

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FEMALE PARTNER AGGRESSION: THE ROLE
OF RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

by

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AN EXAMINATION OF RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF FEMALE AGGRESSION

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine differences between female and male aggression; to examine the effect various aggression, dominance, and couple variables have on female physical aggression; to identify which combination of these variables best explains female aggression in a sample of couples seeking therapy for domestic violence/anger management; and to identify the influence of male physical aggression on the predictor variables. Overall, based on women's reports, 74.6% (n=63) of the women and 86.2% (n=74) of the men in this sample used at least one act of physical aggression against their partner in the past year. With the exception of slapping and using a knife or gun against partner, men perpetrated individual acts of physical aggression significantly more than did women. Aggression, dominance, and couple variables were found to be significantly correlated with and predictive of female physical aggression. Overall, this study found that 55% of the variance in women's use of physical aggression was predicted by women's psychological aggression, husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern, male and female jealousy, and women's disparagement of their partners. Male physical aggression only added 3% of the variance when added to this combination of variables. Since women's physical aggression is explained by various relationship dynamics the theory that women are aggressive only in self-defense is questioned.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In the past 20 years, partner violence has been extensively researched. Research has focused primarily on intrapersonal characteristics associated with men's perpetration of physical and psychological abuse. This research has played an important role in improving knowledge on the characteristics of male batterers, victim advocacy, and the development of batterer intervention programs. Severe assaults against women declined steadily from a rate of 38 to 19 assaults per 1,000 couples between 1975 and 1992 (Straus & Gelles, 1995; Straus, 1995). The Bureau of Justice Statistics also supports the decline in male-to-female aggression showing a 21% decrease of female victimization between the years of 1993 to 1998 (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). While the research focus on male batterers may have played an important role in the decline of male-to-female violence, the same decline has not been found in female-to-male violence.

Unlike female victimization, the rate of male victimization has stayed relatively the same over the past decade (Rennison & Welchans, 2000; Straus & Gelles, 1995; Straus & Kaufman-Kantor, 1994; Straus 1995). Straus and Kaufman-Kantor (1994) reported change over time in women's self-reported incidents of minor and severe physical aggression from 1975, 1985 and 1992 using nationally representative samples. Women's rate of minor aggression in 1975 was approximately 83 per 1,000 couples, 74 per 1,000 in 1985, and then 100 per 1,000 couples in 1992. Women's self-reported rate of severe aggression against her partner in 1975 was approximately 44 per 1,000 couples, 43 per 1,000 in 1985, and 69 per 1,000 couples in 1992.

Another important indication that society has benefited through the focus on male-to-female violence is reflected in the change in societal values regarding the acceptability of male-to-female spousal violence. Straus (1995) reports that in 1968, just over 20% of the United States population approved of a husband or a wife slapping their partner; however, by 1994, the approval of a husband slapping his wife decreased from just over 20% to 10%. Interestingly, the approval of a wife slapping her husband increased slightly from just over 20% to just under 22% between 1968 to 1994 respectfully.

Although evidence supports that women perpetrate violence against their intimate partners (Fiebert, 1997; Sarantakos, 1999; Straus, 1999; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), there has been little research focused on women who have been aggressive in intimate relationships. When Steinmetz (1977-1978) first reported that men and women perpetrate violence at equivalent rates, considerable controversy arose within the domestic violence community. It was believed, especially by feminists and victim advocates, that the acknowledgement of female aggression would reduce funding availability for battered women (Hamberger, 1997). Furthermore, because the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) was used in several of the studies that found high rates of female aggression, it was scrutinized for being unable to identify whether violence perpetrated by women was in self-defense and also for being unable to assess the impact of the aggressive acts. Straus (1997) reports that attempts to deny female abuse can be seen through such criticism of the CTS. Straus

(1997) also points out that several studies not using this measure also identified nearly equal rates of violence perpetrated by men and women.

While little is understood about female aggression, research on female victims indicates that women's use of physical violence tends to occur in the context of their victimization rather than because of a need to gain power or control (Barnett, Lee, & Thelen, 1997; Dasgupta, 1999; Swan, 2001). On the other hand, one of the most accepted theories regarding spouse abuse is that men use physical violence to gain power and control over their partners (Barnett et al., 1997; Claes & Rosenthal, 1990; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Pence, 1989). Therefore, it seems that female and male aggression may be distinctly different in context as well as manifestations of aggressive behaviors; however, there is sparse research on the contextual differences between female and male aggression.

If female aggression is not used as a means to gain power and control – what factors best explain female aggression toward their partners? Growing evidence suggests the need to view partner violence as a dyadic rather than an intrapersonal concept (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Flynn, 1990; Giles-Sims, 1983; Kwong, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1999; Maccietto, 1992). In fact, Margolin (1988) suggests that interpersonal characteristics are fundamentally more defining of the occurrence of abuse than intrapersonal characteristics. This plea for dyadic based research regarding spouse abuse supports the need to examine relationship dynamics that exist between intimate partners where female aggression has occurred. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore relationship dynamics of couples in which female aggression has occurred.

Significance of the Problem

Over the past decade, female aggression has been virtually ignored by researchers of domestic violence. The following section describes some problems associated with ignoring female-to-male aggression.

Violence perpetrated by females has often been justified through the belief that women have an acceptable level of anger and frustration due to the long-term effects of male domination. However, ignoring female aggression perpetuates the cultural norm of tolerating minor levels of violence between partners. In other words, when a woman slaps her partner after he has committed an act she perceives as unacceptable, this continues the violence cycle by reinforcing the male partner's belief that violence is acceptable when she commits an act he perceives as unacceptable (Straus, 1997). Despite the much lower probability of physical injury resulting from attacks by women, assaults by women are serious, just as it would be serious if men "only" slapped their wives (Straus, 1997).

Another important reasons not to ignore female aggression is that studies have found that women who perpetrate minor acts of abuse are more likely to be severely abused by their male partners (Feld & Straus, 1989; Gelles & Straus, 1988, Shields & Hanneke, 1983; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, Tritt, 2002). Furthermore, Stith and colleagues (2002) found that a woman's physical aggression toward her partner was the largest factor in explaining her risk for becoming a victim of physical maltreatment calculated in their meta-analysis of spousal maltreatment risk factors.

By neglecting to study female aggression, domestic violence treatment providers have been faced with the effort of providing services to male victims and female offenders without empirical data to back up their decisions or treatments. Furthermore, most states

have established mandatory arrest laws for domestic violence incidents. These laws were originally established to protect victims from imminent risk (Swan & Snow, 2002). However, when police report to a domestic disturbance, they frequently find that both partners claim victimization, thus leading to dual arrest. This has led to an increase of female arrests for the perpetration of domestic violence (Dasgupta, 1999; Swan & Snow, 2002). Following arrest, many women are mandated to attend anger management classes. However, these classes are based on research specific to male aggression. This provides an example in which research is significantly behind the development of society's needs. Therefore, there is a need to better understand women's involvement in domestic disputes for the development of appropriate treatment approaches for women aggressors.

Research on female aggression is needed as a means to attempt to catch up to society's needs. Furthermore, ongoing attempts to provide a safe and humane environment for all human beings will fail if research on female aggression is neglected. Although some research on female aggression has been conducted, there is a dearth of systemic research focused on female aggression (Dasgupta, 1999). Therefore, this study focused on relationship dynamics in the context of female aggression.

Theoretical Framework

Systems theory is the over-arching theory that will guide this study. Based on systems theory, partner violence is viewed in the context of relationship dynamics and patterns. Some professionals have suggested that systems theory blurs the boundaries between the batterer and the battered, and implies that the victim is "co-responsible" for the assault (Stith & Rosen, 1990). Because systems theory views interactions as circular rather than linear, it is often criticized for leading to "victim blaming," and thereby suggesting that the victim did something to deserve the abuse. However, systems theory focuses on *how* individuals are involved in violent relationships rather than identifying blame or fault for the violence (Anderson & Cramer-Benjamin, 1999; Giles-Sims, 1983). Therefore, systems theorists continue to hold individuals responsible for their actions that contribute to abusive interactions (Anderson & Cramer-Benjamin, 1999). Consequently, when examining violence from a systemic perspective, the individual actions and the responses of both partners should be viewed within the context of the violent relationship patterns (Anderson & Cramer-Benjamin, 1999; Giles-Sims, 1983).

Within the system framework, the couple is viewed as a dynamic organization of interdependent components that continually interact with each other (Cunningham et al., 1998). This framework assumes that the couple is the unit for assessment and intervention, rather than one partner in isolation. For example, Wileman and Wileman (1995) found that reductions in violence were associated with both the man assuming responsibility for his own violence and with the woman decreasing her vulnerability and taking an active role in balancing power in the relationship.

The holistic approach that is suggested by systems theory emphasizes the importance of examining, not only characteristics of individuals involved in the violent relationship, but the dynamics that occur within the relationship context. In fact, relationship characteristics appear to mediate the significance and interpretation given to violence both by the aggressor and the victim (Cunningham et al., 1998). Underlying

relationship dynamics may also impact each partner's decision to remain in the violent relationship despite the violence, or may play a part in maintaining a violent cycle.

If reciprocal violence is taking place in relationships, treating men without treating women is not likely to stop the violence. In fact, cessation of partner violence by one partner is highly dependent on whether the other partner also stops hitting (Feld & Straus, 1989; Gelles & Straus, 1988). Additionally, it is important to remember that violence does not necessarily mean the demise of the relationship. In fact, 50 to 80% of battered wives remain with their abusive partners or return to them after leaving a woman's shelter or otherwise separating from them (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983).

For the most part, female aggression has been examined in the context of male aggression. While male aggression certainly plays an important role in the occurrence of female aggression, it is also important to examine other relationship factors that differ between females who use minor and severe aggression as well as those who do not use any aggression. Systems theory supports that female aggression can be best understood by studying a broad range of relationship dynamics, including female victimization.

To gain an understanding of a relationship in which female aggression has occurred, it is necessary to examine variables that are related to being a part of an intimate relationship. It is also important to gather data regarding both partners' behaviors relating to the variables. For example, knowing both partners' level of jealousy provides greater knowledge of the relationship dynamics than only knowing one partner's level of jealousy.

The independent variables included in this study were thus drawn from systems theory: male aggression; female and male psychological abuse; types of communication patterns exhibited in the relationship (i.e. husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal); female and male marital satisfaction, female and male jealousy, types of dominance by the female and male (i.e. authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement), and perceived level of couple differentiation.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I was interested in gaining a greater understanding of female aggression which has occurred in the context of an intimate relationship in which the male is also aggressive. First, I identified the type of physical aggression committed by this sample of women and compared that to their partners' physical aggression. Then, I examined how level of physical aggression by women is related to a set of aggression variables, dominance variables, and couple variables. Aggression variables include levels of physical and psychological aggression perpetrated by women's male partners and women's level of psychological aggression. Dominance variables include three different forms of dominance: authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement used by both men and women. Couple variables include men's and women's demand/withdrawal communication patterns (i.e. husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal), marital satisfaction, jealousy, and perceived level of couple differentiation. I also examined which combination of variables best explains female aggression. Finally, the unique variance accounted for by male physical aggression was analyzed for the overall prediction models.

