


Spring 2018

“Boys Will Be Boys”: Examining the Relationship Between Men’s Conformity to Masculine Norms and Perceptions of Psychological Abuse

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Recommended Citation

Lian, Aileen, “Boys Will Be Boys”: Examining the Relationship Between Men’s Conformity to Masculine Norms and Perceptions of Psychological Abuse” (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 267.
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“Boys Will Be Boys”:
Examining the Relationship Between Men’s Conformity to Masculine Norms and Perceptions of
Psychological Abuse

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Science, Mathematics, and Computing
of Bard College

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2018

Acknowledgements

Mom, Dad, Ashley, Angela, and Allan: bless you for putting up with me!!!! Thank you for teaching me to be hardworking, passionate, and driven, for helping me develop the classic Lian Family Stubbornness™ while also learning to be soft and open with the world. Another thank you to Ashley for helping me come up with my project title (she wouldn't help me unless I gave her a special shout-out).

Ian: thank you for being you and being my best friend and listening to me ramble about my project and all the weird stuff that goes on in my life <3

My advisor, Tom Hutcheon: thank you for everything, literally everything, because I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without everything I've learned from working with you. Thank you for your support, feedback, and guidance through my Bard career.

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Abstract

Intimate partner abuse is a pervasive and destructive phenomenon in the United States (Breiding, Chen, & Black, 2014). Although previous research has attempted to define its components and dynamics, the study of psychological abuse is less developed in comparison to research on physical abuse. Some researchers have studied intimate partner abuse alongside American constructs of masculinity but have not adequately extended it to psychological abuse. The present study seeks to examine perceptions of psychological abuse in conjunction with conformity to traditional masculine norms among American cisgender men. Masculine ideology in the U.S. prescribes dominance and control, which is theorized to normalize acts of psychological abuse in heterosexual dating couples (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Men who conform more to masculine norms (high masculine conformity participants) were predicted to rate vignettes of psychological abuse as more normal, less abusive, and less harmful in comparison to men who conform less to masculine norms (low masculine conformity participants). Differences in perceptions were also predicted to be more pronounced when overt psychological abuse was presented compared to when subtle psychological abuse was presented. Results indicated that a relationship between masculine conformity and perceptions of psychological abuse does exist; compared to low masculine conformity participants, high masculine conformity participants rated overt social isolation/restriction behavior as less abusive and less harmful. High masculine conformity participants also rated inducing guilt/shifting responsibility behavior as more normal overall. Further examination of this relationship is recommended, as this research can be used to more effectively address intimate partner abuse in the United States and beyond.

Intimate partner abuse, which refers to both physical and non-physical acts of abuse within the context of an intimate romantic relationship (Outlaw, 2009), is a realm of study that has continued to develop throughout the past half-century. Although awareness about this issue continues to increase in academic, social, and cultural discussion, the topic of psychological abuse as a form of non-physical intimate partner abuse has only recently become of significant focus. The majority of research on intimate partner abuse centers around physical acts of violence, consequently discounting the psychological abuse that also contributes to maintenance of abusive dynamics. This imbalance is reflected in contemporary misunderstandings of intimate partner abuse (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015; Marshall, 1994; O'Leary, 2001), as emphasis on physical abuse neglects to fully explain why these relationships are so difficult to leave despite overtly violent acts.

Perpetration of intimate partner abuse, both physical and non-physical, also does not occur in a vacuum and is heavily influenced by socially constructed norms of gender. In particular, masculinity has been studied alongside physical abuse with studies examining potential correlations with men's perpetration of abusive behaviors and various measures of masculinity. Traditional masculine ideology promotes themes of control and dominance, which can normalize acts of physical violence (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Marshall, 1994; Moore & Stuart, 2005). This framework has not been sufficiently applied to perpetration of psychological abuse despite increasing research on the negative impacts of masculinity on men's emotional regulation and behavior (Tager, Good, & Brammer, 2010). High levels of masculinity and/or conformity to masculine norms can normalize psychological acts of domination and control, thus skewing perceptions and preventing recognition of these behaviors as potentially abusive and problematic. Harmful acts can then be continuously perpetrated, even without explicit awareness

of perpetrators themselves. This lack of awareness can also prevent meaningful change in intimate partner violence intervention programs.

The social implications of this research are pervasive, and the present study seeks to critically examine conformity to masculine norms and its potential relationship to perceptions of psychological abuse among American men. In doing so, definitions of psychological abuse, methods of measuring masculinity, limitations in past research, and possibilities for further research will also be considered.

Overview of Intimate Partner Abuse in the U.S.

Intimate partner abuse is enacted in many forms including through physical violence, psychological aggression/abuse, sexual violence, and stalking (Breiding et al., 2014). Psychologically aggressive behaviors, which can be harmful but do not always rise to the severity of psychological abuse, are relatively common in intimate partner relationships as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. According to data collected in 2010, experiences of psychological aggression generally were reported by 48.4% of women and 48.8% of men in the United States over the course of a lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014). When examining lifetime prevalence of specific, more severe behaviors, women reported significantly higher experiences of items such as: “any expressive aggression,” “told you were a loser, failure, or not good enough,” “insulted, humiliated, made fun of,” “told you no one else would want you,” “tried to keep from seeing family or friends,” “threatened to hurt himself/herself or commit suicide because he/she was upset,” “kept you from leaving when you wanted to go,” and “said things like, ‘If I can’t have you then no one can’” (Breiding et al., 2014). As evident, psychologically aggressive behaviors are common in intimate romantic relationships, and many of these behaviors can become abusive.

Defining Psychological Abuse

Differences in Terminology. In past research, the term “psychological abuse” has been used interchangeably with terms such as “emotional abuse,” “psychological aggression,” “verbal abuse,” and “verbal aggression” (Follingstad, 2007). However, the words “abuse” and “aggression” can carry different connotations that can influence how behaviors are interpreted. Use of the term “psychological aggression” usually refers to a broader range of behaviors that have the potential to cause psychological harm; use of the term “psychological abuse” has historically been used to refer to more obvious behaviors that have clearly negative consequences on victims (Follingstad, 2007). Additionally, as Follingstad pointed out, definitions of abuse are inextricably tied to questions of perpetrator intention and awareness, victim perception and interpretation, mutual psychological abuse between partners, patterns and/or duration of behaviors, and victim outcomes (2007). Follingstad also proposed differences between psychological aggression/abuse in married couples and dating couples, as factors such as cohabitation, level of commitment, and duration of relationship can influence perceptions of behaviors (2009). Considering these factors, it is crucial to establish a working operational definition of psychological abuse that is broad enough to account for these factors while simultaneously specific enough for meaningful examination.

One goal of this study is to examine behaviors in the context of abusive dynamics, and in doing so, it is important to acknowledge that these dynamics often contain behaviors that are both obviously harmful (overt forms) and behaviors that are less likely to be perceived at the same level of severity (subtle forms) (Marshall, 1999). For the purposes of this study, the term “psychological abuse” is used as a category containing both overt and subtle behaviors that may carry differing levels of intentionality on the part of the perpetrator and perceived harm on the

part of the victim. The operational definition for psychological abuse in this context is as follows: behaviors occurring within the context of an interpersonal relationship that cause harm and undermine an individual's sense of self through impacting self-concept and perceptions of psychological and/or behavioral competence (Marshall, 1994; O'Leary, 2001).

Types of Psychological Abuse Identified in Past Research. Researchers have used different terminology to describe various types of psychologically abusive behaviors, but the types they describe tend to describe are very similar, if not the almost same, phenomena. These conceptual frameworks vary in specificity and categorization of behaviors. One of the most established frameworks looks at two dimensions of psychological abuse: dominance/isolation and emotional/verbal (Kasian & Painter, 1992; Katz & Arias, 1999; Marshall, 1996; Tolman, 1989). The dominance/isolation dimension includes demands for a partner's compliance, isolation from resources such as a social support network and personal needs, and efforts to control a partner's behavior (Kasian & Painter, 1992). The emotional/verbal dimension includes acts meant to devalue and demean a partner as well as actions to withhold affection (Kasian & Painter, 1992). Although not explicitly acknowledged in all studies on psychological abuse, these two dimensions are evident among different conceptual frameworks. The behaviors depicted in this study primarily fall under the dominance/isolation dimension as opposed to the emotional/verbal dimension.

In their research examining signs of abuse in adolescent romantic relationships, Murphy and Smith identified seven warning-sign domains to describe abusive behaviors: gender denigration (behaviors that devalue a partner's sense of self-worth and/or self-efficacy based on their gender), personal putdowns (derogatory comments, made in private but not in the context of a conflict, about a partner's physical appearance or personality), public debasement (attempts to

embarrass a partner or damage their reputation), verbal aggression (hostile comments or threats made during a conflict), jealousy/possessiveness (overprotective behaviors based on the belief that a partner is one's property), social restriction (regulating a partner's access to resources and social support), and exit-control tactics (behaviors that prevent a partner from leaving a relationship through emotional pressure or manipulation) (2010).

The six factors used by Kasian and Painter are similar and include positive items (e.g., "My partner said things to encourage me"), isolation and emotional control (e.g., "My partner tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family"), self-esteem (e.g., "My partner told me my feelings are irrational or crazy"), jealousy (e.g., "My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts"), verbal abuse (e.g., "My partner yelled and screamed at me"), and withdrawal (e.g., "My partner did not let me talk about my feelings") (1992). Similarly, Follingstad's types of psychological aggression include 14 items such as "control personal decisions," "manipulate," "withhold emotional/physical," "isolate," and "threats," (2011) all of which align with basic frameworks identified in past research (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Marshall, 1994, 1996; Murphy & Smith, 2010). For the purposes of this study, two broad types of behaviors were used in depictions of psychological abuse: social isolation/restriction and inducing guilt/shifting responsibility (Marshall, 1994; Murphy & Smith, 2010). Though these two behaviors represent only a few of the psychologically abusive acts described in research, they were chosen to reflect common experiences reported by women in psychologically abusive relationships (Jackson, 2001; Marshall, 1996; Wood, 2001). They were also chosen because the level of subtlety could be more easily varied in comparison to acts that primarily manifest overtly.

In this study, social restriction/isolation is defined as any behavior intended to restrict a partner's access to resources, including but not limited to having a social support network (Murphy & Smith, 2010). This behavior is psychologically abusive because it encourages one to be dependent on their partner for social interaction and support (Marshall, 1994), which can prevent the individual from acting in their best interests (Murphy & Smith, 2010) or discussing potentially problematic behaviors with other close ones in order to recognize them as harmful (Jackson, 2001). Inducing guilt/shifting responsibility is defined as any behavior intended to make one feel guilty for something and shifting responsibility completely to the individual (Marshall, 1994). Doing so causes the individual to feel that they are responsible and need to change their own behavior for the wellbeing of themselves, their partner, and/or their relationship with their partner (Wood, 2001). In heteronormative situations where the woman is the victim, this behavior is also heavily influenced by the gender narrative that women are expected to take care of their male romantic partners, especially through providing unconditional emotional support (Marshall, 1994; Wood, 2001). This behavior is psychologically abusive because it shifts responsibility from the perpetuating partner to the receiving individual, enabling the partner to maintain their current behaviors without needing to acknowledge or address any problematic aspects (Marshall, 1994; Wood, 2001).

