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Youths' Definitions of Dating Aggression: Context and Measurement

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Youths' Definitions of Dating Aggression: Context and Measurement

By

Kelly Anthony-Brown

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2016

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Youths' Definitions of Dating Aggression: Context and Measurement

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Most research on dating aggression in youth uses act-based questionnaires created by adult researchers, which measure the frequency of specific behaviours but not the context in which the behaviours occurred. This study used mixed methods to investigate whether attitudes and definitions of dating aggression assessed via these act-based questionnaires fully capture the experiences and opinions of emerging adults. University students (ages 17-20 years) completed quantitative self-report questionnaires ($n = 172$; 70% women) or took part in focus group discussions ($n = 21$; 57% female) regarding attitudes toward and involvement in dating aggression. I explicitly compared the quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate how views of dating aggression in youth differed according to method of measurement. Participants also identified factors that influenced the development of their beliefs about dating aggression in order to provide insight into the context in which dating aggression is understood by young people. Quantitative questionnaires adequately captured the types of aggressive behaviours experienced by participants, but did not capture the nuanced beliefs and judgments that participants made about dating aggression. Quantitative questionnaires alone did not provide information about differences between beliefs and behaviours, differences in judging aggression in youths' own versus others' relationships, and the important role of patriarchy and gender roles in how participants understood dating aggression. The context in which participants developed these views about dating aggression was complex and dynamic, and included multiple intersecting factors such as family, friends, culture, media, and education. Findings point to a need for more context-sensitive measurement of dating aggression and acknowledgement that attitudes towards dating aggression may not be as

straightforward as suggested by quantitative data from the questionnaires typically used in the field.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Dr. Susan Elizabeth Anthony, the most brilliant and caring woman I know. Your own tireless graduate work showed me that it was possible. You were my constant inspiration throughout this process and I hope you are as proud of this piece of work as I am of you, always.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Makepeace's (1981) classic study, dating aggression in adolescent and emerging adult populations has received increasing research attention. Indeed, it has become not only an important social concern, but also an ever-growing area of empirical study. Researchers have hypothesized that adolescent dating relationships provide a beginning context for practicing behaviour, both healthy and problematic, that may be used in future adult relationships (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Although reported prevalence rates may be influenced by several factors, including the type of aggression assessed (i.e., physical, psychological, sexual), overall estimates of the prevalence of youth dating aggression, either perpetration or victimization, from recent studies vary from 9% to 46% (Glass et al., 2003; Leen et al., 2013). Prevalence estimates for either perpetration or victimization in adolescence generally range from 10% to 25% (Howard, Wang, & Yan, 2007; Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip, 1992; Pepler et al., 2006; Rothman & Xuan, 2014; Wolfe, Wekerle, Reitzel-Jaffe, & Lefebvre, 1998) and increase to approximately 20% to 55% during university and beyond (Krahe et al., 2015; Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999). One recent Canadian study of high school students reported relatively higher prevalence rates; 44% of the sample reported perpetrating physical abuse, 26% reported perpetrating sexual abuse, and 92% reported perpetrating psychological/emotional abuse (Gonzales, Wekerle, & Goldstein, 2012).

Past research in this area has focused on increasing understanding of dating aggression through examination of its phenomenology and identification of risk factors, correlates, outcomes, and intergenerational patterns (e.g., Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Fallon

& Bowles, 2001; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004). As well, much research has focused on prevention and intervention efforts in this area and has examined possible barriers to seeking help for dating aggression and violence (Ashley & Foshee; Black, Tolman, Callahan, Saunders, & Weisz, 2008).

Aside from prevalence and other facets of partner aggression, the issue of gender symmetry in intimate partner violence (IPV) has sparked both controversy in the field and investigation into the extent to which dating aggression is perpetrated equally by men and women. In the adult literature, continued debate exists over gender symmetry in IPV, in which two main groups of theorists/investigators remain at odds: those who come from a social science perspective and argue that IPV is a family violence issue that involves a significant amount of symmetrical aggression (i.e., that both men and women perpetrate aggression at roughly equal rates; e.g., Straus & Gilles, 1990), and those who come from feminist perspectives and assert that IPV is the result of gender inequality and is an issue of violence against women (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Two hypotheses have been put forth to account for this ongoing conflict regarding the nature of IPV. First, most research in this area uses act-based questionnaires to assess IPV that measure the incidence of discrete behaviours between partners. These questionnaires have been criticized for not taking into account the context or consequences of IPV (Archer, 2000). Second, different samples used by family violence and feminist researchers to study IPV may result in different findings with respect to the symmetry of aggression (Archer, 2000). Michael Johnson and his colleagues have hypothesized a typology of IPV that may in many ways bridge the gap between family violence and feminist perspectives (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Johnson proposed that four main types of partner aggression

exist and are differentiated by the roles that power, control, and context play in the aggression. For example, aggression that occurs as part of a general pattern of dominance and control over a partner is differentiated from aggression that occurs as the result of an escalation in conflict between partners on a specific occasion (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). This typology has been investigated in adult samples, but has not been applied extensively to youth dating relationships.

The bulk of existing literature has been based on researchers' definitions of partner violence but recently, investigators have begun to explore youths' own attitudes toward dating aggression (Price et al., 2000) and the meaning of this experience (e.g., Bhanot, 2010; Prospero, 2006). Using primarily qualitative methods, there is now a growing body of research addressing how young people understand partner aggression (Bhanot, 2010; Ismail, Berman, & Ward-Griffin, 2003). In particular, the Dating Violence Research Team at the University of New Brunswick have built a program of research exploring youths' own definitions of and attitudes toward dating aggression and violence (e.g., Price et al., 2000; Sears & Byers, 2010; Sears et al., 2006). As well, Fredland and colleagues (2005) used focus groups to explore the meanings ascribed by young people to dating aggression and violence. Some quantitative research has also investigated youths' attitudes toward dating aggression (Edelen, McCaffrey, Marshall, & Jaycox, 2008; Molidor & Tolman, 1998). In addition, mixed methods studies have been used by several researchers to better explore and understand how young people perceive and define dating aggression. Specifically, mixed methods have been used to develop questionnaires based on youths' perceptions of dating violence (Price et al., 2000; Prospero, 2006) as well as to gain a richer understanding of the context of dating violence

attitudes and perceptions (Bobowick, 2001; Hall, 2001; Lewis, Maruia, & Walker, 2008; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012).

However, there has been limited investigation of whether young people's definitions of and attitudes toward dating aggression are accurately represented in and paralleled by research measures used to assess dating violence. As much of the previous research on youth dating aggression, and indeed intimate partner violence in general, has used act-based questionnaire measures that do not necessarily incorporate the influence of context (Jackson, 1998), it is possible that an incongruence exists between dating aggression as defined by these questionnaires and dating aggression as defined by youth themselves. Furthermore, these measures of dating violence have frequently reflected researchers' ideas about this topic, as opposed to conceptualizations provided by youth, and have assessed the frequency and severity of behaviours that have been defined a priori as aggression by investigators (Sears, Byers, Whelan, St. Pierre, & the Dating Violence Research Team, 2006). For example, one previous Canadian study of maltreated youth involved with the Children's Aid Society found that concordance between youth and social worker labeling of abuse was relatively high for sexual victimization, but extremely low for emotional and physical victimization (Wekerle et al., 2001). Therefore, it is possible that the criteria for aggression and maltreatment used by adolescents and emerging adults differ from the criteria and definitions used by adult clinicians and researchers. Thus, it is not clear whether typically used act-based measures fully capture young people's understanding of this issue, and whether their definitions of dating aggression are consistent with the definitions on which past research is based. As a result, measures currently used to assess dating aggression may not be

fully capturing what is experienced in young people's romantic relationships, and the strength of research on dating aggression in youth could be called into question.

Specifically, existing measures may be lacking in at least two respects: they may not be capturing all acts that are viewed as aggressive by adolescents, and measures may be including behaviours that are, in fact, not viewed as aggressive by adolescents. In both cases, existing measures may not be accurately capturing the phenomenon of dating aggression, resulting in methodological weakness.

To date, no known studies have explicitly compared whether attitudes and definitions measured via act-based questionnaires are consistent with attitudes and definitions revealed via interviews and focus groups. Although concern has been raised about the validity of act-based quantitative measures predicated on a priori definitions of dating violence (Jackson, 1998; Sears et al., 2006), there has been no empirical investigation of the extent to which data from these questionnaires align with or deviate from how young people articulate their own understandings and definitions of dating violence. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to fill this gap in the literature by explicitly comparing emerging adults' understanding of dating aggression as assessed by act-based questionnaires, which may be more influenced by researchers' conceptualizations, and by focus group interviews, in which youth are able to articulate their own understandings of this phenomenon. By comparing these two assessment methods in a single study, the present study allowed for an evaluation of the extent to which typically used questionnaire measures fully captured how dating aggression was experienced and understood by young people. As well, this type of comparison revealed the nature of the similarities and differences between measurement methods and rich

details about what information is not being captured by questionnaire measures of dating aggression. Thus, results from the present study may lead to more valid or comprehensive measurement of youth dating aggression and attitudes, and potentially more accurate prevalence rates.

Prevalence and Incidence of Dating Aggression

In his classic 1981 study, Makepeace documented that 21% of college students had experienced at least one incidence of physical violence. Since then, prevalence rates of physical aggression cited in the dating aggression literature have ranged from 16% to 47% for adolescents and young adults (Andrews, Foster, Capaldi, & Hops, 2000; Keenan-Miller et al., 2007; Schnurr & Lohman, 2008). One study used dyadic data to assess prevalence of dating aggression in an American university sample and found that 60% of couples were considered physically violent (Perry & Fromuth, 2005). When couple agreement on ratings was required, only 20% of couples were considered physically violent. Even higher estimates have been found when psychological aggression is included (Jaffe et al., 1992). Indeed, there is consistent support that the prevalence and incidence of psychological aggression is significantly greater than physical aggression (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1994; Raiford et al., 2007). For example, a recent Canadian study that surveyed 228 Quebec university students found that approximately one quarter of the sample had been victims of severe physical and psychological violence in the 12 months prior to participation (Dubois-Couture, Hebert, Robichaud, Gagne, & Boucher, 2011). Data from the study also revealed that approximately one third of participants had been the victims of sexual coercion in the 12 months prior to participation. As part of the International Dating Violence Study (Chan,

Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung, 2008), nearly 16,000 university students from 21 countries worldwide completed the revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996). Incidence of physical and sexual violence in Canadian samples was consistently above the worldwide median. Again, it is important to note that the CTS2 measures frequency of aggressive behaviours only and does not assess relevant contextual factors. Although Canadians reported more behaviours than other participants, the context and meaning of these behaviours for participants is unknown (i.e., based on the circumstances in which they occurred, would participants consider the behaviours they reported as dating violence or not?).

With respect to sexual aggression and violence, data from a sample of Canadian university students showed that 44% of female participants had experienced some form of sexual aggression (i.e., coercion, abuse, rape) and 17% of males reported using some form of sexual aggression (Girard & Senn, 2008). Sexual aggression in this study included a variety of experiences ranging from threatening to break up with a partner to the use of physical force if a partner refused to engage in sexual relations. Studies assessing the prevalence of sexual aggression have been criticized by some who feel that researchers have inflated prevalence estimates by using overly broad definitions (e.g., Gilbert, 1993). As well, some writers have criticized this body of research for combining rates of threat of force and actual force, which they argue further inflates prevalence and incidence estimates (e.g., Roiphe, 1993). In response to these critiques, Alksnis, Desmarais, Senn, and Hunter (2000) again investigated prevalence rates of sexual victimization among a sample of Canadian university women. 9.4% of the sample reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact, 18.3% reported having

experienced sexual coercion, 10.0% had experienced attempted rape, and 27.8% had experienced rape. Findings of the study also suggested that combining threat and force when assessing sexual aggression does not result in inflated prevalence rates; rather, for the rape items on their measure, actual force was more prevalent than threatened force. Also, it is possible that prevalence and incidence rates for sexual aggression differ between university and nonuniversity youth. For example, one large-scale study of emerging adults, found that young men and women who were not attending post-secondary education reported higher prevalence rates of sexual coercion (Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997).

Overall, research assessing the prevalence and incidence of dating aggression in youth has several key weaknesses, which may have resulted in inaccurate reporting of rates of dating aggression (see Jackson, 1998 for a review). Specifically, most studies measure only physical aggression and violence or do not clearly define the types of aggression included in operational definitions, making it difficult to obtain an accurate picture of dating aggression in youth. Also, incidence and prevalence are often conflated and many studies fail to make explicit whether they are collecting responses from multiple relationships or only participants' current relationships. As well, studies differ with respect to how dating is defined; whereas some definitions include only longer-term monogamous dating relationships (e.g., "boyfriends" or "girlfriends"), others imply that dating may consist also of one-time interactions or group date situations. Furthermore, rates of victimization and perpetration are combined in some studies whereas others fail to define what exactly comprises a dating aggression experience. Prevalence rates may also be inaccurate with respect to generalizability; dating aggression studies are often

conducted with student samples in high schools or universities and thus results may not be applicable to other groups of adolescents and young adults who do not attend post-secondary institutions (Jackson, 1998).

Limitations in prevalence research may have also stemmed from reliability of reporting and response bias. For example, self-reports of dating violence may be subject not only to retrospective reporting bias but also to socially desirable responding, both of which can decrease accuracy of measurement. Due to the social stigma associated with involvement in partner violence, authors typically expect that participants will have an increased need for social approval and directly measure this construct with a view to statistically controlling for its potential effects (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997). However, the relation between socially desirable responding and reporting involvement in partner violence may not be so clear-cut. One meta-analytic review of 18 studies of partner violence and socially desirable responding using self-report measures found only weak to moderate effect sizes for this relationship (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997). Results from this meta-analysis also showed that participant gender and operationalization of partner violence did not affect estimates of effect size. However, the participant's role in violence was significant such that socially desirable responding was related more to reports of perpetration than victimization. Thus, reports of perpetration may be less valid due to the effects of social desirability than reports of victimization. Overall, therefore, our understanding of dating aggression, based on currently available prevalence and incidence estimates, may be incomplete and fail to accurately capture the extent to which youth are involved in these experiences. Indeed, one aim of the present study was to reveal whether existing prevalence rates should be taken at face value and what new

caveats, if any, need to be considered when evaluating incidence and prevalence rates of dating aggression in young people. As a result, participants in the quantitative portion of the present study completed measures of social desirability in order to statistically control for the influence of socially desirable responding, if needed. This was particularly important given that participants reported on not only victimization, but also on perpetration, which has been shown to be more susceptible to the effects of social desirability (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997).

Definitions of Dating Aggression

Closely linked with discussions of prevalence and incidence is the issue of how dating aggression is defined. In order to assess the quality of prevalence research and dating aggression measurement, a discussion of how dating aggression is typically defined and operationalized in the field is a necessary first step. Due to a number of factors, there may be a difference in the understanding and definition of dating aggression between researchers and youth populations (Sears et al., 2006). Indeed, the aim of the present study was to explore the nature and extent of these potential differences. Thus, in reviewing definitions of dating aggression and violence for the purpose of the present study, it is important to first discuss why definitions created and understood by researchers and youth should be considered separately at all. Sears et al. (2006) acknowledged that most previous investigations have assessed dating aggression and violence according to a priori researcher-generated definitions. In general, investigators may define dating aggression using a more deductive approach in which theory and past research are used to form a definition and act-based measures are created to assess for the behaviours that are part of this definition. For some researchers, the labeling and

identifying of dating aggression may be largely behaviour-based and couched in the theoretical perspective with which a particular researcher is aligned. This understanding of dating violence is then used to assess incidence and prevalence according to a priori definitions. With respect to partner aggression in youth specifically, researchers conducting initial investigations in this area may have been influenced by definitions and measures of partner aggression from the adult literature (e.g., the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales; Straus et al., 1996). Even development of measures assessing partner aggression specifically in youth (e.g., the Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales [Price et al., 1999]; the Conflict in Adolescent Relationships Inventory [Wolfe et al., 2001]) have been based on ideas and input from adult researchers and professionals.

On the other hand, young people who are the focus of empirical study may take a more inductive approach to defining and identifying dating aggression. That is, they may observe behaviours or a pattern of interaction within a dating relationship, and based on a variety of influences, including past experience and context, identify and label this experience as dating aggression (Sears et al., 2006; Smith, Winokur, & Palenski, 2005). Therefore, whereas researchers' definitions of dating aggression may be more likely to stem from data, theory, and the literature, youths' definitions of dating aggression may tend to stem from their lived experiences and information provided by their context and environment. Thus, although there are likely similarities in researcher and youth definitions of dating violence, as a result of these divergent approaches to definition and identification, as well as the differences in life context between adults and adolescents, it is possible that differences also exist between how dating aggression is understood by researchers and youth.

Dating aggression definitions from the literature. There have been many definitions of dating aggression used within the literature and there are often inconsistencies between studies regarding which behaviours and outcomes are used to define this phenomenon. Indeed, the issue of definition and terminology has been highlighted as one of the weaknesses in intimate partner violence research as a whole (Jackson, 1998). Discrepancies exist in the form of two issues: what exactly constitutes intimate partner violence in dating couples, and what terms are used to label this construct. With respect to definitions, inconsistencies across studies have arisen based on the type of aggression investigated. Many studies of dating aggression focus solely on physical aggression (e.g., Black et al., 2008; Keenan-Miller, Hammen, & Brennan, 2007), whereas others also include psychological aggression and/or sexual aggression (e.g., DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Raiford, Wingood, & DiClemente, 2007). Others do not make this distinction at all and ask participants about 'violence' or 'abuse,' but fail to define these terms (e.g., Arriaga & Foshee, 2004). Thus, many different constellations of aggressive behaviour between intimate partners have been labelled by the same broad term: dating aggression or violence. One comprehensive definition used in past research defines dating aggression as any attempt to control or dominate one's romantic partner physically, sexually, or psychologically, resulting in harm (Wolfe & Feiring, 2000). Elsewhere, dating aggression has been construed on a continuum of interpersonal coercion ranging from assertions of power, persuasion, and arguments to abuse of power in the form of threats and physical force (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) also make it clear that within their definition, all aggressive and abusive acts

cannot justifiably be attributed to the victim or their relationship. That is, the abuse is ascribed to and the responsibility of the perpetrator and cannot be blamed on the victim.

In addition to discrepancies stemming from different inclusion criteria, discrepancies also exist among the terminology used to label this construct. Specifically, some past research has used the terms aggression, abuse, and violence interchangeably, whereas other authors make a clear distinction between what is meant by these terms (Jackson, 1998). For example, Archer (1994) proposed that aggression refers only to the act or behaviour, whereas violence or abuse also incorporates the consequences of the aggressive act, such as injury. When evaluated according to Archer's (1994) distinction, most past research could be described as investigating dating aggression rather than dating violence; often, frequency of discrete aggressive behaviours are calculated via self-report measures, which do not typically inquire about the context or outcomes of the aggression. Although many authors have appropriately identified their studies, sometimes using Archer's terminology, the literature as a whole is not based on clear, explicit definitions. In the present study, a distinction was made based on Archer's terminology in which dating aggression was used by the researcher to refer to behaviour and acts, and dating violence was used, as needed, in discussions of both the acts and their consequences (e.g., injury, shame). The application of these terms within qualitative data collection and interpretation was guided by participants' responses and own definitions of these terms.

Young people's definitions of dating aggression. The bulk of existing research on dating aggression has focused on investigating the phenomenology, etiology, and epidemiology of this behaviour. This information has been useful for beginning to

describe and categorize experiences of dating violence and the youth who are involved in these types of experiences, but a comprehensive understanding of dating aggression also requires investigation of how this issue is understood by youth themselves. Far less research attention has been devoted to exploring young people's own definitions and perspectives. However, a growing collection of studies, primarily using qualitative or mixed methods inquiry, have explored how dating aggression is defined by adolescents and young adults. Across studies, youth acknowledged that partner aggression could include physical, sexual, and verbal/emotional behaviours, or a combination of these. For example, results from several qualitative studies indicated that most participants initially defined aggression in terms of some kind of physical force or threat of force and then, often on further reflection, included mental or verbal abuse (e.g., Reeves & Orpinas, 2012; Smith et al., 2005). For example, focus group data from a study of Native Hawaiian high school students showed that students first included verbal abuse in their definitions, but also acknowledged that physical aggression (e.g., hitting) occurs among their peers (Baker & Helm, 2010). Strikingly, attempts to control, exert power over, or threaten a partner were frequently mentioned by youth as part of dating aggression (Baker & Helm, 2010; Lavoie, Robitaille, & Hebert, 2000; Price et al., 2000; Rush, 1999; Smith et al., 2005). However, findings from one study contradicted this pattern. Results from a card sort task administered to a group of African American and Iraqi refugee youth living in the United States showed that emotional/verbal aggression behaviours were less likely to be labeled as violence than other behaviours (e.g., physical or sexual behaviours; Black et al., 2008).

Terminology used by young people. Although some authors have used dating aggression terms (i.e., aggression, violence, abuse) interchangeably, findings from several studies with youth suggest that for young people, there may indeed be differences between and nuanced meanings associated with the terms. For example, Lavoie and her colleagues (2000) interviewed 14- to 19-year old teens and found that the terms ‘violence’ and ‘abuse’ are not necessarily interchangeable. Another qualitative investigation used a Q-sort task involving picture vignettes of couples to be categorized (Rankin, 2010). Results revealed that teens used the term violence only in the case of what was categorized by researchers as actual or clearly impending abuse (e.g., physical contact was being made between the partners, a fist was pictured as being within inches of a partner’s face). With respect to identifying aggression, results from several studies suggest that there is often no clear, consistent demarcation between behaviour that is considered acceptable and that which is considered problematic aggression (Baker & Helm, 2010; Lavoie et al., 2000). Indeed, findings from many studies suggest that labeling behaviour as aggressive/problematic is context-dependent (Bobowick, 2001; Sears & Byers, 2010; Sears et al. 2006; Rankin, 2010). For example, the level of emotional upset or distress resulting from the potentially aggressive behaviour was noted by many teens as a key criterion for labeling violence and abuse (Sears & Byers, 2010; Sears et al., 2006). As well, certain behaviours and types of aggression seem to be more easily or quickly identified than others. Specifically, physical and sexual behaviours were more clearly identifiable as aggression than verbal/emotional behaviours (Baker & Helm, 2010; Black et al., 2008; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). For example, there was consensus among one group of high school students that certain acts were abusive and

problematic (i.e., yelling, hitting, swearing) but other acts, such as cyber-aggression and monitoring of a partner's social media profiles, were more ambiguous and considered merely "irritating" (Baker & Helm, 2010). In another study, focus group participants explicitly confirmed that physical aggression and violence were easier to identify and categorize than psychological aggression (Price et al., 2000).

Gender differences in youths' definitions. Results have been mixed with respect to whether there are gender differences in how dating aggression is defined and identified by youth. Some previous findings suggest that young men and women define dating aggression differently. For example, Price and her colleagues (2000) conducted focus groups with male and female Canadian high school students and found that girls tended to define aggression and violence according to the impact of the behaviour, whereas boys tended to use intent to guide their definitions. That is, if an act resulted in emotional distress or physical injury, girls tended to consider this an act of dating aggression/violence; boys, on the other hand, generally did not define the same act as aggressive/violent if there was not malevolent intent prior to or during the act. The same research group replicated this pattern of findings in an additional study with high school youth (Sears et al., 2006). In contrast, at least one study found no significant differences in the way boys and girls define and identify dating aggression (e.g., Black et al., 2008). A number of other studies did not conduct separate analyses for male and female participants or failed to report any significant gender effects (Ayala et al., 2014; Bobowick, 2001; Lavoie et al., 2000; Rankin, 2010).

Gender Symmetry in Partner Aggression

An important facet to the discussion of how dating aggression is defined in the field and by young people is the issue of gender symmetry in perpetration: is dating aggression understood to occur equally from men to women and from women to men? Several theories have been developed and tested regarding the question of gender symmetry in partner aggression. Three main theories relevant to the hypotheses in the present study are reviewed here: (1) family violence theories, (2) feminist theories, and (3) Johnson's intimate partner violence typology.

Family violence theories. The family violence perspective developed out of social science research and focuses on family and individual factors that set the stage for the use of aggressive behaviour. It is proposed that an individual's previous experiences, relationships, social skills, emotion regulation skills, and social stresses impact the likelihood of aggressive behaviour (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Further, the intimacy and privacy of the family group provide an environment conducive to a pattern of aggression and violence between members; within this contained family unit, aggressive patterns are learned and transferred to future generations and may be generalized to other interpersonal relationships outside the family (Hotaling, Straus, & Lincoln, 1989). Overall, no gender-based distinctions are made with respect to motivations for aggressive behaviour. Indeed, family violence theorists claim that women's frustrations, motives, and potential lack of control over these feelings do not differ from those of men (Shupe, Stacey, & Hazelwood, 1987). Characteristics outside the family (i.e., the context in which the family is embedded, power or status differentials between sexes, and economic conditions) are not incorporated into this perspective. In

this way, the family violence perspective frames partner aggression as an individual- or family-level problem.

Research using act-based measures in community samples of adults and adolescents has found support for the family violence perspective (i.e., that motivations for aggression are not gender-specific; that rates of partner aggression are therefore symmetrical). Findings from several studies show that women report using aggression with romantic partners at rates similar to men (Arias & Johnson, 1989; Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, O'Leary, & Cano, 1997). In one Canadian study, Williams, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, and Laport (2008) investigated dating aggression in a sample of 261 high school students and found that the majority of participants reported being involved in bidirectional dating aggression (i.e., being both a perpetrator and a victim). Furthermore, data from the study indicated that this pattern did not differ significantly across multiple dating relationships or by gender.

Although several community based studies have found support for a family violence perspective (i.e., gender symmetry in incidence of partner aggression), this model has been criticized for assessing IPV in ways that fail to take extra-familial characteristics such as context, consequences, and the patriarchal nature of Western society into account (e.g., Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992). Specifically, it has been argued that act-based measures typically used by family violence researchers (e.g., the Conflict Tactics Scales; Straus, 1979) do not take into account the context of aggressive acts and the potentially different outcomes of such acts for female versus male victims (Dobash et al., 1992). Critics of act-based measures hypothesize that much of the aggression perpetrated by women is done in self-defense; however, without contextual

information, it is difficult to get an accurate assessment of this dynamic. Also, although aggressive acts may typically be reported on act-based measures as frequently by men as women, significantly more women than men report being injured by their partner as a result of these acts (Dobash et al., 1992; Mihorean, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). A meta-analysis of partner aggression studies in American college and community samples found that men are more likely than women to use severe acts of aggression including choking, strangling, and beating a partner (Archer, 2000). Women also are more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner (Fox & Zawitz, 2006). Thus, it has been argued that if the consequences of aggressive acts were considered (e.g., injury, psychological and economic consequences), most victims would be women (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Dobash et al., 1992). As well, research conducted from a family violence perspective rarely includes sexual assault, which is significantly more likely to be perpetrated by men against women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Feminist theories. Feminist perspectives on dating violence, and indeed partner violence in general, are rooted in the male-dominated social structure and emphasize the roles of patriarchy and oppression of women (Bograd, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Although there is no single feminist theory, most authors writing from a feminist perspective focus on why men as a group aggress against women and on the contexts that maintain this aggressive dynamic in society. One group of authors summarized that whereas psychological and social science approaches (e.g., family violence perspectives) emphasize the characteristics of individual men and women who perpetrate and/or are victims of aggression, feminist approaches focus on illuminating the lived experience of violence and related contextual factors (i.e., the ways in which gender-based violence is

encouraged and accepted at a broader societal or institutional level; Ismail et al., 2003). Thus, feminist theories contend that an understanding of partner violence can only be achieved through examination of the broader social context (e.g., patriarchy and oppression; West, 2004). For example, women in most societies have an inferior status to men and experience disadvantage and oppression on many levels, whereas men are socialized to behave in ways that will maintain their dominant position in this patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). As a result, according to feminist approaches, men perpetrate aggression against women because they are the dominant, more powerful group, and they have greater access to resources and privileges.

In feminist models, the assertion of power and exertion of control are consistently viewed as essential to the understanding of intimate partner violence (Bentley, Galliher, & Fergusson, 2007). Indeed, power and control are an integral part of many definitions of dating aggression (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999; Wolfe & Feiring, 2000). Pence and Paymar (1993) proposed a control-centered model of intimate partner violence in the form of their “Power and Control Wheel.” The Power and Control Wheel details the specifics of partner violence that stem from an overall pattern of power and control and includes examples, such as intimidation, threats, economic abuse, male privilege, using children, blaming, and physical and sexual violence. The Power and Control Wheel makes explicit the dynamics that are proposed to operate in an abusive relationship.

Broadly, feminist approaches to understanding partner aggression have received empirical support; several previous investigations have found a significant relation between more patriarchal social structures and higher rates of violence towards women (Morash, Bui, & Santiago, 2004; West, Kantor, & Jasinski, 1998; Yllo & Straus, 1984).

There also are well-established links between power imbalances and negative relationship outcomes in the adult literature, but this relation has not been extensively studied in youth samples (Bentley et al., 2007). Interpersonal power and control were found to be significant predictors of both female and male perpetration, as well as female victimization from sexual aggression (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989). Another study supported not only that the combination of inequality and dating aggression are common in youth relationships, but also that discourses of heterosexuality and equality were important for how youth make meaning out of dating aggression experiences (Chung, 2005). Overall, the desire to dominate, control, or exert power over a partner was discussed by many young people as one of the causes or explanations of dating aggression (Price et al., 2000; Sears et al., 2006; Thongpriwan & McElmurry, 2009).

Another frequent focus in the feminist field has been the relation between adherence to traditional gender role beliefs and involvement in partner aggression (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989). Gender roles have been defined as the constructs or roles that are typically associated with each sex and which form guidelines or standards for how to regulate behaviour (Bem, 1981). For example, in patriarchal societies a female gender role may include being passive, emotional, and placing high value on interpersonal relationships, whereas a male gender role may include being assertive, dominant, and individualistic (Wallston & O'Leary, 1981). Thus, the extent to which individuals hold the gender role beliefs that to be male is to be aggressive/dominant and to be female is to be passive, may impact how they behave in romantic relationships. Indeed, previous findings have shown a correlation between these traditional gender role attitudes (i.e., patriarchal beliefs) and higher rates of

partner aggression (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Jenkins & Aube, 2002; Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984; Smith, 1990). For example, in their study of adolescent dating relationships, Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku (1993) found that for boys, traditional gender role beliefs correlated with the belief that relationships between men and women are adversarial in nature. Also, men who have traditional gender ideologies report engaging in more aggressive behaviour in their dating relationships (Sigelman et al., 1984) and are more likely to view aggression as an acceptable means of reacting to conflict than men who hold less traditional gender ideologies (Burt, 1980). Byers and Eno (1991) also found that men who held more traditional gender role views regarding women were more likely to use aggression with their romantic partners than men who held less traditional gender role views. Kelly and Johnson (2008) found within-male variation such that men whose aggressive behaviour towards partners was part of a relationship-wide pattern of control and dominance held misogynistic attitudes, whereas men who were involved in single situational acts of relationship aggression did not differ from nonaggressive men in their level of misogyny. Data generated from qualitative inquiries also support the theme that gender roles are related to dating aggression, in particular that a double standard exists with respect to the acceptability of male- versus female-perpetrated aggression (Price et al., 2000).

Overall, feminist theory and research have been criticized, typically by family violence researchers, for promoting a picture of partner aggression that relies too heavily on the role of patriarchy and ignores the occurrence of female-perpetrated aggression (e.g., Straus, 2010). Critics allege that definitions used by feminist researchers are too broad and falsely inflate estimates of male-perpetrated aggression and sexual assault in

particular, which do not agree with estimates from nationally representative samples (Pearson, 1997). As well, it has been suggested that in order to hide or deny the existence of symmetry in IPV perpetration, feminist researchers have purposefully published only data on male perpetration even when female data was available (Straus, 2010).

Johnson's partner violence typology. As can be seen, there is ongoing debate in the field about the extent to which dating aggression is symmetrical with respect to gender (i.e., is dating aggression perpetrated at equal rates by men and women?) with two conflicting viewpoints: that generally it is perpetrated by men against women (asymmetry) or that it involves equal aggression by both men and women (symmetry). As discussed above, the former view is typically associated with family violence researchers (e.g., Straus, 1990) and the latter view is often supported by feminist researchers and writers (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 2004). As has been shown, there is empirical research supporting both viewpoints.

Two main hypotheses have been proposed to explain the controversy over gender symmetry in partner aggression. Hamby (2009) provided one explanation, which emerged from her thorough review of the gender symmetry debate. Her review of the data revealed several important conclusions. First, both the family violence and feminist camps represent extreme views of gender symmetry/asymmetry that do not match the prevalence data from other major violence research areas (i.e., general criminal behaviour, delinquent behaviour in youth). That is, Hamby (2009) reported that women across studies and types of measurement commit approximately 20% to 35% of all violent nonsexual crime. Further, her review concluded that gender differences in perpetration are smaller in youth than adult samples and smaller for less serious offences

(e.g., bullying) than more serious offences (e.g., aggravated assault and homicide). She argued that it is unlikely that intimate partner violence prevalence rates would truly differ from this general pattern of male and female behaviour. Second, she proposed that a few key issues with definitions and measurement of partner violence explain a large amount of the discrepancy in gender symmetry findings. Specifically, she found that most partner violence studies did not measure behaviours that are known to validly capture gender differences: sexual assault, rape, injury, and other impacts of violence. As well, her review pointed to the fact that perpetrator reports are not necessarily as valid as victim reports, which constituted another flaw in previous research on gender symmetry. As a result of her review, Hamby proposed a moderate gender symmetry approach to understanding and researching partner violence. That is, she indicated that existing data best supported the hypothesis that moderate gender symmetry in partner violence does exist, in which approximately 20-35% of physical violence is perpetrated by women against men.

A second possible explanation for the gender symmetry conflict was proposed by Michael Johnson and focuses not on measurement, but on the samples used to study partner aggression and violence (Johnson, 1995). Family violence researchers who report gender symmetry in partner aggression typically use representative community samples of couples and feminist researchers who support a gendered view of IPV typically study high-violence samples of female victims who have fled to shelters and male perpetrators who are involved in the criminal justice system or treatment programs (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Johnson proposed that these two groups of research use nonoverlapping populations, and as a result, have been studying two different types of partner violence

(Johnson, 1995). Johnson's full typology of IPV primarily categorizes physical aggression and includes four proposed patterns of relationship aggression: coercive controlling violence, situational couple violence, violent resistance, and separation instigated violence. It should be noted that Johnson described a fifth type of partner violence, mutual violent control, in which both partners engage in a pattern of coercive controlling behaviour (Johnson, 2006). However, Johnson has written less frequently about mutual violent control and much less is known about its incidence and consequences.

Coercive controlling violence. High levels of coercive controlling violence are also referred to as intimate terrorism, and this type of aggression is part of an overall pattern of control and power exertion within a relationship (Johnson, & Campbell, 1993; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). In this case, aggression is just one method in a broad relationship-level attempt to remain dominant and to control a romantic partner. Johnson references Pence and Paymar's (1993) power and control wheel to illustrate the types of coercive and aggressive behaviours that characterize coercive controlling violence (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Coercive controlling violence is perpetrated primarily by men and is the type of IPV most frequently encountered in populations such as women in shelters or men involved in treatment or the criminal justice system (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson, 2006). As well, this type of aggression is typically more severe than other types of IPV; however, it is important to note that this is not always the case (Johnson, 2006). Although much less frequent and not extensively studied, Johnson noted that female perpetrated coercive controlling violence occurs and its existence has been supported by empirical research (e.g., Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007). Johnson

(1995) argued that there should be very little coercive controlling violence in general survey or community samples. Johnson and Leone (2005) used a community sample of 4,967 American couples and found that the prevalence of coercive controlling violence was 1.6%. Of all participants reporting partner violence ($n = 230$), 35% were categorized as experiencing coercive controlling violence.

Situational couple violence. This type of partner aggression is perpetrated by men and women and is reported to be the most common form of IPV (Johnson, & Campbell, 1993). It is not a less severe form of coercive couple violence; rather it is a qualitatively different type of aggression that does not occur within a larger pattern of relationship control. Situational couple violence is typically the result of the occasional escalation of arguments or conflicts into physical aggression. When compared to coercive couple violence, situational couple violence has a lower per-couple frequency and often involves less severe aggression (Johnson, & Leone, 2005). Also, there is no characteristic fear of the other partner, as is frequently found in coercive couple violence. With respect to gender role attitudes and misogyny, results from a previous study indicated that attitudes towards women held by male perpetrators of situational couple violence were not significantly different than attitudes held by nonviolent men (Holtzworth-Monroe et al., 2000). Another study found support for the distinction between coercive couple and situational couple violence, such that men categorized into these two types of IPV perpetration differed significantly on frequency and severity of aggression, antisocial personality traits, and use of aggression outside of family relationships (Babcock, Costa, Green, & Eckhardt, 2004). Using data from the National Violence Against Women Survey in the United States, Johnson and Leone (2005) found

that 2% of their total sample was categorized as specifically experiencing situational couple violence. When considering all participants who reported partner violence (4.95% of the total sample), 64% were deemed situational couple violence (Johnson, & Leone, 2005).