I believe that this study will lend knowledge to the development of theory relating to female aggression and will generate suggestions for future research in this area. I also

hope to provide clinicians with information that will help them to recognize relationship variables that may be risk markers to the often misunderstood female perpetration of physical violence and male victimization.

Research Questions

1. How do men and women differ in the physical aggressive acts they use against each other?
2. How is women's level of physical aggression related to aggression variables (i.e. male aggression, male and female psychological aggression), dominance variables (i.e. male and female use of authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement), and couple variables (i.e. husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal, male and female level of marital satisfaction, male and female level of jealousy, and male and female level of couple differentiation)?
3. Which combination of variables listed above best explains female aggression?
4. How important is male physical aggression in understanding female physical aggression when other identified variables are considered?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The following literature review focuses on knowledge derived from spouse abuse research. After a general description of female aggression directed toward their male partner, a more narrow review of research related to the relationship between female aggression and aggression variables (i.e. male physical and psychological aggression and female psychological aggression), dominance variables (i.e. male and female authority, male and female restrictiveness, and male and female disparagement), and couple variables (i.e. demand/withdrawal communication patterns; male and female marital satisfaction; male and female jealousy, and male and female level of couple differentiation) will follow.

Dependent Variable

Female Aggression. Research on female aggression has focused on gender differences in forms, motives, and outcomes of aggression. While research on gender differences regarding motives and outcomes of aggression are certainly important, they are beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, the following section will review literature on the descriptive acts of female-to-male aggression with a focus on how it compares to male-to-female aggression.

Several studies have found that men and women do not differ significantly on overall levels of aggression or in the frequency in which aggression occurs (Barnett et al., 1997; McFarlane et al., 2000; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994). What is of greater interest is whether women and men differ significantly on the specific forms of minor and severe aggression. Since the most widely used assessments of aggressive acts, the CTS and CTS2, divide minor and severe aggression into specific acts some studies have provided information on gender differences for each act. Minor physical aggression is defined by the following acts: grabbed, pushed or shoved, threw something at partner, slapped, and twisted partner's arm or hair. Severe physical aggression is defined by the following acts: kicked, punched or hit, slammed partner against wall, choked, burned or scalded partner, beat up partner, and used knife or gun against partner.

Straus and Gelles (1995) summarize and compare physical acts of aggression from both the 1975 and 1985 national surveys on family violence. A nationally representative sample of 2,143 and 3,250 families were used in the 1975 and 1985 survey respectively. Women reported throwing things, kicking/biting/hitting with fist, and hitting or trying to hit partner with something more often than did men in both the 1975 and 1985 surveys. Pushing, grabbing, and shoving were reported by women as their most frequent aggressive acts toward their partner. These acts were also reported as the most frequently by men toward women and the rates were slightly for men. Men reported higher rates of beating up their partners than did women.

Similarly, Barnett and colleagues (1997) found that women were more likely to use certain types of aggressive acts than men. Barnett and colleagues sampled 34 men who were court mandated to batterers treatment and 30 women who self-identified themselves as battered women. Twenty three women were shelter residents and 7 women were from shelter outreach programs. All participants of the study completed a modified version of

the CTS: The Relationship Abuse Questionnaire. While no significant differences in the overall aggressiveness of male and female partners were found, a closer look at the specific acts provided significant gender differences in certain minor and severe aggressive acts. Women had a significantly higher frequency of hiding their partner's belongings and threats to lock their partner out of the house. Women also had significantly higher levels of punching and kicking their partner than did their male partners.

Malone, Tyree, and O'Leary (1995) sampled 393 couples on various forms of aggression, just prior to being married, 6 months after marriage, and lastly 18 months after marriage. Similarly to Straus and Gelles (1995), Malone and colleagues found that women were significantly more likely to throw something, slap, kick/bite/hit with fist, and to hit partner with an object. No significant differences were found in the most common aggressive acts: pushing and shoving; nor for the least common aggressive acts: beating partner up and threatening partner with a knife or gun. These findings were consistent at all three assessment phases.

In a more recent report, Swan (2002) examined gender differences in specific aggressive acts based on 108 women's reports of their own and their partner's aggression. She found that women and men differed significantly in their use of aggressive acts. In regards to gender differences in psychologically aggressive acts, women insulted, swore, and stomped out more than their male partners; while men did something to spite their partners and tried to make their partners feel crazy more often than did women. Physically, women threw things at their partner and threatened to hit or throw things significantly more often than did their male partners; while men were significantly more likely to choke their partners. Overall, women in this study committed significantly more moderate acts of aggression than did their partners. Only a trend level of significance ($p=.08$) was found showing that male partners used more severe acts of aggression.

Finally, Stets and Henderson (1995) sampled 272 randomly selected dating people between the age of 18 and 30. While Swan (2002) reports that men tend to use more severely aggressive acts than women, Stets and Henderson found that women were two times more likely to use minor forms of aggression and six times more likely to use severe forms of aggression than men. When examining gender differences in specific forms of aggression, they found that women were significantly more likely to report using the following aggressive acts: insult, did something to spite their partner, threaten to hit, throw something, slap, kick, and bite their male partners. The current study will further explore differences between women and men's specific acts of aggression.

Independent variables

Aggression Variables:

Male Aggression. The relationship between female physical aggression victimization and her own use of physical aggression is the most extensively researched variable in regards to female aggression. This research indicates that male-to-female and female-to-male aggression is highly correlated and that male aggression is predictive of female aggression (Feld & Straus, 1989; Jacobson, 1996; Jacobson et al., 1994; Magdol et al., 1997; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Russel, Lipov, Phillips, & White, 1989; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christenson, 1999; Swan & Snow, 2002; Woffard, 1994). In fact, male aggression is suggested to be the most central issue to examine when studying the nature of

female aggression (Swan, 2001). Swan also claims that there is a bi-directional path between male and female aggression, suggesting that an increase or decrease of aggression by one partner will directly effect the increase or decrease of aggression by the other partner.

Research on variables which relate to the cessation and continuance of aggression between partners supports Swan's (2001) notion of the bi-directional nature of aggression between partners. For example, Jacobson and colleagues (1994), examined roles partners play in aggressive altercations in 92 couples. Wives self-reported a decrease in their own aggression only when there was a decrease in their male partner's physical aggression. Furthermore, based on a sample of 21 year olds currently involved in intimate relationships, Magdol and colleagues (1997) found that women who were severely victimized by their male partners were 10 times more likely to perpetrate severe violence than were women who had never been severely victimized. Finally, several studies indicate that males are more likely to continue aggressive acts against their partner when she is also physically aggressive (Jacobson et al., 1994; Feld & Straus, 1989; Wofford, 1994).

Also supporting the notion of a bi-directional relationship between male and female aggression is Johnson's (1995) research on subtypes of violent couples. Johnson has made distinctions between "common couple" and "patriarchal terrorism" violence between partners. Common couple violence is characterized by a partner's use of violence that erupts during a specific argument. He suggests that common couple violence is likely to be bi-directional in nature and may be initiated by either partner. On the other hand, patriarchal terrorism reflects violence that is embedded in a generalized pattern of a partner's desire for control and is generally perpetrated by men. This typology of violent couples focuses on the individual's use of violence as it relates to the dyadic context of the relationship.

In further support of the bi-directional hypothesis, Straus and colleagues (1980) found that 49% of a large national sample reported mutual/bi-directional abuse, 27% reported unilateral male-to-female aggression, and 24% reported unilateral female-to-male aggression. This research suggests that the least common subtype are those couples in which women were the sole perpetrators of aggression and that the most common subtype were relationships in which both partners were mutually aggressive.

Although causation of male and female partner aggression can not be determined from the above review, it appears that female aggression is likely to occur in the context of male aggression. Thus male aggression is an important variable to include with other contextual variables in this study's examination of female aggression. Specifically, it will be important to examine the effect, if any at all, that male aggression has on the strength of other relationship variables in predicting the level of female aggression. Furthermore, this examination may provide greater knowledge of bi-directional nature of spouse abuse.

Psychological Abuse. Only three studies were found that examined the relationship between male psychological abuse and female physical aggression (Jacobson et al., 1994; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989, Sagrestano, 1999). In general, these studies found that male psychological abuse was significantly related to female aggression.

In a longitudinal study examining couples who were getting married for the first time, Murphy and O'Leary (1989) assessed for psychological and physical aggression one month prior to marriage, and then 6, 18, and 30 months after marriage. Men's

psychological abuse was found to be predictive of their female partner's first incident of physical aggression. In other words, male psychological aggression may play an important role in the development of female physical aggression. The current study expanded on Murphy and O'Leary's (1989) study by examining information on the relationship between male psychological aggression and female physical aggression in relationships where physical aggression is an established pattern within the couple's relationship.

When sampling for couples experiencing severe husband-to-wife aggression, Jacobson and colleagues (1994) also found that the majority of the women self reported that they too had been physically aggressive in the relationship. Through an examination of roles partners play in aggressive altercations by studying 92 couples, the researchers found that according to men, female aggression was more likely to occur when the men were emotionally abusive. However, females in this study did not believe that their physical aggression was based on their partner's emotional abuse. Women reported that their aggression was likely to occur only when their partner was also physically aggressive. This contradiction warrants further investigation of the role male psychological aggression plays in explaining female aggression.

Finally, Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) measured 42 married couples' level of verbal and physical aggression using the CTS. The researchers found that husband's verbal aggression was significantly correlated with female physical aggression. Unfortunately, since psychological and physical aggression was so highly intercorrelated, psychological aggression was excluded from this study's regression analysis regarding the prediction of female's use of either psychological or physical aggression.

Only four studies were identified which examined the relationship between female psychological aggression and female physical aggression. These studies found that women's psychological abuse is generally co-occurring with their own physical aggression toward their partners (Brinkerhoff, Grandin, & Lupri, 1992; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; O'Leary et al., 1994; Sagrestano, et al., 1999).

Brinkerhoff and colleagues (1992), based on results from a national survey of Canadian residents, also found that female psychological aggression is significantly correlated with their physical aggression. Forty-nine percent of the highly verbally aggressive women reported committing a physically aggressive act in the past year compared to 9% of the low verbally aggressive women. Results from a stepwise regression analysis including female verbal aggression, religious denomination, marital satisfaction, authoritarianism, marital conflict, symbolic aggression, self-esteem, and church attendance, revealed that female verbal aggression accounted for the greatest percentage of variance in explaining female-to-male aggression.

Based on research using a community-based sample of 42 married couples, Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) also found that female psychological abuse was significantly correlated with their physical aggression. Again, because the relationship between psychological and physical aggression was so strong, psychological aggression was excluded from this study's regression analysis regarding the prediction of female's use of either psychological or physical aggression.