Severity Levels of Abusive Behaviors. In relationships with abusive dynamics, psychological abuse is not always obvious to partners and/or others around them, as abusive behaviors vary in severity and can be perceived differently depending on context. Previous studies have attempted to explore severity as an important factor in how psychological abuse is perceived. Follingstad's Measure of Psychologically Abusive Behaviors (MPAB) includes mild, moderate, and severe behaviors accompanied by harmful or destructive intent towards a partner

(2011). In her research, Marshall has also examined varying severity levels, proposing a meaningful distinction between “subtle” and “overt” acts of psychological abuse (1994; 1999). In subtle instances of psychological abuse, the behavior is less likely to be perceived as a coercive and clear exercise of dominance because the dominating act is not as obvious (Marshall, 1994). These behaviors, though still attempting to control behavior, are often framed as endearing, helpful, or loving (Marshall, 1994). Examples of these acts include having a partner “make it difficult to go somewhere or talk to someone,” “discourage from interests he is not part of,” “say his hurtful actions were good for you or will make you a better person,” “discourage you from having your own friends,” “act like there is something wrong with you mentally/emotionally,” “make you worry about whether you could take care of yourself,” and “point out he is the only one who really understands you” (Marshall, 1999). Psychologically abusive acts can be committed in loving or joking contexts that minimize their severity (Marshall, 1996, 1999). These contexts are situated in romantic narratives of relationships that normalize problematic behaviors (Jackson, 2001; Wood, 2001).

In overt instances of psychological abuse, which past research associates heavily with physical violence, the acts are clearly dominating and/or controlling (Marshall, 1994). These acts may take the form of verbal aggression and include threats, and they manifest as overt attempts to change a partner’s behavior. Examples of these acts including having a partner “try to keep you from seeing friends or family,” “tell you something he did was your fault,” “ignore you,” “tell others you have emotional problems or are crazy,” “make you feel like nothing you say will have an effect,” “make you feel like you can’t keep up with changes in what he wants,” and “tell you friends or family don’t care about you” (Marshall, 1999). The behaviors described by Marshall have common themes of isolation, invalidation, and domination; the subtle/overt

distinction is defined by how the action is delivered. “Your friends and family don’t care about you” is different from “I’m the only person who really understands you,” but both have the effect of isolating a partner from social interaction outside of the relationship.

In studying psychological abuse, consideration of subtle behaviors is crucial; subtle behaviors are instrumental in building and maintaining abusive dynamics, and the cumulative impact of these behaviors can tremendously impact a partner’s sense of self (Estefan, Coulter, & VandeWeerd, 2016; Marshall, 1994). If harmful acts are not perceived as coercive or overt, they may be normalized, thus enabling a partner to continue perpetrating these behaviors without consequence. Subtle behaviors can also escalate over time and become more overt, during which the gradual increase in severity is also normalized and perceived as acceptable (Marshall, 1994; Outlaw, 2009). Qualitative data collected from victims of psychological abuse demonstrate the importance of this dimension, as participants describe experiences of feeling invalidated, manipulated, and emotionally traumatized from both subtle and overt acts of psychological abuse in past relationships (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015; Jackson, 2001; Marshall, 1996; Wood, 2001).

Depicting Psychological Abuse. To study perceptions of both psychological and physical abuse, past researchers have frequently presented participants with vignettes depicting scenes or interactions between characters who are intimate romantic partners (Beyers, Leonard, Mays, & Rosén, 2000; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Hamby & Jackson, 2010; Hammock, Richardson, Williams, & Janit, 2015; Próspero, 2006). Participants’ perceptions are then assessed through sets of questions pertaining to each vignette. However, no study has yet to depict psychological abuse without physical abuse present, and there is limited research on abusive relationship dynamics that do not necessarily contain physical violence. For example: in

their study, Capezza and Arriaga (2008) presented vignettes describing interactions between a married couple consisting of a man and a woman. The dynamic they utilized was traditional and heteronormative, as Sue (the woman and victim) was responsible for domestic chores, and John (the man and perpetrator) was the source of income. Sue's behavior remained consistent across all scenarios. These scenarios all described a heated martial argument in which both partners yelled at each other, and John's behavior was varied by levels of psychological aggression and physical aggression. "Low psychological aggression" included criticism, breaking dishes, and storming out of the room; "high psychological aggression" included threats of physical violence and degradation. As for physical aggression, the "no physical aggression" condition did not include any physically aggressive acts. The "low physical aggression" condition included John slapping Sue across the face as he left the room, and in the "high physical aggression" condition, John launched himself at Sue, held her down, grabbed her hair, and knocked her head onto the floor (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008).

While psychological aggression is considered in these vignettes, the behaviors that are depicted are overt and align with the violence approach to studying psychological abuse. Subtle behaviors outside the context of a heated argument are not included, and these behaviors are important considering their importance in maintaining abusive dynamics (Marshall, 1999). This is common in studies that have depicted psychological abuse in studying these dynamics (Hamby & Jackson, 2010; Hammock et al., 2015). Unfortunately, in doing so, a crucial dimension of study is neglected; though not overtly coercive or dominating, these behaviors can still have the same harmful effects, and more problematic acts can be normalized over time.

Measuring Psychological Abuse. Several scales have been developed to measure psychological abuse in relationships, and examining the contents of these scales is another way

to understand how abuse is defined in research and clinical settings. One of the most commonly used scales is the Conflict Tactics Scale (or CTS), developed by Straus in 1979 to measure conflict resolution tactics between partners (O’Leary, 2001). Six items address psychological aggression, particularly behaviors that are overt such as “stomped out of the room or house or yard,” “threatened to hit or throw something at him or her,” and “insulted or swore at her/him” (O’Leary, 2001). These items characterize psychological aggression/abuse as acts that are harmful in that they symbolize or threaten violence, and although the CTS has been revised since its conception, its items still share this commonality. The Abusive Behavior Inventory (or ABI), developed by Shepard and Campbell in 1992, is another commonly used scale in measuring psychological abuse alongside physical abuse (O’Leary, 2001). Abusive acts are characterized as intentional tactics for establishing control and power over a partner, and the use of these tactics is situated in feminist theories of patriarchal dominance (Postmus, Stylianou, & McMahon, 2016; O’Leary, 2001). The ABI was initially developed to assess a domestic violence program, and after it became increasingly used for purposes of clinical treatment and intervention, Postmus et al. proposed a revised version (the Abusive Behavior Inventory-Revised or ABI-R) with three distinct factors: physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (2016). Some items on the psychological abuse subscale include “tried to keep you from doing something you wanted to do,” “called you a name and/or criticized you,” “put down your family and friends,” and “told you that you were a bad person” (Postmus et al., 2016).

Although the behaviors included in these and many other scales are intended to measure psychological abuse, they also reveal common themes in how acts of abuse are defined in research. The CTS defines psychological aggression/abuse as violent and malicious, distinct from physical violence in that it does not cause physical harm; instead, violence is symbolized

through threats and harsh language (O'Leary, 2001). This definition does not consider the nuances of psychological abuse and ways in which control is exercised covertly. Items listed on the ABI include broader behaviors that could be enacted in a variety of contexts; psychological abuse is not necessarily defined as symbolically violent or clearly threatening. It is important to recognize that each scale can imply different definitions of psychological abuse, and these definitions are subject to change as research develops.

Psychological Abuse in Intimate Partner Relationships

Psychological vs. Physical Abuse. Research on psychological abuse in intimate partner relationships originally emerged from research on physical violence (Follingstad, 2007), termed by Marshall (1994) as the violence approach. In this approach, psychological abuse is conceptualized as inherently connected to physical abuse; psychological abuse either accompanies or results from acts of physical violence such that an element of overt dominance or control is implicit in its definition. (Marshall, 1994). Several researchers have highlighted the importance of studying psychological abuse independently from physical abuse, as psychological abuse can be a precursor to physical violence (Kasian & Painter, 1992; O'Leary, 2001). Psychological abuse in itself is also immensely detrimental to victims' self-worth, self-efficacy, self-concept, and mental health overall (Lawrence, Yoon, Langer, & Ro, 2009; Simmons, Knight, & Menard, 2018). Additionally, limited research on psychological abuse in comparison to physical abuse prevents clinical and legal definitions from being further developed (O'Leary, 2001).

Although a lack of perceived dominance and coerciveness largely make subtle abusive behaviors difficult to detect, the presence of positive behaviors in a relationship can also discourage partners from recognizing problematic aspects. Positive behaviors and feelings can be

used to justify harmful acts in a variety of ways. As Wood (2001) described in her research with women who had been in abusive heterosexual relationships, justifications can take the form of claims that the “good outweighs bad” and “it wasn’t the real him.” Wood’s framework considers women’s experiences alongside cultural narratives, particularly with gender expectations that play into “fairy tale romance” and “dark romance” narratives (2001). As the women in Wood’s study describe, the beginning of these relationships often felt like living in a fairy tale; their male partners were affectionate, caring, and generous with gifts, and participants described feelings of happiness and bliss. These characteristics made them feel as if they were lucky to have something especially wonderful and that they needed to protect the relationship because it was uncommon to be treated that well (Wood, 2001).

In believing that “the good outweighs the bad,” participants often focused on the presence of positive as opposed to negative behaviors to justify their relationships. Violent behavior was dissociated from the “genuine” character of male partners, as negative behaviors were sometimes attributed to external circumstances such as bad moods and the influence of alcohol and drugs (Wood, 2001). Violent episodes were also frequently followed by periods of increased intimacy during which participants were made to believe that honest remorse and change were possible (Wood, 2001). For these and many other reasons, the presence of positive behaviors in abusive dynamics can mask harm such that increased psychological stress can develop unnoticed over time (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015). This further demonstrates the importance of examining aspects of abusive dynamics that may not be perceived as such in the absence of overtly dominating behavior.

Impacts of Psychological Abuse. Psychological abuse can immensely impact an individual’s well-being, and many studies have sought to quantify and qualify potential negative

outcomes. Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have examined outcomes of intimate partner abuse; however, they often occur within the context of physical abuse such that it can be difficult to establish the particular effects of psychological abuse independently (Simmons et al., 2018). Lawrence et al. (2009) found that psychological and physical victimization in heterosexual newlywed couples were significantly related to symptoms of depression and anxiety over time. After controlling for psychological victimization, there was no longer a significant relationship between physical victimization and symptom development; this suggests that psychological abuse is detrimental independently from physical abuse, and, in fact, psychological abuse may be more damaging than physical abuse (Lawrence et al., 2009). This finding has also been evidenced in other works (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Marshall, 1994).

Psychological abuse has been most commonly associated with outcomes of increased depression and harmful levels of stress among victims, particularly when abuse is relatively frequent and forms a pattern in a relationship (Estefan et al., 2016; Follingstad, 2009). Arriaga and Schkeryantz (2015) found that in a sample of dating college students, higher levels of psychological aggression predicted higher levels of personal stress, and participants who reported higher levels of commitment to their relationship had increased difficulty recognizing their relationship as a source of distress. Some studies even suggest differential impacts depending on the type of psychological abuse occurring, but this realm of research depends on consensus among researchers of what these types are (Katz & Arias, 1999).

In a comprehensive review of psychological aggression and its impacts on women's well-being, Follingstad (2009) outlined various issues that have plagued this realm of study including how to define psychological abuse, how measures of mental and physical health are used in assessing outcomes, and how data can be significantly impacted by a sample's demographics.

Although these factors and many others must be taken into consideration when assessing prior research, literature up to this point provides valuable insights into potential negative outcomes as well as numerous directions for further, more effective research and applications to clinical intervention programs.