Violent resistance. Based on research suggesting that many women need to use aggressive behaviour in order to resist coercive couple violence, violent resistance is defined as violence that occurs immediately in response to an assault and primarily in order to protect oneself or another person from harm (Johnson & Campbell, 1993). This type of aggression is often labeled as self-defense and has received research attention specifically related to women who kill their partners during an incident of couple violence (Kelly & Johnson, 2007). Other authors (Steinmetz, 1987; Walker, 1984) have suggested a broader definition of violent resistance, differentiating among different types of behaviours used in response to the violence of partners. Indeed, these authors propose that women in violent relationships can be differentiated into several types. Specifically, some women in violent relationships are believed to be “brainwashed” and use aggression in self-defense (i.e., the Battered Woman Syndrome), whereas other women are proposed to engage in reciprocal violence with their partners (Steinmetz, 1986). Thus, violent resistance may not always be as immediate and reactive as proposed by Johnson.

Separation-instigated violence. Johnson distinguished a fourth type of IPV that stems from a partner’s loss of psychological control when faced with the dissolution of the relationship. Separation-instigated violence occurs symmetrically in both men and women and typically occurs in couples for whom there was no previous history of

aggression, violence, or fear of the other partner (Johnson & Campbell, 1993). However, it should be noted that risk of death by a partner is higher for women who have separated than for women in intact relationships (Hotton, 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1993). As well, risk of death by an estranged partner increases after separation for women but not for men (Campbell, 1995; Johnson, & Hotton, 2003). One survey conducted by Statistics Canada (2001) indicated that 14% of reported violence began only after separation from a partner. Another study using data from Canada's 1999 General Social Survey revealed that, among women who reported victimization from a partner after separation, 39% indicated that the violence began only after separation, 37% reported that pre-existing violence continued but did not increase in severity, and 24% indicated that pre-existing violence became more serious (Hotton, 2001). Thus, overall, the picture of post-separation aggression and violence may be more complex than initially described by Johnson.

Support for Johnson's typology has been found in several studies using adult samples (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Holtzworth-Monroe et al., 2000; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, & Leone, 2005; Kelly & Johnson, 2007). Empirical investigation of Johnson's typology in teens and emerging adults is very limited; only two known published studies to date have assessed for the existence of coercive controlling and situational couple violence in a youth sample (Melander, 2010; Zweig, Yahner, Dank, & Lachman, 2014). In their large-scale study of American middle and high school students, Zweig and her colleagues investigated overlap between controlling behaviour and dating aggression and categorized participants into Johnson's four aggression types described above. Results indicated that the majority of participants who reported dating aggression

involvement fell into the situational couple violence category (86%) and that there was approximate gender symmetry within this category (47% male, 53% female). Of those participants who were in aggressive relationships, 7% were categorized by coercive controlling violence, 1% were categorized by mutually controlling violence, and 6% were categorized by violent resistance. Notably, 92% of participants in the violent resistance category were female.

A second study (Melander, 2010) investigated whether Johnson's typology applied to cyber partner aggression in an emerging adult sample. Using qualitative methods, findings suggested that cyber aggression in romantic relationships is understood and discussed as having different aspects that parallel Johnson's intimate terrorism, situational couple violence, violent resistance, and mutual violent control. Thus, there is initial support for Johnson's typology in youth samples. The present study serves, in part, to continue to investigate the applicability of Johnson's typology in youth populations by exploring potential relations between dating aggression, controlling behaviour, and gender role attitudes.

The present study did not, however, aim to explicitly test Johnson's typology by categorizing participants into Johnson's four aggression types as was subsequently done in Zweig et al. (2014). Rather, it was my intent to draw on Johnson's theory and its focus on power/control when investigating how young people understand dating aggression in the present study. Given the convincing nature of Johnson's explanation for the gender symmetry debate in the field and the empirical support his theory is gaining, I was interested in investigating the extent to which concepts related to his typology were evident in the definitions and attitudes articulated by participants. Thus, the present study

investigated only the applicability of the principle concept behind Johnson's two main aggression types: that power and control are central to distinguishing coercive controlling violence from situational couple violence. Accordingly, investigation of Johnson's concepts in the present sample was done from an exploratory standpoint only and I did not make any hypotheses in this area.

Young people's views on gender symmetry. Adolescents and emerging adults across several empirical studies, both quantitative and qualitative, have acknowledged that both men and women perpetrate dating aggression (Fredland et al., 2005; Price et al., 2000; Sears et al., 2006). However, the same adolescents also described gender differences in rates of perpetration, victimization, and type of aggression. With respect to perpetration, there are discrepancies between studies regarding whether boys and girls perpetrate partner aggression at similar rates and in similar ways. Some studies report similar rates of perpetration for girls and boys (Espinoza et al., 2012; Perry & Fromuth, 2005; White & Koss, 1991). For example, results from one large study of college students showed similar rates of reported perpetration between genders; 37% of men and 35% of women reported using some form of physical aggression against a dating partner (White & Koss, 1991). In contrast, findings from other studies have suggested that boys have higher rates of perpetration than girls (Ellis, Chung-Hall, & Dumas, 2013). For example, one study using a sample of 12- to 17-year-old students found that 21% of girls and 42% of boys reported perpetrating physical aggression against a partner (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004). Still other studies suggested the opposite pattern: higher rates of perpetration for girls than for boys (Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). Specifically, one study using dyadic data from a university sample found no differences between men's and

women's reports of perpetration, but found that men reported significantly higher victimization levels than did women (Jenkins & Aube, 2002). Additionally, some results have pointed to differences in the intent and type of aggression used by men and boys versus women and girls. For example, in one study of university couples, women reported perpetrating more psychological but equal rates of physical aggression than men reported (Perry & Fromuth, 2005). In that study, the context and intent of the behaviours also were measured and results showed that women reported using significantly more aggression with a playful intent than men. Thus, although men and women in the sample reported equal rates of physical perpetration, the spirit and intent behind the aggression may have been different for men and women. It is important to note that these studies measured dating aggression using versions of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS; Straus, 1979; the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales; Straus et al., 1996), a commonly used act-based measure of the frequency and severity of violence in couples over the previous 12 months. The CTS has been heavily criticized for failing to take context, intent, and potential consequences of aggression into account (e.g., Jackson, 1998). Notably, Arriaga and Foshee (2004) amended the instructions for the CTS and specified that participants should only report incidents in which they aggressed against their partner first (i.e., participants were asked to exclude acts of self-defense). As mentioned above, their results showed that twice as many boys than girls reported perpetrating aggression against a partner. As well, perpetrator reports in partner aggression research have been criticized for being less valid than victim reports, in part due to the impact of socially desirable responding (Hamby, 2009). It has been argued that men consistently underreport perpetration of partner violence, which makes it difficult to conduct accurate

comparisons of perpetration between men and women (Hamby, 2009). Thus, overall, the picture of gender symmetry in youth dating aggression remains unclear. Findings differ across studies and are likely influenced by aggression definitions and measurement tools used by researchers.

Findings also have been mixed with respect to rates of victimization between genders. Studies have variously found either no gender differences (Kaura & Lohman, 2009; White & Koss, 1991) or that women report more victimization than men (Hamby & Turner, 2013; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989; Perry & Fromuth, 2005; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). As well, at least one study with university couples found that men reported significantly more victimization than women (Jenkins & Aube, 2002). However, the results of many of these studies require qualification and clarification. Specifically, victimization rates based only on frequency of aggressive behaviours may not convey the full picture of victimization. For example, Jenkins and Aube (2002) used the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996) to assess dating aggression, and no additional questions regarding context, intent, or consequences of the aggression were included. Thus, the extent to which the aggressive acts received by men were done with the intent to harm, in retaliation, or in self-defense cannot be determined given the CTS2's limitations. Similarly, results from Perry and Fromuth's (2005) investigation of university couples showed that although 42% of men and 30% of women reported experiencing at least one act of physical aggression from a partner, women in the sample reported higher rates of injury than men. As well, participant definitions of victimization may differ from researcher definitions. Despite endorsing that they had been the recipient of physically aggressive acts, none of the participants in Perry and Fromuth's (2005) study reported

being a “victim” of physical aggression. Therefore, absolute rates of victimization reported in past research may not tell the whole story.

It is difficult to compare rates of victimization and perpetration across studies because of differences in type of aggression being assessed; some studies inquire about physical or sexual or verbal aggression whereas others do not specify the type of aggression under investigation. For example, one quantitative study assessed physical, sexual, and psychological aggression separately and found different patterns of gender differences within a single sample (Sears & Byers, 2015). Although boys and girls reported roughly equal rates of psychological and sexual victimization, boys reported significantly more physical victimization than did girls. Clarity with respect to aggression types may become more important in light of findings from at least one recent qualitative study regarding gender differences in perpetration types. Specifically, themes that emerged from one focus group study of high school students reflected that, although both boys and girls use aggression with their dating partners, boys use physical aggression more than girls, whereas girls use more psychological aggression than boys (Sears et al., 2006). It is possible that boys and girls may use aggression with similar frequency, but that they are using different types of behaviours.

Young People’s Attitudes toward Dating Aggression.

Having reviewed dating aggression definitions used in the literature and by young people, it is important to review what attitudes youth themselves hold with respect to dating aggression. A full picture of how young people understand dating aggression needs to include not only a discussion of what exactly constitutes dating aggression, but also whether or not these occurrences are acceptable to youth. Overall, existing findings

regarding youth acceptance of dating aggression are mixed and suggest that a variety of contextual factors contribute to the value judgments made regarding dating aggression. Results from several previous studies indicate that youth are distressed about dating aggression and believe it is not part of healthy romantic relationships (Fredland et al., 2005; Price et al., 2000). However, other data have suggested that youth are ambivalent about condemning dating aggression in certain circumstances and are not outraged by the fact of its existence (Black et al., 2008; Fredland et al., 2005). Of particular concern are the results of one early dating aggression study that indicated that many adolescents interpreted aggressive behaviour towards a partner as a sign of love and commitment (Henton, Cate, Korval, Lloyd, & Christopher, 1983). Thus, overall, the context of the aggressive behaviour as well as a person's own life context are key to understanding when and under what circumstances partner aggression is identified and viewed as unacceptable by youth. Relevant influences and contextual factors discussed in the literature are reviewed below.

Effect of perpetrator gender. Results from previous studies have pointed to differences in how dating aggression is accepted depending on whether it is perpetrated by a man or woman. For example, using a Q-sort method and a hypothetical scenario activity, Rankin (2010) explored adolescent definitions and acceptance of dating aggression. Many participants in the study were reluctant to condemn aggressive acts if they were perpetrated by a girl as opposed to a boy. This double standard with respect to acceptance of aggression has also been found in other previous studies using qualitative and quantitative methods (Fredland et al.; Kaura & Lohman, 2009; Price et al., 2000; Reese-Weber, 2008; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012; Sears et al., 2006). Indeed, qualitative

results suggested that the “Do not hit girls/women” message was a strong, pervasive influence in the lives of youth and contributed to particular disapproval of male-to-female aggression (e.g., Reeves & Orpinas, 2012).

Differences in acceptance of dating aggression have been found not only in relation to the gender of the perpetrator, but also as a function of an individual’s own gender and gender role beliefs. Results from several large-scale quantitative studies using questionnaire measures indicated that boys are significantly more accepting of partner aggression than girls (Edelen, McCaffrey, Marshall, & Jaycox, 2009; Molidor & Tolman, 1998). Gender differences also emerged from another quantitative study that used an experimental design to test a newly-developed behavioural measure of attitudes towards dating aggression (Reese-Weber, 2008). A sample of university students, viewed video clips of an aggressive encounter between a man and a woman and provided ratings about the nature of the interaction and their own level of distress in reaction to the clip. Results indicated that young men in the study had significantly more accepting attitudes of both male-to-female and female-to-male aggression than women (Reese-Weber, 2008). As well, in developing and validating their measure of attitudes towards dating violence, Price and her colleagues (1999) found that acceptance of dating aggression was tied to gender role views, such that greater belief in traditional gender roles was correlated with greater acceptance of dating aggression for both boys and girls. Indeed, belief in traditional patriarchal views (i.e., that men are entitled to privileges and behaviours that enable them to be dominant over and control women) has been associated with greater tolerance of abuse (Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994). It is important to note that the impact of traditional gender role beliefs on acceptance of partner aggression

may intersect with culture such that, for some cultural groups, patriarchy may be associated with less acceptance of partner aggression. For example, some studies of Mexican and Mexican-American youth found that traditional gender role beliefs were associated with less perpetration and acceptance of male-to-female aggression, perhaps because of an element of patriarchal protectiveness that is culture-specific (Espinoza et al., 2012; Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, & Reininger, 2004). The influence of culture on attitudes towards partner aggression is discussed in more detail below.

Self versus other. Another influence on attitudes toward and acceptance of dating aggression is whether individuals are assessing their own circumstances or the experiences of another person. It is possible that youth may view their own experiences through a different lens than that through which they view the dating experiences of friends or strangers. One adult study revealed that participants did not label their own experiences as ‘violent’ or ‘abuse,’ yet they did assign these labels to fictional vignettes involving the same behaviours they themselves reported in their own relationships (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000). In a study of violence victimization among youth involved with the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and a group of high school students, a substantial number of youth (18% of the CAS group and 55% of the high school group) who endorsed that “my family hit me so hard that it left bruises or marks” did not believe that they had been “physically abused” (Wekerle et al., 2001). Furthermore, more teens in the CAS group self-labeled as ‘abused’ compared to the high school sample even when the CAS teens endorsed experiencing similar levels of aggression to the high school teens. Thus, results of this study suggest there is a difference between endorsing the experience of specific acts and labeling oneself as having been ‘abused.’ Indeed, there

are a growing number of studies investigating unperceived abuse and this disconnect between self-labelling and behavioural measures (Ayala et al., 2014; Rodriguez-Franco et al., 2012).

Culture. Culture is also an important contextual factor that has an influence on definitions of and attitudes towards partner aggression and violence. Race, ethnicity, culture, class, sexual orientation, geopolitical location, ability, and other factors intersect to shape an individual's power and access to resources (Crenshaw, 1994). As power and access to resources are often implicated in theoretical and empirical descriptions of partner aggression, these socio-cultural factors become relevant for understanding the context of IPV (Mason et al., 2008). Indeed, several studies have found that partner aggression is accepted more in some cultural groups than others (Go et al., 2003; Peek-Asa et al., 2002). There is some debate in the field with respect to whether IPV should be defined broadly across cultures or whether there is a need for culture-specific definitions that capture experiences and perspectives unique to a particular cultural group or subgroup (Mason et al., 2008). There is empirical evidence supporting both the existence of broad understandings of IPV that transcend culture as well as the existence of culture-specific experiences and attitudes towards partner aggression. Results from several studies representing a variety of cultural groups suggest that partner aggression is defined broadly across cultures and may include a range of behaviours including physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse (Barata et al., 2005; Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Mason et al., 2008; Mehotra, 1999; Senturia, Sullivan, Ciske, & Shiu-Thornton, 2000).

On the other hand, many studies have found support for culture-specific experiences of partner aggression. For example, although abuse and violence were broadly defined by a sample of Russian-speaking women who had immigrated to North America, the women also described a lack of knowledge and awareness of their rights and what constituted inappropriate and abusive behaviour (Crandall et al., 2005). Another study of Hindu Asian Indian immigrants to the United States found that 90% of women in the sample defined partner aggression broadly including physical, verbal, mental, emotional, and economic abuse (Mehotra, 1999). However, the women in the study also identified two unique types of partner aggression reflecting their experiences of isolation (e.g., neglect, limiting contact with other people) and ‘comparative abuse’ (e.g., putting a wife down by frequently comparing her to another woman) by a partner. Several other studies have identified types of partner aggression unique to specific cultural or immigrant groups (Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Sorenson, 1996; Yoshihama, 1999).

Acculturation has also been investigated as another contextual factor influencing attitudes towards dating aggression. Results in this area have been mixed. A few previous studies have supported a positive correlation between acculturation to Western society and increased rates of involvement in partner aggression (Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans, & Cohen, 2006; Smith, Winokur, & Palenski, 2005; Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Stroupe, 2009). That is, the more acculturated the individual was to Western society, the more severe an aggressive experience had to be in order to be defined or labeled as ‘partner violence.’ In contrast, other studies have found that acculturation to Western society is associated with *less* involvement in or acceptance of partner aggression. For example, higher levels of acculturation to Western society have been

associated with less acceptance of violence against women in samples of South Asian-American (Ganguly, 1998), Portuguese-Canadian (Barata, McNally, Sales, & Stewart, 2005), and Hispanic-American women (Champion, 1996). Bhanot and Senn (2007) investigated acculturation and attitudes regarding violence against women in a sample of South Asian male students at a Canadian university and found that men with higher reported levels of acculturation to Canadian society held less accepting attitudes about violence towards their spouse. Findings from the study also showed that the effect of acculturation on IPV definitions was mediated by gender role beliefs (Bhanot & Senn, 2007). Thus it may not be acculturation per se that influences understandings of partner violence; it may be the gender role beliefs and attitudes regarding women's roles that are influential.

Although it is acknowledged that cultural factors are often an important and influential part of youths' context, the aim of the present study was to more broadly explore attitudes and context. The cultural/racial/ethnic composition of the present sample was not diverse or large enough to reasonably allow for inter- or intra-cultural comparisons and discussion. As such, no explicit cultural comparisons were made and the role of culture in shaping attitudes is discussed generally only.

Media. Youth in previous studies have reported that the media plays an important role in obtaining information about dating (Wood, Senn, Desmarais, Park, & Verberg, 2002). Although there has been little research on the influence of media viewing on perpetration of partner aggression, some have hypothesized that media messages portraying aggressive acts between individuals create norms about romantic behaviour and serve as a risk factor for involvement in aggressive dating relationships (Manganello,

2008). The handful of studies that have investigated this relationship have found a significant link between consumption of aggressive media and increased risk for involvement in aggressive dating relationships (Connolly, Friedlander, Pepler, Craig, & Laporte, 2010; Friedlander et al., 2013).

The relation between attitudes and dating aggression. Not surprisingly, youths' attitudes towards and acceptance of dating aggression have been shown to be related to involvement in dating aggression (Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, & Haworth, 2002; Sears & Byers, 2010). Results of several previous studies have suggested that young people who have more accepting attitudes towards dating aggression are more likely to experience higher levels of dating aggression (Connolly et al., 2010; Jouriles, Rosenfield, McDonald, Kleinsasser, & Dodson, 2013; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). For example, greater acceptance of dating aggression predicted recurrent aggression, both victimization and perpetration, across romantic relationships in a study of students in grades 9 to 12 (Williams et al., 2008). Attitudes and acceptance have even been shown to mediate the relationship between dating aggression involvement and other family factors such as living in a single-parent household and low parental education level (Foshee et al., 2008).

It makes logical sense that individuals who have more accepting attitudes regarding dating aggression may be more likely to tolerate and remain in aggressive relationships, potentially leading to higher levels of or recurrent aggression across relationships. However, it also is possible that accepting attitudes, or at least the tolerance of aggression in one's own relationship, are socialized during aggressive relationships. Thus, accepting and tolerant attitudes may be pre-existing, may be

socialized during aggressive dating experiences, or may be both pre-existing and strengthened during aggressive relationships. Additional prospective studies of accepting attitudes and involvement in dating aggression are needed in order to fully understand how accepting attitudes may operate as a risk factor for dating aggression.

Purpose and Rationale for the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was three-fold: (a) to assess the extent to which current assessment methods in the field capture a full picture of how dating aggression is experienced and understood by emerging adults, particularly with respect to gender symmetry in aggression and whether participants' understandings parallel Johnson's partner violence typology, (b) to explore the influences on these definitions and attitudes in order to better understand the context of youths' understandings of dating aggression and how it may differ from the context in which adult researchers form definitions and opinions about dating aggression, and (c) to replicate how dating aggression experiences and attitudes typically have been assessed in previous quantitative and qualitative research. Thus, the present study makes an original contribution to the literature by explicitly evaluating whether young people's experiences of and attitudes towards dating aggression differ as a function of assessment method (i.e., via self-report questionnaires versus via focus group discussion). Additionally, the present study makes an original contribution by directly asking participants to discuss in their own words how their attitudes and dating aggression norms are formed. Although previous work has investigated the nature of attitudes and norms related to dating aggression (e.g., Reeves & Orpinas, 2012), no known studies to date have asked participants themselves to describe how exactly those attitudes and norms came to be. By assessing dating aggression

experiences and attitudes as has typically been done in quantitative and qualitative research, the present study also provided the opportunity to replicate previous findings (i.e., via the quantitative and qualitative questions listed below) prior to making an original contribution to the literature via mixed methods questions.

In order to fulfill this purpose, a mixed methods design was necessary to be able to not only assess dating aggression attitudes and involvement using typical methods in the field (i.e., quantitative act-based questionnaires), but to also explore attitudes and involvement as articulated by youth themselves (i.e., during focus group discussion). That is, mixed methods were needed in order to generate two sets of data that could be compared within a single study to answer questions regarding the strength and validity of questionnaire measures commonly used to assess youths' experience and definitions of dating aggression.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to explore youths' definitions of dating aggression and the contexts that shape these definitions, the following questions guided the proposed research. Hypotheses were based on findings from previous research. As qualitative data generation was exploratory, no hypotheses were made for the qualitative research questions.

Quantitative questions.

1. What attitudes do emerging adults have about dating aggression?
 - a. It was hypothesized that, overall, participants would report negative attitudes towards dating aggression (i.e., that dating aggression is unacceptable; Fredland et al., 2005; Price et al., 2000).

- b. It was hypothesized that men would report more accepting attitudes than women (Edelen, McCaffrey, Marshall, & Jaycox, 2009; Molidor & Tolman, 1998).
 - c. It was hypothesized that all participants would report less acceptance of male-to-female than female-to-male aggression (Kaura & Lohman, 2009; Price et al., 2000; Reese-Weber, 2008; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012; Sears et al., 2006).
 - d. With respect to types of dating aggression, it was hypothesized that participants would be less accepting of physical and sexual aggression than emotional/psychological aggression (Black et al., 2008).
2. Do dating violence attitudes differ as a function of IPV experience and gender role beliefs?
- a. It was hypothesized that all participants (i.e., young men and young women) with higher levels of previous IPV experience would report more accepting attitudes towards dating aggression (male-to-female and female-to-male aggression) than participants with less IPV experience (Connolly et al., 2010; Jouriles, Rosenfield, McDonald, Kleinsasser, & Dodson, 2013; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012; Williams et al., 2008).
 - b. It was hypothesized that all participants who reported more traditional gender role beliefs (i.e., that men have more power than women) would report more accepting attitudes towards dating aggression (male-to-female and female-to-male aggression) than participants with less traditional

gender role beliefs (Jenkins & Aube, 2002; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994; Price et al., 1999).

3. Related to the concepts behind Johnson's dating violence typology (Kelly & Johnson, 2008), to what extent do the experiences and attitudes reported in questionnaires reflect a relation between power and level of dating aggression involvement?

It was hypothesized that participants who reported having lower levels of power in their romantic relationship would also report higher levels of dating aggression victimization (Bentley et al., 2007; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Melander, 2010; Zweig et al., 2014).

Qualitative questions.

4. How do emerging adults define dating aggression?
5. What is the context in which definitions of dating aggression are grounded and what contextual factors shape these definitions (i.e., what environmental qualities, forces, and/or phenomena do participants discuss as having shaped their definitions of and attitudes towards dating aggression)?
6. To what extent do the attitudes, definitions, and themes revealed in focus group interviews reflect the themes of power and control, which are related to Johnson's partner violence typology (Kelly & Johnson, 2008)? Do participants make a distinction between instances where a situation escalates to partner violence and situations where violence is part of an ongoing pattern of control?

Mixed methods questions.

7. What are the differences between and the similarities among emerging adults' understanding of dating aggression as assessed in questionnaires versus focus group interviews?

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Worldview and Methodology

A pragmatic worldview guided the design and completion of the present study. The focus of pragmatism is on the consequences of research and the questions asked rather than the methods used (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Pragmatism allows for both singular and multiple realities or perspectives. Practicality is of greatest importance in this worldview and researchers collect data based on “what works” to address a particular problem or question. In this way, pragmatism recognizes that there are many routes to acquire knowledge (i.e., objective and subjective knowledge) and that both qualitative and quantitative methods are valid “ways of knowing” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Murphy, 1990). Pragmatism has been viewed by many as being the best philosophical stance from which to conduct mixed methods research (see Tashakori & Teddlie, 2003).

Whereas many qualitative and mixed methods studies are conducted from one of four main theoretical approaches (i.e., phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographic, and narrative), the present study adopted a descriptive approach to inquiry (Creswell, 2009; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). As the purpose of the present study was to examine young adults’ attitudes towards and definitions of dating violence and to explore and describe the context in which this understanding developed, rather than make extensive interpretation of this information, a descriptive approach was the best method suited to this purpose (Sandelowski, 2000).

Mixed methods studies are those that combine or associate qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches in the method of a single study or multiphase study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed methods research is more than collecting and analyzing two kinds of data; it involves the use of both methods of inquiry in tandem so that the overall strength of the study or its ability to address research questions is greater than either qualitative or quantitative alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the present study, a mixed methods design was necessary based on its unique ability to address all research questions in a single study. A convergent parallel design was selected to structure data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This design conducts the qualitative and quantitative strands concurrently in the same research phase. As well, a convergent design prioritizes the methods equally, keeping the strands separate during analysis and integrating them during an overall mixed methods interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Although quantitative data collection and analysis were completed before qualitative data collection began, the two sets of data and results were given equal weight in the overall mixed-methods analysis and interpretation. It was important to ensure that these two methods held equal weight in order to answer mixed methods questions regarding the extent to which attitudes and understandings of dating aggression differ or overlap as a function of assessment method (i.e., typically-used act-based questionnaires or semi-structured group interviews). Thus, a convergent design was used for the purpose of triangulation (i.e., discerning whether the understandings of dating violence typical in questionnaire data are also typical in focus group data) as well as complementarity (i.e., using focus group data to find out what makes this understanding of dating violence typical; Sandelowski, 2000).

In an attempt to use a mixed methods approach, some studies have included open-ended questions in questionnaire batteries in order to obtain richer, qualitative data regarding the phenomenon under study. Although open-ended questions, or indeed individual interviews, may have provided answers to the research questions stated above, it was anticipated that a group interview format would result in richer data and be advantageous for several reasons. First, focus groups not only explore individuals' knowledge and experiences, but also examine how and why people think in a particular way (Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger, 2000) – key goals of the present study. Second, focus group interviews help individuals explore and clarify their views in a way that would be less accessible in a one-on-one interview. Through focus groups, researchers can gain access to a variety of communication styles and patterns, which is useful because attitudes are not always clearly encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions (Krueger, 2000). Third, the focus group process can highlight (sub)cultural norms and views that may not be evident in data collected via other methods (Kitzinger, 1995). As it was these norms and views with which the present study was chiefly concerned (i.e., the definitions of dating violence and the context of these definitions), focus groups were ideally suited to answer the questions proposed in this study. Finally, focus group interviews can be useful for facilitating discussion of taboo topics, such as dating aggression, as more outgoing participants tend to break the ice for more reticent individuals and group members can provide each other with mutual support when disclosing sensitive information (Kitzinger, 1995). Thus, it was important in the present study to spend the time and effort to conduct focus group interviews as the qualitative component of the study.

Participants

Rationale for selection of sample. Older adolescence/emerging adulthood was chosen as the age range of interest for several reasons, including that research on IPV in this age group continues to lag behind the adult IPV literature (Jackson, 1998). Additionally, adolescence/emerging adulthood is an important developmental period in which romantic relationships are first formed and in which relationship patterns may be first established. Given that these emerging patterns may not mirror how IPV occurs for and is understood by adults, and in consideration of the stark difference in context between adolescence and adulthood, late adolescence/emerging adulthood is a critical period for investigating how experiences like dating violence emerge and how they are perceived during this developmental period. I chose to focus specifically on emerging adults aged 17-20 years because past studies have demonstrated differences between how dating aggression is experienced and perceived by younger versus older adolescents (Henton et al., 1983; Wolfe et al., 2003). Also, emerging adults may have accumulated more dating experiences and have been exposed to the contexts that shape perceptions of dating aggression for a longer period of time; thus, it is speculated that their definitions of and attitudes towards dating aggression may be more fully formed than those of younger adolescents.

Although dating aggression and violence exist in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships (Freedner, Freed, Yang, & Austin, 2002; Rorhbaugh, 2006), this study focused specifically on dating aggression within heterosexual relationships. Exploration of dating violence attitudes among lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ)

youth is lacking; however, there is support for the idea that dating aggression within sexual minority groups may occur within, and be influenced by, different contexts than heterosexual dating aggression (Freedner et al., 2002; Halpern, Oslak, Young et al., 2001). In addition to the stigma that still exists in our society about being LGBTQ (Savin-Williams, 1994), and the oppression that LGBTQ individuals have endured as a result (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005), youth who identify as LGBTQ may also be at risk for types of dating violence unique to this community, for example psychological aggression in the form of threats of being “outed” by a partner (Freedner et al., 2002). Thus, it is possible that definitions of, attitudes towards, and relevant contexts for dating aggression in same-sex relationships may differ from those related to heterosexual relationships. The present study aimed to explore the contexts in which youth definitions of dating aggression are grounded, the applicability of Johnson’s typology, and in particular the gender-related issues relevant to the symmetry debate discussed above. Therefore, in order to limit the scope of the present study, the focus was on heterosexual dating aggression only. Exploration of definitions of and attitudes towards dating aggression among LGBTQ youth is a direction for future research.

Setting. After receiving clearance from the Research Ethics Board, student participants were recruited from the University of Windsor, a mid-size university offering undergraduate and graduate programs. At the time of the present study, the University had an approximately 50:50 male to female student ratio and almost half of the study body were enrolled in the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Approximately 65% of the student body were from the Windsor area, 27% were from other locations in Canada, and 11% were international students. The University of Windsor psychology participant pool

is a large group of undergraduate students who, by virtue of being registered in psychology courses, were eligible to participate in research being conducted within the department of psychology and to receive bonus points in their psychology courses for their participation. During the recruitment period for the present study, 1,349 students were registered in the participant pool. The pool was 19.5% male and 80.5% female, consistent with the tendency for a greater number of women to be enrolled in psychology courses than men. The pool is not made up exclusively of students majoring in psychology; only 44% of the pool members were psychology majors. With respect to race/ethnicity, 73% of pool members were Caucasian/White.

Online survey. Participants were 172 University of Windsor students ranging in age from 17 to 20 years ($M = 19.19$, $SD = .85$). There were 101 female and 71 male students in the sample. Participants were recruited via the psychology department participant pool. Unmarried male and female students between the ages of 17 and 20 years were eligible to participate if they identified as heterosexual and did not endorse having ever been in a sexual or romantic relationship with a member of the same sex. Seven participants were eliminated from the final sample due to not meeting inclusion criteria; one transgender participant and six participants identifying their sexual orientation as “bisexual” or “other” were excluded.

The majority of participants were in their first year of undergraduate study (33%), 29% were in second year, 27% were in third year, and 11% were in fourth year or above. As well, nine participants (5%) indicated that they were international students studying at the University of Windsor. The majority of the sample, 105 participants identified as

Caucasian/White (65.6%), but there was some diversity in the sample with respect to race/ethnicity (please refer to Table 1 for full demographic characteristics).

Several religious affiliations were represented in the sample with the majority of participants identifying as Christian (55%). At the time of participation, 58% of participants were not in a romantic relationship, 39% were in a relationship, 3% were living with their romantic partner (not married), and 1 (< 1%) participant did not respond to the question. Approximately 31% of participants had not yet begun dating and 69% had begun dating or had had a boy/girlfriend before. The majority of the sample lived in their family home (74%) and the remainder lived either with roommates (17%) or independently (6%). Participants received 1 bonus credit as compensation for participation.

Participants were also recruited from St. Clair Community College in an attempt to increase overall sample size as well as diversity within the study sample. A total of 29 students, 16 women and 13 men, participated in the online survey following recruitment via information flyer and in-class announcements. They each received 15 dollars as compensation.

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the administration and the student governing body at the College. Recruitment began in the winter 2012 semester with information flyers advertising the study that were posted on announcement boards around the College campus (Appendix A) and invited students who met eligibility criteria to go to the study URL or contact the researcher. Additional recruitment involved making brief announcements about the study during class time and inviting eligible students to visit the study URL. Six individual professors were contacted regarding

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Online Survey Participants

	Female		Male		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Age						
17	2	2.0	3	4.2	5	2.9
18	21	20.8	13	18.3	34	19.8
19	36	35.6	21	29.6	57	33.1
20	42	41.6	34	47.9	76	44.2
Year of study						
1	29	28.7	20	28.2	49	28.5
2	30	29.7	27	38.0	57	33.1
3	28	27.7	18	25.4	46	26.7
4+	13	12.9	6	8.4	19	11.1
Ethnicity						
Caucasian/White	78	77.2	37	52.1	115	66.7
Asian	4	3.9	8	1.1	12	6.9
African/Black	4	3.9	6	8.5	10	5.8
Arab/Middle Eastern	3	2.9	7	9.9	10	5.8
European	5	4.9	3	4.2	8	4.7
Hispanic	3	2.9	1	1.4	4	2.3
Bi-racial	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.6
East Indian	1	0.9	1	1.4	2	1.2
No response	3	0.9	7	9.9	10	5.8
Religion						
Christian	53	52.4	33	46.4	86	50.0
Muslim	1	1.0	7	9.9	8	4.7
Atheist	2	1.9	2	2.8	4	2.3
Hindu	1	1.0	1	1.4	2	1.2
Orthodox	2	1.9	0	0.0	2	1.2
Mormon	1	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
Native	1	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
Pagan	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.6
Buddhist	1	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
No affiliation	17	16.8	19	2.7	36	20.9
No response	22	21.8	8	11.3	30	17.4
Started dating						
Yes	73	72.3	46	35.2	119	69.2
No	28	27.7	25	35.2	53	30.8
In current relationship						
Yes	51	50.5	20	28.2	100	58.1
No	49	48.5	51	71.8	71	41.4

making an announcement during their classes and two consented. Announcements were made in a total of three classes including two marketing and one civil engineering technology courses. A personnel change within the student governing body, which was assigned to oversee my recruitment of participants for this study, took place during the recruitment process at the College. Attempts were made to continue recruiting participants after this change, but the new staff was unfamiliar with the study and more conservative policies were enforced with respect to the recruitment process. For example, restrictions were placed on the number and location of information flyers to be posted and the extent to which the researcher was permitted to contact faculty. This change coincided with the end of the winter 2012 semester and a sizeable decrease in the number of classes offered and students on campus during the summer months. As a result, participant recruitment at the College was not able to proceed.