Murphy and O'Leary's (1989) longitudinal study examined the progression of physical aggression in newly married couples by assessing for psychological and physical aggression one month prior to marriage, and then 6, 18, and 30 months after marriage. Results indicated that in general, female, as well as male, psychological abuse was

predictive of women's first instance of physical aggression against their partners. In other words, female physical aggression is often preceded by both male and female psychological aggression. In another longitudinal study, O'leary, Malone, and Tyree (1994) assessed psychological and physical aggression by newly married couples at 18 months and 30 months after marriage. Women's psychological aggression at 18 months after marriage was significantly correlated with women's physical aggression 30 months after marriage.

Dominance Variables

Dominance. Dominance in intimate relationships has played an important role in theoretical frameworks regarding partner physical aggression (Hamby, 1996). Most commonly, feminist theory states that male dominance over women is the fundamental structure that has led to the victimization of women (Mignon, Larson, & Holmes, 2002). However, others proclaim that the lack of male dominance or power in a relationship may cause greater likelihood of violence (Dutton, 1994).

Just as theories differ on the relationship between domination and partner aggression, research findings are also mixed. Several studies have found that dominance is generally related to male-to-female aggression. For example, Dutton's (1995) research found that violent men were significantly more likely to use forms of dominance and isolation (i.e. controlling access to resources) than the non-violent control group. On the other hand, Babcock and colleagues' (1993) study examining mutually violent couples, found that husband's lower domination through decision-making power was correlated with his use of physical aggression and increased his likelihood of perpetrating physical aggression.

Little research has been conducted on the role dominance plays in female-to-male aggression. However, the research that has been conducted supports that female dominance is related to the occurrence of female aggression (Coleman & Straus, 1990; Sagrestano et al., 1999, Cantos et al., 1994). Using data derived from the 1975 Family Violence Survey, Coleman and Straus (1990) identified four subgroups defined by responses to decision-making patterns and beliefs regarding who should make decisions in relationships: male-dominant (n=200), female-dominant (n=160), divided power (n=1146), and equalitarian (n=616). They found that when marital conflict is high and the female dominant, there is an increased rate of female aggression toward her partner. Furthermore, men in this sample were more likely to perpetrate physical aggression when the relationship was characterized as female-dominant. In other words, both men and women were more aggressive when the relationship was characterized as female dominant.

Using a community-based sample of 42 married couples, Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) also found that wives tended to perpetrate more violence when their male partners perceived themselves as having less power. Furthermore, when wives perceived themselves as having greater power they tended to perpetrate more violence. In another study examining 180 couples in which at least one spouse was active duty military, Cantos and colleagues (1994) compared husbands who had been injured versus those that had not been injured by a physically aggressive female partner. They found that wives who caused injury were significantly more likely to have threatened to withhold money and to take the children away than those who did not cause injury. However, because

dominance was not directly measured in this study, it is unclear whether these threats were acts of dominance or acts which are attempts to equalize the power in the relationship.

Hamby (1996) suggests that differences among types of dominance may better explain the role that dominance plays in relationships in which aggression has occurred. The three types of dominance Hamby differentiates are: “authority,” “restrictiveness,” and “disparagement.” Authority represents a pattern in relationships where one partner controls most of the decision-making and is thus “in charge” of the relationship. Restrictiveness is defined by a partner’s influence on whether their partner has the freedom to have contact with certain people or the ability to travel freely. Disparagement is characterized by a partner’s negative appraisal of their partner’s worth. All three forms of dominance are assumed to be associated with partner aggression. Therefore, Hamby’s Dominance Scale (1996) will be utilized in this study as a means to explore forms of domination exhibited by aggressive and non-aggressive partners.

Couple Variables

Demand/Withdrawal Communication Patterns. Demand/withdrawal communication patterns is described by one partner pursuing their partner by insisting on change or the discussion of a problem while the other partner avoids the interaction and withdraws physically or mentally from the discussion (Sagrestano et al. 1999). This communication increases the tension in relationships because the partner being withdrawn from receives the message of disapproval in that they are not important enough to their partner to engage in any meaningful connection (Gottman, 1994). Gottman reports that it is particularly true that women have greater difficulty in situations when their partners withdraw from them. Interestingly, it is men who are more likely to partake in withdrawal behaviors (Babcock et al., 1993; Gottman, 1994).

Babcock and colleagues (1993) were the first to examine the role demand/withdrawal communication patterns play in the occurrence of spousal violence. They looked specifically at the relationship between this communication pattern and husband-to-wife violence. A total of 92 married couples were divided into three subgroups based on the occurrence of physical aggression and level of marital satisfaction: domestically violence ($n=49$), happy/nonviolent ($n=16$), and distressed/nonviolent ($n=30$). Using the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ, Christenson & Sullaway, 1984) husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal patterns were assessed by two three-item subscales. The authors found that husband demand/wife withdrawal pattern of communication was significantly correlated with male physical violence. Furthermore, the abusive husbands were more likely to report a pattern of husband demand/wife withdrawal when compared with distressed and nondistressed nonviolent men. However, wife demand/husband withdrawal also characterized relationships in which husband-to-wife violence occurred, suggesting that violent relationships are often characterized by an inconsistent interplay between husband and wife demand/withdrawal patterns. Non-violent partners were more likely to report that the demand/withdrawal pattern simply does not exist or that there is a consistent pattern of one or the other (i.e. the husband always withdrawals and the wife always demands or visa versa). Babcock and colleagues (1993) suggest that the demand/withdrawal patterns may be one of the fundamental interactional characteristics of violent couples which needs further exploration.

Although Babcock and colleagues (1993) plead for further investigation of the demand/withdrawal patterns displayed in arguments that become violent versus those that do not, only one other study has examined the relationship. Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) examined husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal communication patterns and the relationship they have to both male and female physical aggression in a community based sample of 42 married couples. Demand/withdrawal patterns were assessed using the Conflict Rating System developed by Heavey, Christensen, and Malamuth (1995). Spouses' behaviors were observed and coded for demand/withdrawal patterns during a ten minute discussion in which the couples were instructed to attempt to resolve an issue of disagreement. The interobserver reliability alphas were .93 for demand and .81 for withdrawal. Husband demand/wife withdrawal pattern was significantly correlated with both male and female physical aggression. However, in the regression analysis in which marital adjustment was controlled, husband demand/wife withdrawal was only significant in understanding husband's verbal aggression thus losing all significant effects for husband physical, wife verbal, and wife physical aggression. The wife demand/husband withdrawal pattern in this study was significantly correlated with husband and wife verbal aggression and husband physical aggression. Wife demand/husband withdrawal was not correlated with the wife's use of physical aggression. Wife demand/husband withdrawal lost all significant effects in the regression analyses in which marital adjustment was controlled. This finding seems to contradict Gottman's (1994) theory that women become more upset and frustrated when their partner withdraws. Further exploration is needed regarding the specific role demand/withdrawal patterns of communication play in the occurrence of female aggression.

Marital Satisfaction. Intuitively, it makes sense that relationship satisfaction would be lower in couples where violence has or is currently occurring. In fact, research involving couples indicates that marital satisfaction is lower in couples where violence has occurred (O'Leary & Curley, 1986; Sabourin et al., 1993; Telch & Lindquist, 1984). Interestingly, these same studies discovered that the violent and non-violent but distressed (i.e. couples seeking therapy) subgroups did not differ significantly on levels of marital satisfaction. This suggests that some couples experiencing high levels of marital discord use physical aggression while others do not. In fact, Coleman and Straus (1986) found that 74% of the highly conflictual couples remained non violent.

Marital dissatisfaction has also been identified as the most consistent risk marker with regard to male perpetrated violence and female victimization (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990). Although research indicates that marital satisfaction is negatively correlated to husband physical aggression, studies have found that within violent relationships husband's marital satisfaction is higher than wife's satisfaction (O'Leary & Curley, 1986; Sabourin et al., 1993). Unfortunately, no studies were found specifically examining husband's level of satisfaction when the relationship is also defined by female-to-male aggression.

Using a community-based sample of 66 couples, Byne and Arias (1997) found that 30% of the women self-reported using physical aggression against their partners and 25% of the men self-reported using physical aggression. In regards to marital satisfaction, female's marital satisfaction was negatively correlated with her use of physical aggression. Furthermore, based on a multiple regression analysis, the authors found that responsibility

attributions significantly moderated the relationship between marital satisfaction and physical violence for the wives only. In other words, there were no moderating effects on marital satisfaction and husband's use of physical aggression. On the other hand, the dissatisfied women in this sample were more likely to use physical aggression if they perceived their partners as being "blameworthy" of their negative behavior. The authors report that this information may not be generalizable to men and women experiencing frequent and severe levels of violence since their sample reported low levels of severe physical aggression.

Based on results for a national survey of Canadian residents, Brinkerhoff, Grangin, and Lupri (1992) also found that marital satisfaction was negatively correlated with female physical aggression. Furthermore, marital satisfaction, based on a stepwise regression analysis, was found to play a significant role in the explanation of female aggression but not male aggression. Marital conflict was more significant in the explanation of male aggression than marital satisfaction. This suggests that marital satisfaction may be an important contextual variable that differentiates relationships where female aggression does or does not occur.

In another study of 42 married couples, Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) found a similar result, that marital satisfaction was negatively correlated with female physical aggression and that dissatisfaction was significant in explaining female physical aggression based on a regression analysis. Also, O'Leary and colleagues (1994) found that marital discord at 18 months after marriage was significantly correlated with wives' physical aggression 30 months after marriage.

Vivian and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1994) examined mutually violent couples seeking marital therapy. The couples were subdivided into three groups: "mutually low victimization" ($n=32$), "highly victimized wife" ($n=15$), and "highly victimized husband" ($n=10$). Although the couples in the "highly victimized husband" group tended to report lower satisfaction levels, there were no group differences among the victimized subgroups on levels of marital satisfaction. However, all groups reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction than the non aggressive clinic based comparison

In another study, Murphy and O'Leary (1989) examined the development of physical aggression in 393 newly married couples. Contrary to their hypothesis, neither male nor female marital dissatisfaction proved to be a significant predictor of wives' first instances of physical aggression. The relationship between male and female partners' level of marital satisfaction and women's physical aggression needs further exploration.

Jealousy. Jealousy is a powerful emotion that occurs within an individual when there is a perceived or actual threat to the stability of their relationship. In fact, jealousy may play a part or bring about aggression between partners. However, there are conflicting ideas about who is more likely to react violently when jealousy occurs in a relationship.

Paul and Baenninger (1991) propose that women's aggression related to jealousy will display itself differently depending on the status of the relationship. Women in long-term committed relationships are more likely to focus their anger and aggression against their rival rather than her male partner. This is based on the idea that anger toward her partner may result in the loss of the relationship and thus not beneficial. On the other hand women in courtship relationships may direct their aggression directly to the male partner.

Based on this theory, research on female aggression and jealousy using samples of dating couples may not be relevant.

de Weerth and Kalma (1993) examined the perceptions of both male and female college students expected reaction to jealousy. Relationships in this sample ranged from one month to 13 years with a mean of 29.4 months. The subjects were provided with a short description of a situation which included an act of infidelity and were asked how they expected a member of the opposite sex would respond to this situation. Respondents were also asked how they thought they would react if they heard that their partner was cheating on them. For both questions, respondents were given several possible responses and were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale how likely they or a member of the opposite sex would respond in this manner. Females in this study significantly differed from men in their belief that they would act aggressively toward the unfaithful partner. Although these results may not be comparable to women in long-term committed relationships nor does it reflect what actually happens when partners truly experience jealousy, it does provide information that jealousy may be a factor in female-to-male aggression.