Masculinity and Intimate Partner Abuse

Research on domestic abuse, specifically violence against women in intimate relationships, developed in conjunction with feminist movements of the 1970's and 1980's (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). Male dominance was identified as a factor in how men used violence in romantic relationships to exercise control (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). In particular, the study of masculinity and its impact on behavior was identified as an important component in understanding violence and possible motivations behind it (McCarry, 2007; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013). Most research centers around theories of how traditional masculine ideology in the U.S. normalizes dominance and control by men over themselves and others (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Masculine ideology also promotes the idea that men are entitled to control over women generally; if a woman is not subservient enough and/or does not conform to feminine gender expectations, men may feel justified in exercising dominance through abusive behaviors (Schrock & Padavic, 2007; Scott & Straus, 2007). Overall, gender ideology is an important framework for understanding how abusive acts are approached and interpreted by perpetrators and recipients (McCarry, 2007). There is an abundance of literature on the relationship between measures of masculinity and perpetuation of physical violence, but research on the relationship between masculinity and psychological abuse is less developed (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Examining this relationship independently of physical abuse is important and necessary in order

to understand how abusive dynamics develop and are sustained through ongoing manipulation within a romantic relationship (Marshall, 1994).

Measuring Masculinity. Masculinity in psychological research has been measured using a range of approaches, all of which conceptualize masculinity in different ways. Past studies have utilized the trait approach, normative approach, gender role stress/conflict approach, and indirect approach (Moore & Stuart, 2005). For the purposes of this research, the normative approach is used, as it incorporates social context in its conceptualization of masculinity. This approach operates on the definition of masculinity as a culturally based set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that influence perceptions and interaction with the world around them, and masculinity level is measured by the extent to which one conforms to masculine norms (Moore and Stuart, 2005). The normative approach is also empirically related to perpetuation of psychologically abusive or aggressive behaviors in past research, making it ideal for this particular research topic (Moore & Stuart, 2005).

Intimate Partner Abuse and Masculinity. In previous research, perpetuation of physical violence in intimate relationships has been related to measures of masculinity. Tager et al. (2010) examined the relationship between masculine norms, emotional dysregulation, and perpetuation of domestic assault, finding that all three were significantly related in their sample of men referred for to treatment for domestic assault. Emotional dysregulation, which refers to one's inability to regulate their emotional states in a healthy manner, is heavily related to in masculine norms and was found to be the strongest predictor of physical abuse in intimate relationships (Tager et al., 2010). This conceptualization posits masculine socialization as influential in developing emotional dysregulation, which can cause partners to feel threatened and behave violently as a result (Tager et al., 2010). This theory has also been explored in studies

examining gender role stress as a factor in intimate partner abuse (Berke, Wilson, Mouilso, Speir, & Zeichner, 2015; Cohn, Jakupcak, Seibert, & Hildebrandt, 2010; Franchina, Eisler, & Moore, 2001; Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Moore & Stuart, 2005).

The relationship between masculinity and perpetuation of physical violence has also been explored alongside the theory that masculine ideology, in addition to discouraging constructive emotional regulation, normalizes dominating behaviors. Anderson and Umberson (2001) studied violent men's accounts of their own domestically violent behavior through the lens of masculine norms. In these accounts, Anderson and Umberson found gendered descriptions of violence, characterizing violence committed by men as rational, effective, and natural; these dominating acts, framed as inherent to what it means to be masculine, were then normalized under that definition of masculinity (2001). Follingstad and DeHart (2000) similarly found that gender norms influenced perceived severity of harmful behaviors; behaviors enacted by husbands vs. wives in their study were more likely to be seen as problematic, potentially because these acts are associated with and seen as normal in masculine behavior. Husnu and Mertan (2017) also explored this topic and found that in sample of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot men and women, endorsement of traditional gender myths and perpetuation of abuse behavior was mediated by beliefs towards beating; in other words, men in this study who agreed more with culturally-prescribed masculine dominance and had positive beliefs towards the use of physical violence were more likely to report endorsement of physical abuse. This particular theory, which is fundamental in the understanding of this study, can be summarized as follows: traditional masculine norms in the United States encourage domination and control over oneself and others, and consequently, such acts in intimate relationships can be perceived as more acceptable and normal despite causing harm.

Research examining the relationship between masculinity and psychological abuse is less developed, partially because psychological abuse has not been adequately studied as independent from physical abuse. Some studies have looked at perceptions of psychologically abusive or aggressive acts among varied samples (Beyers et al., 2000; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Follingstad, 2011; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; Hamby & Jackson, 2010; Hammock et al., 2015), but these studies have not brought the potential connection to masculine conformity into the conversation.

Current Study

The present study seeks to examine the relationship between perceptions of psychological abuse and cisgender men's conformity to traditional, American masculine norms. The focus of this study is on cisgender men in particular because experiences gender identity for non-cisgender men may differ in meaningful ways that impact how one identifies with masculine norms. Because these masculine norms encourage dominance and control, both over oneself and over others, psychologically abusive behaviors towards one's partner can be seen as acceptable and within normal expectations of behavior. This could perpetuate the continuation of abusive behaviors and invalidate partners' experiences of harm in intimate partner relationships. Instead of accepting the explanation that men behave in certain ways because "boys will be boys," this study seeks to examine how these problematic behaviors may be normalized through constructs of American masculinity.

In the current study, the term "psychological abuse" is used as opposed to "psychological aggression" in order to situate the phenomenon as a pattern that develops over time and is inextricably related to contextual factors such as duration of behaviors, frequency of behaviors, duration of relationship, and level of commitment between partners. Psychological aggression

can include a wide variety of behaviors common in everyday interactions between people such as raising one's voice or saying something harmful (Follingstad, 2009); psychological abuse, conversely, is a pattern that develops and is maintained over time through varying levels of behavior.

Hypotheses. The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

H₁: Participants who indicate higher conformity to masculine norms will rate the vignettes as more normal, less abusive, and less harmful compared to participants who indicate lower conformity to masculine norms.

H₂: Participants will rate vignettes of subtle psychological abuse as more normal, less abusive, and less harmful in comparison to vignettes of overt psychological abuse.

H₃: Participants who indicate higher conformity to masculine norms will be more likely to rate vignettes of overt psychological abuse as more normal, less abusive, and less harmful in comparison to participants who indicate lower conformity to masculine norms. An interaction effect of masculine conformity and severity level of psychological abuse is predicted such that differences in perceptions between the two groups will be more pronounced for overt as opposed to subtle vignettes.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited via Amazon MTurk. The study was posted as a human intelligence task (or HIT) and was advertised as a study about dating relationships. Although participant criteria were displayed with the name of the HIT, participants who did not qualify but attempted to take the study regardless were disqualified and not allowed to continue based on invalid responses to demographic questions (i.e., if they indicated that they did not live in the

United States or were not a cisgender man). Participants who qualified, consented, and completed the study correctly were compensated \$1.50 through the Amazon MTurk payment system.

In total, 107 cisgender men consented to and participated in this study, and all were currently living in the United States. The average age of participants was 32.24 years old ($SD = 8.46$) with ages ranging from 21-76 years old. Most participants' reported sexual orientation was heterosexual (93.5%), but some indicated sexual orientations of gay/homosexual (4.7%) and bisexual (1.9%). The reported racial/ethnic breakdown of study participants was as follows: White (79.4%), Black or African American (6.5%), Asian (6.5%), Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (2.8%), Mixed Race (3.7%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.9%). Participants represented a varied sample of the United States with the following regional breakdown: Midwest (11.2%), Northeast (22.4%), South (35.5%), West (30.8%).

Additionally, participants were asked about their current relationship status, the number of committed romantic relationships they had been in over the course of their life that lasted at least three months or more, and current occupational status. These data were collected as potential factors to examine in further analyses, although no specific predictions were made. Within the sample, 34.6% reported being in a committed relationship but not married, 21.5% reported being married, and 43.9% reported being single (not currently in a romantic relationship). Number of past relationships (including their current relationship if valid) was reported as follows: zero (2.8%), one (16.8%), two (20.6%), three (25.2%), four (15.0%), five or more (19.6%). Most participants reported being employed full-time (75.7%) while others reported being employed part-time (9.3%), self-employed (9.3%), or unemployed (4.7%). One

participant (0.9%) reported being a student. (See Appendix C for demographic questionnaire; see Table 1 for demographic characteristics.)

Materials

Conformity to Masculine Norms-22. To measure masculinity in this study, the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-22 (CMNI-22) was chosen after extensive consideration of many scales designed to measure masculinity (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009; Moore & Stuart, 2005). The CMNI-22, which is a shortened version of the full CMNI, assesses the extent to which one conforms to dominant norms of masculinity in the United States (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009; Mahalik et al., 2003). The CMNI-22 correlates with the full, 94-item CMNI at .92 and includes the two highest-loading items for each of the 11 original factors. This inventory consists of 22 statements based on traditional masculine norms in the United States (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009). Participants are asked to respond based on how much they personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting one of four options: “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree” (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009). Several of the items are reverse-coded. (See Appendix D for CMNI-22 contents.)

Vignettes. The vignettes presented in this study were modeled off situations described in research as well as vignettes presented in past studies (Beyers et al., 2000; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Hamby & Jackson, 2010; Hammock et al., 2015; Próspero, 2006). The content of each vignette was based heavily on empirical research and experiences reported by individuals who had previously been in abusive relationships (Marshall, 1994, 1996; Jackson, 2001; Murphy & Smith, 2010; Wood, 2001). Building on past research, each vignette was heteronormative and featured a man, who was the “perpetrator,” and a woman, who was the “victim.” Each couple was described as having been in a relationship for either six,

	Whole Group (<i>n</i> = 107)	Low Masculine Conformity Group (<i>n</i> = 52)	High Masculine Conformity Group (<i>n</i> = 55)
Age	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) Range	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) Range	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) Range
Years	32.24 (8.46) 21-76	32.92 (8.87) 21-76	31.60 (8.07) 23-61
Sexual Orientation	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Heterosexual	100 (93.5%)	45 (86.5%)	55 (100%)
Homosexual	5 (4.7%)	5 (9.6%)	0 (0%)
Bisexual	2 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Racial/Ethnic Identification	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
White	85 (79.4%)	40 (76.9%)	45 (81.8%)
Black or African American	7 (6.5%)	3 (5.8%)	4 (7.3%)
Asian	7 (6.5%)	3 (5.8%)	4 (7.3%)
Mixed Race	4 (3.7%)	3 (5.8%)	1 (1.8%)
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	3 (2.8%)	3 (5.8%)	0 (0%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
U.S. Region	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
South	38 (35.5%)	19 (36.5%)	19 (34.5%)
West	33 (30.8%)	17 (32.7%)	16 (29.1%)
Northeast	24 (22.4%)	10 (19.2%)	14 (25.5%)
Midwest	12 (11.2%)	6 (11.5%)	6 (10.9%)
Current Relationship Status	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Single	47 (43.9%)	19 (36.5%)	28 (50.9%)
In a committed relationship but not married	37 (34.6%)	19 (36.5%)	18 (32.7%)
Married	23 (21.5%)	14 (26.9%)	9 (12.6%)
Current Occupation Status	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Full-time	81 (75.7%)	34 (65.4%)	47 (85.5%)
Part-time	10 (9.3%)	8 (15.4%)	2 (3.6%)
Self-employed	10 (9.3%)	6 (11.5%)	4 (7.3%)
Unemployed	5 (4.7%)	3 (5.8%)	2 (3.6%)
Student	1 (0.9%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)
# Past Relationships	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
0	3 (2.8%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.6%)
1	18 (16.8%)	10 (19.2%)	8 (14.5%)
2	22 (20.6%)	10 (19.2%)	12 (21.8%)
3	27 (25.2%)	12 (23.1%)	15 (27.3%)
4	16 (15%)	10 (19.2%)	6 (10.9%)
5 or more	21 (19.6%)	9 (17.3%)	12 (21.8%)

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants.

seven, or eight months in order to establish a consistent relationship duration for context. Age was not specified for any vignette characters. The racial and/or ethnic identity of vignette characters was intentionally ambiguous, as considering race and ethnicity as influential factors is out of the scope of this study. The names used in each vignette were randomly chosen from the U.S. Social Security Administration's most popular names over the last 100 years (Social Security Administration, 2017). These names are organized by "male" and "female" names in order of popularity from 1-100. A random number generator was used to generate 6 random numbers, 3 for female names and 3 for male names, and those numbers were then corresponded to the numbers on each list. For example: if the number 37 was randomly generated for a male name, the 37th most popular name was chosen from the list.