Statistical comparisons of data from the two sites revealed significant differences between St. Clair College and the University of Windsor on several variables. St. Clair College participants were significantly more disapproving of dating aggression and had significantly higher social desirability ratings than University of Windsor participants (see Table 2 for a full list of statistics). As a result, confidence that the two samples came from the same population was greatly reduced and St. Clair College participant data were not included in any analyses. This difference in attitudes between the two samples was unexpected, particularly given that the two samples did not significantly differ on any other demographic or main variable of interest (e.g., age, gender, dating status, sexist beliefs, relationship power, and involvement in dating aggression). One possible explanation for this difference in attitudes towards dating aggression between the two

Table 2

Comparison of Data from St. Clair College and University of Windsor Samples

Variable	UWindsor		St. Clair		Test statistic (<i>df</i>)	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Gender					$\chi^2(1) = 0.262$	0.377
Dating history					$\chi^2(1) = 1.963$	0.117
Age	19.19	0.85	18.86	1.17	$t(198) = 1.787$	0.075
Hostile sexism	3.41	0.66	3.64	0.84	$t(198) = -0.640$	0.102
Benevolent sexism	3.44	0.54	3.46	0.92	$t(198) = -0.154$	0.878
Dating aggression perpetration	1.44	0.36	1.36	0.38	$t(145) = 0.943$	0.347
Dating aggression victimization	1.44	0.40	1.33	0.32	$t(145) = 1.336$	0.184
Total dating aggression involvement	1.44	0.37	1.35	0.35	$t(145) = 1.188$	0.237
Humiliation power	31.11	5.11	31.82	6.13	$t(140) = -0.588$	0.557
Decision-making power	15.22	2.52	15.04	3.12	$t(140) = 0.311$	0.756
Status power	4.00	0.88	4.17	0.49	$t(140) = -0.916$	0.361
Social desirability	18.49	2.83	21.09	1.70	$t(198) = -4.715$	0.000
Attitudes toward psychological aggression						
Female perp	42.27	5.22	44.50	7.90	$t(198) = -1.754$	0.081
Male perp	42.91	4.19	54.21	8.96	$t(198) = -10.837$	0.000
Attitudes toward physical aggression						
Female perp	42.66	4.28	45.07	9.68	$t(198) = -2.212$	0.028
Male perp	39.16	4.83	46.21	7.27	$t(198) = -6.611$	0.000
Attitudes toward sexual aggression						
Female perp	27.85	4.23	41.92	7.47	$t(198) = -14.357$	0.000
Male perp	40.68	4.00	49.35	7.84	$t(198) = -9.016$	0.000
Attitudes toward female perpetration	112.99	8.28	131.50	22.75	$t(198) = -7.969$	0.000
Attitudes toward male perpetration	122.76	10.26	149.78	21.73	$t(198) = -10.635$	0.000
Total attitudes toward dating aggression	235.76	16.29	281.29	41.13	$t(198) = 10.417$	0.000

Note. I used bootstrapping for all *t* tests as a result of significant skewness of variables.

sites stems from differences in the culture and size of the institutions. St. Clair College is a smaller campus with a more personal student culture in which students may have felt less anonymous than students at the University of Windsor. As well, University of Windsor students, particularly those enrolled in the psychology participant pool, may be more accustomed to being part of a research community and participating confidentially in studies than St. Clair College students. To the extent that this was true, St. Clair College students may have been less comfortable with reporting their true views on sensitive topics and responded in more socially desirable ways. A second possible explanation for the difference in attitudes towards dating aggression between the two samples stems from differences in the recruitment process. At St. Clair College, advertising for the study did not exist as part of a broader program of participant recruitment, as it did at the University of Windsor by virtue of being part of the psychology participant pool system. As a result, the sample of participants from St. Clair College may represent a very self-selected group of young people who may have been drawn to participate in my study as a result of holding particular attitudes about dating aggression (i.e., more disapproval). That is, interest in the topic of dating aggression (as well as interest in receiving monetary compensation) may have played a larger role in St. Clair College students' decisions to participate in the study than it did for University of Windsor students, who had many more participation options from which to choose that all guaranteed them compensation. Regardless, it may be inappropriate to draw conclusions about differences in attitudes between students at the two institutions based on data from only 29 participants at St. Clair College. Additional studies with equal

sample sizes from each institution would be needed to make sound conclusions about the potential differences in dating aggression attitudes between the two student bodies.

Focus groups. A total of 21 students from the University of Windsor participated in focus group interviews. Three female (total $n = 12$) and three male (total $n = 9$) focus groups were conducted during the summer 2012 semester. Focus group participants ranged in age from 18 to 20 years ($M = 19.25$, $SD = .87$) with a modal age of 20 years. All female participants majored in psychology. Male participants majored in business/commerce/economics ($n = 2$), computer science ($n = 1$), engineering ($n = 3$), or psychology ($n = 3$). Due to researcher error, focus group participants did not complete the same demographic questionnaire that online survey participants completed. Although additional demographic data on focus group participants were not collected, notes taken by the focus group interviewers indicated that every group was somewhat racially/ethnically diverse in composition. As well, qualitative data showed that at least one participant per focus group identified as belonging to a racial/ethnic group other than White/Caucasian (e.g., mentioned their racial/ethnic identity during discussion).

The number of participants in each group ranged from two to five participants. A minimum of five participants were scheduled for each focus group; however, due to several participants failing to attend, several groups were conducted with less than five members. The three female groups were comprised of 5, 3, and 4 women, respectively, and the three male focus groups were comprised of 2, 4, and 3 men, respectively. Given the differences in group sizes, and in particular that one group had only two participants, it is important to acknowledge that group dynamics may have differed across groups. Interviewer notes indicated that for female focus groups, there were no stark differences

in group dynamics and amount of discussion between groups. In all three female groups, discussion was lively overall with variations in how much each group member contributed to discussion (i.e., in each female group some participants were more talkative than others, as expected). Interviewer notes from male focus groups indicated that the group with only two members was more quiet overall than the other two male groups, but that both members of the two person group seemed to warm up easily and responded to all interview questions. Although the unexpectedly small group sizes were not ideal, saturation was reached after three male and three female focus groups were conducted. Saturation refers to the point during qualitative research when a sense of closure is reached because data collection no longer yields new information (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

As a result of how focus group recruitment unfolded, which is discussed in more detail below, the online survey and focus group portions of the study were completed with two entirely separate samples of participants. Thus, there was no known overlap in participants between the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study. This is consistent with the procedures of a convergent mixed methods design, in which the two types of data collection may be concurrent but are separate (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). That is, one data set need not depend on the results of the other and samples may be comprised of different individual participants. However, as a consequence of using a completely separate sample for the focus groups, focus group participants did not complete the questionnaire battery used in the online survey, including the demographic measure. The majority of focus groups already had taken place when this error in

procedure was discovered. As mentioned above, this resulted in less demographic information about focus group participants than was intended.

Recruitment for focus groups occurred following quantitative data collection, as focus group recruitment was intended to be informed by scores from online surveys. Students who participated in the initial online survey portion of the study and provided their consent to be contacted for future studies were eligible for the focus group portion of the study. Thirty-six percent of online survey participants consented to being re-contacted (37% of women and 39% of men). The aim was to use purposeful sampling to form focus groups with students representing each of the following experiences: previous dating experience, no previous dating experience, involvement in dating aggression as defined by the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI; Wolfe et al., 2001), and no involvement in dating aggression as defined by the CADRI. Students were contacted via E-mail and telephone by the researcher, given a brief description of the qualitative portion of the study (Appendices B and C), and invited to sign up for participation. All of the students contacted declined to participate. The remaining eligible participants were contacted by the researcher, regardless of their scores on the measure of dating aggression and dating experience question. All declined or could not be reached by telephone or E-mail after several attempts. It is important to note that participation in the online survey generally took place at the beginning of the winter 2012 semester and participants were contacted regarding focus groups at the end of the winter semester. It is likely that students had already accrued the maximum number of course credit points allowed by the time they were approached about focus group participation and did not wish to complete additional studies. As well, students may have been

focused on studying for and writing exams during that time and may not have had time to participate in focus groups.

A second wave of focus group recruitment was conducted via the psychology participant pool during the spring/summer 2012 semester. Students were able to view a separate brief description of the focus group portion of the study on the participant pool website and register online for a timeslot. Completion of the online survey was not a prerequisite for focus group participation. Participants for all of the female ($n = 12$) and one of the male ($n = 3$) focus groups were recruited via the participant pool. These students received 1.5 bonus credits as compensation for participation. As there are typically fewer male students registered in the participant pool, it was difficult to recruit a sufficient number of male participants through the pool. I thus recruited additional male participants using information flyers (Appendix D) posted around the University of Windsor campus. Participants for the final two male focus groups ($n = 6$) were recruited via these flyers and received 20 dollars as compensation for participation.

It should be noted that participants in the present study, both those in the qualitative and quantitative strands, may represent a unique group of emerging adults given that two sexual assault prevention initiatives (a sexual assault resistance education program [Senn & Forrest, 2015] and a sexual assault bystander empowerment program [Senn et al., 2015]) were available to University of Windsor students as part of ongoing research projects around the time this study was being conducted. No data were collected from participants in the present study regarding their participation in these or other programs. However, three focus group participants made specific mention of their experiences in the programs and cited the impact of these programs on their attitudes

towards dating aggression. Specifically, one woman and two men (in different focus groups) disclosed that they had taken part in the bystander empowerment program. To the extent that the participants in the present study were privy to this type of prevention program, either by completing the program themselves or hearing about it from peers, participants may represent a group of young people who have different understandings of partner aggression than youth who were not exposed to these types of prevention programs.

Measures

Quantitative Measures. Demographic questionnaire. Participants who completed the online survey were asked to respond to a variety of questions regarding demographic characteristics including, but not limited to, age, academic level, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, dating status, and parent(s)' education level (Appendix E).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form. Potential influences of social desirability on reports of dating aggression, attitudes toward dating aggression, and gender role attitudes were assessed by the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form (MCSDS; Reynolds, 1982; Appendix F). Participants who completed the online survey were asked to respond to 13 statements as true (1) or false (0), with five items reverse coded. Examples of items included, “No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener,” and “I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.” True/false scores were summed, resulting in overall scores ranging from 13 to 26. Lower overall scores on this measure are assumed to reflect less social desirability bias in responding. Reliability estimates in the current sample was $\alpha = .68$. Please see Table 3 for a list of alpha coefficients for all variables and subscales.

Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory. To address limitations in previous research, I used a comprehensive approach to defining and measuring dating aggression in the quantitative component of the present study. I thus assessed three main types of aggression in the context of romantic relationships: psychological, physical, and sexual. Although previous research has highlighted other forms of partner violence and abuse (e.g., economic), the present study focused on these three types of violence for several reasons. The young men and women in the present study were unlikely to be cohabiting; therefore, economic abuse was anticipated to be less salient for these individuals. In addition, my intention was to collect and measure the quantitative data in a way that reflected what is commonly done in the field (i.e., using act-based measures and researcher-generated definitions and categories). Therefore, I did not include an exhaustive list of possible partner aggression domains in the definition of dating aggression because existing studies typically focus only on verbal/emotional, physical, and sexual aggression.

Participants' own experiences of relationship aggression and violence were assessed using the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI; Wolfe et al, 2001; Appendix G) in the quantitative sample. The CADRI is a 35-item self-report questionnaire that measures different forms of aggressive behaviour, including

Table 3

Reliability Estimates for Measures and Subscales

Measure/Subscale	Cronbach's α
ATDVS	
Attitudes Towards Female Psychological Violence	0.74
Attitudes Towards Female Physical Violence	0.88
Attitudes Towards Female Sexual Violence	0.85
Attitudes Towards Male Psychological Violence	0.83
Attitudes Towards Male Physical Violence	0.87
Attitudes Towards Male Sexual Violence	0.92
ASI	
Benevolent Sexism	0.72
Hostile Sexism	0.80
Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale	0.68
Multidimensional Power Measure	
Status Power	N/A
Humiliation Power	0.91
Decision Making Power	0.69
CADRI	
Threatening – Perpetration	0.79
Threatening – Victimization	0.65
Physical – Perpetration	0.83
Physical – Victimization	0.83
Emotional/Verbal – Perpetration	0.82
Emotional/Verbal – Victimization	0.85
Sexual – Perpetration	0.67
Sexual - Victimization	0.72
Relational – Perpetration	0.74
Relational - Victimization	0.79

Note. ATDVS = Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales; ASI = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory; CADRI = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory.

physical aggression (4 items), threatening behaviours (5 items), sexual aggression (4 items), relational aggression (4 items), and verbal or emotional aggression (8 items) that may occur in adolescent romantic relationships. The measure also includes a scale reflecting healthy conflict behaviours used in relationships (10 items), for example “I gave reasons for my side of the argument.” Respondents were asked to rate on a 4-point scale how often behaviours had occurred with their current or ex-partner within the past year. Response choices range from 1 = *never* to 4 = *often: this has happened 6 times or more*. Examples of questionnaire items include, “During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend in the past year...he insulted me with put downs” and “During a conflict or argument with my girlfriend in the past year...she slapped me or pulled my hair.” The CADRI includes perpetrator and victim subscales and was developed and validated with youth up to 19 years of age. Average scores are computed for each subscale as well as total perpetration, total victimization, and total dating aggression involvement. Higher scores represent more frequent levels of dating violence victimization or perpetration. The CADRI has had good validity and reliability across a number of studies (Bentley et al., 2007; Jouriles et al., 2005). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the total abuse scales were greater than .83 and test-retest reliability across a two-week period was acceptable ($r = .75$; Wolfe et al., 2001). In the present sample, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from .65 to .85 across subscales. The two lowest coefficients, .65 and .67, for the threatening violence – victimization and sexual violence – perpetration scales, respectively, were lower than has been previously found in some studies where estimates have typically been above .70 (e.g., Bentley et al., 2007; Jouriles, et al., 2005). However, during measure development and validation in high school samples, Wolfe and

colleagues (2001) found similarly low reliability for the Sexual Violence subscale, with an alpha of .45 for girls and .54 for boys. The remaining subscale alpha coefficients ranged from .72 to .83, consistent with estimates from other studies using the CADRI.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. To assess the extent to which participants in the quantitative portion of the study held sexist views about women and traditional attitudes about gender roles, Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Appendix H) was used. This self-report questionnaire contains two subscales: the Hostile Sexism scale (11 items, e.g., "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them"), which measures antipathy toward women, and the Benevolent Sexism scale (11 items, e.g., "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess"), which measures attitudes that are subjectively positive, but still prejudicial and potentially damaging in nature. Respondents were asked to rate 22 statements on a 6-point scale in which 0 = *disagree strongly* and 5 = *agree strongly*. Average scores are computed for each subscale and an overall sexism score. Higher scores are indicative of more sexist attitudes, either hostile or benevolent, and more traditional gender role beliefs. The ASI has been demonstrated in several studies to have good validity and reliability and has been used with diverse samples (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Silvan-Ferraro & Lopez, 2007). Internal consistency reliabilities for overall ASI scores have ranged from .83 to .92 (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Cronbach's alphas for the current sample were .72 for the benevolent sexism subscale and .80 for the hostile sexism subscale.

The ASI was chosen for the present study because of its widespread use in the field and because, unlike many other measures of sexist beliefs (e.g., Attitudes Towards Women Scale [Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973]; Modern Sexism Scale [Swim &

Cohen, 1997]; Neosexism Scale [Tougas et al., 1995]), it makes a distinction between antipathy towards women and more subtle patriarchal beliefs. Similar to the other sexist belief measures, the items on the ASI are worded to reflect only female gender roles and not the complementary gender expectations for men (e.g., “It is a man’s role to be the primary bread winner in the family”), which may reflect a weakness of the measure.

Multidimensional Power Measure. To try to improve upon past conceptualizations and measures of power, the guidelines and measures provided by Bentley et al. (2007) were used in the present study’s online survey (Appendix I). Specifically, elements of power including status discrepancy, humiliation, and decision-making were assessed using questions adapted from the work of Bentley et al. (2007). Two self-report items measured perceptions of one’s own and one’s partner’s status in the relationship: “To what degree does being involved with your partner increase your contact with people who you desire to be associated with,” and “To what degree does being involved with you increase your partner’s contact with people he or she desires to be associated with?” Ratings were recorded on a 5-point scale in which 1 = *not a lot*, 3 = *somewhat*, and 5 = *a lot*. Difference scores were calculated for these two items and positive scores indicated that participants viewed themselves as having greater status in the relationship. Negative difference scores were indicative of perceptions that a partner had greater relationship status and power. To create a total status power score, these difference scores were transposed onto a scale with only positive integers, where higher scores indicated participants viewed themselves as having greater relationship status.

The humiliation aspect of relationship power was assessed using seven items adapted by Bentley et al. (2007) from the Others as Shamers Scale (Goss, Gilbert, &

Allen, 1994). These seven items included: (a) “My partner sees me as not measuring up to him/her,” (b) “I think that my partner looks down on me,” (c) “I feel that my partner sees me as not good enough,” (d) “My partner sees me as small and insignificant,” (e) “I feel insecure about my partner’s opinion of me,” (f) “My partner sees me as unimportant compared to others,” and (g) “My partner sees me as defective as a person.” Responses were on a 5-point scale from 1 = *never* to 5 = *almost always*; higher scores indicated more intense feelings of humiliation and less perceived power. Bentley et al. (2007) found Cronbach’s alphas for this seven-item modified scale to be .90 for girls and .93 for boys. An alpha coefficient of .91 was found in the present study.

Decision-making power was assessed via a 10-item self-report measure modified by Bentley et al. (2007) from the work of Galliher et al. (1999). Items include statements such as, “When you and your partner disagree on something, who usually wins?”, “Who decides how much time you should spend together?”, and “Who generally decides what you and your partner do together?” Participants were asked to respond on a 5-point scale in which 1 = *my partner always does*, 3 = *we both do*, and 5 = *I always do*. Alpha coefficients for this modified measure in previous studies were .79 for girls and .82 for boys (Bentley et al., 2007). In the present study, the alpha coefficient was .69.

Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales. Participants’ attitudes regarding dating aggression and violence were measured using the Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales (ATDVS; Price et al., 1999; Appendix J) in the quantitative sample. This self-report questionnaire was developed with and validated on a sample of adolescents aged 11 to 20 years. The ATDVS contains two scales: one assessing attitudes towards psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence perpetrated by men

(39 items), and the other assessing attitudes towards psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence perpetrated by women (37 items). Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale the degree to which they agree with each item. Response choices ranged from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*, and lower scores on each scale indicated more positive attitudes (i.e., greater acceptance) towards the behaviours. Items included statements such as, “It is alright for a girl to force her boyfriend to kiss her,” “A guy should not tell his girlfriend what to do,” (reverse coded) and “Sometimes a guy cannot help hitting his girlfriend if she makes him angry.” This measure yields scores ranging from 37 to 185 for girls and from 39 to 195 for boys. The ATDVS also yields scores on three subscales including psychological, physical, and sexual aggression where, again, higher scores indicate less acceptance of aggression. The ATDVS has been shown to have sound psychometric properties. In previous studies, internal consistency reliabilities of the scales were strong and ranged from .75 to .87. In the present study, reliabilities of the scales ranged from .74 to .92. Also, the ATDVS has been shown to have good construct validity such that all scales correlate highly with measures of traditional gender roles and attitudes towards each type of dating violence (i.e., psychological, physical, and sexual) correlate significantly. Good criterion validity has also been established; significant correlations have been demonstrated between having used violence against a dating partner and having more accepting attitudes of dating violence. Furthermore, with the exception of physical violence, having friends who use dating violence was significantly correlated with greater acceptance of dating violence, as measured by the ATDVS (Price et al., 1999).

Qualitative Measure. *Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview.* In facilitating the group interviews, moderators followed a semi-structured interview guide (Table 4) based on the work of Price et al. (2000) and guided by suggestions from Krueger and Casey (2000). The semi-structured interview consisted of ten open-ended questions, although follow-up questions were asked as needed. The interview began with introductory questions to open discussion and gather information about the dating terms that participants used and their preliminary thoughts about what constitutes dating aggression. The interview guide then transitioned to the key items that related directly to the research questions and concluded with closing questions designed to summarize the discussion and elicit participant feedback. Please refer to Appendix K for a copy of the interview guide.

Procedure

Online survey. On the psychology participant pool website, students were presented with a brief description of the study (Appendix L) including eligibility criteria and the study URL. As per participant pool requirements, students registered online for the study and were directed to the study URL. Once on the survey website, participants were provided with a printable electronic information letter (Appendix M) that reiterated the purpose of and eligibility criteria for the study. At the bottom of the screen, students could choose not to proceed by clicking a “Safely Exit Survey” button or continue by clicking a “Next” button. The “Safely Exit Survey” button was included at the bottom of every screen and diverted participants to a final screen containing community and school resources relevant to dating aggression. This screen also contained instructions describing how to clear the computer’s Internet browser cache in order to ensure that

Table 4

Semi-Structured Interview Guide Questions

-
1. We are meeting to talk about your views, opinions, and feelings about conflict in dating relationships. To begin, what types of words do you use to label romantic relationships or involvement?
 2. As I mentioned we are here to talk about conflict in dating relationships. (a) When I talk about dating aggression, what sorts of things do you think about? (b) What about when I talk about violence? (c) What about abuse?
 3. There is a lot of talk these days about violence or abuse that goes on in romantic relationships, including dating relationships. Are there things that go on between university/college students that you would call violence or abuse?
 4. One issue we have talked about is the types of violent acts or behaviours. Let's discuss these one at a time: (a) emotional/verbal abuse, (b) physical abuse, (c) sexual abuse I've separated these three types, but talk about whether these types ever happen at the same time, or go together, or are related or not?
 5. Where or when is it "ok" to use these behaviours?
 6. What people or things influence your definitions of what dating violence is? Where do your definitions come from?
 7. Are there people your age who you know disagree with you or have different views of these types of behaviours? What do they think? What do your friends think? What do your parents think?
 8. Given everything we have discussed today, what stood out as most important for you? What would you have liked to comment on more?
 9. [Provide summary of group's points.] Is my summary of our group's discussion accurate? Have I left out any important points?
 10. Is there anything we have missed? Are there other questions that need to be asked in reference to dating violence and how you define it?
-

others could not trace the students' participation. Clicking the "Next" button directed students to a consent page (Appendix N) on which they were asked to select one of two choices: "I agree and wish to continue" or "I do not wish to participate." Those who consented to participate were routed to the beginning of the survey and those who declined were routed to the resources screen described above.

All participants completed the demographic questionnaire first and were branched to the female or male version of the survey as appropriate based on their responses to the gender item. Questionnaires were identical for the male and female streams except for wording of items that reflected the sex of a dating partner (i.e., item wording for female participants used "boyfriend" when asking about a dating partner, whereas "girlfriend" was used for male participants). With the exception of the dating aggression (i.e., CADRI) and power questionnaires, the order of measures was randomized across participants to reduce order effects. Only participants who endorsed having begun dating completed the dating aggression and power measures as these measures assess experiences related specifically to past and present dating and relationships. Therefore, following completion of the randomized portion of the survey, participants with previous dating experience completed the CADRI and power measure in randomized order. Those who responded that they had not yet begun dating were routed to the final screen in the survey, discussed below.

Following the questionnaire battery, participants were asked if they would be willing to be contacted to participate in future research (Appendix O). Participants expressed their consent to be contacted by entering their name, E-mail address, and telephone number. Due to the initial intent to use purposeful sampling for recruitment of

focus group participants, this contact information was linked with survey data so that participants meeting sampling requirements could be contacted specifically. Participant contact information was deleted from the data following completion of focus group recruitment. The final screen in the survey invited participants to enter their name and University of Windsor E-mail if they wished to receive bonus credit for their participation. To finish the survey, participants clicked a “Submit” button at the bottom of the screen. They were then routed to the closing screen that explained the purpose of the study in more detail and thanked them for participating (Appendix P). A printable list of community and university resources regarding aggressive dating relationships and instructions for clearing the Internet browser cache were also included on this screen.

All electronically submitted surveys were held in a secure third party server belonging to FluidSurveys, the online survey company used by the University of Windsor, and then downloaded onto a secure computer in order to complete data analyses. The data file was password protected and accessed only by the researcher.

Focus groups. Procedures for conducting focus groups were guided by the suggestions of Krueger and Casey (2000) and Price et al. (2000). The (female) researcher acted as interviewer for the female focus groups and a male research assistant acted as interviewer for the male focus groups. The male interviewer was an upper-year undergraduate psychology student working as a research assistant for the researcher’s supervisor. He received focus group training from the researcher, which included role-playing a mock focus group situation. Each interviewer recorded notes immediately following completion of the focus groups in order to detail impressions and observations of the group.

All focus group participants, regardless of the method by which they were recruited, were contacted via E-mail and/or telephone by the researcher one day prior to the group to confirm and remind them of their participation. All focus groups took place on the University of Windsor campus in a small classroom. The classroom included a rectangular boardroom style table centered in the room with eight chairs around it. In each group, participants and the interviewer were evenly dispersed around the table to approximate a circular configuration. The focus group interviewer greeted participants upon arrival at the room, invited them to sit down, and provided them with information and consent forms. Participants were invited to help themselves to water and snacks that were placed in the middle of the table.

The interviewer verbally reviewed the purpose of the study and confidentiality, and written consent was obtained for participation in the study (Appendix Q) and for audio recording the discussion (Appendix R). Two digital audio recorders were turned on and placed on the table. The interviewer then followed the semi-structured interview guide and asked additional clarification questions when needed. Following completion of the group discussion, participants were thanked for their time and debriefed in more detail about the purpose of the focus groups specifically and the overall mixed methods study in general. They also were given a copy of the focus group feedback letter (Appendix S), which contained a list of community resources they could contact if they wished to continue talking about dating aggression and violence.

Three undergraduate level research assistants transcribed verbatim all audio recordings of focus groups. The assistants (two women and one man) had previous transcription experience within the researcher's lab group. The researcher provided

special training relevant to the present study to all assistants, which included review of a study-specific training manual. Assistants were randomly assigned to transcribe two transcripts each. The researcher reviewed the accuracy of all transcripts throughout the process and provided feedback to the assistants as needed. Audio recordings were deleted after all interviews had been transcribed and reviewed. Participants' original wording, including grammatical errors and slang, was retained in all transcripts and in the quotations presented in this document in order that a true, rich picture of these youths' experiences and vernacular is communicated.

I used the software program, Atlas.ti (www.atlasti.com) for all qualitative data analyses. Atlas.ti does not itself code the data, rather it is a tool for supporting a researcher's process of data analysis. I saved the primary documents (i.e., transcripts) within the program and then used Atlas.ti functions to code, annotate, and organize quotations and sections of text in the primary documents. For example, I used an Atlas.ti function to tally the number of times specific codes were used across transcripts, which then became part of mixed methods analysis.

Mixed methods analysis approach. I analyzed data according to recommendations for concurrent mixed methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I first analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data separately according to methods best suited to the data, then the two datasets were mixed in order to complete the overall analysis and interpretations for the study. Merging of data for mixed methods analysis and interpretation in a concurrent design, like the one in the present study, is typically done through comparing side by side or transforming one of the data sets (e.g., transforming qualitative data into quantitative counts and averages; Creswell & Plano-

Clark, 2011). In the present study, I merged data both through side-by-side comparison and by data transformation. As per recommendations from Creswell and Plano-Clark, research questions guided decisions regarding which data to merge and how to present results. Thus, in order to address the mixed methods question, merging of datasets began by comparing the separate results from quantitative and qualitative data side by side in order to assess when and how results differed or were similar. Then, in order to assess the extent to which datasets were similar or different, some qualitative data were transformed into quantitative data (e.g., code and theme counts). Qualitative findings were examined to determine the extent to which they aligned with or differed from quantitative results. Then, the process was reversed and quantitative results were examined to determine whether they aligned with or differed from qualitative findings. In this way, it was possible to determine areas of overlap in the two datasets as well as identify findings that were unique to either quantitative or qualitative analyses.

CHAPTER III

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to completing the main analyses, I examined the data for missing or inappropriate values (i.e., outside minimum and maximum values of variables). I conducted a missing data analysis to examine the amount and pattern of missing values. In the present study, no subscale or measure had more than 2% of data missing. Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) have argued that the pattern of missing data should be of more concern than the absolute number of missing values. Accordingly, data were analyzed for potentially biasing nonrandom patterns and were found to be missing completely at random (MCAR), Little's MCAR $\chi^2 = 6370.92, p = 1.00$. Due to the relatively small amount of missing data and the MCAR nature of the missing values, I used estimation-maximization to replace missing values. The estimation-maximization approach is an iterative procedure in which available data is used to repeatedly impute new values for missing data until the new estimates converge over several iterations. This method is considered to be more robust than mean-substitution procedures and is believed to provide unbiased estimates when data are MCAR (Acock, 2005; Graham, Cumsille, & Elek-Friske, 2003).

I assessed univariate outliers by visually examining boxplots and histograms as well as z scores larger than 3.29. There were no univariate outliers on the (sub)scales of the sexism (ASI), social desirability (MCSDS), or power measures. Outliers were found on several of the attitudes (ATDVS) and dating aggression (CADRI) subscales. Outliers on these aggression-related variables were expected, given previous findings regarding

the base rate of aggression in university samples. Although high scores on aggression measures likely do not reflect the experience of the majority of the general population, it was expected that a portion of the current sample legitimately would have experienced higher levels of dating aggression. I investigated these univariate outliers further for patterns of responding. Participants who were outliers on aggression measures were not found to be outliers across all measures; thus, it is likely that they were responding truthfully rather than selecting the same value throughout the survey in order to complete the study and receive compensation. As well, these participants did not necessarily have outlier scores across all subscales of the same measure, further suggesting that their outlier responses represent a genuinely high level of aggression experience or attitudes. To determine whether these univariate outliers were exerting influence over statistical models, and thus potentially biasing results, I ran analyses with and without these data. Inclusion of outliers did not affect regression coefficients, F ratios, or significance values, thus outliers were retained in all analyses.

I examined multivariate outliers through investigation of DIFFits, Cook's distances greater than 1, and Mahalanobis distances at $p < .01$ (Barnett & Lewis, 1984). One multivariate outlier was found. I conducted analyses with and without the outlier and no change to statistical values or significance was found. In order to preserve statistical power, and given that univariate and multivariate outliers did not influence statistical models, outliers were retained for final analyses. As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), I transformed the multivariate outlier by changing the score to be one unit smaller.

I evaluated normality of the data by examining histograms, skewness and kurtosis values, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics at $p < .05$. Social desirability, decision-making power, and status power difference scales were approximately normally distributed based on skewness values. All attitude subscales (ATDVS) were negatively skewed (indicating less acceptance of dating aggression) with the exception of attitudes towards female sexual aggression, which was slightly positively skewed (indicating more acceptance of this type of dating aggression). Whereas the benevolent sexism subscale of the ASI was near normal based on skewness values, the hostile sexism subscale was slightly positively skewed (i.e., less sexist). The humiliation power subscale and all subscales relating to dating aggression experience (CADRI) were positively skewed. Results from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated that the skewness of these measures and subscales was statistically significant. Skewed data on aggression-related measures were expected, given results from previous research in the area of intimate partner aggression showing that involvement in aggression is not normally distributed in the population. Combined with the relatively small sample size in the present study, this non-normality of variables constitutes a threat to the assumptions of analysis of variance. As a result, I used a bootstrapping method of resampling ($n = 1000$) in all analyses to attempt to compensate for these weaknesses, unless otherwise stated. Bootstrapping is recommended when it is not certain that the distribution from which a sample is taken is normal and the sample size is relatively small, as in the present study (Dalglish, 1994; Efron, 1988; Fearon, 2003). Results from statistical analyses with bootstrap estimates are presented below.

I also examined data for adherence to the statistical assumptions of ANOVA and multiple regression analyses (MRA). Results from Levene's test of homogeneity of variances were nonsignificant and equal variances were assumed. With respect to MRA assumptions, collinearity diagnostics (i.e., VIF and tolerance values) revealed no problems with multicollinearity among predictors. I examined plots for violations of homoscedasticity and linearity, and assumptions were met. Durbin-Watson statistics indicated that there were no violations of the assumption of independence of errors. Normality of errors was determined by examination of histograms and P-P plots.

Main Analyses

Description of the variables.

Dating aggression experiences. Participants who indicated they had begun dating reported on their experiences with dating aggression in the previous 12 months. Overall, participants reported having experienced relatively low levels of dating aggression. Please refer to Table 5 for a complete list of descriptive statistics. Indeed, the mode for many of the aggression subscales was 1.00, indicating participants reported never having experienced that type of dating aggression. When collapsed across participant gender, the highest reported levels of dating aggression (and the highest modal response) were for verbal/emotional aggression perpetration and victimization. The lowest reported levels of aggression were for physical aggression perpetration and victimization.

Of the group who indicated they had begun dating, the majority of participants reported being involved in at least one act of aggression in the previous 12 months, with 84.0% of the group reporting as least one act of victimization and of perpetration.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Dating Aggression

Aggression subtype	Mean (<i>SD</i>)			Percent reporting at least one act		
	All daters	Women	Men	All daters	Women	Men
Threatening						
Perpetration	1.24 (.40)	1.25 (.39)	1.22 (.42)	48.7	53.4	41.3
Victimization	1.23 (.40)	1.19 (.31)	1.30 (.50)	42.9	41.1	45.7
Physical						
Perpetration	1.16 (.40)	1.14 (.28)	1.19 (.54)	23.5	28.8	15.2
Victimization	1.15 (.42)	1.09 (.26)	1.25 (.54)	18.5	15.1	23.9
Emotional						
Perpetration	1.92 (.59)	1.97 (.58)	1.85 (.61)	95.0	97.3	91.3
Victimization	1.88 (.62)	1.87 (.57)	1.88 (.70)	94.1	94.5	93.5
Sexual						
Perpetration	1.26 (.40)	1.16 (.28)	1.40 (.51)	42.0	32.9	56.5
Victimization	1.32 (.46)	1.29 (.41)	1.36 (.52)	51.3	52.1	50.0
Relational						
Perpetration	1.19 (.39)	1.19 (.32)	1.19 (.50)	31.1	38.4	19.6
Victimization	1.27 (.49)	1.22 (.36)	1.13 (.65)	37.8	39.7	34.8
Total perpetration	1.44 (.36)	1.44 (.31)	1.44 (.45)	84.0	80.4	86.3
Total victimization	1.45 (.41)	1.41 (.32)	1.49 (.51)	84.0	84.8	86.3
Total aggression	1.44 (.37)	1.43 (.29)	1.47 (.47)	84.9	82.6	86.3

Note. Score range is 1-4, where 1 indicated no involvement in dating aggression.

Reports were similarly high for both female and male participants, and with respect to both perpetration and victimization. Within the complete group (i.e., collapsing across gender), a very large percentage of participants reported at least one instance of victimization or perpetration of emotional/verbal aggression. Physical aggression was, again, reported relatively less. Reports of at least one instance of sexual aggression perpetration and victimization were also relatively high. However, it is important to note that responses to two sets of items on this subscale were likely responsible for the seemingly high rates of sexual aggression. One pair of items inquired about touching or being touched sexually when he or she did not want this, and up to 25% of the dating group endorsed this experience happening at least once for both perpetration and victimization. Another pair of items asked about kissing a partner or being kissed when he or she did not want to. Almost 30% of the dating group reported that this had happened at least once for both perpetration and victimization.

Although many students in the dating group reported being involved in dating aggression at least once, participants' scores on the aggression subscales were converted to z scores in order to evaluate the proportion of the sample reporting high levels of aggression experience. Only 5.9% of the overall group reported being involved in high levels of dating aggression in the previous 12 months (defined by total aggression scores above one standard deviation from the mean). Five percent of the group reported high levels of aggression use and 5.9% reported high levels of receiving aggression. Within the subscales, proportions of participants reporting high levels of aggression involvement ranged from 2.5% on the verbal/emotional perpetration subscale to 6.7% on the physical perpetration, sexual victimization, and relational victimization subscales.

Bivariate correlations within the total dating group revealed that the overall level of dating aggression (DA) involvement (i.e., victimization and perpetration combined) was significantly related to overall attitudes about dating aggression and to attitudes about male dating aggression. That is, higher levels of involvement in dating aggression were related to more accepting attitudes about DA in general and for male DA in particular. Total level of involvement in dating aggression was not significantly correlated with attitudes towards female dating aggression. A similar pattern of association was found when looking specifically at victimization and perpetration scales; levels of victimization and perpetration were significantly related to overall attitudes about dating aggression and attitudes about male DA, but not attitudes about female DA. Please see Table 6 for a complete list of bivariate correlations.

However, this pattern of results changed when data were separated by participant gender. When looking at data from male daters only, bivariate correlations revealed no significant correlations between dating aggression involvement (either victimization or perpetration) and attitudes towards both female and male dating aggression. On the other hand, bivariate correlations with female daters' data showed a significant relation between overall dating aggression involvement and attitudes towards dating aggression in general, as well as attitudes towards female and male aggression specifically such that higher levels of involvement in dating aggression were related to more accepting attitudes towards such aggression. Please refer to Table 7 for bivariate correlations by gender.

Table 6

Bivariate Correlations between Dating Aggression (DA) and Attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitudes toward female DA	--					
2. Attitudes toward male DA	.54**	--				
3. Overall attitudes toward DA	.85**	.90**	--			
4. Total DA perpetration	-.17	-.34**	-.29**	--		
5. Total DA victimization	-.12	-.28**	-.24**	.85**	--	
6. Total DA involvement	-.15	-.34**	-.28**	.96**	.97**	--

** $p < .01$.

Table 7

Correlations between Dating Aggression (DA) and Attitudes by Participant Gender

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitudes toward female DA	--	.66**	.89**	-.47**	-.39**	-.45**
2. Attitudes toward male DA	.35**	--	.92**	-.42**	-.28**	-.37**
3. Overall attitudes toward DA	.78**	.86**	--	-.47**	-.35**	-.43**
4. Total DA perpetration	.17	-.28	-.12	--	.89**	.95**
5. Total DA victimization	.18	-.26	-.10	.89**	--	.95**
6. Total DA involvement	.18	-.28	-.11	.97**	.98**	--

Note. Correlations for women are presented above the diagonal and correlations for men are below the diagonal. DA = dating aggression.

** $p < .01$.

Traditional gender role beliefs. Response choices on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) were on a 6-point scale, forcing respondents to select somewhat more or less sexist attitudes on each item. Overall, participants' average responses were slightly above the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .53$). Thus, participants reported somewhat sexist attitudes, which may be assumed to correspond to slightly more traditional gender role beliefs. Similarly, participants reported sexist attitudes to some extent on both the hostile ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .66$) and benevolent ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .54$) subscales.

Female participants reported somewhat sexist attitudes overall ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .52$) and on the hostile ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .65$) and benevolent ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .55$) subscales. That is, women's responses fell, on average, on the side of the scale midpoint reflecting sexist beliefs. In the same way, male participants also reported somewhat sexist attitudes on the total measure ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .52$) and hostile ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .64$) and benevolent ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .52$) subscales. Men held significantly more sexist attitudes than women overall, $t(170) = -2.49$, $p = .01$. Men also held significantly more sexist attitudes in the hostile domain than did women, $t(170) = -.73$, $p < .001$, whereas there was no significant difference between men and women on attitudes in the benevolent domain.