Other than the above mentioned study, there currently are no studies examining the relationship between female jealousy and their use of aggression. Several studies have found that male jealousy tends to be associated with male physical aggression (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Dutton, van Ginkel, & Landolt, 1996; Hanson et al., 1997; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Nielson, Endo, & Ellington, 1992; Stuart & Campbell, 1989; Weisz et al., 2000). For example, Nielson and colleagues (1992) found that male batterers exhibited higher levels of jealousy than nonviolent men and that jealousy was significantly correlated with the severity of violence around the time of the worst battering incident. The relationship between male physical aggression and jealousy is also supported in the Hanson and colleagues' (1997) study in which only the severely abusive men reported higher levels of jealousy compared to the moderately and non-abusive men. Furthermore, when Dobash and Dobash (1984) investigated sources of conflict which lead up to a violent incident, based on wives' perceptions and police reports, jealousy was a predominant precursor of male aggression.

Telch and Lindquist's (1984) research comparing marital dynamics in violent, nonviolent distressed, and nonviolent satisfied couples found that jealousy was not significantly different between these groups. The authors suggest that the difference between these groups may be the behaviors used to express jealousy rather than the underlying feelings of jealousy. Because this study does not differentiate the directionality of the violence occurring in this sample (i.e. mutual, husband-to-wife, and/or wife-to-husband) little information can be drawn from these findings and thus supports the need to empirically research the relationship male and female jealousy has with female aggression.

Therefore, the relationship between male aggression and jealousy supports the need to explore how female and male jealousy is related to female aggression. Although, Swan (2001) theorizes that jealousy may have a direct effect on women's use of violence in intimate relationships, it has not been empirically validated.

Differentiation. Differentiation is conceptualized as the balance between a sense of self and a sense of togetherness in relationships. This balance also includes the balance between emotional reactivity and intellectual thinking. An undifferentiated person is unable to resist the influence of emotional impulses (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998).

Couples in which there are lower levels of differentiation are more emotionally reactive and therefore are at greater risk of physical aggression. Bartle and Rosen (1994) suggests that violence between partners can, in part, be explained as a distance-regulating mechanism that helps to maintain the balance between separateness and closeness. Furthermore, Cook and Frantz-Cook (1984) state that a lack of differentiation in spouses may play a significant role in the maintenance of a violent cycle.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of systemic research on spousal aggression, differentiation has not been sufficiently researched. This is especially true for female-to-male aggression. There are no studies to date examining the relationship between differentiation levels in partners where females have been physically aggressive.

While there has been no research focused on the differentiation of aggressive males, batterer treatment programs have been incorporating interventions designed to increase differentiation. Perez and Rasmussen (1997) evaluated a treatment program, by therapist and client self-report, designed to prevent aggression between couples. The goal of this treatment approach was to foster differentiation, lower emotional reactivity, and promote rational thinking. Based on the client's self-report and therapist observation during and after treatment, the couples were less reactive when communicating and displayed an increase in physical and emotional safety. Cook and Frantz-Cook (1984) also summarize a treatment approach for male batterers that include interventions fostering differentiation. This treatment approach helps couples identify how difficulties separating from their family of origins play a role in their current relationship patterns of interactions. Unfortunately, there is no evaluation of the success of this treatment approach.

Summary

In summary, limited and conflictual results exist in areas regarding female aggression. Therefore, this study seeks to further our understanding of this phenomenon by specifically exploring how relationship aggression, dominance, and other couple related variables affect women's level of aggression.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Procedures and Sample

This study is a secondary analysis of the National Institute of Mental Health funded research and developmental project at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Falls Church. The purpose of this larger study was to develop and pilot test a manualized couples' treatment model for both batterers and their partners.

Participants in the larger project were self-referred, referred by courts, or referred by domestic violence treatment programs. Initially, some participants were seeking anger management classes while others were specifically interested in receiving couples counseling for domestic violence. To be eligible for the project, participants had to be at least 18 years old, involved in relationship in which physical abuse has occurred, willing to participate in an anger management program, and attend 12 conjoint couple or multi-couple therapy sessions with a willing partner. Participants were excluded from the study if there was severe patterns of abuse, violence outside the home, substance abuse, weapons use or threats of weapon use in previous violent episode, refusal to remove weapon from home, and refusal to sign a no-violence contract.

Participants interested in receiving services called and spoke to a graduate assistant who was trained in screening perspective participants. Information regarding the level of violence, substance abuse issues, mental health, and referral source was obtained during this phone assessment. If the caller met the inclusion protocol and was interested in pursuing treatment, the caller would then come in and complete the intake procedures/questionnaires.

All participants signed an informed consent form identifying the purpose of the couples' treatment project, the risks and benefits, their right to drop out at any point, and that all information they provide would be protected by confidentiality laws. After an initial intake interview given by trained therapist interns, applicants were left alone to complete a pre-test booklet. This booklet consisted of a number of quantitative research instruments and a few qualitative questions. For this proposed study, the participants will be the subsample of matched couples (n=89) who completed the pre-test booklets.

Instruments

Aggression Variables

The Conflict Tactics Scale - Revised (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996) will be used to determine the nature of the abusive acts that have occurred with the relationship. The CTS2 consists of 78 questions that assess reasoning, psychological aggression, sexual coercion, physical assault, and injury of both the respondent and their partner. CTS2 will be used to measure both male and female physical violence based on a female's positive response to any item on the physical abuse subscales of the CTS2. The CTS2 will also be utilized to measure psychological abuse perpetrated by both partners again using female partner's reports. Internal consistency for the CTS2 ranges from Cronbach's alpha .79 to .95 (Straus et al., 1996). Female partners reports of physical and psychological aggression

will be used based on the evidence that male partners often underreport the occurrence of relationship aggression (Stets & Straus, 1992). The alpha reliability for the current study of women's report of her partners' physical aggression is .89 and for her partner's psychological aggression is .75. The alpha reliability for women's report of her own physical aggression is .82 and for her psychological aggression is .78.

Dominance Variables

The Dominance Scale (Hamby, 1996) assesses three forms of dominance: 1) authority, 2) restrictiveness, and 3) disparagement based on a total of 32 questions. A sample question that assesses authority is "If my partner and I can't agree, I usually have the final say;" restrictiveness is "I try to keep my partner from spending time with opposite sex friends;" and disparagement is "It is hard for my partner to learn new things." The preliminary results of the psychometric properties indicate good internal consistency ranging from alphas of .73 to .82. For the current study, the women's reports of her and her partner's forms of dominance will be used. The alpha reliability for the authority subscale is .66 for women and .71 for men. Women's restrictiveness alpha is .80 and men's is .77. Women's alpha for disparagement is .71 and .75 for men.

Couple Variables

The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) uses 28 questions related to individual perceptions of the dyadic communication patterns with their partner. Specifically, the scale assesses the respondent's perceptions of both their own as well as their partner's demand and withdrawal patterns when discussing relationship problems. Therefore, two subscales assess husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal interactions. Each demand/withdrawal subscale consists of three questions assessing demand patterns by focusing on the partner's pressures to discuss a problem through criticism and nagging while the partner avoids the discussion through retreating/withdrawal, becoming silent, or refusing to discuss the problem. Reliabilities of the demand/withdrawal subscales are reported to range from .62 to .86 using Cronbach's alpha (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). The current study will use women's report of her husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal patterns. For this study, the alpha reliability for women's reports of husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern is .49 and for wife demand/husband withdrawal communication pattern is .44.

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) scale assesses the respondent's current relationship satisfaction. The scale consists of three questions with responses ranging from one equaling extremely dissatisfied to seven equaling extremely satisfied. To score is simply the sum of these three responses. The KMS has also been correlated with both the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Quality Marriage Index (Schumm et al., 1986). This instrument is reported to have high internal consistency with alphas ranging from .89 to .98 and high intercorrelations among items ranging from .93 to .95 (Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grisby, 1983). Both women's and men's self reported level of marital satisfaction will be use in the current study. For this study, the alpha reliability for women's marital satisfaction is .95 and for men's marital satisfaction is .94.

The Romantic Jealousy Scale (White, 1976) is a six-item scale that measures romantic jealousy. Answers range from one indicating "not at all jealous" to 7 indicating

“very jealous.” Sample questions include “How jealous do you get of your partner’s relationship with members of the opposite sex” and “How much is your jealousy of your partner a problem in your relationship?” Both women’s and men’s self reported level of jealousy will be use in the current study. For this study, the alpha reliability for women’s jealousy is .90 and for men’s jealousy is .89.

The Differentiation in the Couple Relationship Scale (DIFS-Couple, Anderson & Sabatelli, 1992) consists of 22 Likert-type items assessing levels of differentiation in the couple relationship. Some example questions include: “I tell my partner what he/she should be thinking” and “I allow my partner to speak for him/herself.” Higher scores indicate greater levels of differentiation. This scale also measures the respondent’s perception of their partner’s differentiation; therefore, women’s report of her and her partner’s differentiation will be used in data analyses. The alpha reliability of women’s differentiation is .80 and women’s report of her partner’s differentiation is .86.

Design and Data Analysis

Prior to running data analysis specific to the research questions, a series of correlation coefficients examining the relationship the independent variables have with female physical aggression will be run. These analyses will help assist in understanding the univariate relationships between independent variables and female aggression.

Research Question One:

1) How do men and women differ in the physical aggressive acts they use against each other?

A series of paired-sample t-tests will be used to compare means of women’s self reported overall physical aggression and women’s reports of their partners’ overall physical aggression. Furthermore, the mean frequencies of each physical act used by women and men will be compared using a series of paired-sample t-tests.

Research Question Two:

2) How is women’s level of physical aggression related to aggression variables (i.e. male aggression, male and female psychological aggression), dominance variables (i.e. male and female use of authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement), and couple variables (i.e. husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal, male and female level of martial satisfaction, male and female jealousy, and male and female level of couple differentiation)?

Three regression analyses with women’s level of aggression as the dependent variable will by run. The independent variables for the first regression will include all of the aggression factors (i.e. male aggression, male and female psychological aggression). The independent variables for the second regression analysis will include all of the dominance factors (i.e. male and female authority, restrictiveness, and disparagement). Finally, the third regression analysis will include all couple related actors (i.e. husband demand/wife withdrawal and wife demand/husband withdrawal, male and female level of martial satisfaction, and male and female level of couple differentiation).

Research Question Three and Four:

3) Which combination of variables listed above best explains female aggression?

4) How important is male physical aggression in understanding female physical aggression when other identified variables are considered?

Lastly, a hierarchical regression analysis will be run using the most significant variables identified in earlier analyses to determine which variables best explain levels of female aggression. To answer question four, male physical aggression will be entered in step two of this analysis to determine the unique variance accounted for by male physical aggression for the overall model.

