of our population” (p. 36). Furthermore, conflict is a natural part of family life, but unfortunately, many family members resort to aggressive behavior to express and resolve their conflicts (Straus & Smith, 1990). Violence reportedly occurs in approximately 25% of families; females are more likely to experience violence against them by a partner in an ongoing, intimate relationship than by an acquaintance or stranger (Miller & Wellford, 1997). The use of physical aggression is legitimized in some circumstances; for example, it is commonly approved of by social norms in order to achieve a particular goal (such as parental use of spanking as a means of discipline). In some cases, aggressive behavior is instrumental in achieving individuals’ goals such as controlling a partner but is less widely socially acceptable, and in other cases its main function is as a means of expressing negative emotions (Gelles & Straus, 1979).

Two major forms of physically abusive behavior have been identified: *patriarchal violence*, or *terrorism*, and *common couple violence*. Patriarchal violence involves predominantly unilateral control and subordination of women by men, commonly through severe aggression, whereas common couple violence is generally bilateral,

milder, and likely to occur when arguments between members of a couple escalate beyond negative verbal exchanges (Johnson, 1995). The present research project examined common couple violence between partners that is likely to be exhibited by couples who seek couple therapy from clinics and private practitioners for relationship problems.

Given the negative impact that aggressive behavior commonly has on its recipients, an important line of prior research has focused on identifying risk and protective factors. In this vein, this study investigated major types of personal resources that may influence the occurrence of common couple violence: the relative *personal resources* that the two members of a couple have acquired, in the form of income and education, and *external resources*, such as the degree of social support that partners perceive themselves as having from others. Resources are commonly thought of as factors that may be buffers against violence, but in the current study, the discrepancies in the partners' relative resources may actually be a risk factor for more abusive behaviors. Given how pervasive common couple violence is in our society, it is important to gain knowledge about characteristics of couples that influence its occurrence and may be potential targets for prevention and treatment efforts.

Despite the high level of interest in understanding, treating, and preventing intimate partner violence, there is still insufficient knowledge about the risk factors for physical and emotional abuse (Miller & Wellford, 1997). There has been a push to focus attention on preventing physical aggression, whether it is patriarchal or common couple violence, because of its obvious, dangerous effects, whereas psychological abuse (e.g., demeaning comments about one's partner, verbal threats) has not been given the same

attention, perhaps because it is less visible (O’Leary, 2001). Indeed, the fact that no legal definition of psychological abuse exists is indicative of the disparity (O’Leary, 2001). However, in recent years, researchers have studied the use of both psychologically and physically abusive behaviors to better understand not only their causes, but also their effects on those involved. Presently, research points to the importance of studying psychological and emotional abuse as an important relationship dynamic in addition to physical abuse alone for a number of reasons. Research shows that abused women at times find non-physical abuse more damaging; some abused women consider their humiliation and ridicule through psychological abuse as more distressing than physical aggression (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; O’Leary, 2001). At the very least, physical abuse is nearly always preceded or accompanied by psychological mistreatment and thus can be predictive of later physical aggression (Henning & Klesges, 2003; O’Leary, 2001). This aspect is very important as it may to help identify couples at risk for later physical abuse and contribute to the development of more effective and beneficial treatment options. Finally, acts of psychological aggression often result in fearful responses from the abused partner and lowered self-esteem as well as other negative emotional responses, thus making it important to study (Henning & Klesges, 2003; O’Leary, 2001). Overall, both physically and psychologically abusive behaviors have deleterious effects on the individuals involved and on the couple relationship itself, and both were subjects of the present research.

Thus, this study is intended to contribute to knowledge on abusive behavior in couples by investigating how partners’ personal resources, specifically income and education, and external resources, specifically perceived social support, influence the

level of physical and psychological violence used by both the male and female partner. However, the current study will only examine common couple violence in which both partners often contribute to and instigate abusive interactions. In particular, this study focused on discrepancies between partners' levels of the personal resources of income and level of education as an index of the relative levels of power between partners (Lee & Petersen, 1983). Resource theory suggests that it is an imbalance in these relative resources that may lead to an increased utilization of violence by the partner with fewer resources (Allen & Straus, 1980; Straus & Hotaling, 1980). Some research suggests that the symbolic meaning of status incompatibility of the imbalance of resources is actually more important than the imbalance itself (Hornung, McCollough, & Sugimoto, 1981).

Socio-economic resources have been the primary focus of research on familial power and arguably are the key factors in determining the partners' relative positions of power in their couple relationship (Blumberg & Coleman, 1989). Income and level of education are two such sources that hold symbolic meaning for power and are also related to subsistence and status (Kaukinen, 2004; Lee & Petersen, 1983). Traditionally, the male in a relationship has had access to greater income and higher levels of education than his female counterpart, and thus much research has sought to understand the effect on the levels of violence perpetrated by the male when the female has achieved greater resources. Allen and Straus (1980) assert that upsetting the traditional balance of power may lead to increased male psychological abuse (Kaukinen, 2004) and violence, especially as the discrepancy between male and female income and level of education grows (Goode, 1971; McCloskey, 1996; O'Brien, 1971). However, prior research findings have been inconsistent regarding the relationship between resources and abusive

behavior. Some studies indicate that the female partner's income is related only to the level of physical violence she experiences, whereas her level of education is associated only with the level of emotional abuse she faces (Kaukinen, 2004); on the other hand, other studies have not found any conclusive evidence of a relationship (Allen & Straus, 1980) or have found one only within certain income levels (Fox, Benson, DeMaris, & Van Wyk, 2002). The present study attempted to illuminate the degree to which the relative income and education levels of the two partners affect the level of physical and psychological abuse that is perpetrated by both partners. In other words, this research is intended to add to the literature on how an imbalance in socio-economic resources between partners contributes to the risk for common couple violence, as research has focused mostly on male to female patriarchal violence.

In contrast to discrepancies in partners' *personal resources* of income and education that may serve as risk factors for abusive behavior, the *external resource* of the amount of social support that the partners perceive as available to them may play an important role in moderating physical and psychological aggression in relationships. Researchers have generally considered the level of *perceived* social support that individuals experience as opposed to an *objective* level of support because it is the subjective feeling of being supported that is likely to reduce subjective stress (Van Willigen & Drentea, 2001). Perceived social support can reduce the level of stress and isolation that partners experience as well as serve an important role in personal coping styles and well-being (Coker et al., 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Rehman, & Marshall, 2002). Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (2002) summarize research that suggests that the attainment of social support is negatively related to the level of intimate partner

aggression. Furthermore, having social skills has been shown to be associated with perpetrating lesser amounts of violence (Holtzworth-Munroe et al.). Overall, it seems that having social skills and support from friends may serve as a buffer against violence between partners.

Purpose

Violence in the context of the family has been a focus of research for many years. There are a number of theories that exist to explain the occurrence of family violence, including intra-family conflict, male dominance in the family and in society, cultural norms that permit family violence, family socialization in violence, and the pervasiveness of violence in American society in general (Archer, 2000; Straus & Smith, 1990). Much study has been devoted to looking at different types of violence, the participants, causes, and effects. Among numerous other factors, socio-economic resources and perceived social support have emerged as important parts of the dynamic of violence between partners in a couple. However, little is known about the way that relative socio-economic resources, such as income and level of education, and external resources, such as perceived social support, interact to influence psychological aggression and the milder levels of physical violence that commonly occur in distressed couple relationships.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the degree to which discrepancies between partners in personal income and education are related to partners' use of psychological and physical aggression in couple interactions, and to determine whether perceived social support from people outside the couple's relationship can moderate the relationship between personal resource discrepancies and aggressive

behavior. Results of this study have implications for treatments for couples who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Review of the Literature

Domestic Violence

Definitions

Establishing a definition of domestic violence on which researchers can agree has been difficult (Brewster, 2002). Some limit definitions to behaviors intended to cause physical harm, but others include the threat of physical harm and acts of intimidation as well as emotionally and psychologically abusive behaviors (Brewster, 2002). In this study, abusive behavior was defined as including instances of both physical violence and psychological abuse. Physical violence was defined as injurious or potentially injurious physical contact inflicted by one member of a couple upon the other (Gelles, 1990).

Consensus on a definition of psychological or emotional abuse has been difficult to establish, but O'Leary (2001) outlines one based on research: "acts of recurring criticism and/or verbal aggression toward a partner, and/or acts of isolation and domination of a partner" (p. 23). Murphy and Hoover (2001) outline four types of psychological abuse: restrictive engulfment, hostile withdrawal, denigration, and dominance and intimidation. Restrictive engulfment involves monitoring and controlling a partner's behavior, hostile withdrawal includes avoidance behaviors and the denial of emotional support, denigration involves humiliating one's partner, and dominance and intimidation includes behaviors meant to control a partner through threats, destruction of property, and verbal belligerence (Murphy & Hoover, 2001). Thus, for this study,

emotional and psychological abuse were defined as forms of verbal and nonverbal behavior that are intended to control or emotionally hurt the partner.

Common couple violence

Despite much evidence that men are the sole or main perpetrators of violent behavior in couple relationships, Straus (1993) suggests that males and females may actually be more equal in their frequency of use of abusive behaviors (Anderson, 2002; Archer, 2000; Shape, Stacey, & Hazlewood, 1987). In fact, some studies indicate that in non-criminal populations, women actually perpetrate more minor acts of violence than men (Archer, 2000; Shape et al., 1987; Stets & Straus, 1990). In particular, the National Family Violence Re-Survey of 1985 found that of 6,002 people, 49% reported experiencing violence initiated by both partners, 23% stated that the male initiated the violence, and 28% stated that the female initiated the violence (Stets & Straus, 1990). Moreover, Archer (2000), in a study of mostly high school and college students in dating relationships, found that the levels of male and female physical aggression were correlated with each other, which supports the assertion that physical aggression is often reciprocal in nature (Temple, Weston, & Marshall, 2005). There is also some evidence that bidirectional violence may occur more frequently and have more severe consequences than unidirectional violence (Temple et al., 2005). This description of domestic violence is more consistent with common couple violence than with the more severe patriarchal violence that was described in previous accounts of domestic violence.

There are several differences between common couple violence and patriarchal violence or terrorism, including women being the perpetrators and initiators and there being less use of physically controlling behaviors in common couple violence (Anderson,

2002; Johnson, 1995). In contrast, patriarchal violence commonly involves beatings that increase in frequency and severity as a form of control (Johnson, 1995). Reporting on the 1985 National Family Violence Survey, Straus (1993) states that wives engaged in approximately one quarter of the physical violence (slightly higher than the amount enacted by husbands only) and that just under one half of physically violent situations involved abuse by both partners. Furthermore, 53.1% of wives initiated the violence compared to 42.3% of husbands (Straus, 1993). Johnson (1995) suggests that these violent episodes occur about once every two months and rarely increase in severity, but rather are arguments that get “out of hand” (p. 287). Thus, although Straus (1993) cautions against assuming too much from these statistics, it appears that wives too are involved in the perpetration of physical violence. Johnson (1995) describes this as a gender balanced form of violence, but other researchers find that despite participation by both partners, males are still generally the more violent partner (Temple et al., 2005) in terms of inflicting more severe damage because of their greater size and strength.

Prevalence and Incidence of Domestic Violence

Due to the often secretive nature of domestic violence, statistics regarding the rates of abuse vary among studies (Miller & Wellford, 1997). Some findings show that females are abused by their intimate male partners at a higher rate than males by their intimate female partners (Saunders, 1988). For example, statistics estimate that in 1998, 7.5% of females over the age of 12 were victimized by intimates, compared to 1.4% of males (Greenfield et al., 1998). Other findings indicate, however, that the frequency of male to female and female to male violence in adult couples is evenly balanced (Straus, 1993). Yet other studies cite female *self*-reports showing that females are actually more

likely than males to be physically aggressive with their partners, although reports by the recipient partner show equal likelihood of male and female physical aggression (Archer, 2000). Johnson (1995) argues that this discrepancy in the studies' findings is caused by the fact that the studies have varied in the types of violence they assess within different contexts. Greenfield et al. estimated that 20% of women have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) across the lifetime, whereas some other studies report that IPV occurs in approximately 16% of couples (Hornung et al., 1981) and others suggest that as few as 4% of couples experience it (Kaukinen, 2004). Women ages 16-24, African American women, women living in urban areas, and women residing in low income households have been found to experience the highest rates of IPV; however, since 1976, the number of female victims of IPV has declined, along with the rates of more severe acts, like intimate murder, which have declined nearly 36% over the last 20 years (Greenfield et al.). Hornung et al. found that housewives experienced the lowest levels of psychological and physical abuse. Emotional abuse nearly always occurs within the context of a physically violent relationship (Hornung et al.); in a sample of physically violent men, Shape et al. (1987) found that all used verbal abuse, including swearing and name calling, in addition to physical abuse. Physical violence in the absence of emotional abuse seems to occur infrequently, with 8% of women receiving only physical abuse (Kaukinen, 2004).