The vignettes are characterized as follows: Vignette 1A (subtle psychological abuse, social restriction/isolation), Vignette 1B (overt psychological abuse, social restriction/isolation), Vignette 2A (subtle psychological abuse, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility), and Vignette 2B (overt psychological abuse, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility). (See Appendix E for vignette contents.)

Vignette Questions. Following each vignette, participants are presented with three questions designed to assess their perceptions of the situation. The questions are as follows: (1) How normal was the interaction?, (2) Was _____ being abusive?, and (3) How harmful was the interaction? The blank space in Question 2 is replaced with the name of the perpetrator in each vignette. These items were modeled off questions that were presented to participants by Capezza & Arriaga (2008), which were designed to assess participants' perceptions vignette abusiveness and seriousness. The questions presented by Capezza & Arriaga were (1) Was _____ being abusive?, (2) How serious was the incident?, and (3) How violent was the incident? (2008).

These were presented following vignettes containing combinations of physical and psychological abuse. Questions for the present study were amended to lessen the intensity of words such as “violent” and “serious,” which automatically imply that something negative is occurring. The word “incident” was also changed to “interaction,” as the word “incident” also implies that something negative is occurring. (See Appendix E for vignette questions.)

Apparatuses. The study was crafted using SurveyGizmo and presented on Amazon MTurk. Amazon MTurk was chosen for study presentation and participant recruitment in order to yield a participant pool that was more representative of the United States than a sample of only undergraduate students from Bard College.

Design

This experiment utilized a mixed between-within subjects design. The independent variables were conformity to masculine norms (between-subjects variable) and vignette severity (within-subjects variable), and the dependent variables were ratings of vignette normalcy, abusiveness, and harmfulness. The study design and contents were approved by the Bard College Institutional Review Board. (See Appendix A for IRB proposal contents; see Appendix G for IRB approval confirmation.)

Procedure

After viewing and accepting the HIT for this study, participants were asked to open the study link in a separate browser window to ensure they could return to it easily after completing the study to submit a confirmation code. Participants were presented with the consent form and indicated their decision to participate or not participate in the study via selecting “Yes, I consent to participate in this study” or “No, I do not consent to participate in this study.” (See Appendix B for consent form.) Those who consented were then presented with a demographic

questionnaire containing questions about their country of residence, gender identification, age, sexual orientation, racial/ethnic identity, and past relationships. (See Appendix C for demographic questionnaire.) Participants who qualified then filled out the CMNI-22, which was described as further questions about personal characteristics. (See Appendix D for CMNI-22 contents and scoring guide.) Participants were then presented with the four vignettes displayed in random order, each of which was accompanied by the three questions about their perceptions. (See Appendix E for vignette contents and questions.) After viewing and responding to all four of the vignettes, participants were presented with the debriefing form. (See Appendix F for debriefing form.) This form included links to further resources about intimate partner abuse. At the end of the study, participants were required to copy a randomly generated code and paste it in the original Amazon MTurk window before submitting the HIT. This code was used to ensure that participants completed the entire study. In total, the study took approximately 10-12 minutes to complete.

Results

Median Split by CMNI-22 Score

Participants were divided into two experimental groups using a median split for CMNI-22 score. These scores ranged from 4 to 63 ($M = 30.98$, $SD = 8.76$) with a median score of 31. Participants with scores of less than 31 were categorized as the “low masculine conformity group” ($n = 52$) while those with scores of 31 or more were categorized as the “high masculine conformity group” ($n = 55$). Several preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that participants in each group were not significantly different on other demographic variables such as age, $t(105) = .015$, $p = .902$. Interestingly, all participants who reported a sexual orientation of gay/homosexual or bisexual (4.9% and 1.9%, respectively) were in the low masculine

conformity group while all participants in the high masculine conformity group reported a sexual orientation of heterosexual. Overall, demographic characteristics of both groups did not significantly differ, and no confounding variables were identified.

Effects of Behavior Type

Before proceeding with analyses specific to the original hypotheses, three 2x2 ANOVAs with vignette severity (subtle, overt) and behavior type (social isolation/restriction, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility) were conducted to check for potential effects of behavior type on each dependent variable.

Ratings of Vignette Normalcy. For ratings of vignette normalcy, a 2x2 ANOVA with vignette severity (subtle, overt) and behavior type (social isolation/restriction, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility) as within-subjects factors revealed main effects of vignette severity, $F(1, 106) = 140.22, p < .001$, and behavior type, $F(1, 106) = 31.281, p < .001$. These effects were clarified by an interaction effect between vignette severity and behavior type $F(1, 106) = 130.13, p < .001$. The manipulation of vignette severity was successful, as subtle vignettes were rated as more normal than overt vignettes. Ratings also significantly differed by behavior type such that ratings for social isolation/restriction followed a significantly different pattern than those for inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. These vignettes were perceived differently, and the interaction effect further demonstrated that the behaviors were not being rated similarly. Subtle behavior was perceived as more normal but only for social isolation/restriction vignettes; for inducing guilt/shifting isolation vignettes, subtle behavior was not rated as more normal than overt behavior. (See Figure 1.)

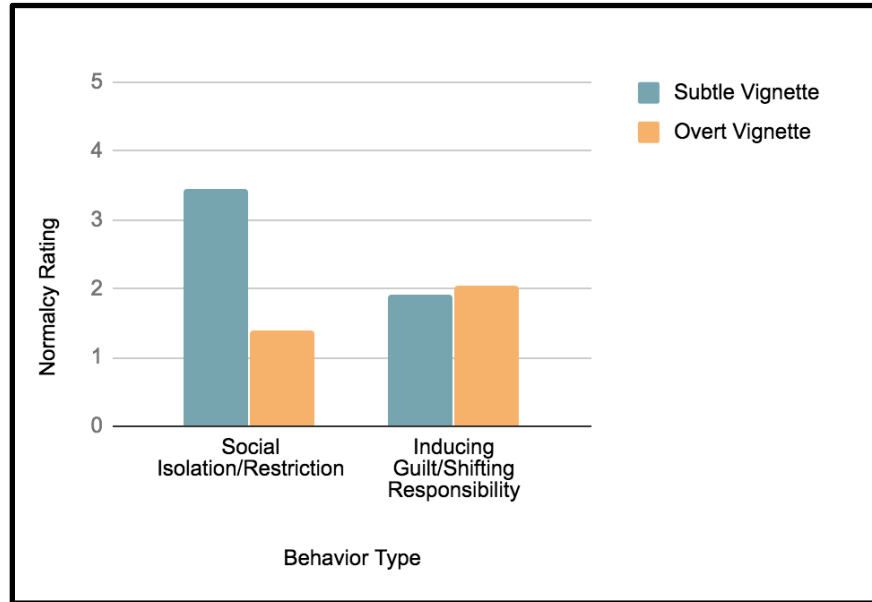


Figure 1. Bar graph showing the relationship between behavior type and vignette severity on ratings of normalcy. Main effects of severity and behavior type were clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Abusiveness. For ratings of vignette abusiveness, a 2x2 ANOVA with vignette severity (subtle, overt) and behavior type (social isolation/restriction, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility) as within-subjects factors revealed a main effect of vignette severity, $F(1, 106) = 353.35, p < .001$, but there was no main effect of behavior type, $F(1, 106) = .416, p = .520$. These effects were clarified by an interaction effect between vignette severity and behavior type, $F(1, 106) = 208.30, p < .001$. Overt vignettes were rated as more abusive than subtle vignettes, which demonstrates that the manipulation of severity was successful. Behavior type was not, in itself, associated with significantly different ratings; however, the significant interaction effect indicates that behavior type is implicated in differing perceptions. With social isolation/restriction, subtle behavior was rated as less abusive than overt behavior; the same pattern was also observed for inducing guilt/shifting responsibility, albeit to a lesser extent.

While there was no main effect of behavior, the presence of an interaction effect indicates that the behaviors are still being perceived significantly differently. (See Figure 2.)

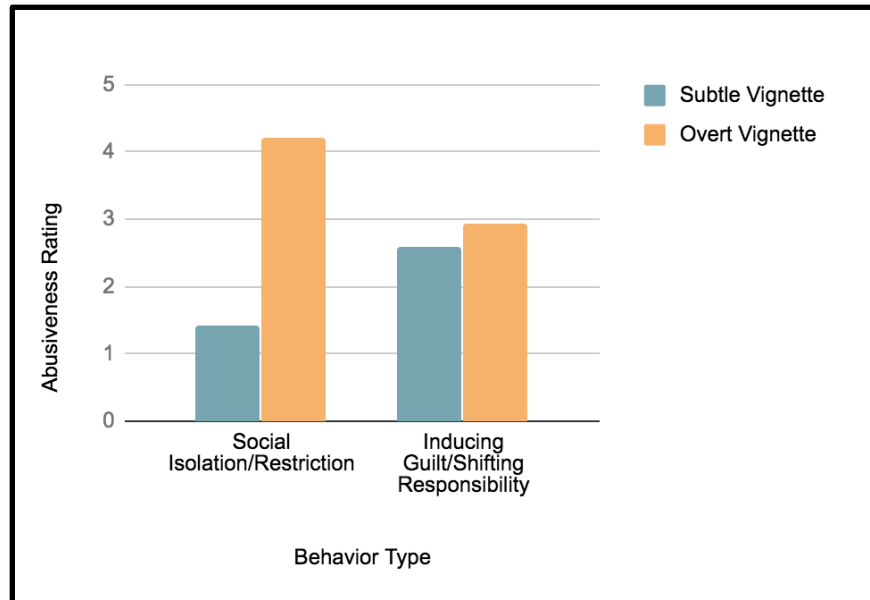


Figure 2. Bar graph showing the relationship between behavior type and vignette severity on ratings of abusiveness. Main effect of severity and lack of main effect for behavior type were clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Harmfulness. For ratings of vignette harmfulness, a 2x2 ANOVA with vignette severity (subtle, overt) and behavior type (social isolation/restriction, inducing guilt/shifting responsibility) as within-subjects factors revealed main effects of vignette severity, $F(1, 106) = 198.45, p < .001$, and behavior type, $F(1, 106) = 23.28, p < .001$. These effects were clarified by an interaction effect between vignette severity and behavior type, $F(1, 106) = 166.23, p < .001$. Overt vignettes were rated as more harmful than subtle vignettes, confirming the severity manipulation as successful. The main effect of behavior type suggests that each behavior is not being perceived similarly. The interaction effect indicates that ratings vary not only by behavior type independently but also depending on the severity. For social isolation/restriction,

subtle behavior was rated as less harmful than overt behavior. For inducing guilt/shifting responsibility, subtle and overt behaviors were not perceived differently. (See Figure 3.)