CHAPTER IV

Results

In this chapter, the results from the data analyses are presented. I first present a detailed description of the 89 couples used in the analyses. Next, to gain a detailed understanding the data, a series of correlation coefficients examining the relationship the independent variables have with female physical aggression were run. These analyses provided understanding of the univariate relationships between the independent variables and female aggression. Then, each research question was analyzed using paired t-tests, linear regressions, or hierarchical regression. Each analysis helped in gaining a clearer understanding of female physical aggression in the context of intimate and abusive relationships.

Sample Description

I first examined women's frequency of physical aggressive behaviors. Overall, 74.6% (n=63) of the women self-reported using at least one act of physical aggression against their partner in the past year. Women reported that 86.2% (n=74) of their male partners were physically aggressive toward them at least once in the past year.

Demographics for the sample analyzed are displayed in Table 1. The mean age of women was 34 (*sd*=10), with a range of 18 to 68 years of age. The mean age for men in the sample was 36 (*sd*=10) with a range of 19 to 74. Fifty-four percent (n=46) of the women were Caucasian, 24% (n=21) African American, and 11% (n=9) Hispanic. Forty-seven percent (n=41) of the men were Caucasian, 32% (n=28) African American, and 9% (n=9) Hispanic. Fifty-six percent (n=48) of women were employed full time, 14% (n=12) employed part time, and 29% (n=25) were unemployed. Seventy-nine percent (n=69) of men were employed full time, 3% (n=3) employed part-time, and 16% (n=14) were unemployed. Seventy-seven percent (n=43) of women reported an individual income between less than \$20,000 and \$40,000, while 73% (n=41) of women's male partner's individual income was between \$20,000 and \$80,000. Thirty-three percent (n=23) of the women in this sample had a Bachelor's degree or greater and 39% (n=22) of men had a Bachelor's degree of greater. Based on the women's reports, the mean length for the couples' relationships was 7 (*sd*=8) years with a range of less than a year to 45 years.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

AGE			
Female (n=86)		n	Percent
18-28		32	37.4
29-38		32	37.4
39-48		15	17.5
49-58		6	7.1
59-68		1	1.2
69-78		0	0
	Mean age = 33.5		
Male (n=87)			
18-28		26	29.1
29-38		29	33.9
39-48		21	24.5
49-58		9	10.6
59-68		1	1.2
69-78		1	1.2
	Mean age = 36.0		
RACE			
Female (n=86)		n	Percent
Asian		3	3.5
African American		21	24.4
Hispanic		9	10.5
Caucasian		46	53.5
Other		1	1.2
Mixed race		6	7.0
Male (n=87)			
Asian		3	3.4
African American		28	32.2
Hispanic		9	9.2
Caucasian		41	47.1
Other		5	5.7
Mixed race		2	2.3
EMPLOYMENT			
Female (n=86)		n	Percent
Full-time		48	55.8
Part-time		12	14.0
Unemployed		25	29.0
Male (n=87)			
Full-time		69	79.3
Part-time		3	3.4
Unemployed		14	16.1

Table 1 Continued

INDIVIDUAL INCOME		
	n	Percent
Female (n=55)		
Less than 20K	26	46.5
20K-39,999	17	30.4
40K –59,999	6	10.7
60K- 79,999	1	1.8
80K – 99,999	1	1.8
100k or more	4	7.1
Male (n=55)		
Less than 20K	10	17.9
20K-39,999	25	44.6
40K –59,999	6	10.7
60K- 79,999	6	10.7
80K – 99,999	4	7.1
100k or more	3	5.4
EDUCATION		
	n	Percent
Female (n=57)		
Less than high school	4	7.0
GED	3	5.3
High school diploma	7	12.3
Some college	19	33.3
Bachelor’s degree	7	12.3
Some graduate credits	3	5.3
Master’s degree	9	15.8
Doctoral degree	4	7.0
Male education (n=57)		
Less than high school	4	7.0
GED	7	12.3
High school diploma	9	15.8
Some college	14	24.6
Bachelor’s degree	9	15.8
Some graduate credits	2	3.5
Master’s degree	8	14.0
Doctoral degree	3	5.3
Vo-tech	1	1.8

Table 1 Continued

YEARS	LENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP	
	n	Percent
1	10	12.7
2	15	19.0
3	9	11.4
4	5	6.3
5	4	5.1
6-10	21	26.7
11-20	8	10.1
+21	6	7.2
Mean = 7.20 years		

Correlation Coefficients

A series of correlation coefficients were run for all three groupings of independent variables (i.e. aggression, dominance, and couple variables) and all included the dependent variable, female physical aggression. Unless otherwise noted, female reports of both their and their partners' behavior were used.

As can be seen from Table 2, female physical aggression was positively and significantly correlated with female psychological aggression, male psychological aggression, and male physical aggression. Furthermore, female psychological aggression was positively and significantly correlated with male physical and psychological aggression. Male physical aggression was positively and significantly correlated with female physical and psychological aggression, and male psychological aggression.

Table 2
Intercorrelations for Female Physical Aggression and Aggression Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Female physical aggression	--			
2. Female psychological aggression	.60**	--		
3. Male physical aggression	.39**	.28*	--	
4. Male psychological aggression	.34**	.59**	.59**	--

* p < .05
** p < .001

All the dominance variables were included in the next correlation analysis with also include female physical aggression. Again, all the dominance variables are based on women's reports of their use of dominance and their partners' use of dominance. Table 3 identifies that female physical aggression was positively and significantly correlated with female authority, female restrictiveness, and female disparagement. Female physical aggression was not correlated with any forms of male dominance. In other words, women who are more aggressive use more dominant forms of behavior. Both female and male forms of dominance were significantly correlated with each other, except that male

restrictiveness and male disparagement were not related to each other. Male restrictiveness was positively correlated with female authority and female disparagement.

Table 3
Intercorrelations for Female Physical Aggression and Dominance Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Female Physical Aggression	--						
2. Male Authority	.08	--					
3. Male Restrictiveness	.19	.43**	--				
4. Male Disparagement	-.05	.29**	.05	--			
5. Female Authority	.31**	-.05	.22*	-.13	--		
6. Female Restrictiveness	.30**	-.01	.20	-.02	.40**	--	
7. Female Disparagement	.28*	-.05	.21*	.16	.28*	.25*	--

* p < .05

** p < .001

Table 4 represents the intercorrelations of the couple related variables and female physical aggression. As can be seen, female physical aggression is positively and significantly correlated with female jealousy. Furthermore, female aggression is negatively and significantly correlated with female perception of male level of couple differentiation and with a communication pattern of husband demand/wife withdrawal. Women are less likely to be aggressive if their male partners are more differentiated or have a greater sense of self in the relationship and are less emotionally reactive. This also suggests that women are less likely to be physically aggressive when the communication pattern within the relationship is characterized by a male partner who is demanding and a female who withdraws.

While female level of jealousy was not correlated with any other variables, male jealousy was positively and significantly correlated with female marital satisfaction and male marital satisfaction. Furthermore, male jealousy was negatively and significantly correlated with a communication pattern of wife demand/husband withdrawal. Men are less jealous if their partners are demanding of them. Female marital satisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with male marital satisfaction and female perceived level of couple differentiation. Male marital satisfaction is positively correlated with female perceived level of couple differentiation and negatively correlated with a communication pattern of wife demand/husband withdrawal.

Table 4
Intercorrelations for Female Physical Aggression and Couple Related Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Female Physical Aggression	--								
2. Female Jealousy	.25*	--							
3. Male Jealousy	.20	.10	--						
4. Female Marital Satisfaction	.06	.04	.27*	--					
5. Male Marital Satisfaction	.13	.11	.30**	.41**	--				
6. Female Couple Differentiation	-.10	-.01	.17	.24*	.23*	--			
7. Male Couple Differentiation	-.25*	-.10	-.10	.10	.15	-.06	--		
8. Wife demand/husband withdrawal	.09	.21	-.25*	-.12	-.28*	-.19	.14	--	
9. Husband demand/wife withdrawal	-.26*	.12	.02	-.15	-.09	-.13	.10	.07	--

* p < .05

** p < .001

Research Question One

Results from the series of paired sample t-test can be seen in Table 5. These analyses were based on women's reports of their own physical aggression and their partners' physical aggression. Women and men differed significantly on the overall level of physical aggression. Men were significantly more aggressive than women. Furthermore, men perpetrated the following aggressive acts significantly more often than did women: threw something at their partner that could hurt, twisted partner's arm or hair, pushed or shoved partner, grabbed partner, punched or hit partner, beat up partner, slammed partner against wall, kicked partner, and choked partner. There were no significant differences between men and women on the frequency of slapping their partner or using a knife against their partner. Neither men nor women had burned or scalded their partner.

Table 5
Gender Differences for Overall and Specific Acts of Physical Aggression

Aggression	Female		Male		df	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Overall Physical	5.88	6.70	13.73	12.41	81	-6.13**
Threw something	1.02	1.55	1.56	1.91	85	-2.56*
Twisted arm/hair	0.24	0.70	1.45	1.87	86	-5.97**
Pushed/shoved	1.64	1.65	2.74	1.94	86	-5.48**
Grabbed	0.99	1.43	2.08	1.90	87	-5.39**
Slapped	0.74	1.12	0.93	1.39	87	-1.27
Punched/Hit	0.48	0.89	1.12	1.61	88	-3.96**
Beat up	0.09	0.33	0.82	1.45	87	-4.75**
Slam against wall	0.12	0.47	1.24	1.53	88	-7.05**
Kicked	0.33	0.77	0.68	1.34	87	-2.84*
Choked	0.02	0.15	0.74	1.17	88	-5.71**
Used knife/gun	0.06	0.23	0.11	0.69	86	-0.72
Burn/scald	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	n/a	n/a

*p<.05

**p<.001

Research Question Two

As can be seen in Table 6, aggression variables significantly predict female aggression, $F(3,70) = 19.45, p < .001$. Aggression variables accounted for 46% of the variance in female aggression. Two variables emerged as significant predictors of female physical aggression. Female psychological aggression had the strongest relationship to female physical aggression. Male physical aggression was also significantly predictive of female physical aggression.

Table 6
Aggression Regression Analysis

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Female Physical Agg.	.67	.46	.43	19.45	(3,70)	.001			
Male Phys. Agg.							.19	.34	3.09**
Male Psych. Agg.							-.16	-.21	-1.63
Female Psych. Agg.							.54	.65	5.96**

* p < .05

** p < .001

Agg. = Aggression

Phys. = Physical

Psych. = Psychological

Like the aggression variables, dominance variables also significantly predicted female aggression ($F(6,83) = 2.78, p = .02$; see Table 7). Dominance variables accounted for 18% of the variance in female physical aggression. Interestingly, while dominance variables overall were predictive of female aggression, no specific variables emerged as significant. Female disparagement was the closest variable to reaching significance.