Another finding that emerges regularly is that females are often more severely injured by intimate partners than are their male counterparts, even if the amount of violence perpetrated by females is equal to that of males (Archer, 2000; Saunders, 1988; Straus, 1993). Indeed, one-fifth of all females injured in IPV sought medical attention

and account for 84% of those in the hospital entering for intentional injury by a partner (Greenfield et al., 1998). Moreover, these women need more time off from work as a result of such violence (Stets & Straus, 1990). This is probably due at least in part to the differences in natural size and strength of the two sexes (Saunders, 1988). Regardless, statistics show that 75% of female victims utilized defensive strategies to protect themselves against their attackers (Greenfield et al.). Specifically, 43% tried to escape, called the police, or used other non-confrontational methods; 34% struggled, shouted, or chased their attacker; and only 23% reported exerting no resistance (Greenfield et al.). Shape et al. (1987) report that the most common methods for self-defense are nail scratching, biting, and using household items that are within reach. However, given the high rates of using self-defense against an attacker, researchers caution against viewing violence as perpetrated only by males, even though those cases are often more severe, and point to the high rates for females being instigators of violence which Shape et al. attribute to female difficulty in controlling anger.

Studies that assess partners' levels of psychological abuse generally find it to be highly prevalent, both in physically abusive and non-physically abusive couples. For example, Hornung et al. (1981), considering both male to female and female to male abuse, suggest that it occurs in as many as two-thirds of couples and as often as once every other week, or approximately 22 times per year. The likelihood of psychological abuse occurring rises even higher when physical violence is present in the relationship; Follingstad et al. (1990), examining mostly Caucasian women experiencing unidirectional male to female violence, found that 99% of physically abused women reported emotional abuse, with 72% of those experiencing all four dimensions (hostile

withdrawal, domination/intimidation, denigration, and restrictive engulfment) of emotional abuse. Of relevance to the present study, the rate of psychological abuse in couples was highest, at 81.5%, when the female partner had achieved a post-college level of education that surpassed her male partner's educational accomplishment (Hornung et al.). Thus, psychological abuse may occur in the presence or absence of physical violence, but seems to occur more frequently alongside physical abuse.

Characteristics of victims and abusers

Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) conducted a review to consolidate research about risk markers for male to female violence in married, engaged, and co-habiting heterosexual relationships. The researchers examined a variety of characteristics both of victimized women and abusive men, as well as attributes of the couple relationship that may be associated with higher rates of violence. Only witnessing violence in a parental or caregiver relationship was consistently associated with females being victimized (Coker et al., 2002; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Kalmuss, 1984). However, experiencing violence at an early age was not significantly associated with experiencing violence later in life. Kalmuss (1984) suggests that witnessing violence between caretakers sets a model against which other relationships will be judged, establishing the perceived appropriateness of violence in parental relationships. Moreover, drug use, self-esteem, educational level, traditional sex role expectations, age, race, assertiveness, personality integration, prior marriage, hostility, violence toward children, housewife status, alcohol usage, disability, and income, were not shown to be consistently associated with experiencing partner violence (Coker et al.; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Kaukinen, 2004).

Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) were able to ascertain nine consistent characteristics of male abusers. The violent male partners from the collected studies were overwhelmingly sexually aggressive toward their partners and violent toward their children. In addition, alcohol use (Anderson, 2002) and witnessing violence as a child were associated with more violent behavior (Shape et al., 1987). Several other factors, such as occupational status, income, educational level, and assertiveness were negatively related to violence; in other words, the lower these factors became, the more violence was likely to occur. Males who have generally high levels of anger have also been shown to utilize more physically aggressive behaviors toward their intimate partners (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003). Experiencing childhood violence (Kalmuss, 1984), unemployment, having a criminal arrest record, low self-esteem, youth, and need for dominance were all assessed in Hotaling and Sugarman's study (1986), but were inconsistently associated with the use of familial violence. This finding is somewhat inconsistent with Shape et al.'s finding that unemployment, as a considerable stressor, and experiencing childhood violence are associated with increased use of physically abusive behaviors.

It is important to note that much literature addresses violence in terms of male to female violence, not accounting for the milder common couple violence in which both partners participate. Women are less often the sole perpetrators of violence, with approximately one-third of all police domestic disturbance calls arising from female violence (Shape et al., 1987), but do participate in milder acts of violence nearly 50% of the time (Straus, 1993). Shape et al. assessed factors of violent females, noting that experiencing and witnessing childhood violence, lack of social skills, difficulty controlling angry, and exposure to stressors are associated with higher rates of female to

male violence. Moreover, for women involved in the perpetration of domestic violence, lower self-esteem is associated with higher rates of using violent behaviors (Anderson, 2002).

In a study of the psychological abuse experienced by women involved in the criminal justice system following a domestic violence dispute with a male partner, Henning and Klesges (2003) found that being currently or formerly married to the partner as opposed to dating, difficulties with employment, a history of substance abuse, and prior arrests or criminal offenses were associated with higher rates and more severe use of psychological abuse. Level of income and race were not associated with the use of psychological abuse. Henning and Klesges (2003) also examined the types of psychological abuse that were most commonly utilized by males. Raising of the voice and shouting and name-calling were most frequently used (67.3% and 63.5%, respectively) followed by jealousy (58.4%), checking up/listening to phone calls (47.0%), discouraging independent activities (33.4%), interfering with relationships with family members (31.5%), and threats to kill the abused partner, the children, or himself (28.2% and 15.1%, respectively). Overall, 80% of the 3,370 adult women in this study experienced one or more forms of the emotionally abusive, controlling, or threatening behaviors listed above.

In addition to characteristics of the individual partners in violent couples, Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) noted characteristics of the couples themselves. Frequency of verbal aggression, religious incompatibility, and debts to needs ratio (Fox et al., 2002) were shown to be positively related to physical aggression, whereas the variables of family income, marital adjustment/satisfaction, and marital status (i.e., being

married versus unmarried) were consistently, negatively related to physical violence. However, the researchers were unable to establish consistent findings on discrepancies between partners' status variables such as education and occupation. Several studies reported a positive relationship between wives' greater educational and occupational achievement and male to female violence, some showed a negative relationship, and one reported no relationship at all. Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) did address the topic of resources in relationships, maintaining that both absolute and relative resources are important in establishing power in relationships. The present study focused on the partners' relative resources as a risk factor for abusive behavior, and it also examined this relationship with psychological abuse and milder levels of physical aggression.

Negative effects of abusive behaviors in relationships

It has been suggested that females experience more negative psychological and emotional effects from violence than males, such as depression and substance abuse (Anderson, 2002), but that both genders report higher levels of stress when there is violence in the relationship (Stets & Straus, 1990). Women in relationships with a physically abusive male partner experience lower levels of health outcomes than those females who are the sole violent partner or are not in a violent relationship (Coker et al., 2002; Temple et al., 2005). Research also suggests that general mental health outcomes are better for women in non-violent relationships (Coker et al.; Temple et al.). Interestingly, women in relationships in which both partners contribute to the violence reported lower mental health outcomes than those in relationships with only one violent partner, regardless of the gender of that perpetrator (Temple et al.). Coker et al. found that women who experienced male to female violence were at increased risk for

diminished mental and physical health, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. In addition, as reported earlier, many studies suggest that females are more often severely injured by their intimate male partners, regardless of the frequency of the abuse, most likely due to their differing levels of strength (Archer, 2000; Saunders, 1988; Straus, 1993)

Psychological abuse also has a negative impact on the well-being of participants; in fact, many abused women report that non-physical abuse is actually more harmful and damaging for them (Follingstad et al., 1990; O'Leary, 2001). O'Leary (2001) suggests that this holds true unless the woman is in a severely, physically abusive relationship. Follingstad et al. explain this finding by asserting that emotional abuse, especially ridicule, attacks women's self esteem and may lead to the development of feelings of worthlessness; O'Leary (2001) supports this finding by suggesting that self-esteem is related more to levels of psychological abuse than physical abuse in abused women. Finally, psychological abuse seems to be associated more with depressive symptoms than physical abuse, such that the threat of separation, divorce, or infidelity is related to higher levels of depression than physical acts of violence (Coker et al., 2002; O'Leary, 2001).

Resource Theory as an Explanation for Abuse in Couples

A variety of theories have been put forth over the years to explain the occurrence of family violence. They draw upon the many factors that research shows may contribute to abusive behaviors in relationships. However, despite the large number of theories available, most can be consolidated into three main categories: intra-individual, social psychological, and socio-cultural theories (Gelles & Straus, 1979). Intra-individual theories examine the role of psychopathology and personal habits, such as the use of

alcohol and drugs, to explain how the individual contributes to and is responsible for the level of violence. Social psychological theories look to the intricacies of interaction between people as the cause of family violence. Some theories in this category include frustration-aggression, social learning, symbolic-interactional, and exchange theories, among others. Finally, the theories that comprise the socio-cultural category tend to examine how the background, traditions, and culture of the society in which we live influence levels of abuse in the family. Well-known theories such as functional, culture of violence, structural, general systems, conflict, and resource theories fall into this realm (Gelles & Straus, 1979). Primarily, resource theory was used in this study to conceptualize partners' use of physically and psychologically abusive behaviors in their couple relationships because it is commonly used by other researchers in the field and explains how resources can determine levels of power and influence violence within relationships.

All social systems use power in some form to carry out their tasks and accomplish their goals, and the family is no exception (Goode, 1971). Resource theory, a branch of social exchange theory, attempts to explain the relationship between the balance of resources among individuals in a social system and the distribution of power in the system (Fox et al., 2002). A resource has meaning for the partners in a relationship because it is "anything that one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter satisfy his needs or attain his goals" (Blood & Wolfe, 1960, p. 12) in addition to being something useful only for the individual who has attained it. These resources include force, "economic variables, prestige and respect... and likeability, attractiveness, friendship, or love" (Goode, 1971, p. 624). Moreover, it is not the absolute resources in a

family that speak to the level of power of the individual partners, but rather, the relative resources between them (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). Resource theory asserts that the person with more resources has greater access to power (Winton, 1995). Specifically, “the central premise of resource theory is that within the marital relationship, each spouse’s decision-making power varies directly with the amount and value of the resources which that spouse provides to the marriage or to the other spouse” (Lee & Petersen, 1983, p. 23). Because of the patriarchal nature of society, males have traditionally had more access to money, occupational status, and prestige and thus have been able to attain more resources (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Consequently, it is argued that when females earn more money, or overcome society’s bias in other ways to gain resources more equal or superior to their partners, they gain more power in the relationship, particularly in decision-making (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

What does this mean to individual families? Allen and Straus (1980) state that “in modern, industrial societies, as in most other societies, power is usually ascribed to the husband” and that “this status of leader must be validated by means of appropriate resources” (p. 190). Thus, the male is assumed to generally be at the head of the household, but also needs to sustain resources like income and occupational status to secure this position. Violence and emotional abuse are other resources that can be employed (Kaukinen, 2004); researchers assert that physical force is the ultimate resource that an individual can use if he or she lacks sufficient other resources (Allen & Straus, 1980; Straus & Hotaling, 1980). The more a woman’s resources exceed those of her male partner, the greater the possibility for his use of violence (Allen & Straus, 1980; Goode, 1971; Kaukinen, 2004; McCloskey, 1996; O’Brien, 1971). McCloskey (1996) supports

this assertion, when after analyzing familial resources among 365 women in battered women's shelters she states, "it was not the absolute financial resources of the family but the relative financial resources of the parents within the family that was the source of strife" (p. 456). Violence is also a resource that may be more effectively used by males than females, due to their larger physical size and overpowering physical strength (Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Saunders, 1988), and males often are also positively reinforced by society for using aggressive tactics (McCloskey, 1996). However, power and violence may not be related if a male has other resources to validate his position in a couple relationship (Allen & Straus, 1980).

As previously stated, males have traditionally had better access to economic resources and means to achieve greater economic resources, as compared to their female counterparts, and thus theorists commonly have used resource theory to explain male to female violence. Indeed, Coleman and Straus (1985) assert that theories of power in families often center on male dominance. However, as society allows for more opportunities for women in education and in the workplace, they too have access to economic resources such as greater wealth and means to obtain greater economic resources and status through prestigious careers and higher education. Therefore, the way that resource theory has traditionally been used to explain violence may no longer hold exclusively for male to female violence but can also be applied to female to male violence and violence that occurs bilaterally between partners. The current study utilized this application of resource theory in examining the effects of differing levels of socio-economic resources and perceived social support on common couple violence.

However, some researchers have alluded to the limitation of resource theory in cross-cultural studies. Specifically, Rodman (1972), in examining the role of resources, including income, education, and occupational status, found that the level of these factors was correlated with marital decision-making power in countries with an “equalitarian ethic” (p. 60). The level of resources directly influenced an individual’s or couple’s level of power in countries such as Belgium, Denmark, France, the United States, and Germany (Rodman, 1972). Rodman (1972) labeled such societies “transitional equalitarian” to suggest a balance between egalitarian ideals and the traditional male dominance norm (Lee & Petersen, 1983). However, in cultures that are more patriarchal and less flexible, such as those found in Greece and Yugoslavia, personal resources account for less variability in determining power levels between spouses (Rodman, 1972). Rodman hypothesized that this was caused by the pre-determined cultural norms that established power levels and left resources with less influence. Generally, resource theory applies mostly in industrial, relatively egalitarian societies such as the United States, where cultural values do not already establish power (Lee & Petersen, 1983; Rodman, 1972). Thus, resource theory was used in this study to examine how socio-economic and personal resources, such as education and income, influence the level of physical violence and psychological aggression found in distressed couples.