Bivariate correlations revealed several significant relations between sexist attitudes and attitudes towards dating aggression (Table 8). Hostile and benevolent sexism scales were significantly related to overall attitudes about male and female dating aggression, such that more sexist attitudes were correlated with more acceptance of dating aggression. On further examination of results, only correlations with male and

female physical and female psychological aggression were statistically significant. As well, in contrast to other DA types, hostile and benevolent sexism were positively correlated with attitudes toward female sexual aggression. That is, more sexist attitudes were related to less acceptance of female sexual aggression, whereas sexist attitudes were related to more acceptance of all other types of DA.

Relationship power. Participants who indicated they had begun dating rated their impressions of three types of power in their relationships: status, humiliation, and decision-making power. With respect to status power, the majority of male and female participants indicated that there was a balance of power in their romantic relationships (i.e., modal power difference response = 0). That is, most students who completed the survey felt they held equal status with their partners. Please refer to Table 9 for a complete list of descriptive statistics related to power subscales.

With respect to the humiliation aspect of relationship power, participants, on average, reported relatively low levels of humiliation, with most participants reporting that there was no humiliation between partners. Humiliation ratings were similar among male and female participants. As well, both female and male participants reported relatively equal decision-making power in their relationships.

Social desirability. The mean social desirability score for the present sample was 18.49 ($SD = 2.83$), suggesting that participants tended to not respond in ways reflecting either very low or very high social desirability. However, a portion of the sample (28.7%) did appear to respond in a socially desirable manner and had scores above one standard deviation from the mean.

Table 8

Bivariate Correlations between Sexist Beliefs and Attitudes toward Dating Aggression

	Attitudes toward female perpetration				Attitudes toward male perpetration			
	Psyc	Phys	Sexual	Total	Psyc	Phys	Sexual	Total
Hostile sexism	-0.29**	-0.30**	0.10	-0.29**	-0.21**	-0.37**	-0.34**	-0.39**
Benevolent sexism	-0.31**	-0.32**	0.10	-0.31**	-0.20**	-0.33**	-0.22**	-0.33**

Note. Psyc = psychological aggression; Phys = physical aggression; Sexual = sexual aggression.

** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Power Subscales

Type of power	Women Mean (SD)	Men Mean (SD)	Overall sample Mean (SD)
Humiliation	10.60 (4.98)	11.30 (5.32)	10.88 (5.10)
Decision-making	15.55 (2.75)	14.72 (2.01)	15.22 (2.52)
Status	3.86 (0.83)	4.21 (0.91)	4.00 (0.88)
Status difference score	-0.14 (0.83)	0.22 (0.92)	0.00 (0.88)

Bivariate correlations were calculated between social desirability scores and all other variables to determine whether responses to survey items may have been influenced by socially desirable responding (see Tables 10 and 11). Social desirability was not significantly related to sexism or attitudes towards dating aggression. However, higher levels of social desirability were significantly related to reporting less humiliation from a partner (i.e., having more power in the relationship). As well, higher levels of social desirability were significantly related to reporting less emotional perpetration and victimization. Lower levels of total perpetration and total dating aggression involvement (i.e., total CADRI score) also were significantly related to more socially desirable responding.

Hypothesis One: Attitudes about Dating Aggression

To obtain information about participants' understandings of and attitudes towards dating aggression, I first conducted a series of descriptive statistics (i.e., means, modes, standard deviations, frequency counts) for men, women, and the total sample. Overall, consistent with hypothesis 1a, participants reported relatively unaccepting attitudes towards dating aggression. Please refer to Table 12 for a complete list of descriptive statistics.

I then conducted four analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to investigate whether attitudes about dating aggression differed according to gender of the participant, gender of the perpetrator, and participants' previous dating experience. One 2 (participant gender) x 2 (perpetrator gender) x 2 (daters vs. non-daters) factorial mixed ANOVA tested dating aggression attitudes in the full study sample. One 2 (participant gender) x 2 (perpetrator gender) x 3 (aggression type) mixed factorial ANOVA examined differences

Table 10

Correlations among Attitudes and Social Desirability

Attitude type	Social desirability	
	Male perpetrated	Female perpetrated
Psychological	-.08	.04
Physical	.08	.08
Sexual	-.01	.05
Total	.00	.09
Overall attitudes	.05	

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 11

Correlations among Remaining Variables and Social Desirability

	Social desirability
Sexism	
Hostile	-.14
Benevolent	-.07
Power	
Status	.12
Decision making	.02
Humiliation	-.22*
Dating aggression	
Emotional perpetration	-.26**
Emotional victimization	-.21*
Physical perpetration	-.14
Physical victimization	-.04
Sexual perpetration	-.11
Sexual victimization	-.09
Total perpetration	-.22*
Total victimization	-.14
Total dating aggression	-.19*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes towards Male-Perpetrated and Female-Perpetrated**Dating Aggression as Reported by Women, Men, and the Total Sample*

Dating aggression type	Mean (SD)		
	Women	Men	Total sample
Male physical	40.1 (4.7)	37.7 (4.6)	39.8 (4.1)
Female physical	43.7 (3.9)	41.1 (4.3)	42.6 (4.2)
Male psychological	43.6 (4.3)	41.8 (3.7)	42.9 (4.1)
Female psychological	42.8 (5.5)	41.8 (4.6)	42.4 (5.)
Male sexual	41.7 (3.6)	39.1 (3.9)	40.6 (4.0)
Female sexual	27.1 (4.3)	28.9 (3.8)	27.8 (4.2)
Male overall attitudes	125.5 (9.7)	118.7 (9.7)	122.7 (10.2)
Female overall attitudes	113.7 (8.4)	111.9 (7.9)	112.9 (8.2)

in attitudes toward different types of aggression for the whole sample. One 2 (perpetrator gender) x 3 (aggression type) repeated measures ANOVA examined differences in attitudes towards subtypes of dating aggression for female participants (e.g., were participants less accepting of physical or sexual aggression compared to psychological aggression?). A final 2 (perpetrator gender) x 3 (aggression type) repeated measures ANOVA examined differences in attitudes towards subtypes of dating aggression for male participants. Planned contrasts and post hoc *t* tests used Bonferroni corrections to help reduce the Type I error risk caused by running multiple analyses.

Although reported attitudes for all groups fell toward the disapproving end of the attitude scale, ANOVA results revealed there were differences in participants' relative amount of disapproval as a function of both participant and perpetrator gender (Table 13). Consistent with hypothesis 1b, women reported significantly less accepting attitudes towards partner aggression than men. In line with hypothesis 1c, participants reported significantly more accepting attitudes towards female perpetrated versus male perpetrated aggression. As well, there was a significant interaction between participant and perpetrator gender. Specifically, perpetrator gender had a greater effect on attitudes for male participants compared to female participants. That is, the discrepancy in relative acceptance of male-to-female versus female-to-male aggression was significantly larger for men than women in the study.

There were also several differences between attitudes towards individual types of dating aggression (Table 14). Results confirmed a significant main effect of participant gender, such that women were significantly less accepting of aggression than men. As a result, I conducted separate ANOVAs for men and women.

For women in the study, there was a significant main effect of perpetrator gender, such that aggression used by men was rated to be significantly less acceptable than aggression used by women (Table 15). In partial support of hypothesis 1d, there also was a significant main effect of aggression type on attitude ratings and contrasts that revealed that women were significantly more accepting of emotional/psychological aggression and physical aggression than sexual aggression. There was a significant interaction between perpetrator gender and aggression type such that perpetrator gender had different effects on women's attitudes depending on what type of aggression was assessed. That is, in partial support of hypothesis 1c, women in the study were more accepting of female perpetrated versus male perpetrated aggression, but only when the aggression was sexual, $t(100) = -24.82, p < .001$. In contrast to hypothesis 1c, when asked to consider physical aggression, women reported significantly more accepting attitudes towards male perpetrated than female perpetrated aggression, $t(100) = 8.26, p < .001$. There was no significant difference between women's acceptance of male versus female psychological aggression, $t(100) = -1.53, p = .13$. Thus, results were consistent with hypothesis 1c (i.e., participants report more acceptance of female than male perpetrated aggression) only with respect to sexual aggression; results relating to psychological and physical aggression did not support hypothesis 1c.

Similarly, for men in the study, perpetrator gender had a main effect on attitudes, where, consistent with hypothesis 1c, men were significantly more accepting of aggression perpetrated by women than by men (Table 16). As well, there was a significant main effect of aggression type and, consistent with hypothesis 1d, contrasts indicated that men were significantly more accepting of emotional/psychological and

physical aggression than sexual aggression. There was a significant interaction between perpetrator gender and aggression type. Similar to women in the study, in partial support of hypothesis 1c, men reported significantly greater acceptance of female versus male perpetrated aggression when the aggression was sexual in nature, $t(70) = 7.02, p < .001$, but significantly *less* acceptance of female versus male perpetration when the aggression was physical, $t(70) = -13.52, p < .001$. There was no significant difference in attitudes towards male and female emotional/psychological aggression, $t(70) = .09, p = .92$.

Hypothesis Two: Predicting Attitudes from Dating Aggression Experiences and Traditional Gender Role Beliefs

I conducted a total of seven multiple regression analyses (MRA) to determine whether participants' attitudes towards dating aggression were predicted by their own experiences with dating aggression and traditional gender role beliefs (i.e., sexist attitudes). Only participants who reported previous dating experience were included in these analyses. Social desirability was included in the original aggression models but was not significantly correlated with attitudes and did not make a significant contribution to prediction. The regressions were rerun without social desirability and its elimination had no noticeable effect on regression coefficients. Therefore, results from the models excluding social desirability are presented here.

I conducted one preliminary regression to test the above model with respect to attitudes towards dating aggression generally (i.e., not separating out attitudes towards male versus female perpetrated aggression). Results revealed that, although the model only accounted for a moderate amount of variance in attitudes, the overall fit of the model was significant (Table 17). Consistent with hypotheses 2a and 2b, previous dating

Table 13

Differences in Attitudes by Participant Gender, Perpetrator Gender, and Dating History

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Participant gender	14.23*	1,168	0.000	0.087
Perpetrator gender	167.48*	1,168	0.000	0.499
Dating history	0.11	1,168	0.737	0.001
Participant gender x Perpetrator gender	13.65*	1,168	0.000	0.075

Note. Dating history is categorical with two levels: participants who have begun dating and those who have not yet begun dating.

* $p < .05$.

Table 14

Differences in Attitudes toward Aggression Types

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Participant gender	12.47*	1,170	0.001	0.068
Perpetrator gender	188.97*	1,170	0.000	0.526
Aggression type	398.90*	2,340	0.000	0.701
Participant gender x Perpetrator gender	13.82*	1,170	0.000	0.075
Participant gender x Aggression type	5.51*	2,340	0.000	0.031
Participant gender x Perpetrator gender x Aggression type	8.82*	2,340	0.000	0.049

* $p < .05$.

Table 15

Differences in Women's Attitudes by Perpetrator Gender and Aggression Type

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Perpetrator gender	242.41*	1,100	0.000	0.708
Aggression type	269.48*	2,200	0.000	0.729
PSYC vs. PHYS	12.64*	1,100	0.001	0.112
PHYS vs. SEX	313.41	1,100	0.000	0.758
Perpetrator gender x Aggression type	296.16*	1.69, 169.1	0.000	0.748

Note. Mauchly's test indicated that the interaction between perpetrator gender and aggression type violated the assumption of sphericity, $\chi^2(2) = 19.97, p < .001$. Therefore, degrees of freedom for this interaction are reported using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction. PSYC = psychological aggression; PHYS = physical aggression; SEX = sexual aggression.

* $p < .05$.

Table 16

Differences in Men's Attitudes by Perpetrator Gender and Aggression Type

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Perpetrator gender	31.96*	1,70	0.000	0.313
Aggression type	157.0*	2,140	0.000	0.692
PSYC vs. PHYS	34.64*	1,70	0.000	0.331
PHYS vs. SEX	115.61*	1,70	0.000	0.623
Perpetrator gender x Aggression type	142.54*	1.65, 115.52	0.000	0.671

Note. Mauchly's test indicated that the interaction between perpetrator gender and aggression type violated the assumption of sphericity, $\chi^2(2) = 19.97, p < .001$. Therefore, degrees of freedom for this interaction are reported using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

* $p < .05$.

aggression experience and sexist beliefs were significant predictors of attitudes, such that higher levels of past dating aggression and more sexist beliefs predicted more acceptance of dating aggression. Participant gender did not make a significant contribution to prediction. Although results from this overall regression analysis were consistent with hypothesis 1a (i.e., that previous dating aggression experience significantly predicted more acceptance of dating aggression), results from additional regression analyses qualified this finding and indicated that prediction of attitudes differs depending on the gender of the perpetrator.

Attitudes toward female aggression. A regression model predicting attitudes toward female aggression was tested with participants' gender entered first followed by dating aggression scores and sexism scores in a second block. Results revealed that the prediction model was significant, although it accounted for only 13% of the variance in attitudes (Table 18). Consistent with hypothesis 2b, sexist beliefs (i.e., traditional gender role beliefs) significantly predicted attitudes towards female aggression. Contrary to hypothesis 2a, neither participant gender nor past involvement in dating aggression significantly predicted attitudes. Inspection of structure coefficients suggested that, consistent with regression results, sexist beliefs were very highly correlated with predicted attitudes ($r = -.97, p < .001$). Even though past dating aggression was also significantly correlated with predicted attitudes ($r = -.39, p < .001$), it is possible that it was left without enough unique variance to contribute significantly to prediction due to the extremely high correlation of attitudes with sexist beliefs, which had more predictive weight in the overall model. As participant gender did not make a significant

contribution to the prediction model, I did not conduct additional regression analyses for men and women separately.

Attitudes towards male aggression. Results from the MRA testing attitudes towards male dating aggression revealed that the overall model significantly predicted attitudes and accounted for approximately one third of the variance in attitudes (Table 19). Consistent with hypotheses 2a and 2b, all variables significantly predicted attitudes towards male dating violence. Specifically, sexist beliefs contributed most to prediction, such that more sexist beliefs predicted more acceptance of male dating aggression. As well, past dating aggression experience made a significant contribution to the model where more previous experience with aggression predicted more accepting attitudes. Unlike in analysis of attitudes towards female aggression, being male significantly predicted more acceptance of dating aggression. Inspection of structure coefficients revealed that, consistent with regression results, all variables were significantly correlated with the predicted outcome and were assumed to be strong indicators of dating aggression attitudes. In addition to gender ($r = -.44$) and previous dating aggression experience ($r = -.56$), sexist attitudes were particularly strongly correlated with predicted attitudes ($r = -.84$).

Due to the significant predictive value of participant gender, I conducted separate regression analyses for male and female participants regarding attitudes towards male dating aggression (Table 20). Results from the MRA with female participants showed that the model significantly predicted attitudes. Consistent with hypothesis 2, more previous involvement in dating aggression and more sexist beliefs significantly predicted more accepting attitudes towards male aggression. Regression results with male

Table 17

Predictors of Overall Attitudes toward Dating Aggression

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	-0.130	-1.63	0.106	0.01
DA history	-0.198*	-2.47	0.015	0.04
Sexism	-0.430*	-5.35	0.000	0.18

Note. $R^2 = .286$, $F(3,115) = 15.329$, $p < .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

Table 18

Prediction of Attitudes toward Female-to-Male Aggression

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	-0.016	-0.178	0.859	0.00
DA history	-0.090	-1.020	0.310	0.01
Sexism	-0.343*	-3.875	0.000	0.11

Note. $R^2 = .137$, $F(3,115) = 6.096$, $p = .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

Table 19

Prediction of Attitudes toward Male-to-Female Aggression

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	-0.190*	-2.45	0.016	0.03
DA history	-0.240*	-3.08	0.003	0.05
Sexism	-0.412*	-5.26	0.000	0.16

Note. $R^2 = .320$, $F(3,115) = 18.06$, $p < .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

Table 20

Prediction of Men's and Women's Attitudes toward Male-to-Female Aggression

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Women				
DA history	-0.269*	-2.40	0.019	0.06
Sexism	-0.300*	-2.68	0.009	0.08
Men				
DA history	-0.280*	-2.39	0.021	0.07
Sexism	-0.576*	-4.90	0.000	0.33

Note. For women: $R^2 = .215$, $F(2,70) = 9.61$, $p < .001$. For men: $R^2 = .407$, $F(2,43) = 14.77$, $p < .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

participants also showed that the model significantly predicted attitudes towards male dating aggression. Consistent with hypotheses 2a and 2b, higher levels of previous dating aggression involvement and more sexist attitudes significantly predicted more acceptance of male dating aggression.

Hostile vs. benevolent sexism as predictors. Although no specific hypotheses were made regarding the effect of sexism subtypes on attitudes, I conducted additional regression analyses including hostile and benevolent sexism as separate predictors of attitudes towards male and female aggression, respectively. With respect to female perpetrated aggression, the overall prediction model was significant (Table 21). Consistent with results discussed above, neither participant gender nor past involvement in dating aggression were significant predictors of attitudes. Only benevolent sexism made a significant contribution to the model and predicted more acceptance of female dating aggression. An examination of structure coefficients revealed that although hostile sexism was strongly correlated with predicted attitudes, it was also significantly correlated with benevolent sexism ($r = .56, p < .01$), perhaps leaving it without enough unique variance to be a significant predictor.

With respect to male perpetrated aggression, the regression model was significant and explained approximately one third of variance in attitudes (Table 22). Unlike attitudes regarding female aggression, all variables in the model significantly predicted attitudes. Specifically, being male and reporting high levels of previous involvement in dating aggression predicted more acceptance of male aggression. As well, both hostile and benevolent sexism predicted more acceptance of male aggression. Looking at

Table 21

Prediction of Attitudes toward Female-to-Male Aggression by Sexism Subtypes

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	-0.027	-0.31	0.756	0.00
DA history	-0.100	-1.14	0.257	0.01
Hostile sexism	-0.076	-0.67	0.503	0.00
Benevolent sexism	-0.305*	-2.76	0.007	0.05

Note. $R^2 = .150$, $F(4,114) = 5.02$, $p = .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

Table 22

Prediction of Attitudes toward Male-to-Female Aggression by Sexism Subtypes

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	-0.192*	-2.45	0.016	0.03
DA history	-0.242*	-3.07	0.003	0.05
Hostile sexism	-0.225*	-2.22	0.028	0.02
Benevolent sexism	-0.233*	-2.35	0.020	0.03

Note. $R^2 = .321$, $F(4,114) = 13.45$, $p < .001$. DA = dating aggression.

* $p < .05$.

structure coefficients, again both hostile and benevolent sexism were strongly correlated with predicted attitudes ($r = -.81, p < .01$ and $r = -.66, p < .01$, respectively).

Hypothesis Three: Investigating Johnson's Intimate Partner Violence Typology

To examine a connection between relationship power and dating aggression, I examined bivariate correlations between relationship power and dating aggression and several significant relations were found (Table 23). Consistent with hypothesis 3, humiliation was significantly related to all types of dating aggression involvement, including both perpetration and victimization, such that higher levels of humiliation from a partner were related to higher levels of dating aggression involvement. As well, there was a significant negative correlation between decision making power and emotional victimization, such that the less decision making power participants had, the more they reported experiencing emotional aggression from a partner. Lastly, status power was significantly related to relational aggression victimization, such that the lower participants' statuses were in relation to a partner, the more they reported experiencing relational aggression.

In addition, I conducted three multiple regression analyses to investigate whether reported power in relationships predicted the level of involvement in dating aggression. An initial regression model included participant gender and power to predict overall involvement in dating aggression, followed by separate analyses to predict dating aggression perpetration and victimization separately. Only participants who reported having begun dating were included in these analyses. Social desirability was initially entered into the regression models as a covariate to control for potential response bias. However, it was not significantly correlated with predictors and did not significantly

Table 23

Correlations between Relationship Power and Dating Aggression

	Humiliation power	Decision-making power	Status power
Threatening			
Perpetration	.37**	.04	.09
Victimization	.47**	-.14	.15
Physical			
Perpetration	.47**	.01	-.02
Victimization	.40**	-.08	.03
Emotional			
Perpetration	.29**	.07	.04
Victimization	.44**	-.20*	.12
Sexual			
Perpetration	.29**	.12	-.04
Victimization	.37**	.01	-.02
Relational			
Perpetration	.43**	.08	.06
Victimization	.40**	-.02	.30**
Total			
Perpetration	.44**	.08	.04
Victimization	.52**	-.13	.15

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

contribute to the prediction model. Regressions were run again without social desirability and statistics did not change. Thus, results from the model excluding social desirability are presented here.

Consistent with hypothesis 3, results from the multiple regression with male and female participants combined indicated that the combination of participant gender, humiliation power, decision-making power, and status power significantly predicted overall involvement in dating aggression (Table 24). Humiliation power was the only significant predictor in the model, such that having less humiliation power than a partner predicted higher levels of dating aggression involvement. Inspection of structure coefficients revealed that humiliation power had an extremely high correlation with predicted dating aggression ($r = .96, p < .001$), indicating a large direct effect on dating aggression involvement.

I conducted two additional regression analyses to examine dating aggression perpetration and victimization separately (Table 25). As humiliation power was the only significant predictor of total dating aggression involvement described above, status power and decision-making power were excluded from these additional analyses. With respect to predicting aggression perpetration, results indicated that, although it did not account for a large amount of total variance in perpetration, the overall fit of the regression model was significant. Again, participant gender was not a significant predictor but more intense humiliation (i.e., less relationship power) significantly predicted more perpetration of partner aggression. A similar pattern of results was seen for victimization. The overall prediction model was significant and more humiliation from a partner (i.e., less power) significantly predicted more victimization. Although a similar

pattern of results emerged for perpetration and victimization, inspection of beta weights suggested that humiliation power was somewhat more predictive of victimization than perpetration.

An overall summary of quantitative findings as they relate to the hypotheses in the present study is included in Table 26.

Table 24

Predicting Dating Aggression from Participant Gender and Relationship Power

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
Participant gender	0.019	0.24	0.814	0.00
Humiliation power	-0.528*	-6.37	0.000	0.25
Decision-making power	0.115	1.38	0.172	0.01
Status power	0.100	1.23	0.222	0.01

Note. $R^2 = .272$, $F(4,114) = 10.62$, $p = .001$.

* $p < .05$.

Table 25

Predicting Dating Aggression Perpetration and Victimization from Participant Gender and Humiliation

Predictor	β	t	p	sr^2
	Perpetration			
Participant gender	-0.025	-0.29	0.770	0.00
Humiliation power	-0.439	-5.24	0.000	0.19
	Victimization			
Participant gender	0.063	0.80	0.425	0.00
Humiliation power	-0.516	-6.51	0.000	0.26

Note. For perpetration: $R^2 = .192$, $F(2,116) = 13.74$, $p = .001$. For victimization: $R^2 = .524$, $F(2,116) = 21.95$, $p < .001$.

* $p < .05$.

Table 26

Summary of Results by Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Supported/Not supported	Main findings
1a. Participants will report negative attitudes towards DA overall.	Supported	Men and women reported unaccepting attitudes towards DA.
1b. Men will report more accepting attitudes towards DA than women.	Supported	Men reported more accepting attitudes towards DA than women.
1c. Participants will report less acceptance of male-perpetrated than female-perpetrated aggression.	Supported	Men and women reported more acceptance of female- vs. male-perpetrated aggression. Women held similar views towards DA regardless of perpetrator gender, whereas men reported significantly more acceptance of female than male aggression.
1d. Participants will be less accepting of physical and sexual aggression than verbal/emotional aggression.	Partially supported	Participants were more accepting of verbal/emotional and physical than sexual aggression. However, participants reported greater acceptance of physical vs. sexual aggression only when the perpetrator is a man. Participants were more accepting of sexual than physical aggression when perpetrated by a woman.
2a. Participants with higher levels of DA involvement will report more accepting attitudes towards DA.	Partially supported	Men and women with higher levels of past DA had more accepting attitudes towards male DA only. DA history did not predict acceptance of female DA.

2b. Participants with more traditional gender role beliefs will report more accepting attitudes towards DA.	Supported	Men and women with more sexist attitudes reported more accepting attitudes towards DA than participants with less sexist attitudes.
2c. Participants with higher levels of DA involvement will report more accepting attitudes towards both male- and female-perpetrated aggression.	Partially supported	Men and women with higher levels of past DA had more accepting attitudes towards male DA only. DA history did not predict acceptance of female DA.
2d. Participants with more traditional gender role beliefs will report more accepting attitudes towards both male- and female-perpetrated aggression.	Supported	Men and women with more sexist attitudes reported more acceptance of both male- and female-perpetrated DA.
3. Lower levels of relationship power will be associated with higher levels of DA involvement.	Partially supported	More intense humiliation from a partner predicted more DA victimization and perpetration. Levels of status and decision-making power were not significantly related to DA involvement.

Note. DA = dating aggression.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Author's Position Statement

When I began to develop this study, I approached planning, data collection, and analysis in the spirit of exploration. One of my primary aims was to let the data speak for themselves, particularly with respect to gender symmetry and definitions of partner aggression. I purposefully did not employ a particular theoretical lens, and tried to remain open-minded with respect to the value of different theoretical perspectives. Initially, I did not align more with a feminist or family violence perspective. Indeed, I was drawn to Johnson's typology of partner aggression specifically because it had the potential to incorporate both feminist and family violence perspectives. As a result, I began qualitative data analysis being mindful of my subjective role in the analysis and interpretation and had a desire to remain as impartial as possible.

However, I found as the process of data analysis continued, and I read and re-read statements from participants about the relation between gender and dating aggression, I became more aligned with feminist perspectives on partner aggression. In particular, statements (almost exclusively from female participants) implying that women "let [aggression] happen" or that being a victim of partner aggression reflects badly on a woman, solidified my belief that partner aggression is, indeed, a gendered phenomenon. I have come to believe that partner aggression is a societal level issue that should not be attributed to the characteristics of specific men, women, and families. As well, my belief that partner aggression is a gendered issue is not, and should not be equated with the belief that men are bad and women are good. Indeed, I acknowledge that women do

aggress against their male partners and that all partner aggression, regardless of the sex of the perpetrator, is unacceptable and should not occur. The process of completing this study strengthened my belief that viewing partner aggression as a gendered issue linked with patriarchy, and acknowledging that women use violence against men are not mutually exclusive. Thus, ultimately, the conclusions I made regarding the present data may have been coloured by the view that partner aggression is a gendered issue and that any and all partner aggression is unacceptable.

Data Analysis

Guided by the Notice-Collect-Think framework laid out by Friese (2012), I explored the data first at a descriptive, then at a conceptual level. I read through the transcripts two times each in order to develop a general understanding of the database. I chose to read through the three female group transcripts, in chronological order, followed by the three male groups, also in chronological order. One of the a priori comparisons in which I was interested was between male and female groups. Thus, reviewing the gender groups separately (rather than alternating between male and female groups when exploring and coding) allowed me to become immersed in the discussion of one gender at a time. This resulted in an appreciation of not only the similarities, but also the differences and nuances within each gender. During this initial exploration phase, I began to comment on pieces of data and make memos about my reactions and impressions, attaching illustrative quotations to each memo.

First stage coding. Following this exploration of the data, I used an open coding approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to identify, label, and categorize phenomena found in the transcript text. In addition to codes that emerged from this descriptive analysis, I

used two a priori codes, power and control, in order to address my research question regarding the applicability of Johnson's (1995) partner violence typology in youth samples. Ultimately, these two codes were merged into a single power/control category code during a later stage of analysis. A first saturation point was reached after five transcripts. That is, the sixth transcript was coded entirely from the list of existing codes. The transcripts were reviewed again to gather additional quotations and ensure that data were completely coded. I continued to create research memos throughout this descriptive coding phase.

Following the recommendations of Friese (2012), structure was added to the collection of codes through merging some codes and subcategorizing others, in order to move the codes from being merely descriptive to being more conceptual or methodological codes. For codes associated with many (i.e., greater than 10-15) quotations, subcategories were created to reflect major aspects within each main category code. To generate these subcategories, I reviewed all quotations associated with a specific code, listing common concepts or themes among the quotations. This list was inspected again, themes were grouped based on conceptual similarity, and groups were assigned an appropriate label, resulting in a final collection of subcategories reflecting different facets of the main category code. Two codes, culture and disapproval, were not parsed into subcategories due to homogeneity in quotation content. Lastly, the code list was reviewed again and examined for overlap or duplication of concepts. Codes reflecting the same idea were merged, and others reflecting different aspects of the same concept were grouped under a main category heading.

Second stage coding. I re-read all transcripts, adding more quotations, comments, and memos. At this stage, it was necessary to create a few new subcategory codes for pieces of data that did not fit well into existing codes. I also created codes to organize the responses to each of the key questions in the interview guide so that these answers would be more easily queried across focus groups during subsequent stages of analysis.

Moving to conceptual-level analysis, I created code families to group and interrelate data according to concept or theme and to prepare for more in-depth querying of the data. For example, a code family was created for each main category code and its associated subcategories. I also created ‘super families’ for two main concepts: type of dating aggression (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, etc.) and terms used to label dating aggression (i.e., aggression, abuse, violence, etc.). To begin the process of representation and interpretation of data, research memos were created in which I documented the steps in my data analysis, gathered supporting quotations, and crafted a response to research questions based on emergent themes. The coded data were evaluated and queried using analysis tools in Atlas.ti to answer the research questions. As well, important themes, patterns, and other findings not related to research questions were recorded in memos and linked with supporting quotations. Finally, I visually explored the data through the creation of data networks that mapped out the relationships and links between codes, code families, and themes.

Data Validation

The ontological and epistemological stance of quantitative methods results in research that regards the world as an object to be measured. Thus, when using

quantitative methods, validity and reliability of data, results, and interpretations are evaluated and measured objectively by a researcher in a systematic way (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In contrast, qualitative methods are typically aligned with a philosophical stance in which the social world being studied is a construct of the researcher. In this view, the researcher cannot be meaningfully separated from the research to act objectively, and thus, validity must be evaluated in a very different way than in quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark).

There are numerous types and discussions of qualitative validity in the literature. Broadly, assessing for qualitative validity involves checking whether data and interpretations accurately represent the phenomena they are intended to explain or describe (Hammersley, 1992). Lincoln and Guba (1985) coined the term “trustworthiness” to represent this concept of accuracy or authenticity. Trustworthiness includes four main constructs by which qualitative research may be evaluated: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. Similar to internal validity in quantitative methods, credibility refers to the extent to which findings are congruent with reality and accurately describe the phenomena under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several provisions, as outlined by Shenton (2004), were made to increase confidence in the credibility of the present findings. Focus groups interviews were chosen as the data collection method based on their well-established use in the qualitative field as well as their previous use in investigations of youth dating and aggression (e.g., Price et al., 2000). Member checks were also used to bolster credibility. Specifically, at the conclusion of each focus group,

the interviewer summarized the discussion aloud and participants were invited to comment on the accuracy and completeness of the summary.

Transferability. As findings in qualitative research are specific to the small group of environments or individuals being studied, it may be impossible to apply the same conclusions to different and larger groups. Instead, the responsibility of qualitative researchers is to present information about a study's context and procedure in enough detail that other researchers are able to evaluate for themselves whether the study's conclusions can transfer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, I endeavored to provide thick, rich descriptions of the present study's context, participants, methods, and procedure to enhance potential transfer of the findings.

Dependability. Akin to reliability in quantitative methods, dependability refers to the extent to which findings are consistent across time and across researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Again, given the specificity of findings to the particular group under qualitative study, it may not be possible for findings to be repeated. However, as with transferability, providing the reader with enough detail about a study's procedure will help ensure other researchers are able to recreate the study, if not necessarily the specific results (Shenton, 2004). I aimed to provide a detailed account of the study design, measures, and procedures to help in this regard. As well, a peer debriefer was used to build confidence in the dependability of findings. A peer who was familiar with and engaged in qualitative research consulted with me weekly throughout the data analysis process regarding my ongoing analysis and interpretation of the data. We randomly selected at least two sections of coded transcript from each of the focus groups for review. The peer debriefer did not re-code these sections herself; rather, she provided a

critique of how I had coded the sections and she initiated discussion about quotations that she would have interpreted or coded differently. As a result of her critique, additional codes and analytic memos were added throughout all transcripts where relevant, not only in the specific sections that she reviewed. For example, if the peer debriefer believed a particular phrase used by a participant reflected the theme of power/control but it did not originally receive this code from me, I then attached the power/control code to this phrase in the section under review as well as any other time it was used in the transcript in the same context.

Confirmability. Perhaps most similar to the concept of objectivity in quantitative methods, confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are the result of the opinions and experiences of the group(s) studied rather than a product of the researcher's characteristics and biases (Shenton, 2004). The openness and transparency of a researcher with respect to their predispositions and decision-making rationales are considered key to establishing the confirmability of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To this end, I have tried to provide reasons for adopting certain design and analytic methods including explanations of any personal beliefs that underpinned these decisions. As well, I have included discussion of the weaknesses in the study design and findings in the discussion section below. Confidence in the confirmability of the present study also was helped by keeping a researcher's journal, sometimes called a reflexive journal. Throughout the research process, I recorded my thoughts, impressions, rationale for decisions, observations, and interpretations. The notes created by my research assistant following the male focus groups were added into this journal. I consulted the journal

regularly during data analysis in order to evaluate the research process as well as monitor how my impressions and interpretations were developing.

Findings

Research question one: How do emerging adults define dating aggression?

Given the broad scope of this question and the number of important themes that emerged, this main question was divided into several subcategories including type of behaviours, parties involved, terminology, acceptability, consent, aggression correlates, and outcomes.

Types of behaviours. Overall, the youth in this study discussed dating aggression as a broad concept that included a variety of types of behaviours. It was acknowledged in all focus groups that physical, verbal/emotional, and sexual behaviours constitute dating aggression. Specifically, physical aggression was defined consistently across groups as including “hands on” behaviours such as hitting, punching, grabbing forcefully, and pushing. Inflicting harm on one’s partner or having the intent to cause harm were mentioned often as hallmarks of physical aggression. One young man’s response to a question about what constitutes physical dating aggression provides a good example of this link made between harm and physical aggression,

“Yeah, I think it’s just hitting. I think hitting is basically physical abuse and that’s about it. I think it depends on the situation, like if you just hit someone as a...as a fun thing, I don’t think it’s physical abuse. But if it’s intended to actually hurt the person, really and seriously, then it’s definitely physical abuse.”

- Male participant, age 19

Physical aggression seemed to be one of the easiest to identify, label, and describe for participants; they responded quickly to questions about physical aggression and appeared to need very little time to enumerate behaviours that would fall into this aggression category. As well, one partner hitting another was often part of examples given by participants in the course of general discussion, such as in the following statement,

“You see people every day, boyfriends hitting their girlfriends getting on the bus, you know? And the girl’s like, ‘oh, why did you do that?’ blah blah blah.”

- Female participant, age 20

With respect to sexual aggression, discussion seemed to include more references to and discussion of sexual abuse from adults towards children and single instances of rape from a stranger than sexual aggression in a dating context. However, there were several mentions of the sexual objectification of women as a type of sexual aggression. For example, objectifying women, making sexualized comments about women’s bodies, or “grabbing someone’s butt” while socializing at a bar or nightclub were considered by some to be a form of sexual aggression. This view is illustrated by the following excerpt from one female focus group discussion,

F1 (age 19): “I don’t think you necessarily have to do sexual activities either, you can just objectify them in other ways, as well. Like, just make them feel kind of belittled sexually...I see it a lot downtown. I would be out with the girls, and the next thing you know, they’re more treated as an animal rather than a human and kind of not have feelings. Or they can be treated like a toy and played around with like, ‘Oh, here’s a drink, oh now

she's not really thinking anymore so let's take advantage of her, 'you know?'

F2 (age 20): "Yeah. Even just grabbing a girl's butt or..."

F1: "Yeah, or even just staring, treating her like she's not a person. So that can also be like sexual abuse."

F3 (age 19): "It's like a game now..."

Discussions about emotional/psychological aggression revealed a wide variety of behaviours that I did not anticipate being viewed as dating aggression. Compared to physical and sexual aggression, which were consistently defined across groups as including a relatively small, specific collection of behaviours, emotional aggression appeared to include a wide variety of situations and behaviours. All groups mentioned verbal behaviours, such as yelling, name-calling, and insulting a partner, as being emotional aggression. For example, one participant provided an example of emotional aggression and seemed to emphasize the idea that causing psychological harm to a partner is a hallmark of emotional aggression above and beyond simply using foul language,

"I think emotional, obviously, would require words and verbal things, but more attacking, you know? It's gonna hurt the person feelings, whereas verbal is just saying rude words."

- Female participant, age 18

Another participant echoed the idea that harm to a partner is at the core of emotional aggression,

“I think sometimes it might not be, like, bad words that a person use. It might be a certain way of communication that you know is gonna hurt the other person. It doesn't have to be any bad words or anything at all, right? Could be a different way of talking to them that make them feel like you don't love them anymore. That could also be, like, emotional.”