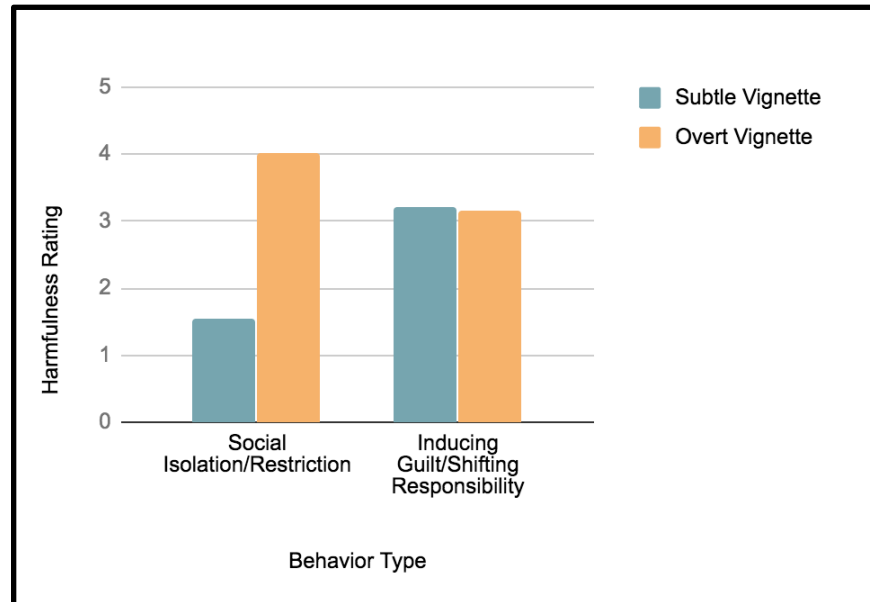


Figure 3. Bar graph showing the relationship between behavior type and vignette severity on ratings of harmfulness. Main effects of severity and behavior type were clarified by an interaction effect.

After main effects of behavior type were observed for ratings of normalcy and harmfulness, further analyses were conducted separately for social isolation/restriction vignettes and inducing guilt/shifting responsibility vignettes because it was evident that behavior type was another factor that needed to be considered separately. Behavior types could not be collapsed into one category.

Vignette Ratings by Masculine Conformity and Severity

Social Isolation/Restriction Vignettes.

Ratings of Vignette Normalcy. For ratings of vignette normalcy on social isolation/restriction vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine

conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed no main effect of masculine conformity, $F(1, 105) = 2.01, p = .159$, and a main effect of vignette severity $F(1, 105) = 237.61, p < .001$. These results were not clarified by an interaction effect between masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = .719, p = .398$. Overall, the subtle vignette was rated as more normal than the overt vignette which indicated that the manipulation was successful. Participants in the low masculine conformity group did not rate vignettes of social isolation/restriction as less normal than participants in the high masculine conformity group. Although there was no interaction effect, these results are informative, as they reveal that the manipulation of vignette severity was successful. (See Figure 4.)

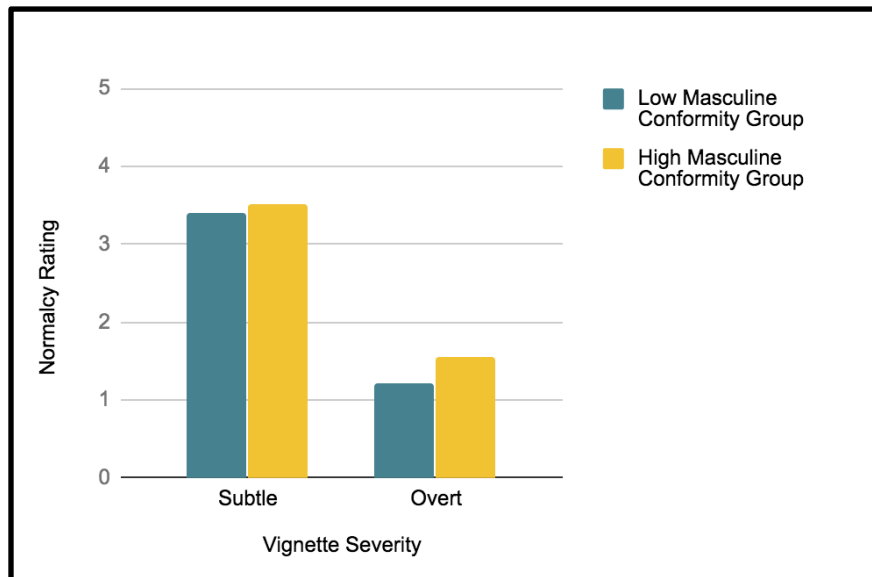


Figure 4. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of normalcy for social isolation/restriction. Main effect of severity and lack of main effect for masculine conformity were not clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Abusiveness. For ratings of vignette abusiveness on social isolation/restriction vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed a main effect of vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 562.84, p < .001$, but no main effect of masculine conformity, $F(1, 105) = .64, p = .425$. However, these results were clarified by an interaction effect for masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 7.37, p < .05$. The overt vignette was rated as more abusive generally, which demonstrates that the severity manipulation was successful. For subtle social isolation/restriction, abusiveness ratings did not significantly differ between low and high masculine conformity participants. However, for the overt vignette, a difference did emerge such that high masculine conformity participants rated the interaction as less abusive than low masculine conformity participants. (See Figure 5.)

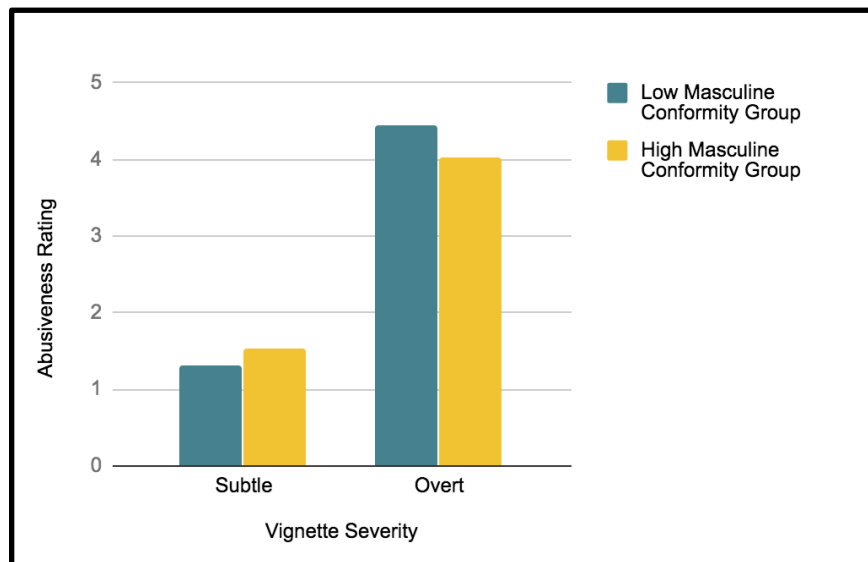


Figure 5. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of abusiveness for social isolation/restriction. Main effect of severity and lack of main effect for masculine conformity were clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Harmfulness. For ratings of vignette harmfulness on social isolation/restriction vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed a main effect of vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 328.71, p < .001$, but no main effect of masculine conformity, $F(1, 105) = 1.64, p = .203$. However, these results were clarified by an interaction effect for masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 10.05, p < .05$. The overt vignette was rated as more harmful than the subtle vignette. For subtle social isolation/restriction, high masculine conformity participants did not rate the vignette as less harmful; however, for overt social isolation/restriction, a significant difference did emerge such that high masculine conformity participants rated the interaction as less harmful than low masculine conformity participants. (See Figure 6.)

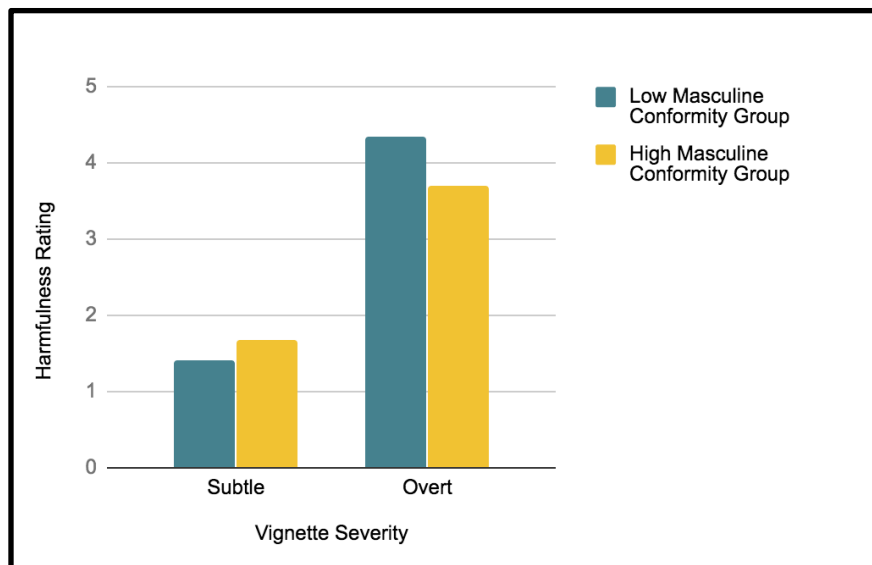


Figure 6. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of harmfulness. Main effect of severity and lack of main effect for masculine conformity were clarified by an interaction effect.

For vignettes depicting social isolation and restriction, there were no significant differences between low and high masculine conformity participants on ratings of normalcy; high masculine conformity participants did not rate subtle behaviors as more normal in comparison to low masculine conformity participants. High masculine conformity participants also rated overt social isolation/restriction as less abusive and less harmful than low masculine conformity participants.

Inducing Guilt/Shifting Responsibility Vignettes.

Ratings of Vignette Normalcy. For ratings of normalcy on inducing guilt/shifting responsibility vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed a main effect of masculine conformity, $F(1, 105) = 8.24, p < .05$, but no main effect of vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 1.55, p = .216$. These effects were not clarified by an interaction effect between masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = .001, p = .972$. High masculine conformity participants rated these vignettes as more normal overall in comparison to low masculine conformity participants. Although the main effect of masculine conformity demonstrates that men who conform more to masculine norms perceive problematic situations as more normal, the lack of main effect of severity prompts further examination of the behavior itself and why it may be viewed differently than acts of social isolation/restriction. (See Figure 7.)

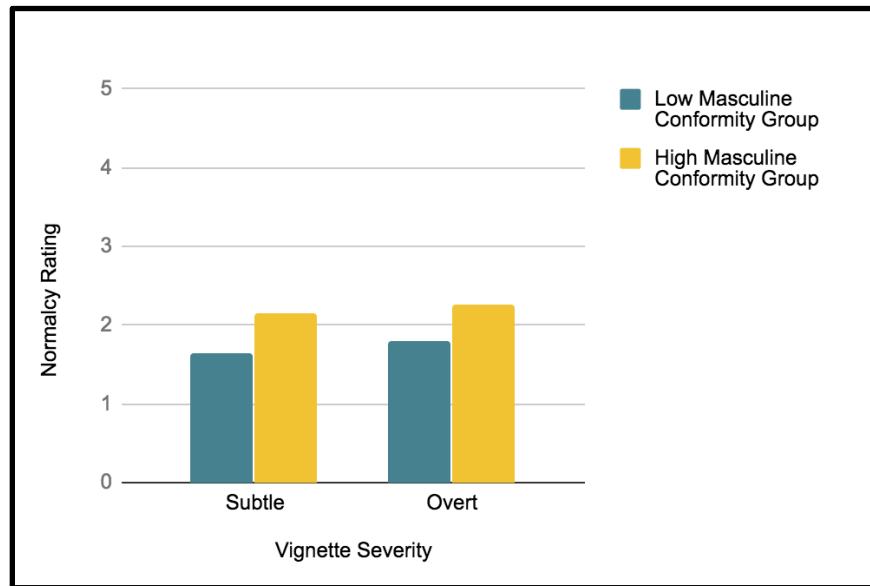


Figure 7. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of normalcy for inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. Main effect of masculine conformity and lack of main effect for vignette severity were not clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Abusiveness. For ratings of vignette abusiveness on inducing guilt/shifting responsibility vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed a main effect of severity, $F(1, 105) = 9.09, p < .05$, but no main effect of masculine conformity $F(1, 105) = 1.98, p = .331$. These results were not clarified by an interaction effect between masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = .51, p = .477$. The overt vignette was not rated as more abusive than the subtle vignette, and ratings did not differ between high masculine conformity and low masculine conformity groups. (See Figure 8.)