Table 7
Dominance Regression Analysis

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Female Physical Agg.	.42	.18	.11	2.78	(6,83)	.02			
Male Authority							1.60	.10	0.79
Male Restrict							0.53	.04	0.74
Male Disp.							-1.28	-.08	0.50
Female Authority							2.75	.18	1.52
Female Restrict							2.16	.17	1.45
Female Disp.							3.54	.19	1.68

Agg. = Aggression
Restrict = Restrictiveness
Disp. = Disparagement

As can be seen in Table 8, couple variables also significantly predicted female aggression $F(8,66) = 2.70, p = .01$. Couple variables accounted for 27% of the variance in female physical aggression. Two variables emerged as significant predictors of female physical aggression. Female jealousy was positively related to female physical aggression and the communication pattern of husband demand/wife withdrawal was negatively related to female physical aggression.

Table 8
Couple Regression Analysis

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Female Physical Agg.	.52	.27	.17	2.70	(8,66)	.01			
Female Differentiation							-.22	-.20	-1.63
Male Differentiation							-.12	-.13	-0.80
Female Jealousy							.21	.26	2.09*
Male Jealousy							.20	.22	1.79
Female Marital Sat.							2.41	.01	0.01
Male Marital Sat.							.15	.09	0.72
Husband demand/wife withdrawal							-.38	-.43	-3.50**
Wife demand/husband withdrawal							-4.20	-.05	-0.33

* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$
Agg. = Aggression
Sat. = Satisfaction

Research Question Three and Four

In order to determine which combination of variables best explains female aggression, the variables with significant Beta weights in the previous regression analyses (i.e. male physical aggression, female psychological aggression, female jealousy, and

husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern) were entered into a hierarchical regression analysis. In addition, the next most significant variables from all three regression analyses (i.e. female disparagement and male jealousy) were added to the list of independent variables in the hierarchical regression analysis. Male physical aggression was entered in step two of the equation to determine the unique variance that male physical aggression added to the overall model.

As can be seen in Table 9, the model without male aggression predicted 55% of the variance in female physical aggression. Three variables emerged as significant, female psychological aggression, husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern, and male jealousy. When male aggression was entered in step two, the added variance was 3%. Female psychological aggression and husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern still emerged as significant; however, male jealousy lost significance. Male physical aggression also emerged as significant in predicting female physical aggression. This overall model of relationship variables predicted 58% of the variance in female physical aggression.

Table 9
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Significant Aggression, Dominance, and Couple Variables

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	r ² change	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Step 1										
Female Physical Agg.	.74	.55	.51	.55	15.03	(5,67)	.001			
Female Psych. Agg.								.51	.62	6.70**
Husband demand/wife withdrawal								-.27	-.32	-3.68**
Female Jealousy								5.76	.07	0.75
Male Jealousy								0.19	.21	2.40*
Female Disp.								1.22	.06	0.62
Step 2										
Female Physical Agg.	.76	.58	.54	.03	14.01	(6,67)	.001			
Female Psych. Agg.								.44	.54	5.61**
Husband demand/wife withdrawal								-.27	-.32	-3.86**
Female Jealousy								2.90	.04	0.38
Male Jealousy								0.14	.16	1.77
Female Disp.								1.23	.06	0.67
Male Physical Agg.								0.12	.21	2.14*

* p < .05

** p < .001

Agg. = Aggression

Psych. = Psychological

Disp. = Disparagement

Since female psychological aggression was correlated at the .60 level with female physical aggression the, same analysis was run omitting female psychological aggression As can be seen in Table 10, the model without female psychological or male aggression predicted 24% of the variance in female aggression. When compared to the previous

regression model including female psychological aggression, husband demand/wife withdrawal remained significant in this model, female disparagement emerged as significant, and male jealousy lost significance. When male aggression was entered in step two, the added variance was 14%. Again, husband demand/wife withdrawal remained significant as did female disparagement. Male physical aggression was also significant. The overall model excluding female psychological aggression predicted 38% of the variance in female aggression.

Table 10
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Significant Aggression, Dominance,
and Couple Variables with Female Psychological Aggression Excluded

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	r ² change	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Step 1										
Female Physical Agg.	.49	.24	.19	.24	5.09	(4,68)	.001			
Husband demand/wife withdrawal								-.26	-.30	-2.71**
Female Jealousy								0.17	.20	1.80
Male Jealousy								8.70	.10	0.89
Female Disp.								4.89	.25	2.13*
Step 2										
Female Physical Agg.	.61	.38	.33	.14	13.74	(5,68)	.001			
Husband demand/wife withdrawal								-.27	-.31	-3.13**
Female Jealousy								8.77	.10	0.97
Male Jealousy								1.87	.02	0.21
Female Disp.								4.36	.22	2.07*
Male Physical Agg.								0.23	.40	3.71**

* p < .05
 ** p < .001
 Agg. = Aggression
 Psych. = Psychological
 Disp. = Disparagement

CHAPTER V

Discussion

There were four main purposes of this study: 1) to examine gender differences on overall and specific acts of physical aggression as measured by the CTS2; 2) to examine the effect aggression, dominance, and couple related variables have on female physical aggression; 3) to identify which combination of variables best explains female aggression; and 4) to investigate the influence of male physical aggression on a combination of predictor variables.

Overall, men were significantly more aggressive than women. With the exception of slapping and using a knife or gun against partner, men perpetrated individual CTS2 acts of physical significantly more than women. Aggression, dominance, and couple variables were found to be significantly correlated and predictive of female physical aggression. Forms of male dominance, female and male marital satisfaction, female perceived level of couple differentiation, and wife demand/husband withdrawal communication pattern were not significantly correlated with female aggression. Overall, this study found that 55% of the variance in women's use of physical aggression can be predicted by female psychological aggression, husband demand/wife withdrawal communication pattern, male and female jealousy, and female disparagement of their partners. Male physical aggression only added 3% of the variance when added to this combination of variables. Since, female physical aggression is explained by various relationship dynamics and thus questions the theory that women are aggressive only in self-defense is questioned.

Gender Differences

There was a significant gender difference in the overall frequency of physical aggression. Men were significantly more aggressive than their female partners. An examination of gender differences in each act of physical aggression found that men perpetrated more of each act, except for slapping and using a knife or gun against partner, than did their partners. There were no significant differences between men and women's frequency of slapping or using a knife or gun against their partner. These findings are contrary to the literature that states women perpetrate significantly more acts of throwing things, kicking, biting, hitting with fist, and slapping (Malone et al.; 1995; Stets & Henderson, 1995; Straus & Gelles; 1995; Swan, 2002). I believe that this difference reflects the fact that this is a sample derived for the primary purpose of assisting couples in which the male was court-ordered or referred to a batterer's treatment program. Female aggression may be characteristically different in relationships where the husband has an identified aggression problem than female aggression which occurs between partners where significant negative consequences of aggression emerged for either partner. Another possible explanation for this discrepancy from previous research is that reporting bias exists because the reports of physical aggression were based only on female perception. To examine this possibility, I ran a series of paired t-tests of physical aggression based on male report of physical aggression. As can be seen in Table 11, based on male reports, there is no significant difference in men's and women's overall physical

aggression. However, men reported that their partners were more likely to throw something and to use a knife or gun against them. Furthermore, no significant gender differences were found on twisting partner's hair/arm, pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, hitting, burned/scalded, and kicking. Thus, women's physical aggression appears to differ depending on who is reporting.

Table 11
Gender Differences for Overall and Specific Acts of Physical Aggression Based on Male Report

Aggression	Female		Male		df	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Overall Physical	7.43	8.17	8.31	9.52	82	0.85
Threw something	1.30	1.86	0.83	1.53	87	-2.60*
Twisted arm/hair	0.57	1.28	0.72	1.44	87	1.00
Pushed/shoved	1.75	1.75	1.87	1.70	88	0.67
Grabbed	1.18	1.47	1.73	1.70	88	3.43**
Slapped	0.82	1.39	0.72	1.34	87	-0.64
Punched/Hit	0.73	1.35	0.67	1.30	88	-0.34
Beat up	0.11	0.52	0.30	0.94	86	2.07*
Slam against wall	0.26	0.69	0.64	1.19	87	2.96**
Kicked	0.40	1.00	0.24	0.88	88	-1.25
Choked	0.20	0.66	0.45	0.80	88	2.50*
Used knife/gun	0.09	0.32	0.00	0.00	88	-2.62*
Burn/scald	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.12	88	1.00

*p<.05

**p<.001

Aggression Variables

The current study also found that female physical aggression is common in relationships where male physical aggression is co-occurring; however, it is clear that male aggression is not the only factor associated with female aggression. In fact, male physical aggression only accounted for 3% of the variance when female psychological aggression, husband demand/wife withdrawal, male and female jealousy, and female level of disparagement were also considered. Furthermore, several variables, besides male physical aggression, were significantly correlated with female aggression in the univariate analyses: female psychological aggression, male psychological aggression, female authority, female restrictiveness, female disparagement, female jealousy, low levels of female perception of male couple differentiation, and less husband demand/wife withdrawal communication. Male forms of dominance, male self reported jealousy, male and female self reported marital satisfaction, female's perceived level of couple differentiation, and wife demand/husband withdrawal communication pattern were not significantly correlated with female physical aggression.

Many of the findings of this study support the literature on female aggression while other do not. The current study lends partial support to Swan's (2001) theory regarding the bi-directionality of partner aggression through the finding that female physical aggression

was correlated and predicted by male physical aggression. While male psychological aggression was correlated with female aggression it did not have unique variance in relationship to female aggression when male physical and female psychological aggression were also considered. This finding supports Jacobson and colleagues' (1994) finding that women believed their aggression was related to male physical aggression and not male psychological aggression. Since Murphy and O'Leary (1989) found that male psychological aggression was significant in predicting female aggression among newly married couples, the findings in the current study may reflect that male psychological aggression may not be as important in explaining female aggression in couples who have been together longer, since the mean length of relationships in this study was seven years.

Dominance Variables

An interesting finding from the current study involved the relationship of dominance to female aggression. As stated earlier, many theorists believe that female aggression is not related to the need to gain power or control in relationships (Barnett et al., 1997; Dasgupta, 1999; Swan, 2001). However, the current study found that female authority over their partner, restrictiveness of their partner, and disparagement of their partner were significantly correlated with female physical aggression. Furthermore female disparagement of their partner was significant in the predictive model of female aggression which also included husband demand/wife withdrawal, female and male jealousy, and male physical aggression. It is important to note, motives for female's use of forms of dominance can not be determined; therefore, women may be using forms of dominance, and even physical aggression, to gain power in relationships were they feel powerless. On the other hand, women could possibly be using physical aggression and forms of dominance to maintain power in the relationship. However, male dominance was not significantly correlated or predictive of female aggression. Thus, it does not appear that wives in this study used physical aggression in response to male dominance.