Socio-Economic Resources and Relationship Conflict

Certain resources such as income and level of education hold symbolic meaning for power, control, status, and access in society and in intimate family relationships (Hornung et al., 1981; Kaukinen, 2004). Lee and Petersen (1983) support the use of socio-economic resources in studies, because as subsistence resources, they “are

universally highly valued” (p. 29). Again, due to the traditional balance of power and access to these resources in society, much research regarding relative resources between partners has been directed to studying instances in which the female’s resources are greater than those of the male in a couple relationship. For example, McCloskey (1996) states that it is “men’s ability to contribute resources to the family relative to their wives’ [that] is the central organizing principle in American marriages” and also holds importance for males’ self-esteem, gender identity, and marital interaction (Kaukinen, 2004, p. 459). Kaukinen (2004) asserts that such socio-economic resources have significant implications for power within the family, power that traditionally has upheld the male as the head of the household and therefore may be related to views of his role in the family. However, if the female brings more resources to the relationship, especially more resources relative to those of the male partner, her power increases, marital tension increases, and the traditional balance in the relationship is disrupted (McCloskey, 1996). Allen and Straus (1980) show that this upset in the traditional distribution of resources and power may raise the possibility that the male will utilize other resources, especially violence, to restore his power. Fox et al. (2002) support this assertion by stating that the risk of male to female violence is significantly reduced “when the man earns a larger share of the couple’s earnings” (p. 803). Indeed, research indicates that the more the female’s resources exceed the male’s, the greater the possibility for his use of violence (Allen & Straus, 1980; Goode, 1971; McCloskey, 1996; O’Brien, 1971) and emotional abuse (Kaukinen, 2004). This may be associated with resources being related to decision-making power, which in turn is negatively related to the level of violence perpetrated by the husband (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993). Hornung et

al.'s (1981) finding that housewives experience the lowest levels of psychological and physical abuse seems to support this assertion. Although this prior research has been important for understanding the unilateral use of violence by males within a patriarchal society, it is insufficient for understanding common, lower intensity bilateral acts of violence in couples.

Not all research has found that the more the female partner earns in relation to what the male earns contributes to distress and physical and psychological abuse between partners. For example, in an examination of 7,408 Canadian women in the community, Kaukinen (2004) has shown that females' relative level of income, but not level of education, is related to the amount of *physical* violence perpetrated against her by her male partner. However, the female's level of education is positively related to the level of *emotional* abuse she receives (Kaukinen, 2004), such that when the female partner achieves a post-college education which exceeds her male partner's educational achievement, the rate of psychological abuse in the couple is greater (Hornung et al., 1981). Kaukinen (2004) suggests that economic factors, such as income and employment, are important mechanisms for men to find authority and control within the family, but that even in some cases only emotional abuse is used to attain such control (Kaukinen, 2004). Fox et al. (2002) assert that the type of work performed and job strain, rather than employment itself, may be related to male to female violence. Kessler and McRae (1982) found that in marital relationships the husband's well-being is benefited by the wife's increased earnings, even if this involves an increase compared to his own and creates a larger discrepancy between their earnings. Rather, they suggest that wives' employment, but not their income, may be the factor that is associated with husbands' depression and

lowered self-esteem (Kessler & McRae, 1982). Finally, Babcock et al., (1993) studied married couples with violent husbands and found that education, income, and socio-economic status were not significantly related to a husband's use of violence or psychological abuse. Rather, both husbands' and wives' use of good communication behavior was associated with lower levels of husband to wife psychological abuse.

The current study was intended to illuminate the process by which males' and females' relative incomes, as opposed to the absolute resources of the individual or family, contribute to physically and psychologically aggressive behavior in the home. Again, results from prior studies have been inconsistent. Fox et al. (2002) found that an increase over time of the female's income relative to her husband's was linked to an increase in the chances for violence to occur in the relationship. However, Allen and Straus's (1980) results have not shown this relationship to be consistent. For example, violence, power, and lack of resources are only related in the working class, but not in the middle class (Allen & Straus, 1980). This finding is consistent with Greenfield et al.'s (1998) report that women residing in low income households are at the greatest risk for violence.

Some findings also suggest that the level of education of the individual male and female partner is unrelated to levels of physical aggression (Hornung et al., 1981); however, these researchers found that an imbalance in their educational statuses is related to the risk for physical violence. Specifically, the rates of severely, physically abusive behavior by either partner are higher when a post-college educated male is in a relationship with a less highly educated female (Hornung, et al.). However, research does not necessarily indicate that the relationship between violence and resources will

hold if the woman has fewer resources than the man. Straus (1980) reports that in married couples when the husband's resources are greater, the wife's use of physical violence is lower. This relationship seems to be opposite of the relationship expected between a wife's economic resources and her husband's use of violence.

Although this study focused on the relative resources between members of a couple, there is also a significant amount of research that considers the partners' absolute resources (i.e., each person's own level of resources, regardless of the other's resources). Hotelling and Sugarman (1986) found that the absolute educational level and income of women are unrelated or inconclusively related to their being victimized by their partners, but other studies have not supported this finding. For example, Greenfield et al. (1998) reported that the couple's absolute income has been shown to be related to the level of violence in the relationship, such that as absolute income of the dyad is greater, there is less violence against females. On the other hand, highly resourced couples in which partners have status parity may be at greater risk for divorce, as neither partner is financially dependent on the other and could choose to leave the relationship (Kaukinen, 2004). Another finding that complicates the dynamic between relative female resources and their risk of violence is that females with more absolute personal resources, especially in the form of income, generally have access to services like shelters and lawyers to seek protective orders or divorces (Miller & Wellford, 1997). Indeed, an increase in the female's absolute income has been associated with a decrease in violence and emotional abuse (Kaukinen, 2004; Steinmetz, 1987). However, while this is an important area of research, in the present study, the partners' relative socio-economic

resources were examined in relation to the occurrence of psychological and physical abuse.

Perceived Social Support

Social support has been a subject of considerable research, generally for its protective effects in aiding individuals, couples, and families in coping with a variety of life stressors (Coker et al., 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2002; Waldrop & Resick, 2004). For example, social support can boost positive coping responses; “the fewer avoidant responses women received from friends, the more likely they were to engage in active-behavioral and active-cognitive coping” (Waldrop & Resick, 2004, p. 296) and to experience more positive mental health outcomes (Coker et al.). Coker et al. found that women in abusive relationships who perceived their social network as supportive were less likely to develop suicidal ideation, poor mental and physical health, anxiety, depression, and symptoms of PTSD than were those without perceived social support. However, the measurement of social support is complicated, as one must consider the actual level of support received from others, either in emotional or instrumental support, as well as the individual’s perception of the amount of support that is available and that is actually received (Cutrona, Cohen, & Ingram, 1990; Van Willigen & Drentea, 2001). Indeed, the perception of helpfulness of a behavior is important in determining how supportive the act becomes to the recipient (Cutrona et al., 1990). Cutrona et al., using 200 undergraduate, primarily Caucasian students (89.5%), found that behaviors that are spontaneous and matched the recipient’s desires (e.g., emotional support was both wanted and received) were perceived as most supportive. Furthermore, the gender of the support provider did not affect the level of perceived support.

Research generally suggests that intimate relationships, such as the marital relationship, tend to be perceived by the members as a significant source of social support. However, social support experienced in couple relationships can vary considerably; for example, Van Willigen and Drentea (2001), also studying mostly Caucasian adults (95.4%), found that perceived social support is lower among partners who believe that their division of household tasks is unfair, whereas more equitable sharing of decision-making led both partners to feel more supported. In general, perceived social support was higher in more equitable relationships where partners shared household chores and decision-making responsibilities and was thought to be related to higher feelings of intimacy in these relationships (Van Willigen & Drentea, 2001). Interestingly, gender was not found to moderate this relationship, even though females, especially African-American women, tended to report higher levels of perceived social support (Van Willigen & Drentea, 2001).

Social support can also be imperative when individuals are coping with abusive behavior from their partner and are considering leaving an abusive relationship. At such times, individuals need aid from the community in a variety of forms, ranging from legal assistance to medical attention to economic resources to social support from friends and family (Sullivan, Basta, Tan, & Davidson, 1992). Social support, both the availability and quality, is often thought to be helpful in aiding women's coping strategies in abusive relationships (Waldrop & Resick, 2004) and in fostering psychological health in terms of self-esteem, mastery, and diminished depression (Coker et al., 2002; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983). In fact, Sullivan et al. (1992) report that 79% of women, nearly equally Caucasian and African-American and mostly unemployed, leaving a domestic violence shelter

stated that they wanted more social support to help them in their transition and felt that they lacked the necessary support.

Levendosky et al. (2004), in a study of 203 women in their last trimester of pregnancy who have experienced mild to moderate physical violence, offer several explanations as to why social support may be lacking in instances of severe domestic violence. This situation may place those in abusive relationships at greater risk because consistent emotional support from family and friends is associated with better mental health and lower anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms (Coker et al., 2002). First, in severely abusive relationships, the abusive partner may isolate the victim as a measure of control, which may in turn have implications for the level of relative resources between the partners. Second, the abused partner may feel shame and embarrassment about the violence and thus retreat from available social support, limiting its availability in times of need. The authors also note that if abused individuals' social relationships are of poor quality, this may account for some of the variability in the availability of social support (Levendosky et al., 2004). Mitchell and Hodson (1983) support these assertions but also suggest that with the increasing stress of the battering relationship, maintaining bonds with friends may become increasingly difficult.

So, how does social support affect individuals in violent relationships? Often the more violent the relationship is, the less contact that the recipient of abuse can make with outside sources of social support, and thus fewer supporters are available to provide instrumental or emotional help (Coker et al., 2002; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983).

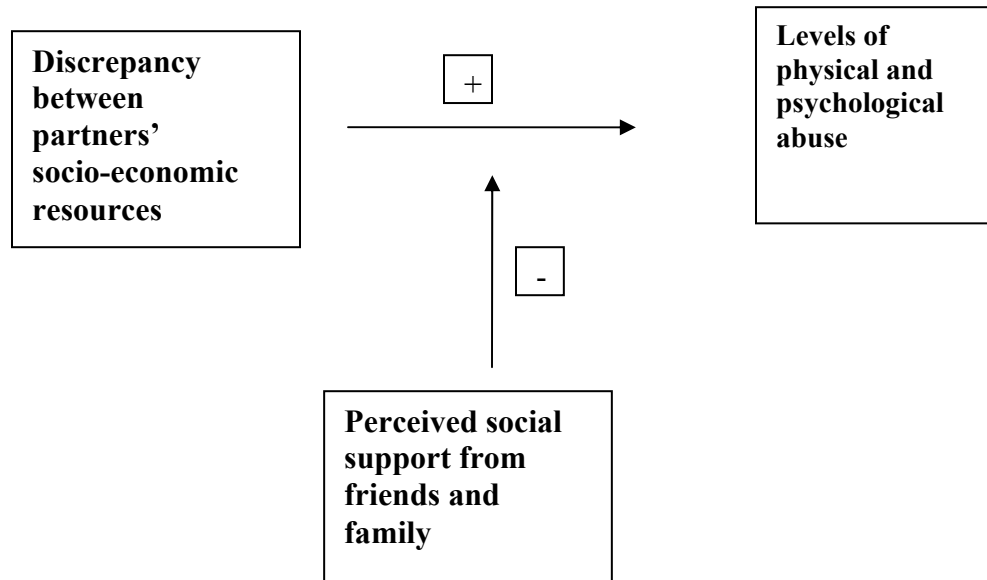
Levendosky et al. (2004) found that recipients' social isolation or the severity of abuse received was related to the level of social support. This may be due to isolating behaviors

used by the abuser, or the abused person's hesitation to disclose abuse. For example, in a study of female undergraduate students, Dunham and Senn (2000) found that the severity of abuse received significantly, negatively predicted the amount of disclosure that the young women made to people in their social support networks. Approximately 36.1% of the students reported at least minimizing the severity or significance of the first instance of physical abuse in describing it to others (Dunham & Senn, 2000). However, 97.3% did report experiencing verbal abuse with little to no minimization when providing a description to their social support network (Dunham & Senn, 2000). Overall, research suggests that the more violence that occurs in the relationship, the less likely the recipient of violence will receive social support, due to both a hesitation to disclose the abuse in full and the stress of the abuse that can have an isolating effect and create distance between the recipient and the social support network. However, the more that the victim disclosed the abuse to others, the more she received "emotional and practical aid" (Levendosky et al. 2004, p. 102). However, it has been suggested that this dynamic may only apply to instances of physical violence, but not to verbal abuse (Dunham & Senn, 2000; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983).

There has also been research that examines the relationships between socio-economic resources and the amount of perceived social support. In studying those factors that contribute to social support or lack thereof in the context of abusive relationships, Levendosky et al. (2004) found that the absolute level of income and education of the couple, while it may explain some of the difference in levels of domestic violence, does not explain the degree of social support received.