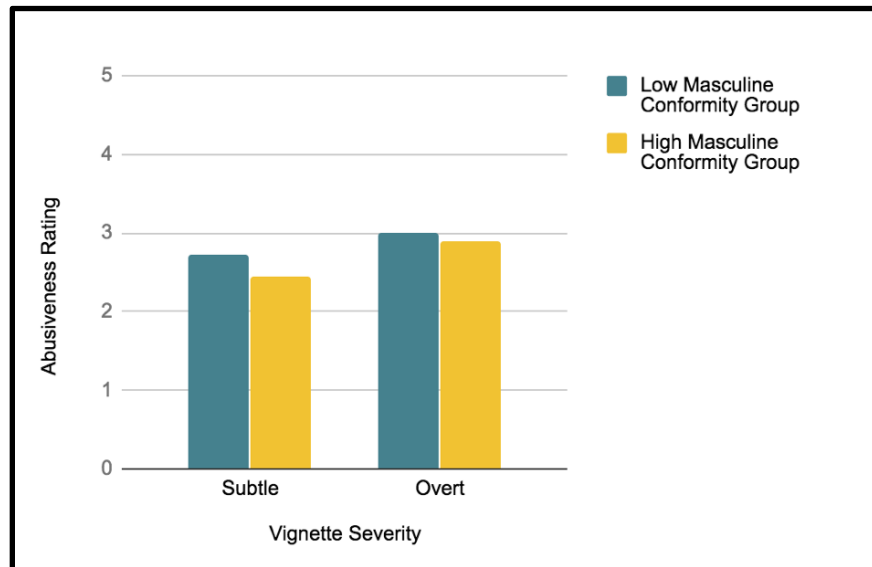


Figure 8. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of abusiveness for inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. Main effect of severity and lack of main effect for masculine conformity were not clarified by an interaction effect.

Ratings of Vignette Harmfulness. For ratings of vignette harmfulness on inducing guilt/shifting responsibility vignettes, a 2x2 ANOVA with masculine conformity (low masculine conformity, high masculine conformity) as a between-subjects factor and vignette severity (subtle, overt) as a within-subjects factor revealed no main effect of masculine conformity, $F(1, 105) = 1.24, p = .269$, nor of vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = .38, p = .540$. These results were not clarified by an interaction effect between masculine conformity and vignette severity, $F(1, 105) = 1.21, p = .273$. Participants did not rate the overt vignette as more harmful than the subtle vignette, and ratings did not differ between high and low masculine conformity groups. (See Figure 9.)

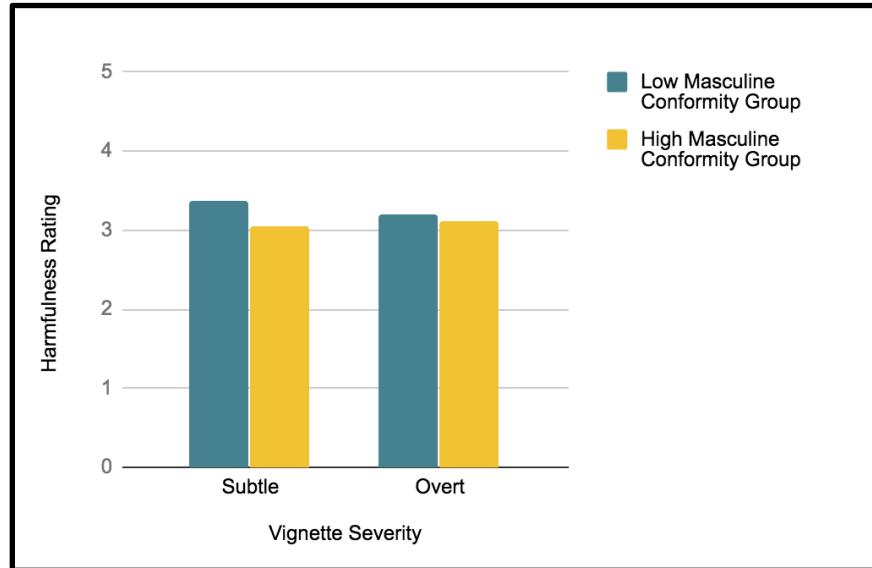


Figure 9. Bar graph showing the relationship between vignette severity and masculine conformity on ratings of harmfulness for inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. No main effects were observed nor was an interaction effect observed.

Discussion

In this study, men's perceptions of psychologically abusive interactions significantly differed by their conformity to traditional, American masculine norms. Overall, in looking at social isolation/restriction and inducing guilt/shifting responsibility as psychologically abusive behaviors, a relationship exists between masculine conformity and how problematic interactions between heterosexual intimate partners are perceived. For social isolation/restriction, men who conform more to masculine norms (i.e., high masculine conformity participants) rated overt psychological abuse as less abusive and less harmful in comparison to men who conform less to masculine norms (i.e., low masculine conformity participants). High masculine conformity participants also rated inducing guilt/shifting responsibility behaviors as more normal in comparison to low masculine conformity participants.

The hypotheses of this study were partially supported by the data. In examining perceptions of social isolation/restriction vignettes, the high masculine conformity group did not rate vignettes as more normal in comparison to the low masculine conformity group. These results suggest that there may be something particular about how one defines normalcy that warrants further examination. For ratings of abusiveness and harmfulness on social isolation/restriction vignettes, ratings depended on both masculine conformity and vignette severity; when presented with the subtle vignette, ratings for abusiveness and harmfulness did not differ significantly. However, when presented with the overt vignette, differences between high and low masculine conformity groups did emerge such that high masculine conformity participants rated the vignette as less abusive and less harmful than low masculine conformity participants.

In examining perceptions of inducing guilt/shifting responsibility, results followed a different pattern. High masculine conformity participants rated these vignettes as more normal than low masculine conformity participants, and the overt vignette was rated as more abusive than the subtle vignette among all participants. Results did not follow the same pattern as that for social isolation/restriction vignettes. The difference in perceptions based on behavior type prompts exploration of why different types of behavior may carry different connotations.

Although no predictions were made regarding behavior type as a significant variable, analyses revealed differing perceptions based on behavior type. This may have occurred for a variety of reasons, particularly concerning methodological aspects of this study. One potential explanation is that the vignettes did not adequately represent inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. Inducing guilt and shifting responsibility are sometimes conceptualized as different behaviors, and for this study, they were collapsed into one category because they often

occur concurrently (i.e., a person might make their partner feel guilty by unfairly claiming that something was the partner's responsibility and they failed to fulfill it). This behavior, however, may be more nuanced such that collapsing them oversimplifies the dynamics that can occur.

Scott and Straus (2007) examine associations between denial, minimization, and partner blaming within abusive intimate partner dynamics and, in doing so, highlight how each can manifest in forms of psychological abuse. They also situate these acts within feminist theory, noting that denial, minimization, and partner blaming can be used by men to avoid facing the consequences of their problematic behavior (Scott & Straus, 2007). Formation of vignettes in this study did not sufficiently take into account how denial and minimization relate to inducing guilt and shifting responsibility, and this may have contributed to why there was a main effect of behavior.

Another potential explanation is that the vignettes were representative of this behavior, and inducing guilt/shifting responsibility is actually perceived differently in general society. This is an interesting possibility considering the limited research on perceptions of specific psychologically abusive behaviors; further examination of this would involve more social and cultural context in addition to the influence of masculine norms.

Implications

Masculine Conformity and Perceptions of Psychological Abuse. The results of this study carry valuable implications for how psychological abuse is studied and understood both within social science research and beyond. Among the cisgender men who participated in this study, statistically significant differences were observed between those who conform more to masculine norms (referred to as the high masculine conformity group) and those who conform less to masculine norms (referred to as the low masculine conformity group). When examining these men's perceptions of inducing guilt/shifting responsibility, high masculine conformity

participants rated both subtle and overt vignettes as more normal in comparison to low masculine conformity participants. This result is compelling, as it suggests that there is a relationship between men's identification with masculine norms and their fundamental perceptions and understanding of the world. As theorized, this may occur because masculine norms in the U.S. prescribe dominance and control over oneself and others, which could possibly lead one to see acts of control over a partner's behavior as more normal. This relationship can only be speculated with the current data, as causality would be inappropriate to assume, but the existence of a relationship to begin with provides a basis for further experimental research.

Significant results were also observed when looking at ratings of abusiveness and harmfulness in social isolation/restriction vignettes. In examining both aspects, differences in perceptions were associated with masculine conformity and severity of behavior. When evaluating subtle social isolation/restriction, ratings for abusiveness and harmfulness did not differ between the two groups. This is relatively unsurprising considering that the subtle vignettes were predicted to be perceived as less abusive and less harmful overall. However, differences did emerge for ratings on the overt vignette such that high masculine conformity participants rated the vignette as less abusive and less harmful than low masculine conformity participants. When evaluating the inducing guilt/shifting responsibility vignettes, high masculine conformity participants rated the interaction as more normal than low masculine conformity participants. These results have crucial implications on how psychological abuse is defined and the importance of referencing social factors such as gender constructs. In some cases, high masculine conformity is associated with perceiving abusive behaviors as more normal, less abusive, and less harmful, and these findings allow for more comprehensive understanding of abusive dynamics.

The findings of this study are also applicable to general masculinity studies, as results demonstrate that masculine conformity is significantly associated with how social interactions are perceived. Existing literature suggests that masculine constructs can be detrimental to emotional regulation, self-esteem, and mental well-being more generally (Cohn et al., 2010; Tager et. al, 2010; Wong, Pituch, & Rachlen, 2006). Masculine conformity may also be related to one's ability to recognize harmful behavior, and dampened awareness can lead to continued perpetuation of harm. The field of masculinity studies and society more broadly would benefit from critical examination of masculine norms and how they may prescribe dominating, psychologically abusive behaviors as acceptable.

Applications to Intervention Programs and Therapeutic Approaches. Some batterer intervention programs, or BIPs, already attempt to address masculinity as a factor in the perpetuation of domestic violence among men (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Schrock & Padavic, 2007). Results of this study can be applied to these programs in order to further refine their effectiveness, which is especially imperative considering the difficulty in actually changing constructions and meanings of masculinity (Schrock & Padavic, 2007). As demonstrated by this study, the relationship between masculine conformity and perceptions of abusive behavior includes not just physical abuse but also non-physical abuse, specifically psychological abuse. Masculine conformity has the potential to normalize physical acts of domination and control, which are more readily assessed as problematic, as well as psychologically abusive behaviors that may operate by similar mechanisms but are more complex in how they are enacted and perceived. Intervention programs may benefit from addressing psychological abuse both in relation to and independently from physical abuse. Through meaningful discussion about what it means to "be a man" and why the phrase "boys will be boys" is cyclically problematic,

intervention programs can address masculinity more broadly to help men assess their own behavior from a critical and constructive perspective.