Couple Variables

Several couple variables were found to be significantly related and predictive of female physical aggression. Female jealousy, low levels of female perception of male couple differentiation, and less husband demand/wife withdrawal communication patterns were significantly correlated in the univariate analyses. Female jealousy was also predictive of female aggression when other couple variables were considered (i.e. female and male differentiation, female and male jealousy, male and female marital satisfaction, demand/withdrawal communication patterns). However, when a combination of aggression variables, dominance variables, and couple variables were considered (i.e. male physical aggression, female psychological, husband demand/wife withdrawal, female disparagement, and male jealousy) female jealousy did not add unique variance in understanding female aggression. In fact, in this model, male jealousy emerged as significant. This was the first study known to date that examined the occurrence of female physical aggression and jealousy. While it appears that female jealousy is related to female use of physical aggression, it may not be the most important variable in predicting aggression.

While female perception of male couple differentiation level was negatively correlated with female aggression, it was not significant in the regression analysis which included other couple variables. This suggests that male emotional reactivity is not as important in predicting female physical aggression when other relationship factors are taken into account. Furthermore, because female level of differentiation was not significantly related to female aggression it appears that female physical aggression was not used as a distance-regulating mechanism to maintain the balance between separateness and closeness in relationships. This finding questions Bartle and Rosen's (1994) theory regarding differentiation and physical aggression. However, it may be that level of couple differentiation plays an important role in male physical aggression but not female aggression.

Interestingly in earlier research, husband demand/wife withdrawal has been positively correlated with male physical aggression (Babcock et al., 1993) but in the current study husband demand/wife withdrawal was found to be negatively correlated with female physical aggression. This seems to suggest that when women are in the distancing role of communication and the men are the pursuers of change or discussion, women are less likely to act aggressively. Furthermore, the opposite, wife demand/husband withdrawal, was not correlated with female aggression, a finding also reported by Sagrestano and colleagues (1999). While wife demand/husband withdrawal may be difficult for women as Gottman (1994) suggests, it does not appear to be related to female physical aggression. Therefore, it appears that women can both pursue and distance in relationships without using aggression as a mechanism for insisting on discussion of a problem or disconnecting from conversation. This further suggests fundamental differences between male and female aggression.

Contrary to the literature, neither male nor female marital satisfaction were related to female aggression. In fact, the only aggression variable correlated with male and female marital satisfaction was male psychological aggression ($r = -.32$, $p = .001$ and $r = -.42$, $p = .001$, respectively). This finding, while in support of Murphy and O'Leary (1989), contradicts several studies that found that marital satisfaction was related to female physical aggression (e.g. Brinkerhoff et al., 1992; Sagrestano et al., 1999). One explanation for this is that women in this study seemed to attribute their feelings of dissatisfaction more to psychological aggression than to physical aggression.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the current study. First, there is no comparison group of non-aggressive women. This study included women whose partners were referred to an anger management program or were seeking help for domestic violence problems. Therefore, it is not generalizable to all women, nor is it generalizable to women in abusive relationship since not all abusive relationships seek help as these men and women had.

Second, the demand/withdrawal questionnaire had low reliability. This limitation could have a significant impact on the results found in this study since husband demand/wife withdrawal added unique variance to the regression analyses. Therefore, I examined the predictive model without husband demand/wife withdrawal and found that the overall model including male physical aggression accounted for 49% of the variance in

female aggression (see Table 12). This reduced the variance accounted for by 6% when husband demand/wife withdrawal was excluded. Furthermore, the overall model without female psychological aggression and husband demand/wife withdrawal accounted for 27% of the variance in female aggression (see Table 13). This was a 13% reduction in variance accounted by the original model when husband/demand/wife withdrawal was excluded. Regardless, more investigation on the influence of demand/withdrawal communication patterns on female aggression is needed.

Table 12
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Significant Aggression, Dominance, and Couple Variables with Husband Demand/Wife Withdrawal Excluded

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	r ² change	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Step 1										
Female Physical Agg.	.67	.45	.42	.45	13.49	(4,70)	.001			
Female Psych. Agg.								.49	.59	6.11**
Female Jealousy								6.83	.08	0.85
Male Jealousy								0.18	.20	2.18*
Female Disp.								2.17	.11	1.09
Step 2										
Female Physical Agg.	.70	.49	.45	.04	12.27	(5,70)	.001			
Female Psych. Agg.								.44	.52	5.32**
Female Jealousy								2.92	.04	0.36
Male Jealousy								0.14	.16	1.68
Female Disp.								1.80	.09	0.93
Male Physical Agg.								0.12	.22	2.12*

* p < .05
 ** p < .001
 Agg. = Aggression
 Psych. = Psychological
 Disp. = Disparagement

Table 13
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Significant Aggression, Dominance,
and Couple Variables with Female Psychological Aggression and Husband
Demand/Wife Withdrawal Excluded

Variable	r	r ²	r ² adjusted	r ² change	F	df	p	B	Beta	t
Step 1										
Female Physical Agg.	.40	.16	.12	.16	4.27	(3,71)	.008			
Female Jealousy								0.18	.21	1.83
Male Jealousy								0.11	.13	1.13
Female Disp.								4.65	.24	2.05*
Step 2										
Female Aggression	.52	.27	.23	.12	6.31	(4,71)	.001			
Female Jealousy								8.70	.10	0.92
Male Jealousy								5.46	.06	0.58
Female Disp.								3.82	.20	1.79
Male Physical Agg.								0.21	.37	3.26**

* p < .05
 ** p < .001
 Agg. = Aggression
 Psych. = Psychological
 Disp. = Disparagement

Research Implications

There are several research implications from this study. I believe that since female aggression is in the early stages of research that more research on the variables included in this study and many more variables are still warranted. Typology research on female aggressors is need to which compares aggressive women and non-aggressive; women who use minor forms of physical aggression verses those who use severe forms of aggression; and women who use psychological aggression only verses those who use both psychological and physical aggression. Furthermore, research investigating women in cohabiting relationship verses newly married verses those who have been married for many years may find that female aggression is distinctly different based on the context of the relationship status.

The current study, implies that there are several distinctions between male and female aggression. More systemic research will provide further information on these differences as well as more understanding of differences among couples who engage in either single perpetrated aggression or mutual aggression.

Qualitative research using aggressive females from a wide range of relationships is needed to further understand relationships in which female partners are aggressive. Furthermore, qualitative research may provide evidence of those unidentified variables distinct to female aggression that need to be researched. Furthermore, qualitative research is needed which focused on motive and outcome of female aggression.

Clinical Implications

As a marriage and family therapist, one of the most distressing findings from this study is that marital satisfaction was not related to female aggression. Therefore, female aggression may not be presented as a clinical issue by clients. Furthermore, men often are reluctant to disclose their victimization. While this may reflect on the societal norms which tolerates female aggression, as clinicians, it is our obligation to protect the welfare of our clients. Therefore, as clinicians, we have to be aware of our own biases toward female aggression and carefully assess for aggression when other factors are present. For example, if a female client is psychologically aggressive toward her partner and often devalues her partner (i.e. female disparagement), clinicians may want to further investigate how these behaviors affect the relationship. Furthermore, since female aggression seems to differ depending on which partner's perception is assessed, both partners should be asked about the aggression in the relationship.

In regards to the treatment of aggressive women, this study suggests that aggression, dominance, and couple related variables are important to address in treatment. In particular, her use of psychological aggression, her dominance in the relationship, and behaviors and feelings associated with jealousy and demand/withdrawal communication patterns should be addressed. Because distinctions between aggressive relationship subtypes are in the early stages of research and not much is understood about them, each woman in treatment for aggressive behavior should be evaluated in the context of her individual relationship. In other words, a clear picture of the relationship dynamics gathered through an unbiased eye of the therapist should be considered in the treatment process. Again, both partners should be asked about the aggression in the relationship. A narrative and collaborative approach would work particularly well in gaining a clear understanding of women's aggression and addressing change during the treatment process.

Conclusion

Female aggression is a complex phenomenon that needs further investigation. This study suggests that aggression, dominance, and couple variables are important factors related to female aggression. Thus it appears that female aggression is not solely related to male physical aggression and therefore may not necessarily be primarily used in self-defense. Therefore, aggression by any partner in a relationship must warrant attention by clinicians and researchers.

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Appendix A

Virginia Tech Couples Treatment Program

INFORMED CONSENT

What is it?

- The Virginia Tech Couples Treatment program is a research project designed to see if adding couples treatment to a men's domestic violence program will be helpful to couples trying to end the violence in their relationships.

What Will I Have to Do?

- Fill out questionnaires before the beginning of treatment, at the end of treatment, and three months after that. Filling out the questionnaires should take about an hour.
- Male partners only: attend all required sessions of an anger management program if you haven't already completed one
- Female partners only: attend a minimum of two sessions of women's group (number of sessions and format -- group or individual -- to be determined based on individual needs).
- Attend an additional 12 sessions of couples therapy (either in a group with other couples or you and your partner alone with a counselor) if you are randomly assigned to receive couples therapy
- Allow your couples therapy sessions (whether group or individual) to be videotaped for research purposes
- Complete a short questionnaire after each couples therapy session
- If asked, do a tape-recorded interview with a researcher about how the treatment has or has not been helpful

What are the Benefits and Risks?

- You will be helping us test a treatment that may help other people with some of the same problems you are having
- You will get additional therapy to help you work on problems in your own relationship
- Like any therapy, you may be asked to talk about upsetting or difficult issues
- It is possible that working on problems as a couple may lead to angry or violent feelings. You will be asked to sign an agreement to control these feelings. Your counselor will help you follow through with the agreement
- There is no guarantee that by participating in this project the violence in your relationship will end or that you will stay together.

Is it Private?

- All information you give in treatment is confidential, but there are times when your counselor may need to break that confidentiality.
 - If you threaten to hurt yourself or someone else, the counselor must take steps to protect you or others
 - If you reveal information that leads the counselor to think that a child or dependent adult has been abused, appropriate county officials must be notified

Will I get Paid?

- We will pay each of you \$20 (\$40 per couple) to complete the first set of follow-up questionnaires upon completion of therapy, and \$50 each (\$100 per couple) to complete the second set of questionnaires (3 months after the completion of treatment). You will not be paid for any other activity that is part of the project.

Can I quit if I want to?

- The couples counseling project is voluntary. You may withdraw from it at any time.

Approval of Research

- This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Family and Child Development.

Participants' Agreement and Responsibilities

- I have read and understand what my participation in this project entails and I know of no reason that I cannot participate in this project. I have had all my questions answered and hereby give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.
- Should I have any questions about this project or its conduct, I can contact any of the following: Dr. Sandra Stith, Principal Investigator (703-538-8460); Ms. Lisa Oviatt, Alexandria Domestic Violence Program (703-838-4911); Dr. Gloria Bird, Department of Family and Child Development (540-231-4791) or Dr. H. T. Hurd, Chair of the Virginia Tech IRB (540-231-5281).

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Witness

Date

Appendix B

Center for Family Services Virginia Tech Couples Counseling Project Counseling Agreement

I agree to receive therapy from Virginia Tech's Center for Family Services as part of my participation in the Virginia Tech Couples Counseling Project. I understand that the following conditions apply to my participation in therapy:

A. My therapists will be either community professionals hired by the Project, or therapist interns who are students in Virginia Tech's Master degree or Post-Master's Certificate programs;

B. My therapists will participate in group and/or individual supervision with other Project therapists and supervisors at which time their work with me may be discussed. From time to time, videotapes of my therapy sessions may be shown in supervision for educational and training purposes.