This study fills a gap in existing research by examining the role of perceived social support in domestic violence. Most of the research to this point has examined social support in severely physically abusive couples in which the abuse is generally unidirectional (male to female violence), but not in those who experience milder common couple violence, as well as those who receive psychologically abusive behavior from their partner where the abuse is bidirectional. Also, although research has focused on how social support can affect the coping and adjustment of women in abusive relationships, little has been done to explore how social support can serve as another resource and affect the levels of aggressive behavior within the couple's relationship. Thus, this study looked at how social support affects milder physical violence and psychological abuse in relationships. Moreover, this study adds to the current literature because of its sample. Because the partners in this study voluntarily entered therapy for relationship concerns, they were likely to have experienced a moderate amount of distress, but most likely were not engaging in severe battering violence. Furthermore, the sample was nearly equally Caucasian and African-American, a diversity which is somewhat rare in the current literature.

Figure 1: Model: The Effect of Socio-Economic Resources on Levels of Physical and Psychological Abuse as Moderated by Perceived Social Support



Variables

Independent Variables

Resources

A resource is “anything that one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter satisfy his needs or attain his goals” (Blood & Wolfe, 1960, p. 12). Relative, not absolute, resources of the male partner as compared to the female partner in a relationship were studied. In particular, the resources that were examined in the present study included personal income and education (see Figure 1).

Income. One personal resource that was examined is income, specifically the gross annual incomes of the individual partners. Money is considered a valuable resource because it can convey forms of social power and can be helpful in stressful circumstances (Steinmetz, 1987). It is also a standard used in much other research regarding resources (Hornung et al., 1981; Kaukinen, 2004; McCloskey, 1996).

Level of Education. The second personal resource examined was level of education, in particular, the highest level of education achieved by each individual partner. As Steinmetz (1987) asserts, education is not only a component of social class but also is linked to the availability of income and prestige. Steinmetz (1977) reported that education is negatively correlated with violence between spouses. Other research suggests a curvilinear relationship such that achieving an 8th grade, some high school, or a high school education is positively correlated with spousal violence, whereas earning a college education or more was negatively related (Straus, 1980).

Moderator Variable

Perceived Social Support

The moderator variable in this study was the level of support that partners *perceive* receiving from their friends and family. This is not the same as the objective level of social support but rather is the subjective assessment of the resources available to a person from his/her social network and may be influenced by internal as well as external factors (Procidano & Heller, 1983). Van Willigen and Drentea (2001) report that measuring perceived social support is a more common practice in research and lends more information to understanding its effects (see Figure 1).

Dependent Variables

Both of the dependent variables, physical and psychological abuse were measured at the individual level of analysis using self-report. Both are forms of aggression, which can be defined as any malevolent act, and can take many shapes (Gelles & Straus, 1979) (see Figure 1).

Physical Violence

Physical violence was defined as injurious or potentially injurious physical contact inflicted by one member of a couple upon the other.

Psychological Abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse was conceptualized in terms of Murphy and Hoover's (2001) four types of verbal and nonverbal behavior that do not involve physical contact with the recipient but rather involve hostile withdrawal, domination/intimidation, denigration, or restrictive engulfment. Psychological abuse is any act in the context of the intimate relationship that is intended to damage the emotional well-being of the partner.

Control Variables

A number of characteristics of the couples in this study were considered as potential control variables, to the extent that they showed evidence of affecting physical and psychological abuse and possibly confounding the relationship between couple resource discrepancy and abusive behavior. These variables included ages of the partners and mean length of relationship.

Hypotheses

There were four hypotheses that guided the research in this study:

1. Based on resource theory, when there is a discrepancy between the partners' incomes, the partner with the lower income will use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' incomes are equal.
2. Based on resource theory, when there is a discrepancy between the partners' levels of education, the partner with the lower level of education will use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' levels of education are equal.
3. When a member of a couple perceives that he or she has high social support from friends and/or family, that partner will use less physical and psychological abuse, compared to when he or she perceives having low social support from friends and/or family.
4. The effect of discrepancies between partners' socio-economic resources on the amount of physical and psychological abuse will be moderated by perceived social support from friends and/or family. Specifically, when perceived social support is high, the degree of discrepancy between partners'

socio-economic resources will be related less to the degree of abusive behavior than when perceived social support from friends and/or family is low.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in the study included 298 heterosexual couples who voluntarily entered couple therapy at the outpatient Family Service Center (FSC) at the University of Maryland, College Park between November, 2000 and December, 2005. Approximately half (55.7%) of the couples seen at the FSC during this time period were married and living together (please see Table 1 for demographic information of the sample). On average, they had been in relationships for approximately 7.1 years. The majority of the clients who entered the FSC for couple therapy were in their early 30s, with the average female partner being 32.1 years of age and the average male being 33.6 years of age. Clients also tended to be predominantly African-American and Caucasian in race. Of the female partners, 46.2% were African-American, and 36.7% were Caucasian, whereas only 17.0% were Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and “other.” Similarly, of the male partners, 44.4% were African-American and 40.1% were Caucasian, with 15.6% Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and “other.”

Clients varied in their degree of attaining the socio-economic resources of education and personal income focused on in the current study. Of the female partners, approximately 21.2% had attended trade school or had attained a high school diploma or less, 36.2% had attended some college or received an associate’s degree, 24.7% had received a bachelor’s degree or had attended some graduate education, and 17.7% had attained a graduate degree. Of the male partners, approximately 29.0% had attended trade school or had attained a high school diploma or less, 36.0% had attended some college or received an associate’s degree, 20.9% had received a bachelor’s degree or had attended

some graduate education, and 14.0% had attained a graduate degree. The female partners had a mean annual income of \$24,886, whereas the males' mean annual income was \$34,359.

Table 1

Demographics by Gender (in means or percentages)

Variable	Males <i>n</i> = 298	Females <i>n</i> = 298
Mean age of partner	33.6	32.1
Mean length of relationship (in years)	7.1	7.1
Relationship Status (percent)		
Married, living together	55.6	55.7
Married, separated	9.1	9.4
Living together, not married	16.4	15.3
Separated	1.4	1.0
Dating, not living together	16.8	18.1
Race (percent)		
Caucasian	40.1	36.7
African-American	44.4	46.2
Hispanic	6.3	8.7
Asian/ Pacific Islander	2.5	3.1
Other	6.8	5.2

Continued on the following page

Education (percent)		
Group 1	29.0	21.2
Some high school	6.6	5.2
High school diploma	16.8	11.1
Trade school	5.6	4.9
Group 2	36.0	36.2
Some college	28.9	26.1
Associate's degree	7.3	10.1
Group 3	20.9	24.7
Bachelor's degree	13.6	13.9
Some graduate education	7.3	10.8
Group 4	14.0	17.7
Master's degree	10.5	16.0
Doctoral degree	3.5	1.7

Mean income (in dollars)	34,359	24,886
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Procedure

The data in this sample were obtained from the pre-existing couple therapy assessment information at the Family Service Center (FSC) at the University of Maryland, College Park. The FSC is a teaching and research facility for master's level graduate students enrolled in a nationally accredited marriage and family therapy training program. As part of their clinical training, the graduate students provide individual, family, and couple therapy services to members of the communities surrounding the University.

In order to begin individual, couple, or family therapy at the FSC, prospective clients first must complete an intake interview over the phone. This process involves a FSC staff member collecting information through a series of questions about the

demographics of the caller's household members, general concerns, sources of referral, use of alcohol and drugs, court involvement, and danger of abuse, suicide, or homicide. Following the completion of the intake interview, the client is assigned a five-digit family case number, which is used to identify the case, as opposed to their personal, identifying information. All cases are then assigned to one or two FSC graduate student intern therapists, who then contact the client(s) to schedule a first appointment.

During the first session, which generally lasts approximately two hours, the therapists explain confidentiality procedures and the limits thereof to clients, as well as the FSC fees for therapy services. Clients are given the opportunity to ask questions about the policies of the FSC and are then required to sign consent forms for therapy to commence. Afterward, the partners are asked to fill out the remaining assessment paperwork in separate therapy rooms. Clients are told that the information provided will remain confidential from their partners and are thus asked to complete the forms as thoroughly and honestly as possible. The therapist then leaves the rooms and reviews the clients' progress about every 20 minutes until all of the assessment forms are complete. Included in this assessment packet are the forms used in this study, designed to assess socio-economic resources, perceived social support, and levels of physical and psychological abuse. The therapist reviews all of the questionnaires to assure that they are complete before the clients leave the FSC; if clients leave any items blank they are asked to fill in the answer that they believe is most appropriate. Clients are also briefly, verbally interviewed about their use of alcohol and drugs to assess for risk factors that may prohibit their participation in therapy. For the purposes of this study, data that

previously were collected from couples and entered into a database in the FSC have no identifying information about the participants.

Measures

Data for this study were derived from several measures that couples completed during their initial assessment session at the FSC: the Client Information and Instructions Form (demographic information, including personal income and education), the Conflict Tactics Scale - Revised (CTS-2), the Multi-dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS), and the Perceived Social Support scale (SS). The variables derived from these measures are described below.

Socio-economic Resources

The Client Information and Instructions Form (see Appendix A) collects basic demographic information, including contact information, marital status, income, education level, and religion; it is the first form that clients fill out individually. Resources were analyzed separately for income and level of education. This was done to account for the possibility that income and education resources may have different effects on physical and psychological abuse. Clients report their income by entering their personal gross annual income into a blank space. There is no response scale for this item, only an open-ended question. The couples' responses were divided into three groups: "female higher income," "equal income," and "male higher income" based on an examination of the distribution of couple income discrepancies within the sample. It was decided that in order to create distinct and psychologically meaningful groups, the couples that fell near the limits of the middle section would need to be eliminated. Those couples in which the mean difference between the male and female income was less than

20% were considered to be couples with equal incomes, whereas if the difference exceeded 50%, the partner earning more income was considered to have more resources with regard to income. Couples with income discrepancies between 20% and 50% were dropped from the sample to create the three distinct groups. In order to compute the income discrepancy within the couple as a percentage, a ratio was calculated by dividing each female partner's income by the male partner's income. However, some male partners reported an income of \$0, which made dividing by that income impossible. To avoid the problem of dividing by "0," any income reported as "\$0" was recoded as "\$1." This process did not change how any couples were categorized, as it did not significantly change the value of the calculated ratio, but simply made the process of division possible.

Clients also indicate their highest level of education completed on the Client Information and Instructions Form. They choose from the following nine item options: (1) some high school, (2) high school diploma, (3) some college, (4) trade school, (5) associate's degree, (6) bachelor's degree, (7) some graduate education, (8) master's degree, (9) doctoral degree. The response categories for levels of education were recoded such that some high school, high school diploma, and trade school were "1," some college and associate's degree were "2," bachelor's degree and some graduate education were "3," and master's degree and doctoral degree were "4." These new categories were formed because they were considered to have equivalent psychological meaning to partners. The partner who marked the higher category was considered to have higher resources with regard to education; if the partners marked the same response category, regardless of which specific item they marked, their resources were considered equal with regard to education.

Perceived Social Support

The Social Support Index (SS), which is derived from the Perceived Social Support-Family and Friends scales (see Appendix B), is a self-report measure that assesses “the extent to which an individual perceives that his/her needs for support, information, and feedback are fulfilled” (Procidano & Heller, 1983, p. 2). The measure has separate subscales assessing perceived support from family and from friends, and they were considered separately in this study. One limitation of this approach is that the family subscale is somewhat ambiguous in that it does not specify who constitutes “family” and thus opens the possibility that the person may include his or her spouse when rating sources of perceived support. However, due to the importance of both support from friends and family, both were used.

The Social Support subscale asks clients to read through 20 statements about friends and 20 statements about family and report the degree to which each item describes their relationships by using a Likert scale, ranging from “yes” (1) to “no” (5). A sample statement on this inventory asks clients, “My friends give me the moral support I need.” Several of the questions are reverse-worded, such that the most social support would be indicated by a “yes” (1) whereas for others the most social support would be indicated by a “no” (5) (item numbers 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14 in the friends subscale and item numbers 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15 for the family subscale). When the instrument was scored, the scores assigned to reversed items were reversed, such that higher total scores on the scale indicate a higher level of perceived social support. In addition to reverse scoring certain items on the scale, other items were eliminated because they measured the actions and abilities of friends and family as opposed to the

level of support received from them (items 4, 11, 12, 16, 17, and 19 for the friends subscale and items 2, 7, 12, 13, 17, and 18 for the family subscale). For example, one discarded item asks, “Members of my family come to me for emotional support.” Although the scores are recorded on an ordinal scale, for the current study an overall perceived social support score was calculated using the combination of the friends and family subscales and then dichotomized into “higher” and “lower,” for use in analyses of variance. In order to dichotomize each support variable, the researcher computed a distribution of scores for each sex and conducted a median split. The perceived social support for each sex was considered separately in order to conduct gender specific ANOVAs. All cases that fell above the median were recoded as “higher support” and all the cases that fell below the median were recoded as “lower support” for both the overall score and for family and friends.

Past research has shown the Social Support scale to have high test-retest reliability ($r = .83$ over 1 month) and internal consistency with Cronbach alpha = .90 (Procidano & Heller, 1983). Furthermore, Procidano and Heller (1983) found that this measure of perceived social support from family and friends is able to predict dependency, lack of self-confidence, sociability, and social presence.