Results of this study can also be incorporated into educative programs aimed towards young adults, as intimate partner abuse is not limited to adult relationships (Giordano, Soto, Manning, & Longmore, 2010; Murphy & Smith, 2010; Sears, Byers, Whelan, & Saint-Pierre, 2006). Given the high rates of psychologically aggressive behaviors reported in previous research (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015; Breiding et al., 2014; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997; Scott & Straus, 2007; Walker, Sleath, & Tramontano, 2017), more initiatives aimed towards educating youth about these behaviors can be implemented to raise awareness. These initiatives may also benefit from consideration of masculine norms and constructions of masculinity among different demographics in the U.S.; in doing so, young adults may be encouraged to critically examine their behavior in relation to social influences, enabling them to recognize harmful behaviors and consider effective means of preventing them at a young age.

Limitations and Further Directions

Heteronormativity and Gender Biases in Definitions. Definitions of psychological abuse are based on heteronormative assumptions of behavior, as reflected in past research (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997). Empirical examination of intimate partner abuse was heavily influenced by feminist studies of patriarchal forces in society; thus, the framework carries an inherent gender bias that must be acknowledged in continuing this research. These situations are assumed to be between cisgender, heterosexual couples in which there is a man and a woman in a monogamous romantic relationship (Marshall, 1994). Traditionally, the man in the scenario is framed as the perpetrator

of intimate partner abuse while the woman is the victim (Beyers et al., 2000; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Hamby & Jackson, 2010; Hammock et al., 2015; Próspero, 2006). These assumptions of heteronormativity do not consider differing experiences of individuals outside of the heteronormative framework; patterns of abuse may develop in systematically different ways for individuals who identify as trans*, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and other identities on LGBTQIA+ spectrums of gender identity and sexual orientation. Although some studies have looked at domestic violence more generally in lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia, & Shiu-Thornton, 2006; Houston & McKirnan, 2007; Little & Terrance, 2010; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000), the field currently lacks studies that focus on psychological abuse independently from physical abuse. Research beyond the scope of this current study must consider how gender- and sexuality-based forms of discrimination can impact both psychological and physical abuse.

Research on men as victims of psychological abuse is also underdeveloped, although violence against men is an issue that warrants further examination in itself. Masculine ideology emphasizing dominance and control in one's life may prevent men from recognizing when acts are harmful (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Data also indicates that mutual abuse may be occurring in some cases of intimate partner abuse, suggesting that the scope of this research needs to be expanded in order to account for more complicated dynamics (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). Additionally, interpretations of violence can be gendered distinctly; in a study of participants in a domestic violence intervention program, men who had perpetrated physical acts of violence in their heterosexual romantic relationships viewed their violence as effective, rational, and powerful (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). Conversely, men who experienced violence from their female partners viewed those acts as ineffectual and of little concern

(Anderson & Umberson, 2001). The severity of violent acts by woman in these relationships was minimized and trivialized, demonstrating that masculinity can also impact how men interpret harmful acts committed against themselves. Because definitions of intimate partner abuse in multiple forms appear to be inherently associated with gender roles and norms, research on these behaviors in non-heteronormative relationships is in great need of development.

Ambiguity of Race and/or Ethnicity. The racial and/or ethnic identity of characters in each vignette was intended to be ambiguous, as considering race and ethnicity as influential factors is out of the scope of this study. Names can carry racial or ethnic connotations, and as previous research demonstrates, these connotations can significantly impact how individuals are perceived (Carpusor & Loges, 2006). Indicators of race and/or ethnicity in vignette characters may have potentially influenced how participants perceive the vignettes themselves; racial and ethnic stereotypes impact perceptions of behavior generally, and rates of intimate partner abuse can differ among different demographics for a variety of reasons (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Selwyn, & Rohling, 2012). Although some studies have examined race and/or ethnicity as a central variable in determining the prevalence of psychological abuse or intimate partner abuse more broadly (Campbell, Campbell, King, Parker, & Ryan, 2001; Henning & Klesges, 2003; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012; Porter & Williams, 2011), there is limited research on how definitions of abuse can differ within racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Just as masculine norms have been associated with perceptions of psychological abuse in this study, it is important to consider the wide variety of social and cultural forces that may also interact with these perceptions.

Difficulties in Measuring Masculinity. The premise of this study is dependent on the assumption that masculinity is something that can be measured; however, masculinity is a

dynamic concept that requires deliberate consideration in itself. The fields of psychology and sociology have approached the study of masculinity in different ways, and both of these disciplines must be considered when trying to obtain measurements about masculinity and its impact on behavior (Pfeffer, Rogalin, & Gee, 2016). In the study of intimate partner abuse, researchers also disagree on the most accurate ways to measure masculinity (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Some researchers choose to measure masculinity through masculine trait identification, the impact of gender role stress and conflict on causing violent behavior, indirect measures of power and control, and levels of emotional dysregulation (Moore & Stuart, 2005; Tager et al., 2010). Many studies use multiple approaches and scales to measure masculinity; unfortunately, the current research is limited in that only one scale is used. Another crucial consideration is that many of these scales were developed using data from predominantly white samples of undergraduate college men, thus failing to adequately capture experiences of masculinity outside of those demographics (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Thompson & Pleck, 1986).

Limited Depictions of Psychological Abuse. The current study focuses on two psychologically abusive behaviors: social restriction/isolation and inducing guilt/shifting responsibility. These particular behaviors were chosen because they are frequently described in literature and are also behaviors that are commonly varied by subtlety and overtness (Jackson, 2001; Marshall, 1994, 1996; Wood, 2001). However, these are only two of the many forms of psychological abuse, and exclusion of additional forms may impact how the contexts of vignette interactions is perceived. Future research should consider a wider range of psychologically abusive behaviors in the creation of study vignettes. The study is also limited in that frequency and duration of the relationships and behaviors in each vignette was not adequately established, which can heavily influence how psychological abuse is fundamentally defined (Follingstad,

2009; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000). Establishing a pattern of behavior within a relationship should be prioritized in the formation of future studies and research on abusive dynamics.

Conclusion

Psychological abuse is a crucial element of intimate partner abuse, and in attempting to define, categorize, and measure its various forms, underlying social forces must be considered. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between cisgender men's conformity to masculine norms and their perceptions of psychologically abusive interactions. Results of this study suggest that a relationship does exist; in heteronormative vignettes depicting the behavior of social isolation/restriction between a man (perpetrator) and a woman (recipient), men who conform more to masculine norms (i.e., the high masculine conformity group) rate overt depictions of psychological abuse as less abusive and less harmful in comparison to men who conform less to masculine norms (i.e., the low masculine conformity group). High masculine conformity participants also rate inducing guilt/shifting responsibility as significantly more normal than participants who conform less to masculine norms. These results provide support for the theory that masculine norms can impact perceptions of oneself and others in the world.

Dominance and control prescribed by masculine ideology in the U.S. can normalize psychologically aggressive and abusive behaviors, thus preventing perpetrators and individuals at large from recognizing the harm embedded in these acts. Continuation of this research will allow for further understanding of how psychologically abusive acts are perceived by perpetrators, recipients, and broader society. Interventions for intimate partner abuse can subsequently incorporate this information in approaches to addressing problematic behavior, working towards a higher level of awareness and recognition of how gendered behaviors and harmful acts are enacted through everyday interactions.

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Appendix A

IRB Proposal Contents

Contact Information:

Aileen Lian, al7168@bard.edu, (248) 804-8898
Psychology Program, Undergrad
Advisor: Thomas Hutcheon, thutcheo@bard.edu

External Funding:

No

Data Collection Period:

December 1, 2017 - March 1, 2018

Project Title:

Perceptions of Dating Relationships Study (This is the title that will be advertised to participants)

Describe your research question briefly (approximately 250 words or less):

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of masculine ideology on perceptions of psychological abuse in dating scenarios. In particular, I am interested in studying the men's perceptions and how those perceptions differ depending on how much they conform to traditional masculine norms. Previous research has examined the role of masculinity in perpetration of physical intimate partner abuse; however, less attention has been devoted to the non-physical components of these dynamics, referred to in this study as psychological abuse.

Psychological abuse, which has been neglected in this realm of study, is an important component of intimate partner abuse. Individuals often pose the question of "why women stay" in violent relationships, as the popular perception is that these relationships are characterized primarily by overt and physical acts of abuse. Popular discourse lacks understanding of how violent relationships are also sustained with psychological coercion in subtle and overt forms. Additionally, research suggests that negative outcomes from abusive relationships are associated with long-term psychological abuse as well as physical abuse, suggesting more complexity in understanding these dynamics.

In my study, I predict that men who indicate higher levels of conformity to traditional masculine norms (in comparison to men who indicate lower levels of conformity) will also perceive subtle forms of psychological abuse as less abusive, more normal, and less harmful (in comparison to overt forms of psychological abuse). This hypothesis is based on masculinity research demonstrating that masculine ideology normalizes dominant and controlling behaviors, especially when they are framed in less overt ways.

Participant Recruitment:

Participants will be recruited through the Amazon MTurk interface. All participants will be cisgender men 18 years or older. The study will appear as a task that participants will have the option to complete if they qualify.

Study Procedure:

1. Fill out a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), expected to take approximately 1 minute.
2. Fill out the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory - 22 (see Appendix D), expected to take approximately 2-3 minutes.
3. Read 4 vignettes depicting interactions between heterosexual couples with a man and a woman and respond to 3 questions for each vignette (see Appendix E), expected to take approximately 8-10 minutes.
4. Read the debriefing statement (see Appendix F), expected to take approximately 1 minute.

Expected Number of Participants:

100

Risks and Benefits:

One potential risk of this study includes minor emotional discomfort. However, this risk is minimal, as the scenarios depicted are not overtly violent. Resources about dating and domestic abuse are provided at the end of the study if additional support is needed.

Participants are compensated with \$1.50 through Amazon MTurk's payment system. They may also experience satisfaction from contributing to knowledge about this topic.

Participant Confidentiality Procedures:

Participant records will be kept under a code instead of by name in order to protect personal information. Once the data collection is complete, all data will be deleted from SurveyGizmo in order to ensure that other users do not have access to. All data will be password-protected and will only be accessible by study personnel (including the principal investigator and advisor).

Debriefing Statement:

See Appendix F.

Certificate of Completion in the Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects:

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Perceptions of Dating Relationships Study - Consent Form

Principal Investigator

Aileen Lian (al7168@bard.edu)
Psychology Program, Bard College

Project Title

Perceptions of Dating Relationships Study

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by members of the Psychology Department at Bard College. Please read the following information carefully.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of heterosexual dating situations among American men.

Study Procedure

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that provides us with basic demographic information including your age, gender, sexual orientation, race, occupational status, and dating history. Next, you will be asked to complete an additional questionnaire assessing personal characteristics. Following these questionnaires, you will be presented with a series of four (4) vignettes. You will be asked to read these vignettes and respond to several questions concerning them. The entire study must be completed in one sitting. The total duration of the study will be approximately 15 minutes, although you will be allotted one (1) hour to complete it. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks and Discomforts

Participation in this study has a small risk of causing discomfort. Content in this study includes depictions of heterosexual dating scenarios, some of which are potentially distressing. Resources will be provided at the end of the study for participants who need additional support.

Benefits

You are not likely to benefit directly from participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the understanding of perceptions of dating relationships and how they vary by certain factors.

Compensation

You will be compensated with payment of \$1.50 through Amazon MTurk's payment system. Upon completion of the study, you will be presented with a randomly generated code. You must copy and paste this code before submitting the task in order to receive payment.

Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria

In order to participate in this study, you must be a cisgender man, meaning that you were assigned the biological sex of “male” at birth and currently identify as a man. You must be 18 years of age or older. You must also currently reside in the United States of America.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your personal information will be ensured through several procedures. Your records will be kept under a code rather than by name. Your personal and demographic information will be password-protected and accessible only by study personnel. Your name will not appear when results of this study are presented or published. Your privacy will be protected to the fullest extent of the law. To ensure that this study is carried out properly, the Bard College IRB may review study records.