Female participant, age 19

This young woman also points to another facet or type of emotional aggression. She spoke about the style of communication to manipulate a person's feelings as being a way of using emotional aggression against a romantic partner. That is, speaking with a partner in a certain way to make him or her feel, for example, unloved would be considered emotional aggression.

In addition to more commonly discussed examples of emotional aggression like yelling and verbal attacks, participants identified a variety of relationship transgressions as being included under the umbrella of emotional aggression. For example, cheating on a partner was considered by many to be a form of emotional abuse. The discussion of one group of female participants highlighted the seriousness of cheating in their peer group,

F1 (age 20): “I think cheating on someone could be a sort of abuse because especially if it's a long term relationship and you cheated on that person and it's like, 'what do you do?'. Almost like that person wasn't even, couldn't even be loyal to you after all these years.”

F2 (age 19): "I would actually probably prefer milder forms of some abuse than cheating. Just 'cause cheating kind of gets you right where it hurts."

F3 (age 19): "Yeah, same thing. Cheating might be worse...betrayal hurts a lot more than other things."

F4 (age 18): "Because after, you don't even know how to be with that person, you can't really trust them."

Although the idea that a young woman would prefer to experience "abuse" from a partner than be cheated on is an upsetting one, this exchange does illustrate the women's strong feelings about the harm caused by cheating, meriting its inclusion in the emotional aggression category. Other behaviours considered as emotional aggression included spreading rumors about a partner and even dating a person only for the sake of being in a relationship (i.e., not because of genuine romantic feelings towards that person). For example, this young man seemed to equate both cheating and spreading rumors with emotional aggression,

"I don't know that I've seen any physical abuse but I've known a lot of emotional or psychological abuse that each person has done to each other, especially with cheating. Like, the person will start spreading rumors about their own girlfriend or boyfriend or whatever... I don't know, something's not right in my opinion. Something's not right because I would never, I would never spread rumors or, you know, talk about my girlfriend to everybody else like that."

- Male participant, age 19

In addition to physical, sexual, and emotional behaviours, there also was frequent mention of another facet of dating aggression: nonconsensual assertions of power or dominance over a partner. Specifically, participants named manipulation, pressuring, belittling, threatening, and scaring a partner as constituting partner aggression. Some participants spoke about power assertions as a layer or component of other aggressive behaviours (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual), whereas other participants spoke about power and dominance as a separate, distinct type of DA unto itself. For example, one participant mentioned a link between power and control and dating aggression,

“Could work verbally, physically, emotionally, mentally obviously, can do pretty much whatever they possibly want to you to break you down, to kinda to dominate.”

- Male participant, age 20

In this statement, the young man seemed to say that power and dominance are the intended final product of partner aggression and that the means to get there may be any type of behaviour. That is, power and control are part of all types of partner aggression (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, etc.) because they are the underlying motivation for the aggression. Another male participant seemed to speak about dominance/power as if it was a distinct type of partner aggression,

Interviewer: “So if I was to say the word ‘dating aggression’ what type of things happen in your mind if I said that?”

M1 (age 20): “Probably one of the couple just dominates the other one, like in decision making or otherwise.”

By making partner domination his response, this young man seemed to be communicating that exerting power and control over a partner is, in and of itself, partner aggression, which need not necessarily co-occur with physical, sexual, emotional, or other behaviours.

Given that three types of dating aggression (i.e., physical, sexual, and emotional) were singled out for discussion by the researcher, participants spoke about their understandings of each type individually. However, participants also discussed the relations between these three main types of dating aggression. Across all groups, participants regularly mentioned that the three types are often linked, such that they often occur at the same time and, indeed, may even lead to each other. One young woman (age 18) mentioned this relation,

“I feel they happen, they’re not separ- well, it depends. From physical it could lead to emotional, could lead to physical, or physical could lead to emotional then sexual, you know?”

Although this participant did not go on to discuss the details or mechanisms by which one type may lead to others, her statement serves to illustrate a general understanding communicated by the groups that types of dating aggression are not necessarily distinct. On the other hand, another young woman (age 19) appeared to want to make clear that, though related, the main aggression types do not automatically lead to each other in every instance,

“I think they’re definitely related, for sure. But I wouldn’t say just because you are emotionally abusive you’re going to rape your girlfriend.”

That's a big stretch. But definitely it's a big, like, web of...I don't know...they're all related somehow."

Again, this participant seems to struggle to articulate how exactly the aggression types are related but she clearly communicated an understanding that a relation does exist between them. Thus, overall, participants seemed to believe that separate aggression types do exist but they often overlap. This idea was summarized well by the statement of one young woman (age 20),

"So everything's intertwined but then there's sometimes that this...I've been in a relationship that I've been, we've been verbally abusive to each other but we never got physical. I think it can be split up into categories but sometimes it does affect one another."

Notably, participants across all groups made a link between emotional aggression, specifically, and other types of partner aggression. Several participants discussed that emotional aggression, or at least emotional harm, seemed to be a component of physical, sexual, and other types of aggression. The following statement summarized this link and also made explicit a potential reason for the co-occurrence of emotional aggression with other types,

"Although I do believe obviously they're separate entities, or I think that there's an obvious connection between them. I mean, you know, you can harm someone physically and that's just physically. Their body's broken per se, but, you know, obviously they're gonna feel very emotionally distraught over that because somebody they trust or somebody they love just hit them or is hitting them or causing physical harm. So I definitely

think everything's all interconnected and related. So physical abuse is definitely a step, you know, leading to emotional abuse but I think that most of the time when you physically abuse someone, you're probably gonna be doing emotional abuse as well."

- Male participant, age 19

Parties involved. First, it is important to report that participants in this study acknowledged that dating aggression exists in their cohort. Although this finding is not surprising, as youth dating aggression is well documented (e.g., DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Keenan-Miller et al., 2007; Schnurr & Loman, 2008), it is worth mentioning that the experiences of the men and women in the present sample seemed to echo what has been found in other groups.

Overall, participants acknowledged that it is possible for partner aggression to occur from man to woman as well as from woman to man and that it can be bi-directional. However, it seemed that there were some nuances to this belief based on participant gender and type of aggression. Men and women in the study seemed to hold a similar belief that emotional aggression and assertions of power and control over a partner occur in both directions (i.e., man to woman and woman to man). For example, some participants directly stated that emotional aggression could be male-to-female or female-to-male, as in this statement,

"For emotional, I feel like it doesn't have to be like most in terms that guys...people will think if it's in a relationship, they'll think it's the guy doing the abuse and not the girl. There could be other ways."

- Female participant, age 19

Other participants seemed to implicitly communicate through their use of language in discussions, a belief that aggression could be bidirectional. For example, one young man (age 19) said,

“I go back to maybe an abusive relationship where a man or woman are harming each other.”

In this statement, he was discussing another facet of dating aggression, but the fact that he specifically mentions that a man or woman could be using the aggression illustrates that bidirectionality is possible.

Despite agreement regarding bidirectionality in emotional aggression, men and women in the study seemed to differ in their beliefs about the parties involved in other types of dating aggression. Through their use of language in discussions, female participants seemed to convey a belief that, generally, partner aggression occurs in both directions. For example, their definitions and statements about hypothetical situations typically used nongendered language or used both ‘boyfriend’ and ‘girlfriend.’ The following example illustrated this nongendered used of language,

“I think aggressive is more like verbal in my definition. So, you’re always screaming at the person, you scare them into doing something.”

- Female participant, age 18

In contrast, however, when the women spoke about specific examples of partner aggression, they almost exclusively described aggression that was used by a man towards a woman. This seemed to be the case for all types of aggression. Similarly, when the women spoke about more severe aggression, abuse, and harm incurred by a partner, they

spoke only about men aggressing against women. Indeed, one group of women wondered what abuse against men would look like,

“I’m kinda curious at how we’re kinda talking about how we as females have been abused, but I’m trying to think of what would be abusive to guys?”

- Female participant, age 19

The exception to this pattern of describing aggression from men towards women was one comment made by a female participant (age 19) who expressed anger related to women slapping their partners,

“I think girls slapping their boyfriends all the time. That really makes me mad when I see that. You shouldn’t slap people for nothing, for looking at a girl.”

This comment speaks to a double-standard that often exists in Western societies where women are often depicted slapping their male partners. Such responses seem to be perceived as acceptable and as a spontaneous emotional reaction rather than partner aggression. If a similar behaviour had occurred from a man to a woman, it almost certainly would be deemed unacceptable and harmful, and might result in the man being labeled a ‘woman abuser’ or ‘violent.’ In her statement, the participant seems to be not only acknowledging that women use physical aggression against men, but also that all physical aggression is unacceptable regardless of the gender of the aggressor.

Male participants tended to almost exclusively speak about aggression as being from a man towards a woman. This belief was evident in the examples of aggression the men described as well as in their use of language (i.e., pronouns, partner labels). The

exception to this finding was when male participants mentioned how women control and manipulate partners in order to get what they want. Men in all focus groups discussed several examples of aggression from women to men in the form of control and manipulation. For example, one young man (age 18) described how a woman might use such aggression against her partner,

“...who dehumanize them in the same way. Women who are too controlling of their partner, who like to, what’s that word? Take away their manhood...demasculate...emasculate, yeah. So in both ways there’s some kind of emotional abuse because one person is taken control of the lives of the other person.”

In his statement, this young man highlights perhaps a unique form of aggression against men comprised of undermining traditional gender norms of men as strong, masculine, and in charge. Interestingly, one female participant (age 19) even seemed to speculate about an explanation for the specific use of power and control against men by women,

“I feel like also females may not feel as strong as males so they obviously don’t resort to physical abuse, but more like belittling their partner.”

Several men (and women) in the study used the term, ‘whipped’ to describe this power dynamic between partners. That is, a man was considered ‘whipped’ if the power differential in the relationship was in favour of the female partner, who controlled the free time and behaviour of the male partner. One male participant (age 19) used this term and seemed to equate it with emotional aggression towards a partner,

“My one friend is dating a guy and we always say she’s whipping him. I consider...I’m thinking now, ‘oh, is she abusing him kind of like emotionally?’”

Thus, overall, it seemed that male and female participants were in agreement that emotional aggression as well as assertions of power and control could be bidirectional and used by either partner. As well, male and female participants were similar in their tendencies to speak about aggression, particularly physical, sexual, and severe aggression, as occurring from a man towards a woman.

Terminology. When asked directly to describe what specific dating aggression terms meant (e.g., aggression, abuse, violence), all participants were able to provide definitions and examples. That is, participants did seem to have definitions in their minds for what might constitute dating aggression, abuse, and violence. However, in general throughout the discussions, only certain terms were used by participants. In particular, the term abuse, and to a lesser extent aggression, were commonly used when participants were engaged in discussion. Although all groups gave definitions for dating violence, this was not a term used spontaneously by participants in discussions. Illustrating this in another, more quantitative way, the ‘abuse’ code was used far more often (41 times) than either the ‘aggression’ (25 times) or ‘violence’ (19 times) codes. Although these three main terms were initially provided and queried by the interviewer, there did not seem to be any additional terms used by participants to label dating aggression. With the exception of ‘being whipped,’ described above, there was no unique, colloquial, or cohort-specific vernacular used in addition to aggression, abuse, and violence.

Although there was frequent overlap and ambiguous boundaries between the three main terms (i.e., aggression, abuse, and violence), as will be discussed in more detail below, these terms also seemed to describe phenomena that differed to a certain extent. Specifically, abuse was often used when discussing aggressive behaviours that were ongoing or occurred more than once. As well, use of the term abuse seemed to denote an intimate relationship context for the aggression, such as between family members or romantic partners (in contrast to a one-time act of aggression between strangers). One female participant (age 18) summed up this nuanced meaning in the following way,

“And violence too, there can be workplace violence, violence is, it could be violent to someone on the street. Like, abuse sounds a little bit more personal, like I don’t think you would say, “I abused someone on the street,” you know what I mean? I see a relationship as abuse or even a family member, you know the person.”

Other salient aspects of the ‘abuse’ term for these participants were the harm caused to recipients as well as the greater severity of behaviours; using the word abuse seemed to convey that the behaviour was relatively severe and/or caused harm to the people involved.

With respect to the term aggression, there were several mentions of a link to behaviour that arose from strong, uncontrolled emotions. For example, several participants used the term aggression to describe individuals who were so angry that they hit or yelled at their partners. For example, one young woman said that the word anger is what came to mind when she heard the term dating aggression. A male participant (age 19) mentioned the following when asked about what constitutes dating aggression,

“To me it sounds like more just pertains to people who’ve been dating but they’re just fighting with each other and just ‘cause they don’t seem to realize yet that they’re meant for each other or they’re not meant for each other, you know?”

Thus, for this young man, the term dating aggression seemed to be associated with relatively benign conflict and fighting.

There were some differences among participants with respect to the types of behaviours considered to be under the aggression umbrella. For example, some believed that aggression included only physical behaviours, whereas others believed that aggression might also include verbal attacks, emotional harm, and sexual acts. Overall, aggression seemed to be used more frequently to label physical and sexual behaviours than verbal or emotional attacks. When the word aggression was used to describe verbal/emotional aggression, it was specifically when the behaviour was deemed ‘passive-aggressive.’ As well, participants seemed to feel that the term aggression applied to behaviours that were less severe, harmful, or problematic than behaviours labeled violent or abusive. One participant described the relative severity of behaviours labeled as aggression versus abuse in the following statement,

“I feel like that’s the baby version of abuse, you know what I mean? Like, aggression is a little more...not accepted, but it’s a little...it sounds less severe.”

- Female participant, age 19

The term violence was used much less frequently than either abuse or aggression and seemed to be applied almost exclusively to physical and/or sexual behaviours.

Specifically, violence tended to be used to label specific instances of behaviours, either as a single occurrence or within a broader pattern of aggression or abuse to a partner. One female participant (age 18) seemed to describe the idea that violence refers to instances of behaviours that could combine to make a pattern of abuse in a dating relationship,

“I think violence is this step into abuse ‘cause abuse is more effective emotionally, physically. Obviously where violence is, you know that you’re in the presence of someone who’s violent and then abuse is pretty much just not getting away from it and experiencing the effects of it.”

Despite these nuanced differences in the applications of the labels aggression, abuse, and violence, there was one commonality among the terms; all three terms were considered to be and used as broad, inclusive, sometimes overlapping labels. Indeed, during coding, subcategory codes needed to be created for each of the three main terms to identify instances where their breadth was discussed or illustrated. As mentioned above, there was some disagreement among participants (both within and between groups) regarding what types of behaviours comprised aggression, abuse, and violence. This heterogeneity in definitions seemed to speak to the breadth of these terms that such a variety of behaviours, and combinations of behaviours, could be included in each of them. During data analysis, there were many instances where the aggression, abuse, and violence codes were applied in combination to a single quotation, illustrating the close link between these terms. As well, on several occasions, participants used one term to define another, further illustrating the breadth of the terms and their potential overlap.

Moreover, on several occasions, participants explicitly mentioned that abuse, aggression, and violence are broad, overlapping, and often ambiguous terms. For example, one female participant (age 18) described the ambiguity of the term ‘abused,’

“It has different meanings. So I could say, ‘oh I was abused’ but you might think it’s verbally or physically, it might be sexually or, you know, some other thing.”

Another young woman (age 19) made the following statement about the breadth of these terms, which was followed by enthusiastic nods of agreement from the other members of her group,

“I think aggression is really broad. Violence is more, you’d think of more physical and then abuse is a little bit more physical and emotional. It’s kind of, it’s also broad, but not as broad as aggression.”

Overall, some participants reported that there was no difference between the terms and they could be used interchangeably. Others, in contrast, seemed to feel that there were differences between the terms, particularly with respect to what they convey about the severity, duration, and consequences of behaviours. Specifically, these participants mentioned that aggression was understood as being less severe and harmful than violence. Further, participants seemed to feel that abuse reflected a pattern of aggression and violence over time. For example, when asked about whether there is a difference between violence and abuse and aggression, one participant responded by highlighting the different durations implied by the terms,

“Abuse is like a more consistent thing, like it happens a bunch of times.”

- Male participant, age 19

Taken together, these findings suggested that dating aggression terms were generally understood in a similar way (i.e., there seemed to be no confusion whatsoever about what partner abuse/aggression/violence meant overall), but due to their breadth, there may have been differences in the particular labels given to a situation by any specific individual.

Acceptability. Participants' feelings about the acceptability of aggressive behaviours in a dating relationship were illustrated by both their direct responses to questioning (i.e., 'under what circumstances would it be ok to use these behaviours with a partner?'), as well as by statements they made during ongoing discussion. Overall, there seemed to be gender differences in how the issue of acceptability was discussed by participants. The women were more 'black and white' in their condemnation of dating aggression. When asked directly when it would be okay to use behaviours with a partner, they consistently agreed that it was never acceptable to do so. Indeed, there was a resounding chorus of "never" responses to that question during female focus groups.

On the other hand, the men tended to frame their responses in terms of where to "draw the line," implying that dating aggression is construed on a continuum of behaviours where only behaviours that exceed a threshold or occurred under a particular set of circumstances were unacceptable. One young man (age 18) described harm caused to a partner as a benchmark for 'where to draw the line' on this theoretical continuum,

"Yeah, I guess light shove is, it's harmless. But, I mean, when it actually gets to the point where the individual can be hurt, then you're pushing it."

Another young man (age 19) mentioned that public versus private behaviour may determine what is acceptable or not,

“This line is, like, privacy. Like, you do whatever within the relationship. When there’s someone, you’re around the people, there’s a behaviour difference and that you should behave differently.”

Several male participants described ‘drawing the line’ when a partner is uncomfortable,

M1 (age 19): “And where I feel the line we can draw is, we have to understand comfort levels of the other person in the relationship

M2 (age 20): “Yeah, definitely, if they’re uncomfortable or you’re hurting them then that’s definitely crossing a line because nobody want to be made so that they’re hurt or uncomfortable.”

However, there were several men who responded using more concrete terms to condemn any aggression used between partners. This response from one male participant (age 19), which followed another man’s disapproval of partner aggression, illustrates a more ‘black and white’ view,

“I definitely agree with you, you know, there’s definitely something that are no matter what the case, probably unacceptable. Cheating, for sure, specifically doing things to harm the other person on purpose.”

Importantly, it must be noted that these gender differences in responses may be due, in large part, to differences in questioning by the two interviewers. In female groups, participants were asked questions exactly as they appeared in the interview guide (i.e., “When is it ok to use these behaviours with a partner?”), prompting quick, unequivocal condemnation of partner aggression from the young women. In contrast, the interviewer for male focus groups strayed from the interview guide wording and posed questions using phrases like “where do you draw the line?” As well, he asked serial

questions where the phrase, “when is it ok?” was directly followed by “where do you draw the line” statements. As a result, it is possible that the male participants were primed to craft their responses in specific ways. That is, they responded by talking about ‘where to draw the line’ just as the interviewer asked, perhaps making it seem that their disapproval of partner aggression was less ‘black and white’ than that of the female participants.

Participants’ discussions outside of responses to direct questions also illustrated their views on what is acceptable. For the women, as in their direct responses, they spoke about specific behaviours, and indeed the overall concept of dating aggression, as being unacceptable. Female participants would often share a story or example followed by an editorial comment to convey that they did not condone the aggressive behaviour. The statement of one female participant (age 18) provides a clear example of such editorial comments expressing disapproval of aggression,

“An abusive relationship, where someone’s hitting someone out. That’s a bad relationship.”

Several of the women seemed to use a public versus private analogy to help make the decision about whether a behaviour is acceptable or not. That is, if you would not do something to a partner in public (i.e., because it is socially or legally unacceptable), then it is also inappropriate to do it in private. One young woman’s comments illustrate the use of this analogy,

“I know of see it as more in a public way...If you can’t do that in front of people where it’s gonna embarrass me, it’s gonna hurt me, it’s gonna be obviously not accepted in society, then don’t do it. If you’re not gonna

swear at me in public and embarrass me, then why would you do it behind closed doors? So you kinda, you base it on that.”

- Female participant, age 19

In contrast to this general disapproval of partner aggression, one or two female participants seemed to express tolerance of aggression from a partner if the alternative was a partner who cheated on them. The following exchange illustrated this alternative position,

F1(age 18): “I would actually probably prefer milder forms of some abuse than cheating. Just ‘cause cheating kind of gets you right where it hurts.”

F2 (age 19): “Yeah, same thing. Cheating might be worse.”

F1: “Like, if you were dating some jerk from downtown or something that was always calling you bitch. That’s a little bit more tolerable than him cheating on you all the time. It’s just not, I dunno, you kind of let bitch slide...”

From these comments, it seemed that the women did not also categorize verbal aggression (i.e., calling her a “bitch”) as a betrayal. Again, it is upsetting that this young woman had learned somewhere that she should let certain aggressions "slide" if there are bigger, more egregious ones occurring.

Male participants were more concrete in their condemnation of aggressive behaviours in general discussion than they were after the direct questioning described above. Many men mentioned that they would never use certain behaviours with partners because it was unacceptable to do so. Several men seemed to make the point that love

and caring are incompatible with intentional harm and aggression. For example, one young man (age 19) spoke about never wanting to harm his partner,

“In my opinion, there’s no room for, there’s no reason for you to want to hurt somebody you’re in a relationship with...If you love someone, you don’t hurt them, that’s how I see it. I love my girlfriend, I am not gonna hurt her on purpose. I’m not gonna intentionally go out and say something or do something that is going to hurt her or make her feel uncomfortable.”

Another young man (age 20) echoed this belief and seemed to take it a step further by making a general statement that mistreating any person is unacceptable,

“Yeah, I think that objectifying a woman, especially if she’s in a relationship with you, or objectifying whoever else is in your relationship, you know, that’s just...you shouldn’t do that. Because first of all, you’re supposed to love, or whatever you feel, towards this person. And not only that, you shouldn’t be really objectifying anybody in my opinion ‘cause people are people, they’re not just a pawn for you to move around, you know?”

As well, many men seemed to reference a general societal standard that violence against women is wrong. Indeed, several men questioned why a person would engage in these types of aggressive behaviours with a partner at all; they repeatedly wondered why someone would deliberately hurt or control a person they love. The following statement provided an example of this rhetorical questioning by male participants,

“For me, harming each other is like, they need to go to the psychiatrist I think. Something that’s beyond the relationship and they have some

problem in mind, you know? Why would someone harm someone if they love someone?

- Male participant, age 19

This young man's comment also seems to align with a more feminist perspective on partner aggression, where aggression is not a product of the relationship or actions of the recipient, but rather, it is the responsibility of the aggressor. This perspective will be discussed in greater detail below.

Consent. The topic of consent was discussed frequently in all groups, although participants did not always use the word consent to label the concept about which they were speaking. All groups seemed to be consistent in their belief that dating aggression of all types (i.e., sexual, physical, and psychological) occurred when there was no consent for the behaviours used. In this way, consent was a key defining characteristic for what constituted dating aggression and what was acceptable. For example, one young man (age 19) used the case of sexual aggression to illustrate how lack of consent equaled partner abuse,

“Just like he said, anything that is unwanted. So as long, as soon as someone says ‘no’ and you continue, the moment you continue, that’s sexual abuse. That’s just plain and simple. When someone says ‘no’ and you keep going, it’s sexual abuse.”

Additionally, participants seemed to be clear that there are necessary criteria that must be met in order that consent is true and valid. Participants communicated repeatedly that consent must be mutual, given by both parties in the relationship. One

male participant (age 18) alluded to the fact that consent is only partial consent if both parties do not agree or are not vocal about their thoughts and feelings,

“To the point where somebody is not really, they don’t have their full consent, I mean. I mean, if they’re both equally into it, then I think it’s different. But if you’re not even, if she’s not saying anything or he’s not saying anything, you’re still pushing the bar a little bit.”

As well, participants seemed to feel that consent must be freely given by both parties; consent cannot be given under duress of any kind or while a person is not mentally capable of consenting. For example, one male participant (age 19) described the importance of mental capacity to consent and even made reference to the targeted education he had received around this issue,

“I remember doing this thing once and they were showing me when you decide to have sex with someone that is not in a conscious state of mind making a decision, right? So let’s say you get a girl totally wasted, that’s technically sexual abuse because she is not in the right state of mind to make a decision on whether she wants to go with you or not.”

Lastly, participants seemed to believe that consent must be current, active, and ongoing. That is, participants reported that if an individual previously consented to something and had since changed their mind, then they no longer consented. A few female participants acknowledged that it was possible to change one’s mind over time and that a partner was encouraged to speak up about their new feelings or withdraw consent (i.e., not “just go along with something” that has been happening previously even though they are now not okay with it). For example, one young woman (age 19) seemed to allude to the difficulty

of sharing feelings with a partner regarding something that had already been occurring for a period of time,

“You might act like you don’t care just...and then when it is enough, to say that you don’t want anymore. There is no way you can say ‘stop’ because you’re so used to it.”

Aggression correlates. Participants also discussed factors they believed were related to dating aggression, or might increase the likelihood that a person would be involved in an aggressive relationship. First, participants implied on several occasions that a person’s environment is related to dating aggression, particularly whether there was violence in the home or neighbourhood. This link between exposure to violence and being involved in dating aggression will be discussed in further detail below. Substance use and abuse were also mentioned by some as increasing the likelihood of dating aggression. Second, participants discussed that socio-economic status (SES), specifically, was associated with higher rates of dating aggression. Several participants shared personal stories of being in low SES communities and witnessing overt instances of partner aggression on a regular basis. One female participant (age 20) alluded to the link between low-SES environments with substance use and partner aggression in the following statement,

“You see people every day, boyfriends hitting their girlfriends on the bus... like in [city] everyday, teenage girls pushing their baby on the bus, you know, their boyfriend’s smoking weed or she’s smoking something right in front of the baby, you know? It all has to do with that factor. [City] is obviously known, the downtown area is known for, like, their

crackheads and all of that so it's just all of this buncha rubbish that's going on."

Third, a few participants discussed the idea that partner aggression is more prevalent in older, more established couples because they have more life stressors and responsibilities. In making this link, these participants seem to align with a family conflict view of partner aggression (Straus et al., 1980), where the behaviours are the result of family and relationship level stressors. Lastly, participants seemed to make a link between involvement in dating aggression and the self-esteem and insecurity of the partners involved. Specifically, some female participants spoke about how pre-existing self-esteem might make you more likely to get into an aggressive relationship, or stay in one,

"I think that people who have lower self-esteem might be more prone to staying in a bad relationship and might stay around more if they had physical abuse in their relationship. I feel like it could be a personal situation where you're sort of insecure and you don't wanna, you think 'oh he's the only person who would date me so I'll let him get away with it.' Some girls can be insecure like that."

- Female participant, age 19

Other participants spoke about how undermining a person's self-esteem might be part of aggression used against a partner (i.e., part of emotional or psychological aggression). A few participants also mentioned the self-esteem of the person who is using aggression against a partner. For example, one young woman (age 19) speculated that the perpetrators might be trying to control their partners because they feel negatively about themselves,

“I think it’s your self-esteem. Sometimes I think that when you feel low and when you don’t feel good about yourself, I think they take it out on the other person to try to make themselves feel better. You just don’t feel good about yourself, you kinda act out and act like you’re in control of everything and you boss her around and you’re aggressive.”

Outcomes. A theme that repeatedly emerged was the outcomes of dating aggression. It seemed that part of participants’ understanding of dating aggression was an appreciation of the negative, harmful, and problematic consequences of being involved in an aggression relationship. Participants mentioned many examples of negative aggression outcomes in discussion, including emotional pain, depression, self-harm (cutting), and physical injuries. As well, disruptions to other interpersonal relationships and academics were noted by some as negative outcomes of experiencing partner aggression. In one poignant example, a female participant (age 19) disclosed that she had just ended an abusive relationship and spoke about its impact on her well-being,

“A couple months back when I was really being attacked by my boyfriend, I went and I talked to somebody and they said that I was going under depression. So it can lead to mental illnesses and stuff like that, you don’t even realize are happening to you.”

Many participants noted another negative outcome of aggression: creating negative relationship norms for children and other people. For example, the effects of partner aggression were acknowledged to not be limited to the two individuals in the relationship; rather, the effects could be felt in future generations who are exposed to the

aggression. This will be discussed in more detail below in relation to the influence of family on beliefs about dating aggression.

Another topic that emerged in several groups was the idea of "sticking it out" in a relationship. Several participants voiced the opinion that many people today "give up on" relationships too easily in the face of conflict, relative to earlier generations in which the divorce rate was much lower. Sometimes it was unclear whether the participant was implying that a person should continue in an abusive relationship, or whether the participant was speaking about general, normative relationship conflict. However, there were one or two examples where a participant mentioned that being hit one time by a partner, for example, was not necessarily a cause to end the relationship and that you should try to work on the relationship. For example, one male participant (age 18) seemed to feel that a few instances of aggression were not reason enough to end a relationship,

“Hitting is wrong, but just for doing it for one time or you do something else or using a word which hurts them, breaking up for one situation or one or two situations, is not the right idea. In my culture it’s ok if they hit sometimes. But these days it’s like, ‘oh you hit me, you’re going to go to the police station’ and gone to go get a lawyer and get a divorce.”

For this young man, cultural norms appeared to play a role in determining what is acceptable with respect to partner aggression. The impact of culture will be discussed in further detail below.

Research question two: What is the context in which these definitions are grounded and what contextual factors shape these definitions (i.e., what

environmental qualities, forces, and/or phenomena do participants discuss as having shaped their definitions of and attitudes towards dating aggression)? Participants' discussions revealed several key contextual factors that influenced their thinking about dating aggression including, age, culture, education, family, friends, media, personal experience, religion, and instinct,. Each factor will be discussed individually followed by introduction of a final theme that emerged with respect to context: complexity and intersectionality of factors.

Age. The majority of discussions regarding age centered on generational and cohort differences rather than absolute age per se. Participants seemed to communicate that generational differences result in differing opinions about dating in general and dating aggression in particular. Specifically, many participants mentioned that previous generations were more accepting of partner aggression and that such aggression was more commonplace than it is today. For example, one male participant (age 19) expressed the view that his generation was less accepting of partner aggression than older generations,

“I think our generation sees it more as a bad thing, abuse as a bad thing, as opposed to, I dunno, other generations condone abuse. But I think we’ve seen more anti-abuse propaganda in a way. It’s not a good thing to do that, so I think most people our age...would say that abuse is the wrong thing, is not a good thing.”

In addition to making claims about the relative acceptance of partner aggression across generations, this young man alluded to a possible mechanism for the generational differences: education of the public and anti-violence campaigning. It was evident from

this and other comments that the times in which individuals were raised (i.e., the social-political climate of the community) were part of the context for one's understanding of partner aggression.

I was expecting that absolute age (as a proxy for maturity and life experience) also would be mentioned as a key part of the context that influences opinions on dating aggression. In fact, there were relatively few mentions of absolute age or maturity level as influential factors. Although it was in the context of discussing the impact of media on youth, one participant did mention that the influence of age comes from maturity because individuals mature at different paces,

"...but it's not always like that and people have different, mature at different ages. Some people are old mature at less age, you know? I find that. So it's all about the, you know, maturity that's important..."

- Female participant, age 19

Interestingly, the two or three comments in which participants mentioned age and maturity seemed to reflect the participants' belief that they themselves were grown adults with fully-formed mature opinions, no longer subject to influences. Participants seemed to imply that teenagers and children were the ones actively being shaped by their context. One male participant (age 19) seemed to express that his views were more similar to people older than him, as opposed to younger teens who perhaps were less mature,

"I think it's more so younger generations now because they're just not as mature, or because they're growing up differently. So I think in that respect it's more the younger generations that are gonna be different from

myself than the older generations. Because, you know, I'm 19. The younger generation is just teenagers."

Perhaps this young man felt that his views were more like those of grown adults than still-maturing teenagers, despite the fact that, at 19, some might still consider him to be an adolescent. It is possible that a richer picture of the influence of age/maturity on partner aggression beliefs could be gained through a cross-sectional investigation where adults of various ages take part in focus group discussions.

Culture. The concept of culture was brought up repeatedly in discussion in all focus groups. Participants represented diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and many shared personal experiences with their groups. As a result, many participants were able to comment on different beliefs and practices across cultures, thereby illustrating the influence of culture on the beliefs of a group of people. Overall, the content of the discussions, as well as the frequency with which participants mentioned culture, illustrated its importance as part of youths' context for understanding dating aggression. Participants discussed two facets of cultural influence on their views regarding dating aggression: cultural norms and acculturation to a dominant group.

Participants repeatedly mentioned that culture directly contributed to societal and family norms regarding partner aggression. Specifically, there were many references to gender hierarchies (e.g., patriarchy) that existed within cultural groups, which dictated norms for the treatment of women. For example, several participants acknowledged that within the cultural groups with which they identified, women occupied an inferior role to men in society; thus it was more acceptable to control or dominate women and to use

aggression to do so. This idea was clearly illustrated by the statement of one male participant (age 19),

“Because especially culture, location because if you grow up where in your culture it’s ok to hit women, then obviously you’re most likely going to think that it’s ok because you’ve been influenced by that a lot. But if you grow up in a culture where you’re told from the start it’s definitely not ok, you’re likely to not believe that that’s ok.”

Another young man (age 18) illustrated the link between culture and beliefs about partner aggression when he described how the views of his cultural group regarding gender roles are communicated through media and influence treatment of women,

“Over here it’s like, you know, the girl is still like a person, she gets to live her own life...but in other places...In India you see the shows, ever if you see any media or TV or anything like that, mostly you’ll see girls in the kitchen, right? She’s barely graduated high school, has probably no education and stuff. So I think that changes if you see a girl that seems independent simply because she got education...tend to be that person you can’t control that much. You can’t possibly talk down to them because they are so educated. But a girl that’s like that, you see as always having to be in the kitchen because that’s their role. Well, guys tend to be a little more controlling with them ‘cause it’s accepted.”

Interestingly, another male participant (age 20) described a kind of benevolent sexism within his cultural group, where, despite the adherence to a patriarchal social structure,

aggression towards women was unacceptable. He spoke about the gender norms in his culture with respect to partner aggression in the following way,

“In my tribe, so to speak, usually the man has, it used to be that the man could have two, three, four wives...and the man was always the head of the house. What he said goes and such. In relationships, it means that the woman submits to the man. As far as abuse went, nobody as far back as I go, nobody actually supports abuse of either partner in relationship. If a man did hit his wife, they respect their women even though...if a man did beat his wife, they would call a council meeting and the man would get punished.

Participants alluded to the idea that, for them, cultural norms exerted influence via family members from older generations who parented them according to the ideals of their culture of origin. For example, there were several stories about how parents held expectations for their children's romantic partners because “at home” or “in the old country” it was done a certain way. Thus, when participants discussed the influence of culture on their views, they often seemed to be referring to their families’ culture of origin rather than the dominant Canadian culture in which they were currently living.

However, there was also frequent mention of a second, intersecting type of influence: acculturation to the dominant Canadian culture. Participants’ comments suggested that the influence of culture on their views came from a combination of the dominant cultural views in Canadian society and being raised by parents with different cultural views. Specifically, participants spoke about the difference in respect for women and acceptability of aggression towards women in Canada versus in their families’

countries of origin. Some mentioned that although traditional views regarding patriarchy were felt in their homes, the unacceptability of violence towards women in Canada was perhaps a stronger influence on their beliefs. One female participant (age 18) described being influenced by Canadian norms as well as her parents' cultural norms, but that ultimately she and her parents held different views regarding partner aggression,

"I think me and my family, we both have different views because my parents got married back home and the relationship, everything, is different...I would compare it and see more about this [Canadian] society than back home society, but they would still try to teach me what is acceptable back in that society than this one."

On the other hand, many participants mentioned that their parents had acculturated to Canadian norms and disagreed with partner aggression. For example, one female participant (age 20) spoke about a friend's family who originally lived in Nigeria, where her friend's father reportedly hit her friend's mother regularly,

"...but now that they moved here, I think things have slightly changed 'cause obviously you can't beat your wife and get away with it with the law here."

Another young man (age 19) also described changes in the beliefs and practices of his parents after moving to Canada,

"For my parents and I, I think I guess our views it is the same. I believe it's similar but it's because they came to Canada. So, like, their views kind of changed. They had changed a little bit 'cause in my country where my parents are from, it was kind of like the man was in charge so he can

practically do anything to his wife. Kind of boss you around and, I dunno, make her do things that maybe she didn't want to do. But now that my parents are here, they disagree with that."

The young man went on to describe how, although he and his parents now share the view that partner aggression is unacceptable, if his parents had continued to live in their country of origin (Vietnam), they would likely hold very different views than the ones he developed growing up in Canada.

Therefore, taken together, discussions indicated that culture does indeed play a key part in shaping the understandings of partner aggression for young people, but it is likely a complex interplay of norms coming from parents, cultures of origin, as well as the dominant culture in which youth are living that ultimately shape views and opinions.