Physical Violence

Physical violence was assessed using the revised version of the Conflict Tactics Scale Revised (CTS-2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) (see Appendix C). The CTS-2 is a self-report measure that assesses the levels and frequencies of primarily physical and to a lesser extent psychological aggression in dating, cohabiting, or marital relationships as well as partners’ strategies for negotiation (Straus

et al., 1996). Originally developed in 1979 to appraise the different tactics used in conflict (O’Leary, 2001), the CTS-2 is based in conflict theory and measures only the frequency of specific acts as opposed to attitudes about violence (Straus et al.). Critics of the measure have noted that it does not account for the context within which physical acts of violence occur (Straus et al.). The CTS-2 was chosen as the measure of physical violence for this study because of its established use in prior research as well as its appropriate length for use in clinical settings (Archer, 2000). Furthermore, prior research with the CTS-2 indicates that it accurately discriminates between partners who engage in physical acts of violence and those who do not; however, this differentiation was more accurate for severe acts of abuse as opposed to more minor acts (Straus et al.).

The categories of behavior included in the CTS-2 are physical assault, sexual coercion, injury, negotiation, and psychological aggression. Clients answer 78 questions about their own behavior and their partner’s behavior that correspond to these categories. The response choices on this questionnaire address the frequency of behaviors, including: (0) not in the past 4 months, but it did happen before, (1) once in the past 4 months, (2) twice in the past 4 months, (3) 3-5 times in the past 4 months, (4) 6-10 times in the past 4 months, (5) 11-20 times in the past 4 months, (6) more than 20 times in the past 4 months, and (9) this has never happened. For example, a sample question is, “I pushed or shoved my partner,” and “My partner did this to me.” For this study, the CTS-2 subscale assessing psychological abuse was not included, because the more extensive assessment of psychological abuse provided by the MDEAS was preferred. Although all of the CTS-2 subscales have good internal consistency, physical acts of violence were assessed for this study using only the physical assault (item numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 27, 28, 33, 34,

37, 38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 53, 54, 61, 62, 73, and 74) and injury scales (item numbers 11, 12, 23, 24, 31, 32, 41, 42, 55, 56, 71, 72), which have Cronbach alphas of .86 and .95 respectively (Straus et al., 1996). It was decided that the sexual coercion and the negotiation subscales were much less relevant for the purpose of this study. The physical assault and injury subscales scores were combined to indicate a score for physical violence because they both involve physical aggression and better indicate the level of severity of abuse. The variable of physical violence was analyzed at the interval level. Given that both the male and female partners answer this measure, the partner's response was used because it is generally accepted practice that the abused partner's account of the violence is more accurate than the abuser's account. This is probably due, at least in part, to the tendency of perpetrators to provide socially desirable answers that may skew results.

Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse was measured using the Multi-dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS; Murphy & Hoover, 2001) (see Appendix D). The MDEAS is a self-report measure that assesses the level and frequency of psychological and emotional abuse in the couple relationship. Psychological and emotional aggression are measured on the MDEAS in terms of subscales for hostile withdrawal (withholding emotional contact to punish partner and increase anxiety; item numbers 15-21), domination/intimidation (threats, property violence, and verbal aggression to produce fear and submission; item numbers 23-28), denigration (humiliation to reduce self-esteem; item numbers 8-14), and restrictive engulfment (isolation and restriction to increase dependency and availability; item numbers 1-7) (Murphy & Hoover, 2001). Clients

answer 54 questions about their own behavior as well as their partner's behavior regarding these categories in the past four months. The response choices on this questionnaire are as follows: (0) not in the 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 has never happened. For example, one of the items asks the clients to identify the numbers of times that they and their partner have called the other person worthless. The MDEAS subscales are scored by calculating the sum of the respondent's answers to the subscale item, with higher scores indicating a higher frequency of enacting or receiving psychologically abusive behaviors. For the current study, the four subscales were scored separately, instead of combining their scores into a composite index. This was decided because the subscales are sufficiently different to warrant concern that combining them would actually negate some of the variation. For example, hostile withdrawal and domination/intimidation are somewhat opposed to each other, as withdrawal implies a distancing behavior while domination implies a pursuing behavior; thus, when combined, these subscale scores may cancel each other out. Psychological abuse was analyzed as an interval variable in the study. Given that both the male and female partners answer this measure, the partner's response was used because it is generally accepted practice that the abused partner's account of the abuse is more accurate than the abuser's account.

Table 2

Summary of Variables, Conceptual and Operational Definitions, and Tools of Measurement

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Tool of Measurement
Income	The gross annual income of each partner individually	Income is considered equal if the discrepancy between male and female income is less than 20%. If the discrepancy exceeds 50%, the partner earning more income is considered to have more resources with regard to income.	Client Information and Instructions Form
Level of Education	The highest level of education completed by each partner	Levels of education were recoded such that some high school, high school diploma, and trade school are "1," some college and associate's degree are "2," bachelor's degree and some graduate education are "3," and master's degree and doctoral degree are "4." The partner who marks the higher category is considered to have higher resources with regard to education; if the partners mark the same response category, their resources are considered equal with regard to education.	Client Information and Instructions Form
Perceived Social Support	Individual perception of the amount of social support received from friends and family	Perceived social support was dichotomized into "higher" and "lower" by attaining frequencies of male and female scores of perceived social support and splitting the scores at the 50% mark. All data that fell above the median was recoded as "higher" and all the data that fell below the median was recoded as "lower" for both family and friends. The overall score was established by summing the family and friends scores.	Perceived Social Support Scale

Physical Violence	Injurious or potentially injurious physical contact inflicted by one member of a couple upon the other	The combination of scores on the physical abuse and injury subscales	Conflict Tactics Scale Revised (CTS-2)
Psychological Abuse	Any act in the context of the intimate relationship that may damage the emotional well-being of the partner	The separate scoring of the four subscales of psychological abuse, including: hostile withdrawal, domination/intimidation, denigration, and restrictive engulfment	Multi-dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS)

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Overview of Data Analysis

Although the researcher considered using continuous variables in multiple regression analyses in order to be more sensitive to variation in scores on the measures, the division of couples into three categories of resource discrepancies between partners (female greater resources, equal resources, male greater resources) was more appropriate for ANOVA and MANOVA tests of the study's hypotheses. The use of ANOVA and MANOVA provided tests of the main effect of income and education resource discrepancy and the interaction of these discrepancies and perceived social support in determining the forms of physical and psychological aggression. Gender-specific ANOVAs and MANOVAs were run such that when examining the female partner's abusive behavior as reported by her male partner, her own level of perceived social support was considered. Similarly, when looking at the male partner's abusive behavior as reported by his female partner, his own level of perceived social support was considered. In addition to the ANOVAs and MANOVAs conducted for hypothesis 3, which addresses the main effect of perceived social support on physical and psychological abuse, it was decided that a Pearson correlation would be utilized as a supplementary analysis, as it is more sensitive to the full range of social support scores examined in this hypothesis and could delineate more information regarding the influence of social support from friends and family.

Preliminary Analyses

For this study, an alpha level of .05 was selected to be the criterion for significance. Effects that have an alpha level of less than .10 were considered to be

trends. A series of correlations were computed to determine whether female and male partners' ages and years together in a relationship were associated with physical and psychological abuse and thus should be controlled statistically in tests of the hypotheses. Thirty correlations were conducted and only one, the male partner's age and his use of denigration was significant, $r = .13$, $p = .03$. Because this sole significant correlation was very weak, it seemed trivial to control for the male partner's age, and it was determined that no variables would be controlled in the tests of hypotheses.

In order to determine the overall level of physical and psychological abuse present in the sample, basic descriptive statistics were computed and are presented in Table 3. Tables 4 and 5 present the demographic characteristics of the three income discrepancy groups and three level of education discrepancy groups constructed with the procedures described in the Methodology chapter.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Physical and Psychological Abuse

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female Physical Abuse	284	.00	48.00	3.51	7.80
Male Physical Abuse	285	.00	51.00	3.45	7.39
Female Hostile-Withdrawal	282	.00	42.00	15.38	11.29
Male Hostile-Withdrawal	286	.00	42.00	18.30	11.93
Female Domination-Intimidation	281	.00	42.00	4.80	8.00
Male Domination-Intimidation	286	.00	42.00	6.85	8.61
Female Denigration	281	.00	42.00	6.80	8.82
Male Denigration	286	.00	42.00	6.58	8.91
Female Restrictive Engulfment	281	.00	42.00	9.86	9.86
Male Restrictive Engulfment	286	.00	41.00	8.36	9.49

In addition to the ANOVA and MANOVA tests based on income discrepancy groups that were constructed to be psychologically distinct through the procedure described in the Methodology chapter, another ANOVA and MANOVA were conducted in which the three income discrepancy groups were created differently. In the second set

of analyses, the partners' incomes were still considered equal if the mean difference between the male and female income was less than 20%. However, if the mean discrepancy exceeded 20%, the partner earning the higher income was considered to have greater resources with regard to income. Thus, none of the cases were dropped in dividing the sample into the three income discrepancy groups. These second analyses were conducted in order to determine if the loss of nearly 100 participants through the creation of the three original distinct groups affected the results.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Income Discrepancy Groups

	Income Discrepancy		
	Female Higher Income	Equal Income	Male Higher Income
Female			
Age	31.87 (7.50) (n = 55) Range (19-56)	33.38 (9.14) (n = 52) Range (19-57)	30.96 (9.14) (n = 82) Range (18-65)
Length of Relationship	6.68 (6.87) (n = 41) Range (0-33)	7.11 (6.36) (n = 44) Range (1-37)	7.28 (7.36) (n = 67) Range (0-40)
Income	36,667.38 (19,035.76) (n = 55) Range (3,600-90,000)	32,080.29 (16,782.83) (n = 52) Range (1-83,000)	9,716.85 (13846.17) (n = 82) Range (1-70,000)
Male			
Age	33.40 (8.13) (n = 55) Range (20-63)	33.96 (9.88) (n = 51) Range (21-69)	33.22 (9.12) (n = 82) Range (19-68)
Length of Relationship	6.68 (6.97) (n = 40) Range (0-33)	7.09 (6.34) (n = 43) Range (0-37)	7.19 (7.28) (n = 67) Range (1-40)
Income	11,244.04 (13482.62) (n = 55) Range (1-50,000)	33,000.08 (16,735.39) (n = 52) Range (1-70,000)	50,536.59 (37,949.30) (n = 82) Range (4,000-200,000)

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of Level of Education Discrepancy Groups

	Level of Education Discrepancy		
	Female Higher Education	Equal Education	Male Higher Education
Female			
Age	32.22 (7.26) (n = 83) Range (21-49)	31.14 (8.80) (n = 106) Range (18-56)	32.37 (9.43) (n = 63) Range (18-64)
Length of Relationship	6.14 (5.16) (n = 69) Range (1-23)	6.40 (6.19) (n = 86) Range (0-33)	9.15 (8.56) (n = 46) Range (1-41)
Income	28,686.89 (19,207.37) (n = 81) Range (1-80,000)	24,059.22 (19,867.03) (n = 99) Range (1-90,000)	23,961.52 (18,798.86) (n = 56) Range (1-83,000)
Male			
Age	32.58 (7.41) (n = 84) Range (22-63)	33.22 (8.86) (n = 106) Range (19-69)	34.92 (9.66) (n = 63) Range (19-66)
Length of Relationship	5.81 (4.73) (n = 67) Range (1-23)	6.41 (6.40) (n = 84) Range (0-33)	8.81 (8.37) (n = 47) Range (1-41)
Income	26,295.35 (18,902.84) (n = 77) Range (1-75,000)	35,591.19 (30,125.60) (n = 101) Range (1-200,000)	45,600.17 (37,031.83) (n = 59) Range (1-185,000)

Tests of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that when there was a discrepancy between the partners' incomes, the partner with the lower income would use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' incomes were equal. An ANOVA was used to determine the main effect of the three levels of income discrepancy (“female higher income,” “equal income,” and “male higher income”) on the single dependent variable of physical aggression; however, a MANOVA was used to determine the main effect of income discrepancy on the four forms of psychological abuse that were assessed using the MDEAS. For females, a trend toward a group difference was discovered in the use of physical abuse as reported by the male partner, with $F(2, 184) = 2.46, p = .089$. The results form the following pattern: the female partner's use of physical abuse was highest when she had the higher income, mean = 4.05, and lowest when the male had the higher income, mean = 1.85. Couples in which the incomes were considered equal fell between the two other groups, mean = 2.23. It is worth noting that these means represent low levels of abuse more characteristic of common couple violence than patriarchal violence (Johnson, 1995). This finding did not support the hypothesis that the partner with lower resources with regard to income would utilize more physical abuse. However, no significant results were found during the second analysis for a partner income discrepancy and the female partner's use of physical abuse, $F(2, 240) = 2.11, p = .12$. The results for the male partner's use of physical abuse as reported by the female partner were not significant, $F(2, 184) = 2.04, p = .13$. Similarly, in the second analysis, the results for the male partner's use of physical abuse as reported by the female partner were not significant, $F(2, 241) = 1.53, p = .22$.