The final project of this study will be permanently and publicly available in the Bard College Library as well as online through the DigitalCommons. Your identity will remain confidential, and your name will not appear in this final project.

In Case of Injury/Harm

If you are injured as a result of being in this study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Aileen Lian (al7168@bard.edu).

Participant Rights

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to discontinue you the study, there will be no penalties, but you will not receive compensation through Amazon MTurk’s payment system.

Questions About Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the chair of the Bard College IRB (irb@bard.edu).

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions about the study, contact Aileen Lian (al7168@bard.edu).

1. Please indicate your decision to participate or not to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, you are indicating that you have read the information presented in this form and consent to participate in the study. *

- Yes, I consent to participate in this study.
- No, I do not consent to participate in this study.

2. Date: *

3. Please enter your Amazon MTurk Worker ID: *

Appendix C
Demographic Questionnaire

Please read and respond to these questions as accurately as possible.

4. What country do you currently reside in? *

- Germany
- China
- Denmark
- France
- United States of America (USA)
- United Kingdom (UK)
- Other - Write In (Required)

5. What is your gender identification? *

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Other - Write In (Required)

6. What is your age? *

7. What is your sexual orientation? *

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Other - Write In (Required)

8. What is your racial/ethnic identification? *

- White
- Black
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Mixed race
- Other - Write In (Required)

9. What is your current relationship status? *

- Single (not currently in a committed romantic relationship)
- In a committed relationship but not married
- Married

10. What is your current employment status? *

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Self-employed
- Student
- Unemployed

11. Over the course of your life, how many committed romantic relationships have you been in that lasted for at least 3 months?

*

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Appendix D

CMNI-22 Items and Scoring Guide

CMNI - 22

The following items contain a series of statements about how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much **you personally agree or disagree with each statement** by circling **SD** for "Strongly Disagree", **D** for "Disagree", **A** for "Agree", or **SA** for "Strongly agree" to the right of the statement. There are no correct or wrong answers to the items. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

1. My work is the most important part of my life	SD	D	A	SA
2. I make sure people do as I say	SD	D	A	SA
3. In general, I do not like risky situations	SD	D	A	SA
4. It would be awful if someone thought I was gay	SD	D	A	SA
5. I love it when men are in charge of women	SD	D	A	SA
6. I like to talk about my feelings	SD	D	A	SA
7. I would feel good if I had many sexual partners	SD	D	A	SA
8. It is important to me that people think I am heterosexual	SD	D	A	SA
9. I believe that violence is never justified	SD	D	A	SA
10. I tend to share my feelings	SD	D	A	SA
11. I should be in charge	SD	D	A	SA
12. I would hate to be important	SD	D	A	SA
13. Sometimes violent action is necessary	SD	D	A	SA
14. I don't like giving all my attention to work	SD	D	A	SA
15. More often than not, losing does not bother me	SD	D	A	SA
16. If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners	SD	D	A	SA
17. I never do things to be an important person	SD	D	A	SA
18. I never ask for help	SD	D	A	SA
19. I enjoy taking risks	SD	D	A	SA
20. Men and women should respect each other as equals	SD	D	A	SA
21. Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing	SD	D	A	SA
22. It bothers me when I have to ask for help	SD	D	A	SA

To score the CMNI-22: (a) score Strongly Disagree items as 0, Disagree as 1, Agree as 2, and Strongly Agree as 3; (b) recode the scoring of 9 items (i.e., 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 20) as 0 = 3, 1 = 2, 2 = 1, 3 = 0; then (c) sum the 22 items. Higher scores reflect greater conformity to traditional masculine norms.

When computing reliability, I encourage researchers to consider using theta, a special case of alpha for multidimensionality, instead of alpha. I recommend that because the 22 item scale is derived from the two highest loading items on 11 distinct factors. For information on theta see Helms, J. E., Henze, K. T., Sass T. L., & Mifsud, V. A. (2006). Treating Cronbach's alpha reliability as data in nonpsychometric substantive applied research. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*, 630-660.

Appendix E

Vignettes Contents and Questions

Vignette #1a (subtle)

Philip and Julia have been in a committed relationship for 8 months. For the past month, Julia has been spending time with her colleagues on Tuesday evenings. During these evenings, Julia and her colleagues usually socialize while eating dinner or grabbing a drink together at a nearby restaurant. One Tuesday evening, Philip and Julia have the following conversation:

Philip: Hey, can I ask you something?

Julia: Sure!

Philip: I know it's not a special occasion, but I planned a romantic dinner for tonight just for the two of us. What do you think?

Julia: That sounds amazing, but I was planning on going out with my colleagues! Do you want to come?

Philip: Nah, not really. I just thought it would be nice for us to spend time with just each other. Being with you is all I really need to be happy.

Julia: Aw, really?

Philip: Of course. And wouldn't it be more worthwhile to have a lovely dinner and just be with each other instead of going out to some random bar with people you don't really know? I feel like we can talk about anything with each other, and it's just not the same with those colleagues. I just love you so much.

Julia: I love you, too! Maybe I can hang out with them another night.

Please answer the following questions about the above scenario.

1. How normal was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all normal
- 2 - a little normal
- 3 - somewhat normal
- 4 - moderately normal
- 5 - very normal

2. Was Philip being abusive?

- 1 - not at all
- 2 - a little
- 3 - somewhat
- 4 - moderately
- 5 - very

3. How harmful was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all harmful
- 2 - a little harmful
- 3 - somewhat harmful
- 4 - moderately harmful
- 5 - very harmful

Vignette #1b (overt)

Arthur and Laura have been in a committed relationship for 6 months. For the past few weeks, Laura has been going to the gym with her friends on weekend mornings. While at the gym, Laura and her friends usually attend a cycling class together or have smoothies at the gym café. On a Saturday morning, Arthur and Laura have the following conversation:

Laura: Hey, I'll see you later! I'm heading to the gym.

Arthur: I don't want you to go to the gym today.

Laura: Why don't you want me to go?

Arthur: I don't like when you go to the gym, and you're not going today.

Laura: I don't understand why you don't want me to go, and my friends are expecting me.

Arthur: You're not going. I took your car keys, so you can't drive there.

Laura: I don't need to drive myself. I can ask one of my friends to give me a ride.

Arthur: No, you can't. I have your phone, and I already messaged all of them to tell you that you can't come today. It would be weird of you to ask them for a ride now.

Laura: Are you going to tell me why you don't want me to go?

Arthur: Yeah, we can talk about it.

Laura: Okay, fine.

Please answer the following questions about the above scenario.

1. How normal was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all normal
- 2 - a little normal
- 3 - somewhat normal
- 4 - moderately normal
- 5 - very normal

2. Was Arthur being abusive?

- 1 - not at all
- 2 - a little
- 3 - somewhat
- 4 - moderately
- 5 - very

3. How harmful was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all harmful
- 2 - a little harmful
- 3 - somewhat harmful
- 4 - moderately harmful
- 5 - very harmful

Vignette #2a (subtle)

Benjamin and Gloria have been in a committed relationship for 7 months. For the past few weeks, Gloria has been trying to eat healthier to improve her health and daily energy levels. To do this, she's been doing things such as eating less fried food and drinking less soda. One evening, while eating dinner at a restaurant, Gloria and Benjamin have the following conversation:

Benjamin: What are you thinking of ordering?

Gloria: Probably the grilled chicken salad. What about you?

Benjamin: I'm not sure yet. Are you sure you want to order that?

Gloria: I think so! Why do you ask?

Benjamin: It's just that seeing you with this new diet makes me feel kind of sad.

Gloria: How so?

Benjamin: It makes me worry that by eating healthier, you're going to lose weight and become more conventionally attractive.

Gloria: That could happen, but I just want to eat better for my health.

Benjamin: But if you're more attractive, I feel like you won't be the same person anymore, and it'll change our relationship. I feel like I won't be good enough for you. I'll feel less attractive, and I just want to feel like I'm good enough for you.

Gloria: I don't want to make you feel that way. Maybe I can rethink this new diet.

Please answer the following questions about the above scenario.

1. How normal was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all normal
- 2 - a little normal
- 3 - somewhat normal
- 4 - moderately normal
- 5 - very normal

2. Was Benjamin being abusive?

- 1 - not at all
- 2 - a little
- 3 - somewhat
- 4 - moderately
- 5 - very

3. How harmful was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all harmful
- 2 - a little harmful
- 3 - somewhat harmful
- 4 - moderately harmful
- 5 - very harmful

Vignette #2b (overt)

Jordan and Brenda have been in a committed relationship for 8 months. For the past month, Brenda has been planning to go on a trip a few states away to visit a few family members. The date of the vacation is approaching, and Brenda has begun to pack. While packing one day, Brenda and Jordan have the following conversation:

Brenda: Have you seen my sunglasses? I need to pack them for the trip.

Jordan: I haven't seen them.

Brenda: Can you help me look for them?

Jordan: No, I can't. I don't think you should be going in the first place.

Brenda: What do you mean?

Jordan: You're going to be going off on this extravagant vacation, and you're just leaving me behind for an entire week.

Brenda: I've been planning this for a while now, and you've known about it for a month.

Jordan: So what? I have this big project I have to work on, and you said you could help me on it. If you go on this trip, it's not fair because you're going back on your word.

Brenda: What do you want me to do?

Jordan: You said you would help me with this, and you need to stay and do what you said you would.

Brenda: I'm sorry. Let me talk to my family, okay?

Please answer the following questions about the above scenario.

1. How normal was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all normal
- 2 - a little normal
- 3 - somewhat normal
- 4 - moderately normal
- 5 - very normal

2. Was Jordan being abusive?

- 1 - not at all
- 2 - a little
- 3 - somewhat
- 4 - moderately
- 5 - very

3. How harmful was this interaction?

- 1 - not at all harmful
- 2 - a little harmful
- 3 - somewhat harmful
- 4 - moderately harmful
- 5 - very harmful

Appendix F

Debriefing Form

Perceptions of Dating Relationships Study - Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this study! The purpose of this study was to examine how perceptions of psychological abuse within heterosexual dating relationships differ by cisgender men's level of masculinity, i.e., the extent to which each individual conforms to traditional, American masculine norms. Specifically, we hypothesized that cisgender men who conformed more to traditional masculine norms would also have greater difficulty in recognizing subtle forms of psychological abuse in dating vignettes.

Previous research has examined the role of masculinity in perceptions of physical abuse in dating relationships, but little research has examined this relationship in psychological abuse. Psychological abuse is an important aspect of looking at interpersonal violence and abusive dynamics and has previously been neglected as an important area of study. What we learn from this study can have significant implications on understandings of masculinity, interpersonal violence, and intervention programs for domestic and dating abuse.

If you have any further questions about the study, contact Aileen Lian (al7168@bard.edu).

For more information and support on the topics of dating and domestic violence, please utilize the following resources:

[Additional resources about intimate partner violence from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)

[Information about dating violence from the Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224

Appendix G

IRB Approval Confirmation

Bard College

Institutional Review Board

21 November 2017

Aileen Lian
al7168@bard.edu

Re: Perceptions of Dating Relationships Study

DECISION: APPROVED

Dear Aileen,

The Bard Institutional Review Board reviewed your proposal request (and the minor revisions made in response to the IRB's comments). Your proposal is approved through 21 November 2018. Your case number is **2017NOV21-LIA**. Please notify the IRB if your methodology changes or unexpected events arise.

We wish you success with your research.

Sincerely,

Justin Hulbert
IRB Chair

cc: Deborah Treadway and Thomas Hutcheon