Education. Another influence on participants' views about dating aggression was education they received while growing up. Education is a broad term and participants described a variety of ways they had been purposefully taught that partner aggression, and specifically violence against women, was unacceptable. For example, there was mention by several people that anti-violence against women messages were a part of their elementary school curriculum. One male participant (age 19) remembered learning about partner aggression in the classroom,

"Well, when I was in grade school they showed us some videos about couple's relationships and stuff like that, harassment and abuse, violence and such...worked their way into their...I guess they served as a warning: don't do this, or get ourselves out of the situation we find ourself in."

By using the term ‘worked their way into,’ it seemed that this young man was describing the impact of this preventative education program on the students’ understanding of partner aggression.

As well, several participants spoke about the impact of on-campus initiatives to curb partner aggression and nonconsensual sex in particular. Some participants listed workshops on consent and the bystander effect as shaping their views. One young man (age 19) spoke about the pervasiveness of the anti-violence campaign at university and seemed to imply that it would be impossible for these messages not to inform personal beliefs,

“Yeah, I mean first year university, there’s always those stickers everyone gives you, ‘no means no.’ Those kind of things, when you get to university, they emphasize that because there is more cases of that happening so they try to enforce that, try to keep pushing that at you that this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong. So there’s no way, there’s no way you can say, ‘I did not know about [that] you’re not supposed to do that.’ ‘Cause it’s always there.”

Family. Participants spoke frequently about the influence of family on their own beliefs about partner aggression. Several sub-themes emerged that described different ways in which family exerted this influence over youth, including family as guardians, family as role models, family as support system, and family abuse history.

Many participants discussed the role of family as guardians and protectors. Consistent with the historical patriarchy of our society, only female participants spoke about this particular aspect of family influence. Several young women mentioned that

their parents filled a gatekeeper role for them with respect to dating in adolescence. For example, one female participant (age 19) described the protection with which her parents wanted to surround her,

“They treat me as if I’m a diamond in a museum. They wanna make sure I never get stolen or I never get hurt, I never get scratch, you know what I mean? They’re just like, ‘yeah you have to experience your own experiences and run through a few walls, but you should never ever let anybody either physically, emotionally, or mentally abuse you.’”

In this way, family members seemed to communicate, both directly and implicitly, the standards for treatment by a romantic partner (i.e., that aggression is unacceptable). One young woman (age 20) even seemed to imply that a high level of involvement by parents in the dating lives of teens might serve as a protective factor against becoming involved in an aggressive dating relationship,

“I think that if parents are more involved in your dating life and get to know the other person and help you about it, even if they might judge that person, that’s totally okay if they can actually help you think better...But I think if they just let you date whoever and they don’t even care, then that’s probably where it goes wrong for a lot of girls.”

Both male and female participants discussed that family members influenced beliefs about dating aggression via their modeling of romantic relationships and interpersonal behaviour. Participants explicitly mentioned that family members served as role models for how to act in relationships, and that these models shaped young people’s

beliefs as they grew and matured. One female participant (age 19) succinctly illustrated the influence of family in the following statement,

“I think it has to do, I mean I know with our age group not everyone still lives at home, but for up until now the majority of your life you probably did live with your parents so you base all of your opinions on your parents. All your learning experiences from your parents and then, like, obviously later in life another age group would probably have this discussion totally different.”

This young woman also raised an interesting point about the potential changes to the context of a person’s beliefs over the lifespan. That is, the influence of family on understandings of partner aggression may be particularly salient for this young adult age group given the fact that they have spent the previous 18 to 20 years of their lives closely surrounded by family.

Several participants noted that the models provided by families could be taken as an example of what is ‘normal’ and expected or more as a cautionary example of what to avoid in one’s own life. One participant summed up this dual role of family models,

“I wanna say it’s your family, but I also think it can go either way. You can see it and say ‘no’ or you can see it and fall into it.”

- Female participant, age 20

Indeed, one young woman (age 18) described wanting to have relationships that were very different from the ones she observed in her family,

“Everybody in my family, everybody, like every uncle and aunt I have, even my parents, they’ve all been divorced at some point in time in their

life. I personally feel that may, yeah your parents play a big role in it, but you might think differently because everybody in my family is divorced but I don't agree on divorce."

Regardless of whether family exemplars served as role models or cautionary tales, participants communicated repeatedly that families do influence their views on romantic relationships in general and dating aggression in particular.

Family abuse history, specifically, was discussed as another contextual factor and influence on youths' views on dating aggression. Many participants mentioned that witnessing any interpersonal abuse, not necessarily partner abuse, within the family of origin impacted a person's understanding of interpersonal relationships and normalized using aggression with a romantic partner. One statement from a female participant (age 19) seemed to illustrate this general understanding among participants,

"It depends on how the girl was raised, you know what I mean? Her dad could have been abusive to her mom, she sees 'ok if my boyfriend, my mom already took it, I might as well just take it.'"

One male participant (age 19) spoke about his belief that witnessing violence in the family of origin was linked to perpetrating aggression against a partner,

"Most people who do end up becoming serial abusers get that from seeing their mothers being beat as kids. So some of the serial rapists and murderers, they become who they are because maybe someone in their life was abused."

Although this young man presented a somewhat extreme, black and white example, his statement illustrated the general understanding among participants that a link does exist

between witnessing aggression and subsequently being involved in partner aggression oneself.

In addition to helping shape the dating aggression context for young people, family was also discussed as a key part of a person's support system. Many participants mentioned that their parents and other family members were important for emotional support. In this way, participants viewed family as a key part of how one might cope with being involved in an aggressive relationship. One participant spoke about this supportive role played by family,

“I think it has a lot to do with you, like, support system. Depends on your family, who's gonna be there for you if you do decide to stick up for yourself or go to the police if it's that severe. But if you don't have your support system, then you feel insecure and you feel like you can't do anything about it so you just stick it out because you don't wanna get even more hurt.”

- Female participant, age 18

As well, participants commented on the relative amount of impact that family had on their opinions, compared to other aspects of their life context (e.g., friends, media). In contrast to the above statements about family, some participants felt that family did not exert much influence over their views on dating aggression. Or, they noted that family had relatively less impact on their views than other contextual factors like friends and the media,

“And you're more influenced by your friends as opposed to family members.”

- *Female participant, age 20*

Several male participants mentioned that the issue of dating aggression and how to treat a partner was never discussed in their family,

Interviewer: “Any messages coming from family members or anything about it?”

M1 (age 19): “No, not so much.”

M2 (age 20): “No.”

M3 (age 19): “My parents have never really said anything.”

Indeed, male participants seemed to speak about family far less frequently than female participants. It is possible that this trend reflects an actual difference in parenting practices for boys versus girls, where partner aggression and respect are discussed more explicitly with daughters than sons. Due to the gender norms of our society, conversations about dating and feelings may, in fact, happen more freely and regularly with girls than boys. Thus, the lack of comments from male participants about the influence of family may also reflect a gender difference in the way young people are influenced by family, such that girls may learn through direct conversations and teachings from parents, whereas boys may learn more through observation of parent models.

Friends. Friends and their impact on a person’s beliefs were frequently mentioned throughout discussions. Male and female participants repeatedly noted that friends provide an important social norm that guides their own behaviour and understanding of what is right and wrong in relationships. Two female participants

discussed how friends' relationships may serve as a social barometer for what is right and wrong,

F1 (age 19): "I think sometimes maybe your other friends' relationships might affect you. It might make you realize that maybe your relationship is bad compared to everyone else or way better."

F2 (age 18): "Or even if someone's like, 'oh, you let him do that?!'"

This impact of friends on social norms was also illustrated by the following comment,

"We peers and they're telling you these stories and you see it, you're kinda like, that's when you get your best definition of it. That's when it really stays you 'cause you're like, 'Yeah, I don't want that. I would never want that.' Then you get this model of what you do want and what you don't want and you kinda go from there."

- Male participant, age 19

Indeed, friends were credited by some participants with having the deepest, strongest, and most frequent influence on their views. At least one (male) participant seemed to acknowledge that most of a young person's time is spent with friends at school and on the weekends, thus a person's social group is almost constantly shaping norms.

Interestingly, as with discussions about family role models, participants noted that the behaviour of friends could serve both as an example of what is 'normal' and expected, as well as an example of what not to do. Several participants disapproved of the aggressive behaviour that they knew was occurring in their peers' relationships. At least one young woman (age 20) seemed to express frustration that she was unable to help her friend leave an aggressive relationship,

“Yeah, it’s kind of hard but I feel that ‘cause when we tell our friend that, you know, she’s going through a relationship that’s not healthy, she doesn’t see it. So it’s hard because we feel like we should step in and tell her...it’s like if you do it on your own it might be too late, you might be more harmed or get hurt more.”

In addition to participants’ explicit statements that friends had shaped their views, the impact of peers on beliefs was also illustrated clearly by the sheer number of stories told by participants about friends. With overwhelming frequency, participants of both genders shared stories about peers’ involvement in unhealthy relationships. It seems doubtful that these young men and women would have included peer stories so frequently in discussion if they were not such a key part of their context.

Media. The influence of media on young people’s understanding of dating aggression can be seen not only through participants’ direct acknowledgement that it had impacted their views, but also through the frequency with which they included examples from the media in their discussions. Movies, television, celebrity gossip, advertisements, video games, magazines, and the internet were noted to have provided depictions of partner aggression that informed participants’ opinions. One male participant (age 19) seemed to believe strongly that media portrayals of partner aggression provided a model for how people should behave in romantic relationships,

“Media. Media is one of the main things that’s influencing relationships that we’re in. How they just have this view, you know, this is that standard that we should have, the relation should be like this. I think it’s from the

media and they just keep on doing things the way it happens in the media and so media influences a lot.”

Many participants acknowledged that the media was often the only contact people their age had with partner aggression. As a result, in the absence of any other information, media representations of partner aggression may be a powerful influence on young people’s norms for behaviour. The following statements illustrated this idea that the media may be the only depiction of partner aggression to which a person is exposed,

“Basically what the media portrays, that’s what most people know, I mean unless you’ve experienced it.”

- Female participant, age 20

“I can’t say that I’ve seen a lot of physical abuse in reality but you can see a lot of it on TV, the man beating the wife or the wife beating the man, threatening them with guns or knives or stuff like that.”

- Male participant, age 19

Similarly, one young man (age 19) agreed that the media is a strong influence on beliefs and made an interesting hypothesis that this influence may be greater for younger generations due to the number of hours they log in front of a television relative to older generations,

“Especially with little kids ‘cause they’re just learning. And if you’re being nurtured your whole life by the TV and, you know, your parents are working more now, so if you’re just watching TV of course that’s gonna play a big part in how you’re nurtured while you’re growing up...they’re

just gathering information from the TV that they think is right because they see that on the TV.”

However, some participants seemed to caution that the media should not be the only influence on a person’s beliefs. These young men and women appeared to believe that the media did not accurately portray reality, which may result in youth receiving incorrect information about relationships and aggression. For example, one young man (age 20) highlighted the stories that are fabricated or distorted by tabloid news media as one source of misinformation,

“The media, I think, has a lot of things wrong about relationships. Especially when you look, if you go to Shopper’s Drug Mart and you look at all the magazines...I just find it ridiculous but I think if anybody’s taking relationship advice from, say, some celebrity magazine. I don’t know why people would take an example from, of all things, the celebrities ‘cause there’s so much misinformation or just ridiculousness.”

Several participants also noted a differential impact of media on boys versus girls. They seemed to believe that boys may be influenced more by sports and video games, whereas girls may be more influenced by television and movies, particularly romances. To the extent that there are different messages regarding partner aggression and gender norms in these types of media (i.e., video games vs. TV/movies), there may be accompanying differences in the beliefs held by men and women.

Some participants noted that the media tended to reflect the dominant views in society, and in this way, became another vehicle for cultural views to be communicated to youth. For example, one male participant shared that television shows in India, where

he grew up, included images of women only as subordinate to men (e.g., completing domestic tasks, taking direction from her husband). Thus, there may be a mediating effect, such that a person's beliefs are influenced by the media, but ultimately it is cultural and societal norms that are the true influence. Similarly, several participants discussed that the influence of the media is not always direct and may intersect or be moderated by the influence of other contextual factors, such as parents or friends. For example, the media may portray aggression in a relationship but it is up to an individual to judge it as harmful or acceptable depending on their own existing beliefs. This idea is illustrated by a statement from a young man who spoke about how family moderated the influence of media,

“So I think the media will show it the way that will get the most viewers, I guess. Because you see movies where guys beat their wives or wives beat their husbands, and depending on what kind of family background you come from, you would react to it differently, I guess.”

Another young man (age 19) seemed to hold a similar view, that information from the media is processed and understood through our own existing belief system,

“I mean, I think all it still has to do with family. I mean, the media might push it as a man beating his wife, it depends on your views to see it as this is good thing or thing is a bad thing. So the might just put something on neutral and it's pretty much up to us to...”

Thus, the young people in the present study seemed to understand the influence of media in two ways; for some participants, media is an influence on beliefs about partner

aggression, and for other participants, media presents information that is consumed via pre-existing beliefs.

Personal experience. Not surprisingly, participants frequently shared stories from their own lives throughout the discussions. The influence of personal experience on understandings of dating aggression was directly stated by participants and indirectly communicated by the vast number of stories they shared. Stories fell into three main categories: experiences unrelated to partner aggression, participant exposure to another's partner aggression, and participant's own involvement in partner aggression. Overall, participants seemed to feel that having personally witnessed or experienced partner aggression changed how you understand and judge this behaviour. A person's understanding of partner aggression was considered by some to be mostly theoretical until they had personal experience, either through witnessing or being involved in partner aggression, as illustrated by this comment,

"I think it's hard 'cause not a lot of us have witnessed it or experienced it, so it's like you just kinda assume."

- Female participant, age 18

Some participants appeared to think that being involved in an aggressive relationship created the belief that it is normal and expected, which then made you more likely both to tolerate partner aggression and become involved in future aggressive relationships. One female participant (age 19) explained this view in the following way,

"Or they might actually end up getting into the same relationship as they did before because that's all they know, right? Because I think you get to that point where you kinda feel as though, 'I deserve it,' so you're kinda

like, 'Well, this is what I'm used to, this is what I know the best, I wouldn't wanna get in anything else because I still do want a relationship.'"

In contrast, other participants seemed to feel that being in an aggressive relationship may do the opposite, and help you avoid this type of relationship in the future, as you are able to see the contrast between healthy and unhealthy behaviour. Likewise, witnessing partner aggression was discussed as having two possible impacts: contributing to norms that the behaviour is acceptable or acting as a deterrent for using aggression oneself. For example, one young man (age 20) commented on the lasting negative impact of witnessing a man abuse his partner,

"I think the past experiences also shape. If you've ever seen it, if you've ever seen a guy actually hit his girlfriend or wife or stuff, it looks pretty ugly and stuff. So, you know, it kinda sticks with you and you don't forget that and you realize that you don't want to do that to somebody like that."

Religion. Religion came up in discussion less frequently than expected. Only one or two participants spoke about a link between religion and beliefs about partner aggression. For example, one young woman (age 19) mentioned that religion may actually be a protective factor against partner aggression, whereas another young woman noted how religion may be used by some to rationalize the use of aggression against a partner,

"I know some of my friends when they are kind of violent or abusive, they're like, 'Oh, well it's okay, it's okay because of my religion, what I learned or what I was told.'"

Instinct. One unexpected theme that emerged from discussions was the concept of instinct or a person's 'gut feeling' about something. Several participants discussed that their own innate sense of right and wrong helped them understand dating aggression and decide when something was harmful or unhealthy. The following statements from two young women were an example of this concept of instinct guiding beliefs,

F1 (age 19): "For me, I think it's whatever makes me uncomfortable.

Sometimes you can just tell..."

F2 (age 19): "Gut feeling's the best."

When asked how they developed this 'gut feeling,' participants seemed to respond in a circular fashion that it was 'instinct' about what makes them feel uncomfortable or what feels 'dangerous.' For example, in the following discussion among female participants, the young women try to describe the source of their 'gut feelings,'

Interviewer: "So if you have that gut feeling you guys spoke about, where do you think the gut feeling comes from?"

F1 (age 20): "It's like an instinct."

F2 (age 19): "Possibly dangerous."

F3 (age 19): "Maybe having an idea of what you expect your relationship to be like and it just goes away from that then you just aren't comfortable with it."

Overall, it seemed that the instinct and 'gut feeling' that participants described was not, in fact, part of the context that influenced their views on dating aggression, but rather was the end result of their contextual influences. That is, the terms instinct and 'gut feeling' may simply be synonyms for beliefs and opinions. Said another way, their so-called 'gut

feeling' does not shape what they think about dating aggression, it *is* what they think about dating aggression.

Complexity of context. Although participants often spoke about contextual influences as if they were distinct entities, there was evidence throughout group discussions that the context for their beliefs about partner aggression was complex and interactional. For example, many participants listed off two or more contextual factors when asked to describe what shaped their beliefs. One young woman (age 18) mentioned several influences on her beliefs, illustrating the complexity of factors that shape her understanding of partner aggression,

“I personally think, well for me I think it’s my family. How they raised me up and with their culture and everything. What they said, I kind of grew up with but I also do think it’s the media and TV and the romance.”

As well, there were several occasions when participants explicitly referred to the complexity of their life context and mentioned that many factors, together, are involved in shaping their opinions and ideas. The following collection of statements provided examples of this acknowledgement that many factor influence their beliefs,

“I would say you get it from a lot from different places...”

- Female participant, age 19

“So it also has to do with those factors, like family or friends. You can’t really pinpoint where it’s from...”

- Female participant, 18

Some participants also seemed to feel that certain elements of their context were weighted more than others and had more influence on their beliefs. For example, as

discussed above, several participants described that family members have more influence than friends or vice versa.

Overall, the discussions of these young men and women seemed to suggest that the context for their beliefs about partner aggression was complex. It was likely a dynamic environment in which various influences in a young person's life intersected, interacted, and existed in a unique hierarchy that differed from person to person and might change over time. Certainly, similarities and common beliefs among cohort members emerged. But there also seemed to be nuances and individual differences.

Research question three: To what extent do the attitudes, definitions, and themes revealed in focus group interviews reflect the themes of power and control, which are related to Johnson's partner violence typology? Do participants make a distinction between instances where a situation escalates to partner violence and situations where violence is part of an ongoing pattern of control? Focus group discussions were also analyzed to answer questions about the applicability of Johnson's (1995) partner violence typology in a young adult sample. Specifically, did themes of power and control relevant to the concept of intimate terrorism emerge? Did participants make a distinction between instances where partners become upset and the situation escalates to violence (as in situational couple violence), and violence as part of a general pattern of control (as in intimate terrorism)?

The theme of power and control was consistently interwoven throughout discussions of partner aggression. Power/control was the only code established a priori in the present study and, ultimately, it likely was unnecessary to do so given how strongly the theme emerged during analysis. There seemed to be two ways in which the concept

of power/control became present in discussions: through direct or implied mention of a link with partner aggression and through discussion of gender norms and patriarchy. Power/control as a gendered issue related to patriarchy and misogyny emerged with such frequency and depth that it merits discussion as its own theme, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Both male and female participants spoke about partner aggression as either the result of one partner trying to gain control or power over another, or the means by which they did so. For example, one male participant (age 19) seemed to sum up the idea that aggression of various types is a means by which one partner attempts to exert control over another,

“Could work verbally, physically, emotionally, mentally obviously. Can pretty much do whatever they possibly want to you to break you down, to kina to dominate, just like he said. They want control.”

Indeed, when asked what constituted partner aggression, several participants stated that attempts at power/control were the very definition of this behaviour,

“I think being pressured to doing something you don’t want to do.”

- Female participant, age 18

“I’d also think some controlling, right? Like force, when you force...”

- Male participant, age 19

Similarly, another young man (age 19) seemed to use the presence of vulnerability and a power differential between partners as a benchmark for identifying partner aggression,

“I think it’s only abuse when there’s somebody who’s vulnerable and there’s another person who’s the, the dominating factor.”

There was also some evidence for an understanding of situational couple violence among young people. Particularly in male focus groups, there was discussion of partner aggression as a single-incident phenomenon resulting from intense emotions, poor emotional control, and family abuse history. One young man (age 18) seemed to describe how, even in the context of a ‘good’ relationship, sometimes a life stressor may lead to aggression against a partner,

“Sometimes I see they’re really good in relationship, but due to some bad situations they may hit the person or abuse with a word...”

Similarly, another young man (age 19) described the possibility that conflict can escalate to aggression without a person intending to be aggressive or cause harm,

“That’s the first thing they’re say, ‘cause she made him get mad so he hit her, she made him get mad so he yelled at her and everything. But I think they don’t really wanna do it, but they just, I dunno, it comes to them.”

Statements such as these seemed aligned with the concept of partner aggression as an escalation of conflict, as in Johnson’s (1995) situational couple violence.

Support for Johnson’s (1995) typology may also be found in the terminology used by participants. Specifically, participants seemed to use different terms when referring to single incidents versus an ongoing pattern of aggression between partners. The term abuse was typically used when speaking about an ongoing pattern of aggression, whereas violence or aggression was used when discussing a specific single incident or behaviour.

There were also some gender differences in the discussion of Johnson’s (1995) two proposed partner violence types. Although female participants did discuss specific instances of aggression, they tended to speak about partner aggression as an ongoing

pattern of behaviour from a partner. In contrast, male participants acknowledged the existence of long-term partner abuse, but typically spoke about single isolated instances of aggression and why they happened in the moment. Thus, overall, participants did seem to acknowledge two facets of partner aggression: a long-term pattern of abuse and a conflict escalation to a single instance of aggression. These facets may map onto the concepts of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence proposed by Johnson and could provide preliminary support for the applicability of his typology in younger adults.

Additional themes that emerged. In addition to themes that directly related to the research questions and hypotheses, several other important themes emerged. These additional themes merit separate discussion as they help provide a deeper understanding of how dating aggression is viewed by youth.

Beliefs versus behaviours. Another interesting contextual layer emerged from discussions that may contribute to the complexity of youths' context for understanding partner aggression. Several comments were made about a potential disconnect between holding rational beliefs that aggression is wrong and actually taking action to behave accordingly in one's own relationship. Participants noted that there was a difference between, for example, thinking, 'If a partner hits me, I will end the relationship,' and actually going through with ending the relationship when the participant is in that situation. One young woman's (age 20) comments illustrated this idea that beliefs may not always equal behaviour,

"Yeah, it's easier said than done. I would say, 'oh I'm gonna slap you' but when the situation comes, I don't know if I'm gonna slap you or not, you know? I could easily say, 'Yes, that's how I would stand up for myself' but

until I'm in, actually in, those shoes, I don't know how I'm gonna react. I don't know how I'm gonna play out the action or handle it, the situation."

Another young woman (age 19) echoed these remarks about a disconnect between beliefs and behaviour,

"Yeah, no one's gonna come out and say, 'I want to be abused,' but I think there's a lot of people that would say it's wrong and go back and let it happen at home."

Participants seemed to be communicating that holding negative views about partner aggression and disapproving of this behaviour did not necessarily translate into behaviour or action. Thus, just because youth believe that dating aggression is wrong and harmful may not necessarily mean they will act in accordance with these beliefs.

Self versus other. A theme that emerged from all female groups was the idea of self versus other. Interestingly, no mention of this concept was made by any of the young men in the study. Female participants described viewing a situation differently when it was your own relationship rather than someone else's relationship. Similar to the concept of beliefs versus behaviour discussed above, many of these young women seemed to convey that the criteria for judging your own relationship were somehow different than those for judging the relationships of peers. For example, what may be considered aggressive, harmful, or problematic in the relationship of a friend, either may escape notice or be tolerated when it occurs in one's own relationship. Thus, it may be possible that identical behaviour is judged differently when it happens to yourself versus someone else. One young woman (age 18) described this idea and seemed to imply that objectivity

and distance from the relationships of other people led to differential judgments about partner aggression,

“Yeah, it’s easier to tell someone else that something isn’t okay because you’re not the one that’s going to have to, you know, suffer the consequences and maybe the relationship ending. Whereas in your own relationship, you might be like, ‘Oh well, maybe it’s not as bad as I think, maybe I’m just making it a big deal when it’s not.’”

In her comment, this young woman also speculated about the thoughts of a person experiencing partner aggression and seemed to imply that rationalization of the behaviour occurred when it is in your own relationship.

The rationalization of partner aggression was discussed by many other young women in the study. Their ideas about why a person may rationalize aggression from a partner seemed to fall into four categories. First, some participants speculated that aggression might be rationalized by deeming it as an intense emotional outburst, as discussed above in relation to comments about situational couple violence. Second, several young woman hypothesized that a person may rationalize aggression and remaining with an aggressive partner, by the benefits associated with being in the relationship. For example, in the following statement one young woman (age 19) speaks about the personal validation and social status conferred on a girl by being in a relationship, even if she is experiencing aggression,

“So a lot of girls are like, ‘Oh, because he’s this, he’s the star quarterback of the football team, he hits me, he’s popular, I don’t care as long as we’re together’ ...It’s like the image he has and they like the image, they respect

it. So because of that, they're like, 'Yes, he can defile me anytime, any day,' you know? And I feel like it's pretty pathetic."

Third, some participants acknowledged that aggression might be rationalized or tolerated because of love for the person using the aggression. That is, some young women speculated that love for one's partner might overshadow the aggression,

F1 (age 19): "It's like one day they could be like, 'Oh I love you so much,' then the next days it's like they hit you but then you're like, 'Oh, well I know that they love me."

F2 (age 19): "Today he's nice to me, tomorrow maybe, 'Oh it's just an accident, he already told me that he loves me. Someone who loves me would never do that to me intentionally so I'll just let that pass by.'"

F3 (age 20): "So tomorrow it'll be ok, so they just kinda go back on...like, they don't wanna lose the love part of the relationship and they put that higher than the physical abuse and the verbal abuse."

Lastly, several participants seemed to believe that a person may rationalize aggression in their own relationship not because their beliefs about partner aggression change, but because they lose clarity in the situation. Participants' comments seemed to describe an uncertainty that accompanied evaluation of one's own relationship, as illustrated by the following statement,

"You don't know if it's as big of a deal as you're making it out to be. Do you believe them after something small happens? Do you wait for, you know, three things to happen?"

- Female participant, age 19

Other young women also spoke about the loss of clarity or objectivity about your own relationship,

F1 (age 19): “And then when they get caught up in the relationship, it just sort of happens and you don’t even notice.”

F2 (age 20): “Yeah, it’s kind of like you’re blind, by the love, by the affection.”

F3 (age 19): “Like what happened to me, I didn’t notice it was happening until somebody actually told me and I was like, ‘Oh okay, I see what’s going on now.’”

The comments of these young women, particularly from one who shared a personal experience with abuse, seemed to point to another layer to the self versus other concept: when judging one’s own relationship, a person may rationalize and tolerate aggression that they otherwise believed to be wrong, but a person may also completely lack awareness of the aggression in the first place. These young women seemed to convey that being “blind by love” to the aggression could also result in judging your own relationship differently than the relationships of others. Thus, beliefs about dating aggression may fail to apply when individuals are in the situation themselves.

Patriarchy and misogyny. The theme of patriarchy emerged repeatedly throughout data analysis. Patriarchy emerged in different forms ranging from blatant misogyny and overt victim blaming to subtle, benevolent sexism. It was evident in the language used by participants as well as the stories they told and opinions they voiced. Perhaps most surprisingly, evidence of patriarchy and misogyny was most blatant in the female, rather than male, groups. Certainly, examples of patriarchy and sexism were

present in the male discussions, but there were gender differences in the content and frequency of sexist themes.

In perhaps their most subtle form, patriarchal beliefs and sexism emerged from statements implying that men and parents should ‘take care of’ women. Several female participants spoke about their parents being protective and putting parameters on their interactions with boys. For example, one 18-year-old woman spoke about not being allowed to date and the family expectations for her future partner,

“I’m Middle Eastern and so in our family they don’t let our kids date. So I’m not allowed to date right now even though I do have a boyfriend. But we were raised in a way that we have to find a guy that would treat us like a princess or else...not really as like in a good way.”

Another young woman (age 18) seemed to suggest that being taken care of and protected by parents was, in fact, a protective factor against becoming involved in an aggressive relationship,

“But I think if [parents] just let you date whoever and they don’t even care, then that’s probably where it goes wrong for a lot of girls.”

Whereas several female participants spoke about how protective their parents were, none of the male participants told these stories. Indeed, the male participants rarely commented at all about parental influence in their lives. This may not mean that parents have no involvement in the dating lives of sons; it simply may be that it is less socially acceptable to talk about the involvement of parents in your dating life if you are a man. If that is the case, then it again speaks to a gender double standard with respect to protecting children. That is, it may be acceptable for women to openly acknowledge the

protective role of parents because they are assumed by patriarchal society to “need” this protection, but men are viewed by society as more capable, such that they should not require protection and parameters from parents.

Overall, this seemed related to the concept of benevolent sexism, where beliefs and practices may appear to be subjectively positive, but actually are damaging to both individuals and gender equality efforts. The notion of protecting daughters may not appear to be overtly negative or discriminatory, but still conveys an underlying assumption, rooted in patriarchy, that women are inherently unable to make responsible life choices on their own.

There was also evidence of more harmful misogyny in the form of victim blaming. Surprisingly, victim blaming was observed only in female groups and not in male groups. Female participants spoke about male-to-female partner aggression as if it was somehow ‘owned’ by and the responsibility of the female partner. Discussion in female groups seemed to reflect a general resignation to the fact that aggression from men to women will happen. Comments were made by female participants that seemed predicated on an understanding that aggression from men to women is inevitable. Their discussions seemed to be focused not on the aggression and why it is happening in the first place, but rather, its impact on other people and women’s reactions to the aggression. For example, statements made by female participants often seemed to imply that a woman’s role is as a gatekeeper or guardian against inappropriate behaviour from men. For example, one young woman (age 19) spoke about the need to enter a relationship with a plan for how to react to aggression from your partner,

“It’s like, you should draw the line in your head, if he ever says a rude word to me I’ll cut the line there but if you don’t have that kind of boundary for yourself, if you never think that far ahead, you just keep letting it go then you, obviously, you’re just letting yourself be a victim of it.”

In this statement, she seemed to speak as if aggression from a partner was inevitable and that a woman was complicit in the aggression if she did not plan to ‘take a stand.’

Similarly, another young woman (age 19) described the lengths to which a woman may need to go in order to control aggression from a partner,

“It’s how much you can take and...if you don’t push yourself, warn him a couple times. If you don’t give them specific warnings, like a number of warnings, if you don’t make an effort, give them reasons to smarten up and stop what they’re doing, that’s gonna carry on, you know what I mean?”

In this way, there was almost a subtle implication that it was acceptable for men to act this way because it was the woman’s role to resist it or prevent it. As a result, women could be considered to be to blame for the aggression because they seemingly did nothing to prevent or stop it.

Furthermore, rather than showing outrage and questioning why a person would aggress against a partner at all, female participants tended to question a woman’s character and why she would be with an aggressive partner. For example, one young woman (age 19) seemed to feel that experiencing aggression from a boyfriend reflected poorly on the character of the girlfriend,

“I wouldn’t wanna see someone’s boyfriend attacking them in public, you know? It looks bad on him, it looks bad on her in my opinion.”

Similarly, another participant appeared to imply that being abused or disrespected by a boyfriend calls a girl’s intelligence into question,

“But again, a smart girl wouldn’t want someone who doesn’t respect their...like, if your father doesn’t respect your mom, you shouldn’t...a smart girl wouldn’t want that. They wouldn’t want their boyfriend to not respect them.”

- Female participant, age 20

In addition to these character judgments about women with aggressive partners, one participant implied that it was the responsibility of a woman to ‘learn something’ from her relationship abuse and that her failure to do so would lead to future relationship abuse,

“You have to learn something from that before you get into another one. Because if you didn’t learn anything from your previous one and you get into another one, you would repeat the same thing that you did and the process keeps on going and you never learn anything.”

- Female participant, age 19

Several other female participants made comments that seemed to reduce the continuation of an aggressive relationship to a simple lack of action by the woman experiencing abuse. For example, one young woman (age 19) initially disapproved of victim blaming then continued to speak in a way that seemed to place blame for an ongoing abusive relationship on the woman,

“I know the victim is never to blame, but it’s also the actions they do to prevent it. If my boyfriend kept hitting me a couple of times, if I just sat around and did nothing about it, it means I don’t wanna get out. So it’s really up to the victim who’s being abused. If you wanna get out, you get out. No one’s really forcing you to stay.”

In addition to the content of the comments above, subtle victim blaming was evident also in the language used by female participants. Although there were no explicit statements faulting the recipient of aggression (e.g., "she brought it on herself, she should not have worn that outfit"), there was consistent use of wording that seemed to attribute the aggression to the woman in some way. Many female participants frequently used the phrase, ‘let it happen’ when talking about the experience of being aggressed against by a partner, again implying that the onus was on the woman to prevent or stop the aggression. For example, the following collection of examples illustrated the frequent use of the term ‘let it happen,’

“My mom, she’s the type of person that would let herself be abused.”

- Female participant, age 18

“The same friend I keep talking about, she was sexually abused as a kid and she continues to let herself be sexually exploited.”

- Female participant, age 19

“It’s a form of abuse if you just let yourself be taken advantage of.”

- Female participant, age 19

“...girls who let their boyfriends cheat on them with other girls...”

- Female participant, age 20

By using the phrase ‘let it happen,’ these young women seemed to be saying that women had some sort of control over whether a partner uses aggression, therefore if aggression was used, it was brought about by the woman. The word choices of another participant seemed to reflect this belief that aggression was the responsibility of the woman. Specifically, she spoke about her own mother’s experience of partner aggression and then referred to it as “mom's mistake,” which seemed to imply that the aggression was attributed to the failings of the mother.

In contrast to the pervasive, subtle evidence of misogyny in the female group discussions, there were no instances in which a male participant seemed to directly or indirectly blame the recipient of the aggression (e.g., saying things like, ‘she deserved it because she made me angry,’ ‘she was wearing sexy clothing,’ etc.). They consistently spoke about aggression as if it were ‘owned’ by or the responsibility of the one using the aggression, typically the man in their examples. However, at least one young man (age 19) seemed to acknowledge that there might be complex psychological sequelae of being involved in an aggressive relationship,

“Or they might actually end up getting to the same relationship as they did before because that’s all they know, right? If you’ve been beaten in your previous two relationships then, I mean, it’s quite possible that the one after that you could be as well, right? Because I think you get to that point where you kinda feel as though, ‘I deserve it, this is what I’m used to, this is what I know best...”

In his statement, the young man seemed to acknowledge that continuing in an abusive relationships might be related to the psychological consequences of partner aggression on

a woman's self-image and self-worth rather than the inherent failings of an individual woman. If indeed this was the young man's intended meaning, this statement seemed in sharp contrast to the comments from female participants, who seemed to imply that continuing to be in an abusive relationship was a simple failing of the woman and must reflect her desire to remain in the relationship.

Despite the thread of misogyny through the discussions, there were two clear examples of an opposite perspective: that aggression is wrong and not the fault or responsibility of the (typically female) recipient. One comment seemed to express surprise that a man would think it was acceptable to use aggression against a partner,

"Who is he to hit you? It's not in his power to hit you."

- Female participant, age 19

The second comment seemed to reflect a feminist viewpoint that partner aggression is a gendered phenomenon rooted in power/control,

"Does he have respect for girls? If you notice he's calling girls bitches and this, is that who you really wanna be with?"

- Male participant, age 20

By questioning a man's respect for women, this participant seems to be acknowledging (albeit implicitly) that partner aggression is not just behaviours, but it is about gender and respect. Another male participant (age 19) very eloquently summed up how society and gender roles influence an individual's views and how that can translate into aggressive behaviour against a partner,

"I think that...my parents, every time they think about a girl they go, 'she gotta be able to cook' and stuff. So I think for them that would be, like if

you can't cook or things, the person, like, sort of loses value. Almost where, the more they lose value, the less respect you have for them. The less respect you have for them, the farther the line shifts on what you think is okay to say to them and do and stuff."

He appeared to make clear links between the value individuals hold in society, how much they are respected, and accordingly, how they are then treated by a partner.

CHAPTER V

MIXED METHODS RESULTS

Within the broad mixed methods question, mixed method findings revealed five main aspects of how dating aggression was understood by the young people in the study, which were grouped according to the following questions: (a) What constitutes dating aggression? (b) What are young people's attitudes about dating aggression? (c) How does sexism influence young people's attitudes toward dating aggression? (d) How does past dating aggression experience influence young people's attitudes? and (e) How do young people view dating aggression in relation to power and control?

What Constitutes Dating Aggression?

Reporting of dating aggression on quantitative measures was compared with reports made during focus group discussions. As discussed in the above results sections, both datasets revealed that dating aggression was indeed reported via both quantitative and qualitative measures. Codes associated with reporting of specific types of aggression (i.e., threatening, physical, emotional, sexual) were transformed into quantitative counts and merged with quantitative data, as displayed in Table 27. This joint display revealed similarities and differences in patterns of reporting that occurred in quantitative and qualitative measures with respect to types of aggression. On both questionnaires and during focus group discussions, emotional aggression seemed to be reported noticeably more than all other types of aggression. However, physical aggression was the least reported type of aggression on questionnaires but the second most discussed type of aggression during focus groups.