The MANOVA comparing the three income discrepancy groups on the four types of psychological abuse by the female partners indicated a significant multivariate effect, $F(8, 360) = 2.23, p = .03$ for Wilkes' Lambda. Therefore, the individual ANOVAs for the four types of psychological abuse were examined. The group difference was significant for denigration, with $F(2, 183) = 4.19, p = .017$, and there was a trend toward a group difference for hostile-withdrawal, with $F(2, 183) = 2.62, p = .075$. The group means for all of the forms of abuse are presented in Table 6. The means for the groups regarding denigration are as follows: female higher income = 9.22; equal income = 5.02; male higher income = 5.48. Post hoc paired comparisons using the Student-Newman-Keuls test indicated significant differences between the female higher income group and equal income group and the female higher income group and the male higher income group, with $p = .04$ and $p = .04$, respectively. The means for the groups regarding hostile-withdrawal are as follows: female higher income = 17.47; equal income = 17.40; male higher income = 13.62. No significant differences were found for income discrepancy and domination-intimidation or restrictive engulfment, with $F(2, 183) = 1.57, p = .21$ and $F(2, 183) = 0.77, p = .46$, respectively. Although a relationship between income discrepancy and denigration and hostile-withdrawal exists, the results did not support the hypothesis. Rather, the pattern occurs in the opposite direction from that expected with the female partner using *more* denigration and hostile-withdrawal when she had higher resources with regard to income. Thus, in the case of denigration and hostile-withdrawal, having fewer resources with regard to income was not associated with greater use of psychological abuse by the female partner.

In conducting the second analysis, a trend towards a group difference was discovered for a partner income discrepancy on the four types of psychological abuse by the female partner, $F(8, 468) = 1.89, p = .06$. Similar to the first analysis, a trend toward a group difference was discovered for the female partner's use of hostile withdrawal, with $F(2, 237) = 2.39, p = .094$. The means for groups regarding hostile withdrawal are as follows: female higher income = 16.16; equal income = 17.40; male higher income = 13.67. However, the results for domination/intimidation, $F(2, 237) = 0.86, p = .42$; denigration, $F(2, 237) = 2.11, p = .12$; and restrictive engulfment, $F(2, 237) = 0.47, p = .63$, were not found to be significant.

The MANOVA comparing the three income discrepancy groups on the four types of psychological abuse by the male partner did not indicate a significant multivariate effect; $F(8, 366) = 0.97, p = .46$. This finding is therefore not consistent with the hypothesis.

Table 6

Income Discrepancy Group Means and Standard Deviations for Physical and

Psychological Abuse

	Income Discrepancy			Test of Significance
	Female Higher Income (<i>n</i> = 55)	Equal Income (<i>n</i> = 52)	Male Higher Income (<i>n</i> = 79)	
Female Physical Abuse	4.05 (7.59)	2.23 (6.04) (<i>n</i> = 51)	1.85 (4.11) (<i>n</i> = 81)	$F(2, 184) = 2.46$, $p = .089$
Male Physical Abuse	4.93 (9.08)	2.55 (5.12)	2.69 (6.57) (<i>n</i> = 80)	$F(2, 184) = 2.04$, $p = .13$
Female Hostile- Withdrawal	17.47 (13.37)	17.40 (10.63)	13.62 (9.94)	$F(2, 183) = 2.62$, $p = .075$
Male Hostile- Withdrawal	19.31 (12.05)	15.33 (12.41)	18.10 (11.28)	$F(2, 186) = 1.60$, $p = .20$
Female Domination- Intimidation	5.20 (7.87)	4.63 (8.87)	3.09 (5.13)	$F(2, 183) = 1.57$, $p = .21$
Male Domination- Intimidation	7.56 (9.01)	5.62 (7.71)	6.45 (9.01)	$F(2, 186) = 0.68$, $p = .506$
Female Denigration	9.22 (10.50) ^a	5.02 (6.47) ^b	5.48 (8.06) ^b	$F(2, 183) = 4.16$, $p = .017$
Male Denigration	6.78 (10.07)	4.29 (6.02)	6.10 (7.55)	$F(2, 186) = 1.40$, $p = .25$
Female Restrictive Engulfment	10.65 (10.67)	8.27 (8.01)	9.29 (10.62)	$F(2, 183) = 0.77$, $p = .46$
Male Restrictive Engulfment	7.76 (9.06)	8.88 (8.79)	7.55 (9.16)	$F(2, 186) = 0.37$, $p = .69$

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different superscripts are significantly different. Sample sizes are marked for the entire column unless otherwise specified.

Hypothesis 2 stated that when there was a discrepancy between the partners' levels of education, the partner with the lower level of education would use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' levels of education were equal.

An ANOVA was used to determine the main effect of the three levels of education discrepancy (“female higher education,” “equal education,” “male higher education”) on the single dependent variable of physical aggression; however, a MANOVA was used to determine the main effect of education discrepancy on the four forms of psychological abuse that were assessed with the MDEAS. For female partners, a trend toward a group difference was discovered in the use of physical abuse as reported by the male partner, with $F(2, 247) = 2.61, p = .076$. The group means for all of the forms of abuse are presented in Table 7. The means for the groups were as follows: female higher education = 2.93; equal education = 2.06; male higher education = 4.63. There was a trend toward a group difference between equal education and male higher education, but it did not reach the level of significance. This finding supports the researcher’s hypothesis that there is a relationship between discrepancy in partner’s levels of education and the use of physical abuse such that the partner with lower resources with regard to level of education will utilize more physical abuse than when the male partner has more resources. No significant difference was found between the three levels of education discrepancy and the male partner’s use of physical abuse as reported by the female, $F(2, 248) = 0.58, p = .56$.

The MANOVA comparing the three education disparity groups on the four types of psychological abuse by the female or male partner was not significant; $F(8, 482) = 0.96, p = .47$ and $F(8, 492) = 0.93, p = .49$, respectively. These findings did

not support the hypothesis put forth by the researcher that the partner with more educational resources will utilize less psychological abuse; therefore, univariate analyses of the four types of psychological abuse were not examined.

Table 7

Level of Education Discrepancy, Group Means, and Standard Deviations for Physical and Psychological Abuse

	Level of Education Discrepancy			Test of Significance
	Female Higher Education (<i>n</i> = 82)	Equal Education (<i>n</i> = 102)	Male Higher Education (<i>n</i> = 63)	
Female Physical Abuse	2.93 (5.28) ^a (<i>n</i> = 84)	2.06 (5.09) ^a (<i>n</i> = 105)	4.63 (10.93) ^b (<i>n</i> = 62)	<i>F</i> (2,247)= 2.61 <i>p</i> = .076
Male Physical Abuse	3.25 (7.20) (<i>n</i> = 83)	2.65 (5.48) (<i>n</i> = 104)	2.21 (4.26)	<i>F</i> (2,248)= 0.58 <i>p</i> = .56
Female Hostile-Withdrawal	14.22 (10.76)	15.58 (11.50)	15.48 (11.38)	<i>F</i> (2,247)=0.38 <i>p</i> = .68
Male Hostile-Withdrawal	17.81 (11.83)	18.02 (11.94)	17.97 (12.10)	<i>F</i> (2,249)= 0.01 <i>p</i> = .99
Female Domination-Intimidation	3.87 (6.01)	3.27 (5.92)	5.56 (8.89)	<i>F</i> (2,247)= 2.22 <i>p</i> = .11
Male Domination-Intimidation	6.31 (8.20)	5.98 (7.38)	6.08 (7.66)	<i>F</i> (2,249)= 0.04 <i>p</i> = .96
Female Denigration	6.72 (9.62)	5.92 (7.93)	7.17 (8.02)	<i>F</i> (2,247)= 0.46 <i>p</i> = .63
Male Denigration	5.90 (8.07)	5.33 (7.13)	7.21 (9.32)	<i>F</i> (2,249)= 1.10 <i>p</i> = .34
Female Restrictive Engulfment	8.83 (8.74)	9.28 (10.11)	9.52 (9.58)	<i>F</i> (2,247)= 0.10 <i>p</i> = .90
Male Restrictive Engulfment	6.99 (8.48)	6.77 (7.88)	9.46 (9.54)	<i>F</i> (2,249)= 2.20 <i>p</i> = .11

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different superscripts are significantly different. Sample sizes are marked for the entire column unless otherwise specified.

Hypothesis 3 stated that when a member of a couple perceives that he or she has high social support from friends and/or family, that partner will use less physical and psychological abuse, compared to when he or she perceive having low social support from friends and/or family. For hypothesis 3, ANOVAs and MANOVAs as well as Pearson correlations were conducted to determine the influence of perceived social support from friends and family on physical and psychological abuse, respectively.

Two ANOVAs were used to determine the main effect of the two levels of social support (“higher support” and “lower support”) on the dependent variables of females’ and males’ physical abuse; however, a MANOVA for each sex was used to determine the main effect of social support levels on the four forms of psychological abuse that were assessed with the MDEAS. No significant difference was found regarding the female partner’s perceived social support and her use of physical abuse as reported by the male partner, $F(1, 165) = 0.001, p = .98$. This finding is not consistent with the stated hypothesis. Similarly, no significant difference was found regarding the male partner’s perceived social support and his use of physical abuse as reported by the female partner, $F(1, 167) = 0.60, p = .44$. This finding is also not consistent with the stated hypothesis.

The MANOVA comparing the two social support groups on the four types of psychological abuse by the female partner was not significant, $F(4, 161) = 1.05, p = .38$. This finding is not consistent with the stated hypothesis. A trend toward a group difference was discovered regarding the male partner’s perceived social support and his use of psychologically abusive behaviors, $F(4, 166) = 2.15, p = .08$. Upon further investigation of the four subtypes of psychological abuse, the following results were found: a significant difference regarding the male partner’s use of hostile withdrawal,

$F(1, 169) = 6.16, p = .01$; a trend toward a group difference regarding domination/intimidation, $F(1, 169) = 3.87, p = .051$; and no significant difference regarding denigration $F(1, 169) = 0.46, p = .50$ and restrictive engulfment $F(1, 169) = 0.42, p = .52$. The group means for all of the forms of abuse are presented in Table 8. The means for the male partner's hostile withdrawal were 20.35 for "lower social support" and 15.30 for "higher social support." The negative relationship pattern whereby the male partner utilizes more hostile withdrawal when he perceives lower levels of social support is consistent with the hypothesis. The means for the male partner's domination/intimidation were 7.52 for "lower social support" and 5.27 for "higher social support." The negative relationship pattern whereby the male partner utilizes more domination and intimidation when he perceives lower levels of social support is also consistent with the hypothesis.

Table 8

Partners' Own Perceived Social Support Group Means and Standard Deviations for Physical and Psychological Abuse.

	Own Perceived Social Support		Test of Significance
	Higher (<i>n</i> = 85)	Lower (<i>n</i> = 90)	
Female Physical Abuse	2.59 (4.82)	2.38 (6.53)	$F(1, 165) = 0.001$ $p = .98$
Male Physical Abuse	2.77 (6.35)	3.25 (6.97)	$F(1, 167) = 0.60$ $p = .44$
Female Hostile- Withdrawal	15.49 (11.51)	15.80 (10.78)	$F(1, 164) = 0.01$ $p = .93$
Male Hostile- Withdrawal	15.30 (11.94)	20.04 (11.62)	$F(1, 169) = 6.16$ $p = .014$
Female Domination- Intimidation	4.60 (6.69)	3.09 (6.58)	$F(1, 164) = 2.01$ $p = .16$
Male Domination- Intimidation	5.27 (7.34)	7.52 (9.25)	$F(1, 169) = 3.87$ $p = .051$
Female Denigration	6.75 (8.89)	5.72 (8.32)	$F(1, 164) = 0.26$ $p = .61$
Male Denigration	5.09 (6.52)	6.18 (8.91)	$F(1, 169) = 0.46$ $p = .50$
Female Restrictive Engulfment	8.95 (9.64)	9.67 (10.03)	$F(1, 164) = 0.39$ $p = .53$
Male Restrictive Engulfment	6.96 (7.98)	8.27 (9.80)	$F(1, 169) = 0.42$ $p = .52$

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Supplementary Correlation Analysis of Social Support and Abusive Behavior

In order to determine the influence of perceived social support from friends and family, separately and combined, on partners' use of physical and psychological abuse, Pearson correlations were conducted, as they were more sensitive to the full range of participants' scores on the social support measure. Similar to the findings from the ANOVA, the female partner's use of physical abuse as reported by the male partner was not related to her reports of overall social support, $r = .02, p = .38$, or social support by friends or family, $r = .00, p = .50$ and $r = .03, p = .31$, respectively. This finding does not support the hypothesis that a partner with lower social support will utilize more physical abuse.

Unlike the findings from the ANOVA, the male partner's use of physical abuse as reported by the female partner was significantly, negatively related to his perception of overall social support he receives, $r = -.11, p = .047$, as well as social support from family $r = -.11, p = .04$, but not perceived social support from friends, $r = -.08, p = .11$. Thus, it seems that the more the male partner perceived social support from family, the less likely he was to use physical abuse, as reported by the female partner. This finding does support the hypothesis presented by the researcher.

Unlike the findings from the ANOVA, with regard to psychological abuse, the female partner's use of domination and intimidation as reported by the male partner was significantly related to her overall perceived social support, $r = .11, p = .04$. Unlike what was predicted in the hypothesis, this correlation suggested that when the female partner perceived more overall social support, she was *more* likely to utilize domination and intimidation of her male partner. This finding thus does not support the hypothesis. A

trend was discovered regarding the correlation between the female partner's use of domination and intimidation and her perception of social support from family, $r = .09$, $p = .07$.