C. Information about me that I reveal in therapy may not be given to anyone outside the Center for Family Services except in the following situations:

1. I give written permission for the release of information about me. If I am being

seen with a partner or other adult, both of us must provide written permission before any

information can be released;

2. A court subpoena's my record or my therapist's testimony;

3. My therapist comes to believe that I am in danger of hurting myself or someone

else, in which case he or she will contact appropriate medical personnel, law enforcement

officers, my family members or others who can prevent harm from occurring;

4. My therapist believes, based on information I have given, that a child or dependent adult is being, or has been, abused, in which case my therapist or other Center staff will contact the county Child or Adult Protective Services unit.

5. In addition, my therapist reserves the right to use professional judgement about whether to maintain individual confidences between family members.

D. I will not come to sessions under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If I do, my therapists may refuse to see me for that session.

E. I will attend all twelve sessions of counseling. If I cannot attend a session, I will let my therapist know in advance by calling the Couples Counseling Project Office at 703-538-8467;

F. I understand that the Center is not an emergency service and in an emergency if I cannot reach the Center or my therapist directly, I will contact the crisis service at my local mental health center, a hospital emergency room, or local law enforcement officials.

I have read and understand the above statements concerning my therapy at the Center for Family Services. My signature below indicates that I give my informed consent to receive services as discussed above.

Signature of Client

Date

Therapist/Witness

Date

Appendix C

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

Although the following three items refer to marriage, please think of your relationship with your current partner, **whether you are married or not**, as you answer the questions.

CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER

(A) How satisfied are you with your current marriage or relationship?

Extremely Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Satisfied
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(B) How satisfied are you with your relationship with your spouse or partner?

Extremely Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Satisfied
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(C) How satisfied are you with your partner as a spouse or partner?

Extremely Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Satisfied
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Appendix E

Conflict Tactics Scale-Revised

Please circle how many times you did each of the following things in the past year, and how many times your partner did them in the past year.

If you or your partner did not do one of these things in the past year, but it happened before, circle “7.”

How often did this happen?

- “0” = No, this has never happened
- “1” = Once in the past year
- “2” = Twice in the past year
- “3” = 3 - 5 times in the past year
- “4” = 6 - 10 times in the past year
- “5” = 11 - 20 times in the past year
- “6” = More than 20 times in the past year
- “7” = Not in the past year, but it did happen before

1. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My partner explained his or her side of a disagreement to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I insulted or swore at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I threw something at my partner that could hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I twisted my partner’s arm or hair	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I made my partner have sex without a condom	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I pushed or shoved my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My partner pushed or shoved me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I used force (like hitting, holding down, using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I used a knife or a gun on my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner during a fight	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I called my partner fat or ugly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. My partner called me fat or ugly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I destroyed something belonging to my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I went to a doctor because of a fight with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. My partner went to a doctor because of a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I choked my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I shouted or yelled at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I slammed my partner against a wall	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I said that I was sure we could work out a problem	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. My partner was sure that we could work it out	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

41. I needed to see a doctor because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. My partner needed to see a doctor because of a fight with me, but didn't	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I beat up my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. I grabbed my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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	7
48. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. I stomped out of the room or house or yard because of a disagreement with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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	7
52. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. I slapped my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. My partner suggested a compromise	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63. I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66. My partner accused me of this	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

67. I did something to spite my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71. I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of fight we had	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72. My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
73. I kicked my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
74. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
75. I used threats to make my partner have sex	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
76. My partner did this to me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
77. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
78. My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F

The Differentiation in the Couple Relationship Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following sets of statements describing the relationship between you and your partner. Please circle the number that best describes **HOW OFTEN** the following statements happen between you and your partner.

NEVER = 1

ALMOST NEVER = 2

SOMETIMES = 3

ALMOST ALWAYS = 4

ALWAYS = 5

Me:

1. I show respect for my partner's viewpoints. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I respond to my partner's feelings as if they have no value. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I demonstrate respect for my partner's privacy. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I tell my partner what he/she should be thinking. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I respond to my partner's feelings in an understanding way. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I tell my partner that he/she doesn't mean what he/she is saying. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I show a lack of concern for my partner's feelings. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I encourage my partner to express his/her feelings, bad or good. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I discount my partner's thoughts and opinions. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I show understanding when my partner does not wish to share his/her feelings. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I allow my partner to speak for him/herself. 1 2 3 4 5

My partner:

1. My partner shows respect for my viewpoints. 1 2 3 4 5

2. My partner responds to my feelings as if they have no value. 1 2 3 4 5

3. My partner demonstrates respect for my privacy. 1 2 3 4 5

4. My partner tells me what I should be thinking. 1 2 3 4 5

5. My partner responds to my feelings in an understanding way. 1 2 3 4 5

6. My partner tells me that I don't mean what I am saying. 1 2 3 4 5

7. My partner shows a lack of concern for my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5

8. My partner encourages me to express my feelings, bad or good. 1 2 3 4 5

9. My partner discounts my thoughts and opinions. 1 2 3 4 5

10. My partner shows understanding when I do not wish to share my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5

11. My partner allows me to speak for myself. 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix G

The Dominance Scale

People have many different ways of relating to each other. The following statements are all different ways of relating to or thinking about your partner. Please read each statement and decide how much you agree with it.

(CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER)

Strongly Disagree = 1

Disagree = 2

Agree = 3

Strongly Agree = 4

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My partner has good ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I try to keep my partner from spending time with opposite sex friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. If my partner and I can't agree, I usually have the final say. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. It bothers me when my partner makes plans without talking to me first. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. My partner doesn't have enough sense to make important decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I hate losing arguments with my partner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. My partner should not keep any secrets from me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I insist on knowing where my partner is at all times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. When my partner and I watch TV, I hold the remote control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. My partner and I generally have equal say about decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. It would bother me if my partner made more money than I did. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

12. I generally consider my partner's interests as much as mine.	1	2	3	4
13. I tend to be jealous.	1	2	3	4
14. Things are easier in my relationship if I am in charge.	1	2	3	4
15. Sometimes I have to remind my partner of who's boss.	1	2	3	4
16. I have a right to know everything my partner does.	1	2	3	4
17. It would make me mad if my partner did something I had said not to.	1	2	3	4
18. Both partners in a relationship should have equal say about decisions.	1	2	3	4
19. If my partner and I can't agree, I should have the final say.	1	2	3	4
20. I understand there are some things my partner may not want to talk about with me.	1	2	3	4
21. My partner needs to remember that I am in charge.	1	2	3	4
22. My partner is a talented person.	1	2	3	4
23. It's hard for my partner to learn new things.	1	2	3	4
24. People usually like my partner.	1	2	3	4
25. My partner makes a lot of mistakes.	1	2	3	4
26. My partner can handle most things that happen.	1	2	3	4
27. I sometimes think my partner is unattractive.	1	2	3	4

28. My partner is basically a good person.	1	2	3	4
29. My partner doesn't know how to act in public.	1	2	3	4
30. I often tell my partner how to do something.	1	2	3	4
31. I dominate my partner.	1	2	3	4
32. I have a right to be involved with anything my partner does.	1	2	3	4

Appendix H

The Romantic Jealousy Scale

1. How jealous do you get of your partner's relationship with members of the opposite sex?

not at all jealous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very jealous

2. In general, how jealous of a person do you think you are?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very jealous

3. Have you ever seriously thought about breaking up with your partner because of his/her attraction to someone else of the opposite sex?

never rarely sometimes occasionally often
1 2 3 4 5

4. My relationship with my partner has made me (much less to much more) jealous than I usually am.

much less 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 much more

5. How often do you get jealous of your partner's relationships with members of the opposite sex?

never rarely sometimes occasionally often
1 2 3 4 5

6. How much is your jealousy of your partner a problem in your relationship?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 much more

Appendix I: VITA

Carrie Penn
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Education:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Falls Church, VA

1999 – Expected graduation, July 2002
Marriage and Family Therapy Program
Current GPA: 3.94

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

1995 – 1999
Psychology
In major GPA: 3.8
Overall GPA: 3.7

Clinical Experience:

Marriage and Family Therapist Intern

8/2000 – Current
Center for Family Services, Falls Church, VA

- Facilitate systemic therapy to families, couples, and individuals dealing with a wide array of mental health problems
- Over 500 direct client contact hours
- Maintain professional clinical records

Substance Abuse Therapist Intern

8/2001 – 5/2002
INOVA Kellar Center, Fairfax, VA

- Co-facilitator of group therapy to adolescents at an intensive outpatient substance abuse program
- Co-facilitator of multi-family groups of substance abusing adolescents at an intensive outpatient treatment facility
- Maintained professional clinical records

Multi-Family Group Co-facilitator

1/2000 – 3/2000

Crossroads Residential Treatment Facility, Fairfax, VA

- Co-facilitator of multi-family groups and adolescents dealing with substance abuse

Behavior Modification Therapist

1997 – 1999

Roanoke, VA

- In-home behavior modification therapist for an autistic child

Work History:

Research Assistant to Sandra Stith, PhD.

1999 – Current

Virginia Tech, Falls Church, VA

- Aided in the development of a Spouse Abuse Risk Assessment tool
- Administrated extensive literature reviews specific to domestic violence
- Conducted meta-analysis of spouse abuse risk factors
- Co-creator of a manual for therapist to use regarding the assessment of domestic violence
- Worked with team in the development and implementation of a training program for the assessment of domestic violence risk
- Presented to the Major Family Advocacy Commanders of the US Army
- Assisted at the annual Senior Social Workers Advisors meeting for the Air Force in San Antonio, TX

Intake and Qualitative Interviewer

8/1999 – 1/2001

Virginia Tech, Falls Church, VA

- NIMH Grant relating to couples therapy for domestic violence
- Intake therapist
- Data entry and analysis
- Conducted qualitative interviews to assess risk and make assessment for research project
- Qualitative interview transcription

Undergraduate Research Assistant

1996 – 1999

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

- NIMH grant investigating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among families who have experienced a house fire

Technical Skills:

Experienced in using: Word, Power Point, NVIVO, Excel, SPSS

Publications:

Stith, S.M., Tritt, D.R., Penn, C.E., Ward, D.B. (In press). Partner violence assessment. In D.K. Jordon (Ed.) Handbook of Couple and Family Assessment. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Presentations/Reports:

Stith, S. M., Tritt, D. R., Robichaux, R. J., Penn, C., & Ward, D. B. (2001, July.) Developing a Risk Assessment Tool to Predict Spouse Abuse. Poster session at the 7th International Family Violence Research Conference, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Stith, S. M., Penn, C., Ward, D. B., & Smith, D. B. (January, 2002). Partner Violence Risk Factor Review Manual. Technical report for the USAF Family Advocacy Program.

Stith, S. M., Penn, C., Ward, D. B., & Smith, D. B. (January, 2002). Partner Violence Risk Factor Review Manual for Clinicians. Technical report for the USAF Family Advocacy Program.