Table 27

*Most Frequently Reported Dating Aggression Types in Quantitative Versus Qualitative**Measures*

Frequency rank	Online survey	Focus group discussion
1	Emotional	Emotional
2	Sexual	Physical
3	Threatening	Sexual
4	Physical	Threatening

Additionally, qualitative findings regarding emotional aggression enhanced the understanding of the quantitative outcome that emotional aggression was reported by significantly more people than other types of aggression. Specifically, several focus group participants discussed the idea that emotional aggression may frequently co-occur or be a component of all other types of aggression, and thus may be reported more frequently than other types of aggression, as was seen in quantitative results.

Datasets also were merged to examine the similarities and differences in specific aggressive behaviours represented in quantitative and qualitative data (Table 28). Overall, there appeared to be more overlap than discrepancy between behaviours mentioned in the two datasets. Indeed, 15 out of 26 behaviours were cited in both quantitative and qualitative data. However, there were several (9) behaviours included in quantitative questionnaires that were not mentioned at all by focus group participants. Examples of each type of aggression (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual) were represented among these nine behaviours. There were only two behaviours mentioned during focus groups that were not included in quantitative questionnaires: sexual objectification and cheating.

Overall, mixed methods findings revealed that there were similarities in the reporting and discussion of types of dating aggression in questionnaires and focus group interviews. As well, this mixed methods analysis allowed for a comparison of how youth describe dating aggression versus how it is outlined by researchers in self-report questionnaires. Although there were some behaviours included only in quantitative or qualitative data (i.e., there was not perfect overlap), there were fewer behaviours missing from questionnaires than from focus group discussions. This seemed like the preferable

Table 28

Aggressive Behaviours Referenced in Quantitative Measures and Qualitative Discussions

Behaviour	Present in QUAN questionnaires	Present in QUAL focus group discussion
Physical		
Push/shove	✓	
Slap	✓	✓
Pull hair	✓	
Kick/hit/punch	✓	✓
Throw object	✓	
Destroy property	✓	
Sexual		
Unwanted kiss	✓	
Unwanted sex	✓	✓
Unwanted sexual touch	✓	✓
Get person drunk to reduce resistance to sexual advances	✓	✓
Objectification		✓
Emotional		
Spread rumors	✓	✓
Threatened	✓	✓
Accuse of flirting	✓	✓
Blame partner	✓	
Monitor whereabouts	✓	✓
Ridicule/belittle	✓	✓
Turned friends against	✓	
Put downs/insults	✓	✓
Hostile voice	✓	✓
Incite anger	✓	
Make jealous	✓	
Swearing	✓	✓
Yell/scream	✓	✓
Tell what to do	✓	✓
Tell how to dress	✓	
Change self to please partner	✓	
Cheat		✓

Note. QUAN = quantitative; QUAL = qualitative.

pattern (i.e., rather than having more behaviours missing from questionnaires than group discussions), as it suggested that questionnaires are doing a sufficient job inquiring about an appropriate breadth and depth of behaviours and situations to validly capture youths' experiences. Questionnaire behaviours missing from focus group discussions likely did not reflect a weakness in the questionnaire's conceptualization of dating aggression; rather, this simply may have reflected individual differences in the types of situations discussed by a given group of young people. For example, cheating was only mentioned in three out of six groups (two female, one male) and objectification was only mentioned in two female groups.

What Are Young People's Attitudes towards Dating Aggression?

Quantitative and qualitative datasets were merged to examine the extent to which findings told similar stories regarding participants' judgments of dating aggression. Congruent and incongruent data are displayed in Table 29.

General attitudes towards dating aggression. Quantitative results indicated that female participants were significantly more disapproving of aggression than male participants. Qualitative findings echoed this relation in some respects but also suggested that attitudes may be more nuanced than what quantitative results showed. In general, both datasets included clear communication from participants, both men and women, that partner aggression was unacceptable. As well, one theme from male focus groups seemed to qualify quantitative results and suggested a similarly nuanced perspective on dating aggression for men. Although the men explicitly expressed disapproval of dating aggression during discussions, there also was a pattern of responding in which the men implied that acceptance of dating aggression may exist on a continuum for them.

Table 29

Linking Acceptability of Dating Aggression As Endorsed on Quantitative Measures versus As Discussed in Qualitative Focus Groups

QUAN result from ANOVAs	QUAL findings	
	Convergent	Divergent
Women were significantly less accepting of aggression than men	<p>-Clear statements of disapproval from women:</p> <p>Female P: <i>"I don't think it's ever okay."</i> <resounding agreement from other participants></p> <p>-Statements from men implying that lower threshold behaviours may be acceptable:</p> <p>Male P: <i>"Yeah, I guess light shove is, it's harmless. But, I mean, when it actually gets to the point where the individual can be hurt, then you're pushing it."</i></p>	<p>-Statements from women implying that aggression is inevitable and a woman's responsibility to control:</p> <p>Female P: <i>"If my boyfriend kept hitting me a couple of times, if I just sat around and did nothing about it, it means I don't wanna get out. So it's really up to the victim who's being abused. If you wanna get out, you get out. No one's really forcing you to stay."</i></p>
Women were similarly disapproving of male and female perpetrated aggression	<p>-explicit statements condemning all partner aggression.</p>	<p>-Statements implying that aggression is inevitable and a woman's responsibility to control:</p> <p><i>"If you never think that far ahead, you just keep letting it go, then you, obviously, you're just letting yourself be a victim of it."</i></p> <p>-Statements expressing disapproval of female aggression:</p> <p><i>"I think girls slapping their boyfriends all the time. That really makes</i></p>

		<i>me mad when I see that. You shouldn't slap people for nothing, for looking at a girl."</i>
Men were significantly more accepting of female versus male perpetrated aggression	-no data available.	-Men often used gender neutral language when disapproving of aggression: <i>"Harming each other is like, they need to go to the psychiatrist. Why would someone harm someone if they love them?"</i>
Participants disapproved similarly of male and female perpetrated verbal/emotional aggression	-Statements disapproving of male verbal/emotional aggression: <i>Female P: "If he's willing to call you names...and disrespect you, then you definitely should not be with someone like that." Male P: "...emotional abuse for sure. I don't really think it has any place in a relationship."</i>	-Statements disapproving of controlling behaviour from man to woman and vice versa. -No data available.
Women were more accepting of male versus female perpetrated physical aggression	-Statements using gender neutral language disapproving of verbal/emotional aggression -Statements implying that aggression is inevitable and a woman's responsibility to control: <i>"If you never think that far ahead, you just keep letting it go, then you, obviously, you're just letting yourself</i>	-Statements disapproving of male physical aggression: <i>Female P: "My friends they were actually attacked by their boyfriends...we had to call the cops."</i>

	<i>be a victim of it.”</i>	
	-Statements expressing disapproval of female aggression:	-Statements disapproving of female physical aggression:
	<i>“I think girls slapping their boyfriends all the time. That really makes me mad when I see that. You shouldn’t slap people for nothing, for looking at a girl.”</i>	Female P: <i>“I think girls slapping their boyfriends all the time. That really makes me mad when I see that. You shouldn’t slap people for nothing, for looking at a girl.”</i>
Women were more accepting of female versus male perpetrated sexual aggression	-Statements disapproving of unwanted sexual contact and sexual objectification of women by men.	-Explicit statements disapproving of all partner aggression.
Men were more accepting of male versus female perpetrated physical aggression	-No data available.	-No data available.
Men were more accepting of female versus male perpetrated sexual aggression	-No data available.	-No data available.

Note. QUAN = quantitative; QUAL = qualitative; ANOVA = analysis of variance; P = participant.

Specifically, men used the term “draw the line,” implying that there were circumstances under which it was more or less acceptable to use aggression with a partner. In this way, qualitative results may provide an explanation for men’s greater acceptance of dating aggression on quantitative measures relative to women. However, it is important to note that this result should be interpreted with caution given that question wording by the male interviewer may have influenced male participants to specifically discuss their attitudes from a “draw the line” perspective.

On the other hand, themes from female focus groups regarding the inevitability of male aggression and the potential responsibility of women to prevent and regulate the aggression may suggest that a more nuanced interpretation of quantitative results is needed. Despite expressing disapproval of dating aggression, many statements made by female participants seemed to suggest that they view male aggression as inevitable, and may therefore be resigned to its existence. Although resignation to dating aggression should not be equated with acceptance of dating aggression, it is important to note that to the extent that women feel resigned to male aggression, they may be less likely to incite action against aggression, even in light of holding explicit beliefs that aggression is unacceptable.

Attitudes towards male versus female aggression. Mixed methods findings suggested that women in the study were similarly disapproving of male and female perpetrated aggression. Quantitative results showed no significant difference in women’s attitudes towards male versus female aggression and qualitative findings seemed to converge with this outcome. Specifically, this result seemed to be echoed in qualitative findings by a combination of two themes: criticism of women who used aggression

against their partners (e.g., slapping, manipulation) and explicit statements that dating aggression is never acceptable. For men in the study, quantitative results indicated that men are significantly more accepting of female than male aggression; however, qualitative findings did not necessarily converge with this result. Men in focus groups made no clear statements about their relative levels of disapproval of male and female aggression that could directly converge with this quantitative outcome. However, male participants often used gender-neutral terminology when making statements condemning dating aggression, potentially implying that they would disapprove of the behaviour if it were used by either a man or woman. Male participants seemed to disapprove of controlling behaviour in particular, with several men criticizing either a man or woman who controlled the behaviour of a partner. Thus, overall, mixed method findings indicated some differences for men in the study between attitudes reported on questionnaire versus focus groups measures, such that focus group discussions with men seemed to indicate their attitudes towards male and female aggression were far more similar than was suggested by quantitative results.

With respect to different types of aggression (i.e., physical, verbal/emotional, sexual), mixed methods results indicated some overlap and also many inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative and qualitative data converged with respect to participants' overall disapproval of all aggression types. Despite this overlap, however, themes of disapproval for all aggression types emerged strongly from qualitative data, whereas quantitative results indicated that several relative differences in acceptance of aggression types exist depending on both participant and perpetrator gender. Specifically, quantitative results showed that women in the study disapproved of

verbal/emotional aggression relatively less than either physical or sexual aggression. In general, women did not discuss their relative disapproval of different aggression types during focus groups except for one comment from a participant who would rather experience verbal aggression (i.e., name calling) from her partner than cheating. Quantitative and qualitative findings converged with respect to women's equal disapproval of male and female verbal/emotional aggression but showed different pictures of women's attitudes towards physical and sexual aggression. Women in focus groups expressed disapproval of both physical and sexual aggression regardless of perpetrator gender, whereas quantitative results indicated that women were more accepting of female but not male sexual aggression and male but not female physical aggression.

For men, quantitative and qualitative datasets overlapped and diverged with respect to men's attitudes towards different aggression types. Quantitative results indicated relatively more disapproval of sexual versus either physical or verbal/emotional aggression. This finding was echoed by the frequency of male focus group discussions of the intricacies of sexual consent. The men often made reference to the importance of establishing valid consent for sexual contact and intercourse with women but spoke relatively less about acts of verbal/emotional or physical aggression. Findings converged as well with respect to men's disapproval of both male and female verbal/emotional aggression. With respect to attitudes towards female versus male physical and sexual aggression, quantitative data showed several differences in attitudes for men but there were no available parallel findings from focus groups. That is, men did not make

statements, or subtle implications, about their relative disapproval of male versus female perpetration of physical and sexual aggression.

How Does Past Dating Aggression Experience Influence Young People's Attitudes?

Datasets seemed to converge with respect to the relationship between past experience with dating aggression and attitudes towards using aggression against a partner (see Table 30). Quantitative results indicated that previous involvement in aggressive dating relationships predicted less disapproval of dating aggression overall. Qualitative findings paralleled this relation, with themes emerging regarding how attitudes are shaped by past experiences. Many focus group participants discussed the impact of dating aggression experiences on how a person judges aggressive behaviour and may be more accepting of partner aggression in the future because it may come to be viewed as a norm. However, it is important to note that whereas qualitative data pointed to the influence of past dating aggression experience on the attitudes of young people overall, quantitative data found no statistically significant relationship between past experience and attitudes towards female perpetrated aggression. That is, only male perpetrated aggression was significantly predicted by past experience with dating aggression.

How Does Sexism Influence Young People's Attitudes toward Dating Aggression?

There were both similarities and differences between participants' sexist attitudes as assessed via questionnaires versus focus group discussion. Quantitative and qualitative findings converged with respect to providing evidence of sexist beliefs. Specifically, average scores for both men and women on the quantitative sexism measure (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) fell slightly toward the sexist side of the scale. Statements

Table 30

*Relations Between Acceptance of Dating Aggression and History of Dating Aggression**As Reported in Quantitative Questionnaires and As Discussed in Qualitative Focus**Groups*

	QUAN results from MRAs	QUAL findings
	History of dating aggression as significant predictor	
Female Perpetration	No	Female P: <i>"I think a lot of people have been used to being treated badly so sometimes 'I'll be in a bad relationship and I gonna stick it out' 'cause that's all they know."</i>
Male Perpetration	Yes ($\beta = -.24, p < .001$)	Female P: <i>"One day they could be like, 'oh I love you so much' then the next day it's like they hit you but then you're like, 'oh well, I know they love me.'"</i> Male P: <i>"I've come to all of [these opinions] through my own relationship with my girlfriend and past relationships...so it's more like trial and error."</i>

Note. QUAN = quantitative; QUAL = qualitative; MRA = multiple regression analysis; P = participant.

made during both male and female focus groups seemed to support these quantitative results and reflected slightly sexist or traditional beliefs about gender roles. For example, participants made references to the importance of parents protecting their daughters from unsuitable romantic partners and discussed that some men they know view women as property.

On the other hand, findings diverged with respect to gender differences in sexist attitudes. Quantitative results indicated that men reported beliefs that were significantly more sexist than women, whereas qualitative findings seemed to tell a different story. The nature and frequency of comments made by female focus group participants about the culpability of women in aggressive relationships was striking. Often, female participants seemed to imply that women “let abuse happen” or were somehow responsible for the aggression because they did nothing to prevent or stop it. These comments seemed to reflect potential underlying patriarchal and sexist beliefs. On the other hand, men in focus groups rarely made sexist or patriarchal comments. When they did discuss gender roles and sexism, it was typically in the form of descriptions of how women are regarded in other cultures, not necessarily the men’s own personal views. In this way, qualitative findings seemed to reflect the opposite outcome of quantitative results. It is possible, however, that this difference is an artifact of different assessment methods. That is, men may have felt more comfortable reporting their true beliefs on the anonymous quantitative questionnaire than during face-to-face group discussion where the pressure to respond in socially desirable ways (i.e., not disclosing sexist beliefs) may have been stronger.

With respect to the relation between traditional gender role beliefs and attitudes towards dating aggression, quantitative and qualitative findings told somewhat different stories. Specifically, findings regarding female perpetration of aggression were somewhat less clear than those regarding male perpetrated aggression. In both quantitative and qualitative results, it was difficult to find a clear, consistent picture of how sexist beliefs related to young people's attitudes towards female-to-male aggression. It was challenging to make sense of the one statistically significant result that benevolent sexism predicted more accepting attitudes towards female perpetrated aggression. As benevolent sexism includes traditional gender role beliefs about masculinity, gender hierarchies, and the objectification of women, it seems incongruent that these beliefs would predict *more* acceptance of women using aggression (and therefore power and control) against men. With respect to qualitative findings, use of aggression by women was discussed in focus groups far less frequently and in less depth than male perpetrated aggression, making mixed method comparisons difficult. Mention of female dating aggression in focus groups seemed limited to examples of a woman slapping her partner or seemingly controlling him in some way (i.e., a man being "whipped"). However, it could be argued that the types of female-to-male aggression discussed by participants are themselves rooted in sexist and patriarchal beliefs. Specifically, when a female partner was considered to hold power in a relationship and be in control, the male partner was mocked for "being whipped." Indeed, several participants made statements implying that "being whipped" is a form of dating aggression. That is, there seemed to be a patriarchal gender role belief operating where it was acceptable and expected that men would be the

controller in the relationship, but when the power differential was reversed it was considered worthy of mockery or even constituted dating aggression.

In contrast, quantitative and qualitative data seemed to converge with respect to attitudes regarding male perpetrated aggression (Table 31). Analysis of quantitative data showed that having more traditional gender role beliefs and more hostile sexist attitudes predicted having more accepting attitudes towards male partner aggression. Qualitative findings supported this relation, as there was acknowledgment from focus group participants that traditional and sexist attitudes about women are, indeed, related to understandings of and attitudes towards partner aggression. Several young men and women mentioned links between societal expectations for women and how women are then valued and treated by men.

How Do Young People View Dating Aggression in Relation to Power and Control?

The concept of power/control was evident in both quantitative and qualitative findings (see Table 32). Many items on quantitative dating aggression measures inquired about power/control behaviours between partners, such as items about threatening, monitoring, and using force with partners. As well, power/control in the form of traditional or patriarchal gender role beliefs (i.e., sexism) was directly assessed by another quantitative questionnaire (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Themes of power/control were similarly evident in qualitative findings. Indeed, this theme emerged frequently during qualitative analysis through statements linking power/control with dating aggression as well as comments reflective of underlying gender role beliefs and patriarchy.

The relation between power/control and dating aggression was evident in both quantitative and qualitative findings. Correlations from quantitative analyses indicated that having lower decision-making power and lower status power within a relationship was significantly related to higher levels of emotional and relational aggression, respectively. Many statements from focus group participants echoed these relations, including one from a male participant who clearly mentioned dominance in decision making as a type of dating aggression. As well, another young man seemed to explain that a woman holding higher personal status (e.g., through education) cannot as easily be controlled or dominated by her partner. Thus, overall, mixed method analyses revealed a strong link between power/control and dating aggression, seen not only in the measures used to assess dating aggression, but also in the many ways dating aggression was discussed by young people.

Table 31

Relations between Sexist Attitudes and Acceptance of Dating Aggression

	QUAN results from MRAs	QUAL findings
	Predictors of accepting attitudes	
Male Perpetration	Participant gender ($\beta = .05, p = .001$) Hostile Sexism ($\beta = -.25, p = .003$) Benevolent Sexism ($\beta = -.14, p = .083$)	-Although being male significantly predicted more accepting attitudes, there were no qualitative data that echoed this relation. Male P: <i>"...so I think for them that would be like if you can't cook or things, the person sort of loses value. Almost where, the more they lose value, the less respect you have for them. The less respect you have for them, the farther the line shifts on what you think is okay to say to them and stuff."</i> Female P: <i>"Even though I'm not allowed to date...if [parents] let you date whoever and they don't even care, then that's probably where it goes wrong for a lot of girls."</i>

Note. QUAN = quantitative; QUAL = qualitative; MRAs = multiple regression analyses; P = participant.

Table 32

Relations between Power and Dating Aggression

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Findings
<p>-Many items on dating aggression questionnaires (i.e., CADRI and ATDVS) asked about behaviours related to one partner exerting power and control over another. For example, <i>'My partner kept track of who I was with and where I was.'</i> <i>'I threatened my partner in an attempt to have sex with her/him.'</i></p> <p>-Gender role beliefs (rooted in patriarchy) were assessed directly by the ASI. Less decision-making power is related to higher levels of emotional victimization.</p> <p>Less status power is related to higher levels of relational victimization.</p>	<p>-Strong themes of power/control emerged through: -Mentions of a link between power/control and dating aggression -Comments related to gender norms and patriarchy</p> <p>Male P in response to a question about what constitutes dating aggression: <i>"Probably one of the couple just dominates the other one, like in decision making or otherwise."</i></p> <p>Male P: <i>"...if you see a girl that seems independent simply because she got education, you tend to be that person you can't control that much. You can't possibly talk down to them because they are so educated."</i></p>

Note. CADRI = Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (Wolfe et al., 2001); ATDVS = Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales (Price et al., 1999); P = participant.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Much previous research in the area of youth dating aggression has focused on investigating incidence, prevalence, and risk factors; however, studies typically measure dating aggression using act-based measures of discrete behaviours that are based on researcher definitions of aggression and do not include contextual information (Jackson, 1998; Sears et al., 2006). Some researchers have begun to study how youth themselves define and understand dating aggression and whether there is a discrepancy between how researchers and young people understand and label partner aggression (e.g., Ismail et al., 2003; Price et al., 2000; Sears & Byers, 2010; Sears et al., 2006). However, no known studies to date have explicitly compared whether attitudes and definitions measured via researcher-generated act-based questionnaires are consistent with how young people themselves articulate their attitudes and definitions. The present study addressed this gap regarding the extent to which data from questionnaires align with or deviate from data from focus group interviews with open-ended questioning by explicitly comparing data from these two types of measurement. The present study also made an original contribution to the literature by investigating what young people themselves identify as influences on the development of their dating aggression norms and attitudes. As well, the present study explored the extent to which participants' attitudes and beliefs aligned with the concepts outlined in Johnson's (1995) typology of partner violence. That is, for participants, what role does power/control play in dating aggression and to what extent does dating aggression in their cohort parallel Johnson's concepts of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence? Thus, unlike previous research, results from the present

study not only highlighted the weaknesses in typical measurement of youth dating aggression and attitudes, but also revealed specific details about what content is being missed and how researchers' understanding of dating aggression in youth would be affected by relying on information from only one type of assessment method (i.e., either quantitative or qualitative). Furthermore, qualitative results extended the literature by showing not simply what norms and attitudes exist regarding dating aggression, but the factors that young people feel have led them to hold the beliefs they do, such as family, friends, culture, and the media.

Quantitative Summary and Interpretations

Reported dating aggression. On average, participants reported relatively low levels of involvement in dating aggression overall (i.e., victimization and perpetration combined). Consistent with previous research (Fernandez-Gonzalez et al., 2012; Klipfel et al., 2014; Leen et al., 2013), the highest prevalence of aggression was in the emotional/verbal/psychological domain (94%), with lower rates in the physical (25%) and sexual aggression domains (51%). The prevalence rates for the three aggression types were much higher than some previous studies with both high school and university samples (Hamby & Turner, 2013; Klipfel et al., 2014; Krahe et al., 2015; Rothman & Xuan, 2014). For example, dating aggression prevalence rates in the present study were up to two times higher than in a recent study of American high school students (Rothman & Xuan, 2014). However, differences in measurement may account for these differences in prevalence across studies, as some used single-question measures (e.g., Rothman & Xuan, 2014) and others used higher threshold criteria for dating aggression (e.g., Hamby & Turner, 2013). As well, high rates of sexual aggression in the present sample are likely

due to frequent endorsement of two questionnaire items reflecting unwanted kissing or touching by a partner. Although making these types of sexual advances with an unwilling partner is unacceptable, the items include little contextual information and the questions may have been ambiguous to participants. For example, it is possible that participants interpreted these behaviours as a relationship blunder or an ill-timed sexual advance rather than an act of aggression rooted in power and control. Other items reflecting less ambiguous and arguably higher level sexual aggression, including forced sex and threatening a partner in attempt to have sex, were endorsed much less frequently. Overall, prevalence rates in the present study are consistent with rates from previous studies that used the same measurement tool, the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (e.g., Fernandez-Gonzalez et al., 2012; Jouriles et al., 2005; Jouriles et al., 2013; Zweig et al., 2014).

Attitudes towards dating aggression. Overall, the young men and women in the present study reported disapproving attitudes towards dating aggression. This finding is encouraging and perhaps not surprising given the general guideline circulated throughout western society that violence against women is ‘bad.’ Indeed, several past studies also have found that young people believe partner violence to be unacceptable (Fredland et al., 2005; Price et al., 2000). Despite this general disapproval of dating aggression, there were significant differences in relative levels of disapproval depending on the gender of the perpetrator as well as gender of the participant and the type of aggression used. Similar to findings from a number of previous studies (Fredland et al.; Kaura & Lohman, 2009; Price et al., 2000; Rankin, 2010; Reese-Weber, 2008; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012; Sears et al., 2006; Smith Slep et al., 2001), aggression perpetrated by women was

significantly more acceptable than aggression perpetrated by men. This gender effect was particularly true for men in the study; women in the study had similarly negative attitudes towards aggression regardless of the gender of the perpetrator. This gender double standard with respect to the acceptability of partner aggression appears, at first, to be at odds with a feminist perspective (i.e., that partner aggression is the inevitable product of patriarchy and power inequality between genders). In patriarchal society, institutions condone and even promote male dominance in which aggression and violence may be seen as an acceptable way of controlling and asserting power over women (O’Keefe & Treister, 1998). Thus, people are socialized to view aggression and control from men, and dependence and submission from women as interpersonal norms. In this context, aggression used by men would be acceptable, whereas aggression from women may not be tolerated as it represents a departure from their traditional role as submissive to men. Yet the pattern found in this and other past studies was the opposite: that female perpetrated aggression is *more* acceptable than male perpetrated aggression. These findings may still be understood through a feminist lens to the extent that aggression from women was not taken seriously, either due to differences in physical strength or an assumption that female aggression could not possibly be very impactful because it comes from ‘the weaker sex.’ In fact, in their early study of American high school students, O’Keefe and Treister, (1998) found that men did seem to take aggression from women less seriously, with some men finding female aggression “funny.” As well, previous research has found that individuals with traditional attitudes (e.g., towards gender roles) report more accepting attitudes towards violence than individuals with more liberal attitudes (Tanner, 1996). Thus, it is possible that participants in the present study who

reported more traditional gender role beliefs also were less disapproving of partner aggression, even when it was perpetrated by a woman.

Acceptance of dating aggression in the present study also differed by participant gender, with women being significantly less accepting than men. Again, this pattern of findings is similar to previous research in which men had more favourable attitudes towards dating aggression than women (Edelen et al., 2009; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Reese-Weber 2008; Smith Slep et al., 2001). Socialization practices for boys and girls likely provide an explanation for differences in approval of partner aggression. Women may be less accepting of aggression as they are often socialized to refrain from confrontation and aggression, perhaps creating implicit beliefs that condemn aggression in general. On the other hand, socialization of men often allows them to be more aggressive and does not frown on aggressive displays as would happen for women (Eagly & Steffen, 1986).

For both men and women, verbal/emotional aggression was more acceptable than either physical or sexual aggression. This pattern of attitudes has been found several times before in adolescent samples (Sears & Byers, 2010; Sears, Byers, & Price, 2007; Smith Slep et al., 2001). It is possible that young people are more disapproving of physical and sexual aggression due to their potential to cause physical injury, whereas the harm resulting from verbal/emotional aggression may be less visible, less well understood, and taken less seriously than physical injury. As well, attitudes towards physical and sexual aggression may be more negative as a result of public prevention campaigns circulating the message that partner aggression, and violence against women in particular, is wrong. Findings from one qualitative study with youth indicated that the

'hitting girls/women is wrong' message was strong, pervasive, and impacted attitudes towards partner aggression (Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). It makes logical sense that verbal/emotional aggression was reported at much higher levels than physical or sexual aggression, given its acceptability relative to other aggression types. When young people use or experience physical or sexual aggression, they may be more likely to receive negative reactions and outcry from people around them and avoid these types of behaviours in the future, whereas verbal/emotional aggression may be more likely to continue unchecked.

Accepting attitudes have frequently been found to be related to greater involvement in partner aggression, albeit with small to moderate effect sizes (Feiring et al., 2002; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Jouriles et al., 2003; O'Keefe, 1997, Price & Byers, 1999; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Sears & Byers, 2010; Smith Slep et al., 2001). Similarly, in the present study, greater acceptance of dating aggression was related to higher levels of overall dating aggression involvement as well as higher levels of perpetration and victimization, respectively. An interesting gender effect emerged such that accepting attitudes were related to dating aggression involvement only for women and not for men. This was surprising in light of previous findings in which the attitude-dating aggression link has been found more consistently for men than women. It is possible that traditional gender role beliefs more than attitudes towards partner aggression were related to dating aggression involvement for men in the present sample, as will be discussed in more detail below.

Sexism and traditional gender role beliefs. All participants reported somewhat sexist attitudes, reflective of relatively more traditional gender role beliefs (i.e., the

dominance of men and subjugation of women). This was true for both hostile sexism, which reflects more blatant antipathy toward women, and benevolent sexism, which reflects beliefs that, while subjectively positive, are still potentially damaging to women and are rooted in patriarchy. Consistent with previous studies (Espinoza et al., 2012; Ferragut, Blanco, & Ortiz-Tallo, 2014; Glick & Fiske, 1996), men reported attitudes that were significantly more sexist than women, except with respect to benevolent sexism, which men and women endorsed to a similar degree.

Several previous studies have found that traditional gender role beliefs and sexism are significantly related to and predictive of involvement in partner aggression (Jenkins & Aube, 2002; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994; Price et al., 1999). Indeed, it makes intuitive sense that having more traditional, patriarchal beliefs about the role of women would make an individual more likely to tolerate or condone aggression against women. As well, although some have failed to find a relation (e.g., Bethke & DeJoy, 1993; Bobowick, 2001), the influence of past partner aggression experiences on acceptance of dating aggression has been documented elsewhere (Arias & Johnson, 1989; Cate et al., 1992; Williams et al., 2008). In fact, one study of Spanish adolescents found that simply having romantic dating experience (i.e., nonaggressive relationships) increased boys' and girls' levels of sexism (De Lemus, Moya, & Glick, 2010). Given this past work, it was not surprising that a greater history of dating aggression involvement and more sexist beliefs significantly predicted more favourable attitudes towards dating aggression.

As well, the pattern of differing attitudes regarding male versus female perpetrated aggression continued with respect to the influence of sexism and history of dating aggression. For aggression used by women against men, only benevolent sexism

predicted more acceptance of aggression, whereas the findings were somewhat more complicated with respect to attitudes towards aggression used by men. Being male, having a history of dating aggression involvement, and having more sexist beliefs predicted greater acceptance of aggression perpetrated by men. However, when specific types of sexism were considered (i.e., hostile and benevolent), history of dating aggression and benevolent sexism had no significant role in predicting attitudes towards male aggression. That is, being male and reporting more antipathy toward women were much more important in predicting these young people's attitudes about male aggression than previous experiences with dating aggression. This finding fits with the perspective that partner aggression is very much a gendered issue (Bentley et al., 2007; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Rogers et al., 2005). That the influence of past involvement in dating aggression is overshadowed by the influence of sexist beliefs demonstrates that attitudes towards gender roles are of critical importance when trying to understand partner aggression.

It is interesting to note that hostile but not benevolent sexism predicted attitudes about men perpetrating aggression, whereas the opposite pattern applied to attitudes about women perpetrating aggression (i.e., benevolent, not hostile sexism, predicted acceptance of female aggression). The traditional masculine ideology and gender role, reflected in the hostile sexism scale, includes beliefs about male aggression and dominance over women. It is fitting then, that aligning with this type of hostile sexism would be related to acceptance of men using aggression to dominate and control women. Participants in the present study who identified less, or not at all, with this hostile antipathy towards women may have been more accepting of women breaking with

traditionally submissive gender roles and using aggression against a partner. From this perspective, it makes sense that hostile sexism would predict attitudes towards male but not female aggression. It seems contradictory then, that benevolent sexism would predict acceptance of female aggression, as the benevolent sexism scale reflects paternalistic attitudes and assumptions that women are inherently vulnerable or delicate. It is possible that it is the absence of hostile sexism that predicted acceptance of female aggression rather than endorsement of benevolent sexism per se. As mentioned above, participants who do not report high levels of hostile sexism may be more accepting of female aggression, but may still report paternalistic attitudes towards women (i.e., benevolent sexism) as a result of being socialized in a patriarchal society. What is clear from the literature is that attitudes towards female aggression may be more complex and less clear-cut than attitudes towards male aggression (Bobowick, 2001; Price et al., 2000; Rankin, 2010). Thus, results from the present study with respect to female aggression join an already mixed collection of results and interpretations.

Relationship power and dating aggression. Although the majority of participants reported having roughly equal decision-making power with their partners and very low or no humiliation in their relationships, there were significant relations between perceived lack of relationship power and greater involvement in dating aggression. Specifically, having less decision-making power was related to more emotional victimization and lower status power was related to experiencing more relational victimization. More than other subtypes of power considered in the present study, humiliation power (i.e., feeling shamed by or less than one's partner) was particularly important in predicting dating aggression involvement. Lower humiliation power

predicted victimization and perpetration of all aggression types of aggression, although beta weights were stronger for victimization than perpetration. Overall, these results are consistent with those from previous research (Bentley et al., 2007; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Melander, 2010), which demonstrated that distribution of power in a relationship is important for predicting and understanding partner aggression. Although the sample size in the present study was not large enough to allow for participants to be grouped into Johnson's partner violence types based on participants' dating aggression experiences (as in Zweig et al., 2014), the relations between low power and more dating aggression victimization found in the present study may offer additional support for Johnson's typology in youth. It is also possible to interpret the relation between power and dating aggression in the present study as support for feminist perspectives, where partner aggression is inherently linked with gender-based power differentials. Given the statistical limitations of the present sample size, I was unable to make conclusions about which perspective(s) (i.e., feminist or otherwise) the data ultimately support.

Qualitative Summary and Interpretations

Dating aggression behaviours and types. Several themes emerged regarding what constitutes dating aggression and how subtypes are defined. Overall, participants acknowledged that dating aggression is a broad construct and includes a variety of behaviours including physical, sexual, and verbal/emotional. In particular, verbal/emotional aggression emerged as a wide collection of behaviours that may be more difficult to define and describe than either physical or sexual aggression. Youth in previous studies had similar difficulty defining and identifying emotional/psychological aggression, which may be more ambiguous than physical or sexual behaviours (Black et

al., 2008; Bobowick, 2001; Rankin, 2010; Reeves & Orpinas, 2012). Nonconsensual assertions of power/dominance were discussed frequently in focus groups as either a component or final product of all other aggression types (i.e., physical, sexual, verbal/emotional) or as a distinct type of dating aggression. Although types of aggression were often discussed separately, participants repeatedly communicated that there are links and overlaps between the types. For example, physical, sexual, and verbal/emotional aggression may co-occur and lead to each other. Strong links between verbal/emotional aggression and other types were noted in particular, which may help explain why verbal/emotional aggression was reported with such high frequency in the quantitative phase relative to other types. If verbal/emotional aggression occurs in isolation as well as in combination with other types, then it makes sense that this type of aggression would have a much higher prevalence than other types. Findings regarding overlap and co-occurrence among aggression types are consistent with previous studies of how partner aggression types are related in youth (Buzy et al., 2004; Gagné, Lavoie, & Hebert, 2005; Halpern et al., 2001; Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996). In fact, one study with Canadian high school students found that for boys and girls, the most common pattern was to have experienced all three main forms of aggression (Sears & Byers, 2010). Thus, overall, young men and women in the present study defined dating aggression as including several broad types that often overlap or co-occur, and which are often linked with assertions of power and dominance.

People involved. Similar to previous findings indicating that dating aggression in youth is often mutual (i.e., both male and female partners are using aggression against each other; Gray & Foshee, 1997; Riggs & O’Leary, 1996; Williams et al., 2008),

participants in the present study acknowledged that both men and women aggress against partners and mutual partner aggression is possible. Interestingly, although men and women indicated that partner aggression is theoretically perpetrated by both genders, they almost exclusively spoke about aggression as occurring from a man to a woman. This may be indicative of either the reality in their cohort that partner aggression occurs more frequently (or with more serious consequences) from men to women, or of the tendency described earlier to take aggression used by women less seriously. One exception to this pattern was discussion in men's groups about aggression from girlfriends in the form of controlling behaviour, "emasculating," or "being whipped." That loss of traditionally masculine identity would be considered dating aggression seems to further support the idea that partner aggression is inherently linked with gender roles and power/control.

Terminology. When asked to discuss specific dating aggression terms (e.g., aggression, abuse, violence), it was clear that participants had definitions in mind for these terms and easily were able to provide examples. However, during discussion, men and women used only certain terms in certain ways. Abuse was used most frequently during discussion and seemed to convey an ongoing pattern of severe aggression and harm in the context of a close relationship (i.e., a romantic or familial relationship). Aggression was used much less frequently and typically denoted less severe behaviour that resulted from strong emotions or lack of control. Lastly, participants used the term violence very infrequently and only to label discrete isolated incidents of physically or sexually aggressive behaviour. As with their understanding of types of aggression, these terms were considered to be broad, ambiguous, and overlapping. These findings mirror the use of terminology in the dating aggression literature itself. Indeed, the overlapping

and ambiguous nature of these terms and how they are conceptualized in research have long been considered weaknesses in the field (Jackson, 1998). It is not surprising then, that the partner aggression research community has struggled with terminology and definitions given that they may be ambiguous and problematic for the very people being studied.