Similar to the findings from the ANOVA, the male partner's use of psychological abuse as reported by the female partner was related to his overall perceived social support, as well as perceived support from family and friends. Specifically, the male partner's use of hostile withdrawal was related significantly to his overall perceived social support, $r = -.12$, $p = .03$, and perceived social support from family, $r = -.11$, $p = .03$, but not perceived social support from friends, $r = -.08$, $p = .10$. These relationships support the hypothesis as they suggest that as the male partner perceived more social support he was less likely to engage in psychologically abusive behaviors. The male partner's use of domination and intimidation was significantly related to his own perceived social support from family, $r = -.14$, $p = .01$, and overall perceived social support, $r = -.14$, $p = .01$. A trend was also discovered such that the male partner's use of domination and intimidation was related to his perceived social support from friends, $r = -.08$, $p = .099$. The male partner's use of denigration towards his partner was significantly related to his overall perceived social support, $r = -.18$, $p = .002$, his perceived social support from friends, $r = -.11$, $p = .045$, and his perceived social support from family, $r = -.15$, $p = .01$. Finally, the male partner's use of restrictive engulfment was significantly related to his own overall perceived social support, $r = -.13$, $p = .02$, and his perceived social support from family, $r = -.13$, $p = .02$. There was also a trend discovered such that the male partner's use of restrictive engulfment was related to his perceived social support from friends, $r = -.08$, $p = .098$. The relationships between

perceived social support and use of all four types of psychological abuse support the hypothesis that the use of these abusive behaviors was negatively related to perceived social support from friends, family, or both.

Hypothesis 4 stated that the effect of variations in discrepancies between partners' socio-economic resources on the amounts of physical and psychological abuse would be moderated by perceived social support from friends and/or family. Specifically, when perceived social support is high, the degree of discrepancy between partners' socio-economic resources would be related less to the degree of abusive behavior than when perceived social support from friends and/or family was low. For the single dependent variable of physical abuse, the interaction effect between the three levels of discrepancy in socio-economic resources and the two levels of perceived social support (higher versus lower) was tested with an ANOVA. The same interaction effect on the set of four forms of psychological abuse was tested with a MANOVA. No significant income discrepancy by perceived social support interaction effect was found for the female partner's use of physically abusive behaviors, $F(2, 165) = 0.39, p = .68$. A similar effect was found in the second analysis, $F(2, 217) = 0.95, p = .39$. This does not support the hypothesis put forth by the researcher. On the other hand, a significant income discrepancy by perceived social support interaction effect was found for males' use of physical abuse, $F(2, 167) = 5.12, p = .007$. The cell means for this interaction are presented in Table 9. The pattern of the cell means indicates that there is little variance in males' physical abuse across the three income discrepancy groups when the male partner perceives higher social support, compared to when he perceives lower social support. In particular, the male partner uses more physical abuse (mean = 8.00) when he perceives

that he has lower social support and his partner has more resources with regard to income, in contrast to when the two partners have relatively equal incomes (mean = 1.14) or when he has greater income (mean = 1.68). A similarly significant effect was found in the second analysis, $F(2, 217) = 3.08, p = .48$. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that when perceived social support is low, the degree of discrepancy between partners' socio-economic resources would be related more to the degree of abusive behavior than when perceived social support from friends was high.

In computing the above 3 x 2 ANOVA, the main effect for income discrepancy on male's physical abuse reached the level of significance, $F(2, 167) = 4.33, p = .015$, unlike the non-significant finding for income discrepancy when the one-way analysis of variance was computed for hypothesis 1. The means for the female higher income, equal income, and male higher income groups were 5.30, 2.26, and 2.09, respectively. This pattern was consistent with hypothesis 1, that males would behave more abusively when they had fewer resources with regard to income than their female partners. This difference in significance level seems to have occurred because the inclusion of perceived social support accounted for additional variance that was not accounted for in the one-way ANOVA for income discrepancy. This likely reduced error variance, therefore bringing about a significant main effect for income discrepancy, which before had approached a trend toward a group difference, $p = .13$.

Table 9

Cell Means for Males' Physical Abuse: Income Discrepancy by Social Support

Interaction

Perceived Social Support	Income Discrepancy		
	Female Higher	Equal	Male Higher
Higher	2.61 (<i>n</i> = 28)	3.38 (<i>n</i> = 24)	2.50 (<i>n</i> = 36)
Lower	8.00 (<i>n</i> = 23)	1.14 (<i>n</i> = 22)	1.68 (<i>n</i> = 40)

No significant interaction effect was found between the female partner's perceived social support and discrepancy in level of education for her use of physical abuse, $F(2, 225) = 1.38, p = .25$. Similarly, no significant interaction effect was found between the male partner's perceived social support and discrepancy in level of education for his use of physical abuse, $F(2, 222) = 0.39, p = .68$. Thus, these findings do not support the hypothesis that social support moderates the relationship between educational resource discrepancies and physical abuse.

No significant interaction effect was found in the MANOVA between partners' income discrepancy and the female's perceived social support on the levels of her use of psychological abuse as reported by her male partner in either the first analysis, $F(8, 322) = 0.39, p = .92$, or the second analysis, $F(8, 422) = 0.74, p = .65$. Similarly, there was no significant interaction effect found in the MANOVA between the income discrepancy and the male partner's perceived social support on levels of his use of

psychological abuse as reported by his female partner in either the first analysis, $F(8, 332) = 1.34, p = .22$, or in the second analysis, $F(8, 432) = 0.93, p = .49$. Thus, these results do not support the stated hypothesis that social support moderates the relationship between income resources and psychological abuse. Furthermore, no significant interaction effect was found between discrepancy in level of education and the female partner's perceived social support for her use of psychological abuse, $F(8, 438) = 0.78, p = .62$. Similarly, no significant interaction effect was found in the MANOVA between the male partner's perceived social support and discrepancy in level of education for his use of psychological abuse, $F(8, 442) = 1.48, p = .16$. Thus, these results do not support the stated hypothesis that social support moderates the relationship between educational resources and psychological abuse.

CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

The purpose of the current study was to examine the degree to which discrepancies between partners in personal income and education are related to partners' use of psychological and physical aggression in couple interactions, and to determine whether perceived social support from people outside the couple's relationship can moderate the relationship between personal resource discrepancies and aggressive behavior. Some results supported the proposed hypotheses that the partner with lesser resources in income and education and perceived social support would use more psychological and physical abuse, whereas others did not. Similarly, some results supported the hypothesis that there exists an interaction effect between resource discrepancy and perceived social support and the use of psychological and physical aggression, whereas others did not. The results will be summarized and discussed by hypothesis, followed by an examination of the limitations of the study, clinical and theoretical implications, and the implications for future research.

Hypothesis 1 stated that when there was a discrepancy between the partners' incomes, the partner with the lower income will use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' incomes are equal. For hypothesis 1, several of the results were statistically significant, but nothing directly supported the expected outcome. Specifically, there appears to be a relationship between an income discrepancy and the female partner's use of physical abuse and the psychologically abusive tactics of denigration and hostile withdrawal; however, the female partner's greater use of these behaviors occurred when she in fact had *more* resources than her male partner. The

direction of this finding is the opposite of what was expected. However, these same results were not found during the second analysis of income discrepancy, though it was hypothesized that no significance was found because the new groups were less psychologically distinct. Furthermore, there were no significant findings regarding partners' income discrepancy and the male partner's use of physical or psychological abuse. Previous research has been somewhat inconsistent in determining whether such a relationship between relative partner resources and abusive behaviors exists and in what direction it should occur. The current study was able to support previous findings from Straus (1980), who stated that when a husband's resources are greater, the wife's use of physical violence is lower, as found in this study; whereas this was not the finding that was expected in the present study, the results do directly support Straus (1980). Moreover, the findings of Babcock et al. (1993) are supported, as they found that education, income, and socio-economic status were not significantly related to the husband's use of physical violence or psychological abuse. However, the current study's findings are not consistent with prior findings by Allen and Straus (1980) and Fox et al. (2002), who reported that given a male partner with fewer resources than the female partner, the male partner would be more likely to utilize violence to restore the typical balance of power in a relationship and Kaukinen (2004), who stated that emotional abuse is likely to occur when the female partner's income exceeds that of the male partner.

One possible explanation emerges to clarify why the current study did not find that the partner with fewer resources with regard to income utilized more physical and psychological abuse. McCloskey (1996) states that as the female partner's power increases, due to increasing resources as compared to the male partner, marital tension

increases and the traditional balance of power in the relationship is disrupted. Perhaps this tension leads to an increased likelihood of physical and psychological abuse because of a need to release pressure. The female partner may feel more comfortable releasing the tension in the form of physical abuse and denigration and hostile-withdrawal when she has more income and thus more power. Essentially, perhaps achieving a higher income than her male partner empowers the female partner to act upon this power as such power is not generally felt in this patriarchal society. Or, perhaps a higher income gives the female partner greater options for leaving the relationship, so she may feel more free to act aggressively.

Kessler and McRae (1982) provide a possible explanation regarding the lack of male physical and psychological abuse in response to discrepancies in partners' resources. Kessler and McRae (1982) state that the husband's well-being is benefited by the wife's increased income, and thus he is less likely to utilize aggressive tactics. Whereas this explanation speaks more to the absolute resources of the couple, it provides an explanation as to why the relative resources between members of a couple may not always matter exclusively. It is also quite possible that the current study did not measure characteristics that would be meaningful to males' physical aggression. The current study examined the role of two socio-economic resources on the occurrence of physical abuse, but did not address other factors, such as belief systems about abuse, that may be likely to impact the male's use of physical aggression. Furthermore, this finding does not support the efficacy of resource theory to predict common couple violence in couples. It seems that the occurrence of abuse is more complex than resource theory contends and may

need to take into account issues other than power derived from relative resources to explain the use of aggression.

Hypothesis 2 stated that when there was a discrepancy between the partners' levels of education, the partner with the lower level of education would use more physical and psychological abuse, compared to when the partners' levels of education are equal.

For hypothesis 2, only one finding supported the stated hypothesis: the female partner's use of physical abuse was highest when the male had achieved a higher level of education. No significant results were found regarding the relationship between discrepancies in the levels of education achieved between partners and the female partner's use of psychological aggression or the male partner's use of both physical and psychological abuse. Again, Allen and Straus's (1980) assertion that a female partner achieving a higher resource level would result in the male partner's increased use of violence was not upheld as no significant results were found for the male partner's use of either physical or psychological abuse. Kaukinen (2004) also suggested that the female partner's level of education exceeding that of the male partner is related to the amount of psychological abuse she received from the male partner; again, the findings from the current study do not support this finding. The findings from Hornung et al. (1981) were partially supported; Hornung et al. found that an imbalance in educational resources is related to the risk for physical violence. Clearly, in the current study, only the trend for female partner's use of physical violence to be associated with resource discrepancy was upheld.

Several possible reasons emerge to explain why the findings overall failed to uphold the stated hypothesis. It is feasible that females may realistically expect to reach

educational parity with their male partners in today's society, despite not typically achieving income parity. Because of this, they may have come to accept having fewer income resources, but not educational resources, and react more strongly to achieving a lower level of education than their male partner. It is therefore not surprising that there was not a significant relationship found between the male partner's use of physical and psychological abuse and a discrepancy in educational achievement. Furthermore, Hornung et al. (1981) suggest that there is only a relationship between discrepancies in levels of education achieved and physical abuse, with no mention of psychologically abusive behaviors; Hornung et al. even suggest that this relationship is most likely to occur when a male is more highly educated than his female partner. Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that no relationship between female's psychological abuse and educational discrepancies was found. In fact, this finding is consistent with some prior research, although it does not support the current study's hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 stated that when a member of a couple perceives that he or she has high social support from friends and/or family, that partner will use less physical and psychological abuse, compared to when he or she perceives having low social support from friends and/or family. Most research suggests that social support can serve as a protective factor for couples, families, and individuals coping with life stressors (Coker et al., 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2002; Waldrop & Resick, 2004). The majority of the current study's results support the previous research, with a few exceptions. The female partner's use of physical abuse was unrelated to her perceived social support from friends or family. The study produced the expected results regarding the main effect of the male's perceived social support overall and from family on his use of physical abuse; the

male partner is more likely to utilize physical abuse when his overall perception of social support and perception of social support from family is low. Again however, this relationship was very weak, with $r = -.11$ and $r = -.10$, respectively. Interestingly, a trend appears to exist regarding the importance of social support from family and the use of abusive behaviors. Generally, it seems that familial support plays a more important role in lowering abusive behaviors, both physical and psychological, than support from friends. It also seems interesting that the male partner's physical abuse seems to be more influenced by social support than is the female partner's physical abuse; females' perception of support was not related to her use of physical abuse at all. This may be due in part to the low level of physical abuse recorded in this study, especially by female partners. Or, it is possible that gender plays an important role in the way that social support influences our behaviors. However, despite some inconsistencies in the influence of perceived social support on the use of physical abuse, it seems that the results support the hypothesis for males.

The result regarding social support and the female partner's use of psychological abuse however was surprising and unexpected. The results suggest that when the female partner perceives overall social support (more with regard to the family), she is more likely to utilize domination and intimidation tactics. It was expected that the opposite finding would result, whereby the female partner would use less psychological abuse when overall social support was high. Perhaps, for females, perceiving social support produces a perception of strength to say and do what one wishes more freely than without support.

Finally, the results for psychological abuse supported the hypothesis that male partners would use less abusive behavior when perceiving greater support. For all four dimensions of psychological abuse, males' overall perception of social support and support from family were significantly related to the amount of abusive behavior utilized, but there was only a trend for support from friends to be associated with degrees of domination and intimidation and restrictive engulfment. Again, this suggests that the perception of support from family is more powerful than support from friends in determining certain actions by the male partner.

Hypothesis 4 stated that the effect of variations in discrepancies between partners' socio-economic resources on the amounts of physical and psychological abuse would be moderated by perceived social support from friends and/or family. Specifically, when perceived social support is high, the degree of discrepancy between partners' socio-economic resources would be related less to the degree of abusive behavior than when perceived social support from friends was low. Most of the findings did not support the hypothesis that perceived social support would moderate the relationship between discrepancies in income and education and physical and psychological abuse. In fact, for hypothesis 4, only the interaction effect between the male partner's use of physical abuse and the income discrepancy and social support was significant. The findings suggest that males are more likely to utilize physically aggressive behaviors when they perceived lower social support and their female partner had higher resources with regard to income. Furthermore, the males' use of physical abuse varied much less when he perceived high social support compared to when it was lower. This supports the hypothesis that the degree of discrepancy in socio-economic resources would be related less to physical

abuse when perceived social support was higher compared to when it was lower. It also supports the efficacy of using resource theory in examining common couple violence.

Several explanations emerge to shed light on the findings. The males seem to utilize more physical abuse when they have fewer alternative resources, such as income and social support. In this sense, violence may be used as another resource to gain power in a relationship where it might otherwise be lacking. However, if he had either equal or more income than his partner or a relatively high level of social support, he does not appear to have needed to resort to violence to gain power. Interestingly, psychological aggression was not greater with fewer income or social support resources; it is possible that physical violence is used more because it is more visible and therefore more effective for gaining power. Also, the current study may not have found an interaction effect consistently between resources and social support because only a very modest main effect for socio-economic resources and abusive behavior existed; therefore, not much of a relationship was present for social support to moderate in the first place. It is possible that no interaction was discovered for female partners based on the variables measured in this study, but that other factors may be related.

Limitations of the Current Study

The current study has several limitations that should be addressed. Most importantly, the sample used was not as diverse in resources and level of physical abuse as would be useful, and the data were collected exclusively using the self-report method. In general, the Family Service Center intern therapists see clients who engage in a relatively low level of physical abuse and a modest level of psychological abuse; this may be due to the fact that clients voluntarily enter therapy. Therefore, the sample utilized in

this study may not accurately represent the prevalence of physical violence in heterosexual couples or the impact of socio-economic resource discrepancies and social support on the occurrence of physical violence. Rather, the level of physical abuse measured in this study is more consistent with common couple violence (Johnson, 1995). Furthermore, the absolute resources of the couples were not particularly varied, such that there were no couples with an extremely low level of resources. Having a more diverse sample may provide more sensitive tests of the hypotheses. In addition, the data in the current study were collected using self-report questionnaires in which individuals report both their own and their partner's actions. This raises the possibility of clients' falsely under-reporting the frequency of negative behaviors due to the social desirability bias.

Another important consideration is the use of the Perceived Social Support scale for measuring support from the family. The family subscale is somewhat ambiguous in that it does not specify who constitutes "family" and thus opens the possibility that a respondent may include his or her spouse when rating sources of perceived support rather than related family members exclusively. Because of this ambiguity, the family subscale may lack validity and unintentionally measure some amount of the couples' conflict with each other rather than providing an indication of their external support, which is what it is intended to measure. A revision of the instructions for this particular subscale to increase clarity of what constitutes "family" could be considered to remedy this ambiguity in the future.

Clinical and Theoretical Implications

The results from the current study raise interesting implications for professionals in their work with clients. First, they reinforce the importance of not making assumptions

about a couple's use of physical and psychological abuse based on resource discrepancies. For example, the male partner's use of abusive behavior was not related to resource discrepancies at all, though it was expected. However, the female partners' behavior was related to resource discrepancies, sometimes associated with the use of more abuse and sometimes with lower usage. The results suggest a gender difference in the importance of resource discrepancies. It seems important for the clinician to collect information regarding resource discrepancies as well as a cognitive appraisal of the meaning of these discrepancies to each partner as a part of the overall assessment of the client's current situation, but not to rely exclusively on this information. Similarly, collecting information about the couple's social support (and each partner's perception of this social support), especially regarding support from the family, seems important for gaining a better understanding of the couple's external environment and coping abilities. However, the current study suggests that social support is only somewhat correlated with the use of abusive behaviors, and therefore clinicians should not look exclusively at support as a protective factor. Clinicians should continue to seek other coping mechanisms and strengths that the partners possess to help them in the therapeutic process and in their home environment.

Similarly, certain implications for the efficacy of applying resource theory to couples experiencing common couple violence arise. Overall, the male partners' actions were unrelated to any resource discrepancy, whether it was in their favor or not. This finding in no way supports resource theory, which proposes that the partner with fewer resources will have less power and thus may be more likely to attempt to level the playing field, perhaps by using higher levels of abusive behaviors. In fact, only the

female partners' actions were associated with resource discrepancies, although they too for the most part did not support resource theory. Rather, having more resources with regard to income was associated with an increased level of physical and psychological abuse, suggesting that the female partner was empowered to act more boldly with increased resources instead of using more constructive strategies. However, in a sense, this does not necessarily contradict resource theory, as the theory makes no predictions about how the partner with higher resources will act. For example, resource theory states that the partner with fewer resources will be more likely to utilize aggressive behavior, but does not state that the partner with greater resources will be kinder or act in a more constructive way. Only the association of female partners' educational resources and abusive behaviors supports resource theory. Perhaps resource theory is most accurate in the context of a highly patriarchal system (or patriarchal violence), as opposed to the more equal opportunity society in which we currently live (or common couple violence) as Lee and Petersen (1983) and Rodman (1972) suggest. Resource theory also assumes that a significant deficit in males' personal resources exists to encourage his use of aggression. In other words, the male partner should feel disadvantaged before utilizing the resource of violence; as stated before, such a resource discrepancy does not exist in the sample examined in the current study. However, there are other resources that may not have been taken into account in the current study, such as the therapeutic resources that the couple was receiving or other, non-socioeconomic resources. Therefore, more research should be done to understand the applicability of resource theory to common couple violence.

Implications for Future Research

In order to overcome the limitations in this study, future research could be conducted which takes into account its short-comings. Many of the limitations of the current study stem from the sample used; therefore, future researchers could seek samples in which partners use average or high levels of physical violence and psychological abuse to better understand the affect of relational factors. A sample with diverse participant resources, including more varied incomes and levels of education may be helpful as well. Finally, researchers could seek other objective ways to collect data, other than simply self-report. This may help with more accurate measuring of the meaning and frequency of certain behaviors.

Another route for future research involves the measurement of social support. Future research may benefit from revising the instructions for the Perceived Social Support - Family subscale to increase clarity of what constitutes “family.” This could remedy the ambiguity in the future, which may skew the current study’s results. Also, an avenue for future research could involve a more in-depth examination of social support. The majority of past research on social support involves looking at its use as a coping mechanism, but little to none evaluates its efficacy for preventing physical or psychological abuse. For example, could receiving support from friends and family discourage a previously abusive partner from continuing to utilize abusive tactics? What type of support is most helpful in this endeavor: emotional, financial, or other resources? The current study suggests that familial support is more often associated with less use of psychologically abusive behaviors, compared with support from friends. Future research could seek to better explain the differences in the type and meaning of support provided

by family and friends to understand the reasons and mechanisms by which they function differently. Overall, it seems that more research is needed to clarify how socio-economic resources and perceived social support influence the use of abusive behaviors in clinical couples.

COUPLE INFORMATION
& INSTRUCTIONS

This is a first in a series of questionnaires you are being asked to complete that will contribute to the knowledge about couple 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 that comes to mind is the best one. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Case #: _____ 2. Therapist's Code: _____ 3. Co-therapist's Code: _____ 4. Date: _____

The following information is gathered from each partner separately.

Name: (Print) _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____ zip _____
 Phone Numbers: (h) _____ (w) _____
 (cell) _____ (fax) _____

5. Gender: M F 6. SS# _____ 7. Age (in years) _____

8. You are coming for: a.) Family _____ b.) Couple _____ c) Individual Therapy _____

9. **Relationship status** to person in couple's therapy with you: 10. Total Number of **Years** Together: _____
 1. Currently married, living together a. **If married**, number of years married: ____
 2. Currently married, separated, but not legally divorced
 3. Divorced, legal action completed
 4. Engaged, living together
 5. Engaged, not living together
 6. Dating, living together
 7. Dating, not living together
 8. Domestic partnership

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

13. Personal **yearly gross income**: \$ _____ 14. **Race**: _____
 (i.e., before taxes or any deductions) 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)

18. Highest Level of **Education** Completed: _____
 1. Some high school (less than 12 years) 4. Trade School (mechanic, carpentry, beauty 7. Some graduate education
 2. High school diploma (12 years) 5. Associate degree 8. Master's degree (MA, MS)
 3. Some college 6. Bachelor's degree (BA, BS) 9. Doctoral degree (PhD, MD, EdD, etc.)

19. Number of people in household: _____ 20. Number of **children** who **live in home** with you: _____
 21. Number of children who **do not live** with you: _____

Names and phone number of **contact people** (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)
 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 5. several times a year
 2. once a week 6. once or twice a year
 3. several times a month 7. rarely or never
 4. once a month

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 quality of **medication(s)** you are currently taking. Also list the name and phone number of the medicating physician(s) and primary care physician:

Medications: _____
Primary Care Physician: _____ **Phone:** _____
Psychiatrist? Yes/No Name & Phone, if yes. _____
Phone: _____

Legal Involvement:

26. A. Have you ever been involved with the police? Yes/No (circle)
 If yes, what happened? Explain: _____

27. B. Have formal, legal procedures (i.e., ex-parte orders, protection orders, criminal charges, juvenile offenses) been brought against you? Yes/No (circle)
 If yes, what happened? Explain: _____

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

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 include in your responses about your family. Circle yourself in this list.

29. (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 # _____

SS (assessment)

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.

Directions: The statements which follow refer to feelings and experiences which occur to most people at one time or another in their relationships with **FAMILIES**. When thinking about family, please do not include friends. 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 family gives me the moral support I need.
—	—	—	—	—	2.	I get good ideas about how to do things or make things from my family.
—	—	—	—	—	3.	When I confide in the members of my family who are closest to me, I get the idea that it makes them uncomfortable.
—	—	—	—	—	4.	Most other people are closer to their families than I am.
—	—	—	—	—	5.	My family enjoys hearing about what I think.
—	—	—	—	—	6.	Members of my family share many of my interests.
—	—	—	—	—	7.	Certain members of my family come to me when they have problems or need advice.
—	—	—	—	—	8.	I rely on my family for emotional support.
—	—	—	—	—	9.	There is a member of my family I could go to if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later.
—	—	—	—	—	10.	My family and I are very open about what we think about things.
—	—	—	—	—	11.	My family is sensitive to my personal needs.
—	—	—	—	—	12.	Members of my family come to me for emotional support.
—	—	—	—	—	13.	Members of my family are good at helping me solve problems.
—	—	—	—	—	14.	I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of members of my family.
—	—	—	—	—	15.	Members of my family get good ideas about how to do things or make things from me.
—	—	—	—	—	16.	When I confide in members of my family, it makes me uncomfortable.
—	—	—	—	—	17.	Members of my family seek me out for companionship.
—	—	—	—	—	18.	I think that my family feels that I’m good at helping them solve problems.
—	—	—	—	—	19.	I don’t have a relationship with a member of my family that is as close as other people’s relationships with family members.
—	—	—	—	—	20.	I wish my family were much different.

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".

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
1. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
2. My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
3. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
4. My partner explained his/her side of a disagreement to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
5. I insulted or swore at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
6. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
7. I threw something at my partner that could hurt him/her	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
8. My partner did this to me (PA)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
9. I twisted my partner's arm or hair	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
10. My partner did this to me (PA)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
11. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner (I)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
12. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
13. I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
14. My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
15. I made my partner have sex without a condom	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
16. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
17. I pushed or shoved my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
18. My partner did this to me (PA)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
19. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
20. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
21. I used a knife or gun on my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
22. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
23. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight (I)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
24. My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
25. I called my partner fat or ugly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
26. My partner called me fat or ugly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
27. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
28. My partner did this to me (PA)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
29. I destroyed something belonging to my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
30. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
31. I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner (I)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
32. My partner went to a doctor because of a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

How often did this happen?

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

33. I choked my partner	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	9
34. My partner did this to me (PA)	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 (PA)	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 didn't (I)	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 (PA)	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 (PA)	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 (PA)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	9
55. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner (I)	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 (PA)	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 (I)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	9
72. My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight	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 (PA)	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

*Items from the physical assault (PA) and injury subscales (I) are denoted in parentheses after the items.

MDEAS (ASSESSMENT)

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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (RE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (DE)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (HW)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	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. (DI)	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

*Items from the restrictive engulfment subscale (RE), denigration subscale (DE), hostile-withdrawal subscale (HW), and domination/intimidation subscale (DI) are denoted in parentheses after the item.

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