Acceptability of dating aggression. Through responses to direct questions and during ongoing discussion, participants communicated a general disapproval of partner aggression. This finding was consistent with results from previous studies with teens and emerging adults who felt aggressing against a partner was unacceptable overall (Fredland et al., 2005; Price et al., 2000). However, there were some gender differences in the present study such that women seemed more concrete in their condemnations of partner aggression whereas men's disapproval seemed to exist on a continuum. Men used language such as "where to draw the line," suggesting that there may be circumstances in which aggressing against a partner is more acceptable than others. They alluded to factors such as number of instances and location of the behaviour (i.e., public versus private space) as being important in determining "where to draw the line." In contrast, women repeatedly stated that partner aggression was "never ok." This finding fits with quantitative results from this and previous studies that boys and men report more accepting attitudes towards partner aggression than girls and women (Edelen et al., 2009; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Reese-Weber 2008; Smith Slep et al., 2001).

It is possible that gender differences in socialization (i.e., that aggression is an acceptable outlet for men but not women) help explain this tendency for men to be more equivocal in their disapproval of partner aggression. It is also possible that differences

between focus group interviewers in the present study influenced men and women to respond differently. Whereas the female focus group interviewer asked questions verbatim as they were listed in the semi-structured interview guide, the male focus group interviewer editorialized the questions and himself used the phrase, “where do you draw the line?” As a result, male participants likely responded in kind and discussed acceptance of aggression in more relative terms than the women. Despite this weakness in the present study, it was evident from ongoing discussions during focus groups that both men and women hold beliefs that partner aggression is unacceptable. As well, both men and women used consent as a key criterion for determining whether behaviour was acceptable or not. They felt that if consent was not mutual, voluntarily given, and current/ongoing then behaviour constituted dating aggression and was unacceptable. This finding differed somewhat from previous results in which girls tended to define aggression by the impact of the behaviour (e.g., harm) and boys tended to consider only the intent of the behaviours (Price et al., 2000; Sears et al., 2006). Indeed men (and women) in the present study indicated that if a behaviour caused harm of any kind to a partner, intended or not, then the behaviour was unacceptable and should stop. It is possible that the present results reflect changes in attitudes regarding dating aggression labeling that have occurred at a societal level over the 10 to 15 years since Price (2000), Sears (2006), and their colleagues completed their studies. As well, differences between past and present results may reflect an age/maturity effect and be due to differences in samples used; the previous studies mentioned used a sample of younger high school teens (mean age = 14.6 years; Price et al., 2000), whereas the present study used a somewhat older, university sample (mean age = 19.25 years).

Factors that shape definitions and attitudes. One of the main purposes of the present study was to investigate which factors in emerging adults' lives influence and shape their attitudes towards dating aggression. Several themes emerged including the individual factors discussed below as well as the overarching theme that the context in which attitudes are formed is complex, intersecting, and in constant flux over the lifespan. Individual influences on beliefs and attitudes combine in unique ways for each person and likely change over time as different factors take on more or less importance in a person's life. Thus, the individual factors discussed below likely do not operate in isolation; rather, they intersect and combine over time to shape a person's attitudes. This theme of complexity and intersection fits with a social cognitive perspective in which beliefs are hypothesized to form over time as the result of social experiences in a variety of contexts (e.g., home, school, work; Bandura, 1986). In fact, almost all of the influencing factors discussed by participants constitute some form of social learning through interaction with or observation of behavioural models. These results have important clinical implications, particularly given that prevention and intervention efforts tend to focus on the individuals directly involved in the dating aggression (i.e., youth themselves). The present results point to other areas for change, including the roles that could be played by family and friends in the development of healthy dating relationships. Clinical efforts should also focus on making parents, family members, and peer groups aware of their impact and the power they have to influence the beliefs of those close to them.

Age/maturity. Age, as a proxy for maturity, was identified as an influence on attitudes towards dating aggression. Other studies have found similar age/maturity

effects where acceptance of dating aggression decreases across adolescence (Orpinas, Hsieh, Song, Holland, & Nahapetyan, 2013). Generational differences due to changes in socio-political and cultural climate emerged frequently as an influence on attitudes and an explanation for differing opinions between parents and children. This theme further supports the importance of overall societal and cultural norms in shaping attitudes and beliefs.

Culture. As has been demonstrated in previous research (Go et al., 2003; Peek-Asa et al., 2002), culture had an impact on participants' attitudes towards dating aggression. Two facets of culture emerged as particularly salient: cultural norms and acculturation. Cultural norms, especially regarding gender roles and hierarchies, were often communicated through media or the family of origin and influenced attitudes about romantic relationships in general and dating aggression in particular. As well, acculturation to dominant western society also influenced attitudes. According to many participants, people coming to Canada from cultures where aggression against women is accepted often acculturate to Canadian society and adopt more disapproval of partner aggression as a result. Findings regarding the impact of acculturation on partner aggression have been mixed, but the present results fit within a group of previous studies that found that greater acculturation is related to less acceptance of partner aggression (Barata et al., 2005; Champion, 1996; Ganguly, 1998). Data from at least one study suggested that it is gender roles rather than cultural values or acculturation themselves that influence acceptance of partner aggression. A study of south Asian university students found that restrictive, patriarchal gender role beliefs fully mediated the relation between less acculturation and greater acceptance of wife abuse (Bhanot & Senn, 2007).

Education. Many participants noted the impact of targeted prevention and education about dating aggression on attitudes. Although some studies have found that explicit beliefs shaped by prevention and intervention efforts do not always have a lasting impact or result in behaviour change (Foshee et al., 1998), participants acknowledged that targeted education about dating aggression does indeed shape their views. Participants cited the influence of familiar catch phrases (e.g., “no means no” and “don’t hit girls”) as well as programs at the secondary and post-secondary level. Despite some findings about the weak long term effects of prevention and intervention programs, these results from the present study are encouraging and support continued efforts to inform teens and emerging adults about healthy relationships and dating aggression.

Family. Although there was some disagreement about the extent to which family impacted attitudes relative to other factors such as friends and media, the overall importance of family in the formation of attitudes was very clear in participants’ discussions. Family members influenced expectations for dating relationships and attitudes towards dating aggression through gendered parenting practices and by providing behavioural models for children. Specifically, the role of parents as guardians and ‘gate keepers’ for girls was discussed frequently and seemed to implicitly introduce and reinforce gender norms for girls (i.e., patriarchal views of girls as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection from boys). In this way, family is a means by which societal and cultural gender role expectations are communicated to youth. Interestingly, women in the study spoke much more frequently about family than did men. This gender difference parallels findings from a previous study that showed girls receive significantly more general dating information from family than boys do (Wood et al., 2002). It is

possible that this pattern of results reflects, again, different gender norms where it may be more acceptable for girls to talk with their families about feelings and dating relationships than it is for boys to talk about these topics.

With respect to family as a behavioural model, participants acknowledged that such a model may serve as a norm for what is appropriate and expected behaviour or as a cautionary tale and example of behaviour to avoid. It was unclear under what circumstances family models would be considered norms versus undesirable examples. Results from one study of adult men who had witnessed partner violence in their family of origin pointed to one explanation for this possibility that aggressive family models serve as examples of behaviour to avoid. Men in the current qualitative study indicated that witnessing only negative consequences of partner violence (e.g., injury, police visits, even death of a parent) and having external factors and relationships that promoted resiliency led to them remaining nonviolent with their own partners (Harris & Dersch, 2001). Overall, the impact of family on a young person's romantic relationships in general and acceptance of dating aggression in particular has been well documented (Akers et al., 2011; Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Hendy et al., 2003; Miller, Gorman-Smith, Sullivan, Orpinas, & Simon, 2009). Thus, regardless of whether families provide positive or negative models for youth, it is clear from the present study and the existing literature that families play a critical role in influencing attitudes towards dating aggression.

Friends. Similar to findings regarding the influence of family, participants communicated repeatedly that their peer group influenced their attitudes towards dating aggression. This finding was expected given the existing empirical support for the

impact of peers on dating aggression involvement and acceptance (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1995; Fredland et al., 2005; Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard, & Bohmer, 1987; Sears & Byers, 2010; Smith et al., 2005; Swart et al., 2002). During adolescence in particular, friends and peers take on increasing importance and provide important models for behaviour as well as feedback and judgments about behaviour (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004). Findings from one study with young adults found that friends provided the largest quantity of information about dating and were considered to have the greatest influence on a person's dating choices (Wood et al., 2002). As with discussion of family models, participants noted that these behavioural models from friends could serve either as norms for expected behaviour or examples of unacceptable behaviour that is to be avoided.

Media. The impact of media on attitudes towards dating aggression was made very clear by participants through their ongoing discussions and explicit acknowledgement of the role media plays in the lives of young people. Adolescents and emerging adults are avid consumers of media and are exposed to up to eight hours of media daily including television, movies, video games, magazines, the Internet, and music (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Similar to many previous studies (Borzekowski & Rickert, 2001; Dill & Thill, 2007; Manganello, 2008; Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008; Wood et al., 2002), participants noted that, like friends and family, the media provides models of behaviour that lead to relationship norms and expectations. Similar results were found in at least two other studies in which aggression-tolerant attitudes completely mediated the impact of media consumption on dating aggression involvement (Connolly et al., 2010; Friedlander et al., 2013). Opinions in the present study were

mixed with respect to whether the media provided accurate models or misinformation about relationships and aggression. Interestingly, the impact of media on attitudes was typically not considered to be absolute, but rather moderated or mediated by other influences such as age, gender, family, and friends. For example, relationship portrayals in the media may be considered healthy or problematic depending on what norms had been communicated in the family of origin. As well, different types of media may be more important for boys and girls; participants believed that video games and pornography influence boys and magazines, movies, and television influence girls. Previous work supports this gender difference in types of media preferred by boys and girls (Arnett, 2007).

Power and applicability of Johnson's typology. Power and control emerged as a consistent theme throughout focus group discussions. Participants spoke about two important facets of power and control: their role as a component of dating aggression and their inherent link with gender norms. In this way, young people in the present study understood power and control in a similar way to how they are understood and studied by researchers and theorists (Bentley et al., 2007; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Melander, 2010; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Rogers et al., 2005).

With respect to Johnson's (1999) typology of partner violence, qualitative findings from the present study seemed to provide initial support for the existence of two main aggression types, intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. Participants spoke about dating aggression that occurred as an escalation of conflict and heated emotions, similar to the concept of situational couple violence hypothesized by Johnson. The terms aggression and violence were typically used in this context. As well,

participants discussed dating aggression that was ongoing and reflective of continued attempts at power, control, and dominance by one partner, which parallels Johnson's concept of intimate terrorism. In these cases, participants typically used the term abuse to describe behaviour. Interestingly, men spoke most frequently about single-incidents of aggression escalation, whereas women tended to speak about ongoing patterns of abuse and dominance. Discomfort associated with talking about dating aggression perpetration by one's own gender may be an explanation for this pattern of findings. Previous studies have found that intimate terrorism is perpetrated mostly by men and situational couple violence is perpetrated at roughly equal rates by men and women (Johnson 1999, 2000, 2006). It is possible that men in the study found it more comfortable to talk about single incidents of situational couple violence (and the justifications for such aggression) because women may also be responsible for using this type of partner aggression. To the extent that it is socially taboo for men to acknowledge and discuss their gender's role in intimate terrorism, men in the present study may have avoided referencing this type of partner aggression.

These findings provide additional support for the application of Johnson's partner violence typology in youth populations. As has been found previously (Melander, 2010; Zweig et al., 2014), there seem to be different types of aggression between partners depending on the role that power and control play in the overall relationship. As a result of using mixed methods, results from the present study are able to uniquely support application of Johnson's partner violence typology through not only reports on questionnaires, but also through discussion from participants themselves during focus groups.

Additional important themes. In addition to the themes discussed above that directly related to my research questions, several other important themes emerged that help provide a richer picture of how dating aggression is understood by emerging adults.

Beliefs versus behaviour. Participants acknowledged that a disconnect exists between a person's beliefs about dating aggression and their behaviour in that domain. Having the belief that partner aggression is unacceptable does not necessarily translate into behaviour that is in keeping with this belief; young people may disapprove of dating aggression and still find themselves either using aggression against a partner or being on the receiving end of such aggression. Many participants noted that "you never know" what you would do in a situation until you are actually in that situation. These findings seem at odds with existing evidence that more accepting attitudes are related to increased involvement in partner aggression (Foo & Margolin, 1996; O'Keefe, 1997; Price & Byers, 1999; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Smith Slep et al., 2001). However, the present findings do reflect a pattern in broader social psychology theory and literature regarding a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour, in particular the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). One group of researchers used cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) to explain the discrepancy between attitudes about dating aggression and dating aggression perpetration (Schumacher & Smith Slep, 2004). Although they found a direct link between attitudes and behaviour, they also found that cognitive dissonance (i.e., using aggression against a partner while holding beliefs that such behaviour is wrong or will incite negative consequences) explained a reduction in perpetration over time, above and beyond what could be explained by changes in attitudes. Another possible explanation for a potential disconnect between beliefs and

behaviours comes from a study of explicit versus implicit beliefs about partner aggression (Jouriles et al., 2013). Explicit cognitions are the conscious thoughts and ideas that people articulate, which are the result of experiences and learning. They are believed to be malleable and are measured by self-report questionnaires. On the other hand, implicit cognitions are automatic, unconscious, and reflect traces of previous experiences. Implicit cognitions are believed to be unchangeable and can be measured through tasks such as sentence completion or word association. Jouriles and his colleagues (2003) found that both explicit and implicit beliefs contribute to differences in dating aggression involvement among adolescents. Therefore, it is possible that a person reporting explicit beliefs that partner aggression is unacceptable may still hold implicit beliefs that tolerate partner aggression. Overall, results from the present and previous studies suggested that disapproving of partner aggression might not always translate into nonaggressive dating behaviour.

Self versus other. Another disconnect identified by participants was between judging your own relationships versus those of other people. Dating aggression was believed to be easier to identify and judge if it occurred in a peer's relationship than if it occur in one's own relationship. Women spoke about how dating aggression in a person's own relationship may not be viewed objectively or with clarity and may be rationalized due to a number of reasons (e.g., feelings of love for the partner, the partner's history of exposure to aggression, the partner's loss of emotional control). One study with adults found that women labeled all hypothetical scenarios as abusive, but labeled their own experiences as abusive only if they were more frequent or more severe (Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000). Other studies with youth have found a similar pattern in

which people are less likely to label their own experiences as abusive or problematic (Ayala et al., 2014; Lopez-Cepero et al., 2013; Wekerle et al., 2001). The tendency of women to not label their experiences as abuse has been the focus of much previous research and is considered by some to be an unwillingness associated with pathological denial of their circumstances (e.g., Battered Women syndrome [Walker, 1984] and Stockholm syndrome [Graham et al., 1994]). However, other researchers and theorists, particularly those working from feminist perspectives, have called for a less deficit- and pathology-oriented approach to understanding the psychology of women involved in dating aggression (e.g., Hamby & Gray-Little, 2000).

Patriarchy and misogyny. As discussed above, themes of patriarchy, traditional gender roles, and gender inequalities emerged throughout focus groups in relation to dating aggression. However, an additional pattern in this domain emerged that warrants separate discussion: patriarchy ranging from benevolent paternalism to blatant misogyny was present in all female focus groups but in none of the male groups. Despite quantitative findings that men reported more sexist attitudes than women in the present study, qualitative findings suggested that women were significantly more demonstrative in their patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs than men. If, in fact, men held similar beliefs, it is possible that they did not articulate these beliefs during focus group discussions because of social pressures to respond in desirable ways, particularly in such a nonanonymous arena. It also is possible that this gender difference in patriarchal attitudes between data sets was related to potential self-selection bias within the sample. Perhaps men who ascribed to less patriarchal, sexist views were more drawn to participate in the study than men who held more patriarchal or even misogynistic views.

Due to being explicitly advertised as part of study on dating aggression, focus groups may have been filled with men who are more aligned with a gender equality perspective and who may have been more open than other men to discussing views on dating aggression.

Evidence of patriarchal beliefs among the women ranged from mention of the protective role parents play with daughters but not sons, to more blatant misogyny in the form of subtle but pervasive victim blaming. Women seemed to speak about aggression from men as if it was inevitable and seemed to place responsibility for its prevention and control on the female partner. In this way, they frequently made reference to women who “let [aggression] happen” and made character judgments about girls and women who failed to prevent or control aggression from their partners. Again, there seemed to be a disconnect between explicit statements disapproving of partner aggression or acknowledging that the victim should never be blamed, and the range of patriarchal beliefs communicated during ongoing discussions. Similar beliefs have been documented elsewhere (Cook, 1995; Weiss, 2009). In particular, qualitative data from one study of sexual assault revealed that participants commonly held the beliefs that sexual aggression from men is “natural,” unwanted sexual behaviours are inevitable, and that women often facilitate the completion of rape by not resisting effectively (Weiss, 2009). Although disconcerting, these findings should perhaps not be surprising given the patriarchal nature of western society and the socialization of girls and boys according to gender role expectations via family, friends, and the media as discussed above. Interestingly, this pattern of misogyny and subtle victim blaming paralleled findings from one study of how partner aggression is presented in teen magazines. Results from that

study showed that the majority of articles used an individual rather than cultural frame when discussing dating aggression (Hensmen Kettery, & Emery, 2010). Thus, girls and young women, who are the typical consumers of such magazines, are presented with the view of dating aggression in relation to individual characteristics rather than a problem situated in a broader social context. When exposed to this perspective on dating aggression over a period of time, it is understandable that young women would struggle to consider the broader societal level factors contributing to dating aggression (e.g., patriarchy) and focus on the role of the victim, as was the case in the present study.

Mixed Methods Summary and Conclusions

Mixed methods analyses revealed both similarities among and differences between understandings of dating aggression as assessed via self-report questionnaires versus focus group interviews. Overall, both methods captured a similar picture of how dating aggression is defined and labeled by emerging adults. Participants communicated via both methods that dating aggression exists in their cohort in the form of a broad range of behaviours and experiences. As well, both self-report questionnaires and focus group discussion showed that verbal/emotional aggression happens at a much higher rate than either physical or sexual aggression. The only discrepancy between measurement methods with respect to how aggression is defined and labeled was lack of inclusion in questionnaires of several specific behaviours seen as aggressive and harmful by participants: cheating, objectification of women, and cyber aggression. Overall, these results increase confidence in the ability of self-report measures to accurately ‘pick up’ on the breadth of dating aggression experiences presently occurring in youth relationships.

On the other hand, information gathered from self-report questionnaires and focus group interviews did not always align when considering attitudes towards dating aggression. Both methods captured similar overall attitudes that dating aggression is unacceptable and that previous dating aggression involvement and more accepting attitudes towards partner aggression are associated. As well, both sets of data suggested that women have less accepting attitudes towards dating aggression than men. However, self-report questionnaires failed to reflect nuanced attitudes evident in focus groups including that, despite general disapproval of partner aggression, women spoke as if aggression from male partners was expected and the women seemed potentially resigned to its existence. There was also a mixed picture regarding attitudes towards female perpetrated aggression. Data from questionnaires indicated that aggression perpetrated by women is more acceptable than aggression perpetrated by men but this pattern was not echoed in focus group data. There was very little discussion of female perpetrated aggression at all during focus groups and when this topic did arise, both men and women in the study expressed clear disapproval. Given the high prevalence rates of female perpetration and male victimization in the present study, this lack of discussion of female aggression likely does not reflect a lack of female perpetration; rather, it may be indicative of a tendency to take female aggression less seriously than male aggression.

The last major difference between questionnaire and focus group data concerned reported sexist beliefs. Quantitative data told a straightforward story in which men reported significantly more sexist beliefs than women, suggesting that men more strongly held views in support of traditional gender roles and patriarchy. On the other hand, qualitative data presented a somewhat more complex, nuanced picture of how men and

women regard traditional gender roles and sexism. Men in focus groups seemed to neither explicitly nor implicitly endorse traditional gender role norms. The only comments from men that appeared to be rooted in patriarchy were related to aggression from women in the form of controlling or emasculating behaviour. Without quantitative data from the present and previous studies indicating that men do indeed tend to hold sexist beliefs, the lack of gender role discussion by men in focus groups could be construed as an absence of traditional gender role beliefs. It is more likely, however, that lack of evidence of patriarchy in male focus groups reflects a tendency to respond in socially desirable ways, particularly given that focus group participation was not anonymous. On the other hand, women in focus groups communicated sexist beliefs and misogynistic attitudes through subtle use of language as well as explicit comments (e.g., that it is a woman's responsibility to prevent or control aggression from men, that a "smart girl" would not want to be with an aggressive partner). Although women endorsed having disapproving attitudes towards partner aggression and victim blaming, evidence of patriarchy, paternalism, and even misogyny were present throughout focus group discussions. Thus, overall, questionnaire data alone may not provide as full or rich a picture of the nuances in sexism and gender role beliefs, and how they related to dating aggression for emerging adults.

Limitations

The present study contributes to a growing body of research regarding how dating aggression is understood and accepted by adolescents and emerging adults. The results discussed above should be considered in light of several limitations that may impact conclusions and generalizability of the findings. With respect to the quantitative phase of

the study, one limitation is the relatively small sample size. Having a larger sample size, as was intended at the study outset, would have increased statistical power. As well, having a more equal number of male and female participants may have improved the statistical validity of gender comparisons. An additional limitation relates to the validity of an initial item on the dating aggression measure (CADRI; Wolfe et al., 2001) that was used to group participants into those who had dating or romantic experience and those who did not. Approximately 30 percent of participants endorsed the item choice, 'I have not yet begun dating,' which is a much higher percentage than is typically seen in university and even high school samples. In some cases, a high percentage of 'non-daters' may be an accurate measurement and reflects a portion of the sample comprised of young people from ethnic or cultural groups in which romantic involvement has not yet been sanctioned by families. However, the demographic data do not support such an explanation. Instead, it is likely that the wording of this item is outdated and failed to validly assess the romantic status of the participants. Indeed, qualitative data from the present study suggest that, although participants were able to define what the term "dating" meant, they did not use this term when describing romantic interactions and relationships with the opposite sex in their own words. Thus, it is likely that a portion of participants who truly did have romantic relationship experience were not properly identified due to outdated question terminology. To the extent that this explanation is correct, the wording of this dating question represents not only a weakness in the present study, but also a weakness of the measure itself. Given that the measure was published almost 15 years prior to data collection for the present study, as well as the profound changes in the youth interpersonal landscape during that time (i.e., use of technology,

norms, vernacular), it will be important for future research to conduct validity checks on existing measures and make updates as necessary. In the same way, it likely would be useful for researchers to investigate the validity of measures of sexist or traditional gender role beliefs, like the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) used in the present study. As noted above, existing measures of sexism use item wording that exclusively reflects only feminine gender role expectations. It would likely be valuable to develop a measure that included a balance between items reflecting feminine and masculine gender role characteristics and which reflect notions of gender roles as today's young people understand them. It would be interesting for future research using a more gender balanced sexism measure to investigate whether young people endorse male versus female gender role beliefs to a similar extent and whether any differences also relate to attitudes towards partner aggression.

There were also limitations with respect to the qualitative phase of the study. First, due to difficulty with recruitment, there was no participant overlap between the quantitative and qualitative phases (i.e., participants who completed the quantitative measures and those who participated in focus groups were entirely different groups of individuals). As such, I was unable to link the two data sets at an individual participant level. Being able to link data in this way would have allowed for more fine-grained mixed methods analysis of how certain characteristics (e.g., attitudes, dating aggression history) are related to the themes that emerged during group discussions. As well, linking quantitative and qualitative data at the individual level may have allowed for stronger conclusions about how understandings of dating aggression are communicated via questionnaires versus focus groups. Second, a related limitation is that focus group

participants did not complete any background demographics questionnaires, as was the case for quantitative participants. As a result, there was limited information on the people who took part in focus groups, which reduced the richness of the data and potentially limits transferability of findings. Third, the very small size of some focus groups may have resulted in different dynamics between groups and, as a result, differences in the depth and amount of discussion in each group. A final limitation in the qualitative phase was the discrepancy in the extent to which the male and female interviewer deviated from the semi-structured interview guide. As discussed above, despite receiving training prior to conducting focus groups and feedback from the researcher during data collection, the male interviewer tended to editorialize discussion questions, which may have primed men to respond in certain ways. This somewhat decreases confidence in the validity of findings with respect to men's explicit attitudes towards dating aggression.

Finally, a broad limitation of the present study relates to generalizability of findings. Participants were Canadian university students and although there was some racial and ethnic diversity within the sample, the majority of participants identified as Caucasian. Thus, it is unknown to what extent the present results apply to people of other age ranges, emerging adults who do not attend post-secondary education, and those from diverse racial and ethnic groups. Questions about the generalizability of findings also stem from the significant differences in dating aggression attitude scores between University of Windsor students and St. Clair College students. As discussed previously, it is possible that the students from St. Clair College were a very small, self-selected group of young people who do not necessarily represent the College student body at

large; however, to the extent that the attitudes reported by St. Clair College participants were representative of the College population, the findings from the present study (i.e., reports from University of Windsor participants) may not generalize well to samples from other post-secondary institutions, and indeed those emerging adults who do not attend post-secondary education. As well, the present study focused exclusively on men and women who identify as heterosexual and had never had romantic involvement with someone of the same sex. As a result, findings may not generalize to samples of people from diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. It will be important for future research to address understandings of dating aggression in same sex couples. Lastly, as mentioned previously, participants were privy to information from partner aggression prevention programs offered at the University of Windsor. Thus, their understandings of dating aggression may differ from young people who were not exposed to information from these types of programs and may not generalize as well to students at schools without such programs and young people who are not involved in post-secondary education.

General Conclusions and Implications

Despite the limitations discussed above, the present study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, through the use of mixed methods inquiry, the results fill a gap in the literature with respect to whether dating aggression in youth is adequately assessed by typically used self-report questionnaire batteries. No previous work has explicitly compared understandings of dating aggression as assessed via these two methods in a single study. As a result, the present findings are uniquely able to highlight that both similarities and differences exist in information provided by

participants. Indeed, mixed methods findings indicated that relying on reports made via only one assessment method (i.e., quantitative or qualitative) may lead to an incomplete or incorrect picture of dating aggression experiences and attitudes in youth. Overall, results suggested that self-report questionnaires were appropriately able to capture the aggressive behaviours and patterns of aggression in emerging adult dating relationships. However, as has been noted by other researchers, mixed method findings also indicated that relying exclusively on self-report questionnaires may result in missing richer, more nuanced information about how youth understand dating aggression. In particular, self-report measures provided information about youth attitudes towards dating aggression, but were not able to show that these attitudes likely apply differently to oneself than to others, or that these attitudes do not necessarily predict whether a person will be nonviolent with a partner. As well, self-report questionnaire data did not communicate the extent to which power/control and gender role beliefs are linked with attitudes towards and the experience of dating aggression. Thus, overall, self-report questionnaires provide valuable information about the behaviours and attitudes of youth but likely are not able to capture the full picture of dating aggression and its meaning in adolescents and emerging adults. As a result, it will be important for future research in this area to carefully consider the context of behaviours reported by participants as well as maintain awareness of the possibility that information reported on questionnaires may not reflect how people actually behave and react. In particular, future research should address the potential disconnect in youth between judgments made about oneself versus others as well as factors underlying discrepancies between explicit beliefs and dating aggression behaviour.

These conclusions also have implications for the measurement of youth dating aggression in future research. Although the present results suggested that self-report questionnaires do an adequate job capturing aggressive dating behaviours in the lives of youth, measures may be strengthened by the addition of items addressing cheating, the objectification of women, and cyber aggression. As well, it also may be important for future research to assess whether the behaviours reported by participants are single incidents, the result of conflict escalation, or part of an ongoing pattern of aggression and control. Making these changes and additions to existing self-report measures would likely lead to a richer, more comprehensive assessment of dating aggression in youth samples. It would be important for future research to focus also on the development and validation of a more context-sensitive self-report measure to assess dating aggression involvement. It may not always be possible to include qualitative or mixed method measurement of dating aggression in a study (e.g., due to time, financial, or logistic constraints), but creation and use of a new context-sensitive self-report measure would likely lead to a richer, more accurate assessment of dating aggression than quantitative questionnaires alone.

The present findings contribute to the literature in a second important way by going beyond enumerating what norms and attitudes influence dating aggression in youth to providing reports from young people themselves about what shaped the development of their attitudes. Previous work has demonstrated that risk for dating aggression involvement is multidetermined (Connolly et al., 2012), and the present study builds on this idea further by showing that attitudes towards dating aggression also are multidetermined. Indeed, there seemed to be no single factor that alone impacted beliefs

about dating aggression. The context in which young people develop attitudes includes a complex variety of intersecting factors that may change over time and may carry more weight for certain individuals than others. Culture, society, family, friends, and the media were among the most important and frequently discussed influences in the lives of participants. These findings point to how an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1996) may be helpful in understanding and building a theory of how dating aggression norms and attitudes operate in the lives of young people and across the life span. Similar to the work of Connolly et al. (2012), application of such a model to not only risk for dating aggression involvement, but also attitudes towards dating aggression may help researchers as well as intervention and policy developers work from a more integrative and developmentally appropriate perspective.

The social implications of these results are numerous. The repeated links in the present data between partner aggression, gender roles, and power/control, as well as the misogyny and subtle victim blaming during focus groups, indicated that there is much to be done socially regarding respect for women and dating aggression norms. It is very difficult to change societal structures historically based in patriarchy as well as the mass media culture that promotes extreme gender roles and the objectification of women at every turn. Moving forward, it will be particularly important for media to emphasize healthier, less patriarchal views of women and to present dating aggression as situated in a broader socio-cultural context (e.g., Hensmen et al., 2010). It would be helpful for media to communicate that male-to-female aggression is intimately linked with broad socio-political factors like patriarchy and should not be misconstrued as evidence that men are inherently bad or violent. Indeed, based on the present results, it also will be

important for media and other social structures to acknowledge that women do aggress against men and that *all* instances of partner aggression are unacceptable regardless of whether they are perpetrated by a man or a woman.

Clinical implications. Given the prevalence of dating aggression in adolescent and young adult samples, it is clear that there continues to be a need for effective prevention and education programs as well as quality support and clinical interventions for those already involved in aggressive romantic relationships. By extending previous studies of how youth, themselves, understand dating aggression and investigating the factors that influence those views (Edelen et al., 2008; Fredland et al., 2005; Sears et al., 2006), results from the present study point to several important ways prevention and intervention efforts may better promote and maintain healthier, more respectful attitudes and relationships. These clinical implications are discussed below.

First, results from the present study support the belief that assessing the type and frequency of aggressive behaviours between partners is a necessary but insufficient way to fully understand partner aggression (Archer, 2000). In light of this finding, it would be important for clinicians working with youth who are involved in dating aggression to ask additional questions and open more dialogue about the context of aggressive behaviour in a client's relationship. Inquiring about specific behaviours should be accompanied by a richer discussion of the circumstances in which the aggression occurred, the history of similar occurrences, and the client's attitudes about these events. In particular, given the strong links between power/control and dating aggression throughout the present findings, clinicians should work to gain an understanding of whether, and in what ways, a client's involvement in dating aggression is related to power assertions and attempts to

control a partner. These types of conversations and questions may help clinicians get a better understanding of a client's relationship, which may then help guide further therapeutic efforts and discussions.

Second, findings regarding a disconnect between attitudes and behaviour point to a need for clinicians to be mindful that there may be discrepancies between the explicit beliefs discussed by clients and their behaviour. Hearing from a teen or young adult client that they do not condone dating aggression does not necessarily mean that they are categorically not at risk of being involved in dating aggression (Jouriles et al., 2003; Schumacher & Smith Slep, 2004). Similarly, clinicians should be aware that teen and young adult clients may struggle to identify problematic behaviour in their own relationships while readily labeling and passing judgment on similar behaviour in their peers' relationships. As a result, asking young people to think about what advice they would give a friend may be a useful way of encouraging them to think about and discuss how to handle involvement in an aggressive dating relationship.

Third, results suggested that prevention and intervention efforts are indeed impactful, but should be tailored in a few specific ways to be most efficacious. Specifically, due to the different attitudes, experiences, and influences on girls and boys, prevention and intervention efforts would likely benefit from having gender specific components. In particular, mixed method findings revealed that a person's alignment with traditional gender role beliefs differed depending on method of assessment, but that both men and women hold somewhat sexist beliefs. Women reported less sexist beliefs on questionnaires but made implications and used language deeply rooted in patriarchy and misogyny during focus group discussions. Thus, it would be incorrect for developers

and facilitators of intervention programs to assume that women do not hold traditional gender role beliefs to the same extent as men. Indeed, the present results point to the need to discuss sexism and respect with all young people. In this vein, one evaluation of Safe Dates, a primary and secondary prevention program for dating violence found that dating violence was indeed reduced by the program and that dating aggression norms and gender stereotyping were two main mechanisms behind this change (Foshee et al., 1998).

Fourth, results from this and other studies indicated that whereas verbal/emotional/psychological aggression was reported more frequently than all other types, it was also the most accepted form of partner aggression in youth. These findings point to the importance of extending public education and prevention efforts to emphasize the harm and seriousness of verbal/emotional aggression specifically. Appreciation of the impact of verbal/emotional aggression likely has lagged behind appreciation of the harmful consequences of physical and sexual aggression. However, given the potential for significant psychological harm stemming from verbal/emotional aggression, public awareness and understanding of this type of aggression is an important area for change. Indeed, the reduction in perpetration of psychological abuse following the Safe Dates program described above was due in part to an increase in perception of the negative consequences of such abuse (Foshee et al., 1998). Thus, continued effort to educate young people about the harm associated with emotional/psychological aggression remains an important facet of primary and secondary prevention of dating aggression.

Fifth, the present results underscore the importance of family and friends in the lives of youth, particularly with respect to how partner aggression is understood and viewed. Consistent with social learning theory, family and peers emerged as a powerful

force that should be used to promote healthy relationships and attitudes in young people. It will likely be important to appeal to parents and peers and educate them about the key roles they play in the developing beliefs and behaviour of youth. Indeed, programs focusing on bystanders to dating violence are a promising new direction in prevention efforts (Flood, 2011; Lonsway et al., 2009). Senn and her colleagues (2015) implemented a bystander education program at the University of Windsor that was designed to help students understand the importance of their role in reducing sexual assault by speaking out on gender norms that support such behaviour and safely interrupting situations that could lead to sexual assault. Evaluations of this and other bystander based prevention programs (Katz & Moore, 2013), indicated that such programming increases bystander efficacy and proactive bystander behaviour (Senn et al., 2015). Thus, continuing to grow this branch of dating aggression prevention and intervention programs targeted specifically to peers and family members would be a valuable future direction for prevention and intervention efforts.

Overall, results from the present study contribute to our understanding of how emerging adults view partner aggression as well as the important factors in their lives that help shape these views. Perhaps more importantly, the present results also point to the need to extend existing measurement practices so that future studies can more accurately capture the nuanced views young people hold about partner aggression. Certainly, more research is needed to better understand how young people's views can be best captured during research studies and used to promote healthy romantic relationships.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer (St. Clair College)



Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

Are you between the ages of 16 and 20?

Have you had a sexual or romantic relationship with someone of the opposite sex?

If yes: you are eligible to participate in a research study being conducted through the University of Windsor about conflict in romantic relationships

- **We are looking for:** college students to participate in an online survey about dating relationships
- **You would be asked to:** fill out an online survey
- **Participation will take:** about 35 minutes to complete the questionnaire
- **In appreciation of your time you will receive \$15**

For more information or to volunteer for this study, go to:
study URL here

OR

Contact Kelly Anthony-Brown at E-mail: anthonyk@uwindsor.ca

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from the University of Windsor Research

Appendix B: Qualitative Phase Description for E-mail Recruitment

Dear _____,

You recently completed a research study through the University of Windsor entitled, Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships. At the end of this study you provided your contact information and consented to being re-contacted about future studies.

I am writing to let you know that you are eligible to participate in Part II of this study. This new study asks students to participate in small group discussions to get more information about their views about conflict in dating relationships. Participation would involve coming to a one-time session on campus that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. To compensate you for your time you will receive either course credit points (University of Windsor students) or \$20.00 (St. Clair College Students).

If you are interested in participating or would like more information please contact Kelly at: anthonyk@uwindsor.ca or (519) 253-3000 ext. 4887 or go to the study website:
study website here

Thank you for considering volunteering for this research study,

Sincerely,

Kelly Anthony-Brown

Appendix C: Qualitative Phase Description for Phone Recruitment

Hello _____,

My name is Kelly and I am calling from the psychology department/the University of Windsor. You recently completed a study called Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships that I conducted at the University. At the end of that study you gave me permission to contact you about future studies. Do you remember participating in this study?

I am calling because you are eligible to participate in phase two of this study. Would you be willing to hear more about this next phase?

IF NO:

Ok, thank you again for participating and for your time today. Have a great day.

If YES:

Great! Participation would involve coming to campus and taking part in a group discussion to talk about some of the same issues like conflict with dating partners in a bit more depth. It is a one-time commitment and will take about 60-90 minutes of your time. It is completely voluntary and you can stop participating at any time. You'll get 1.5 bonus credits/20 dollars to thank you for your time. Are you interested in booking an appointment to participate?

IF NO:

Ok, thank you again for participating and for your time today. Have a great day.

IF YES:

Book the participant for a focus group and provide them with the time and location
Thank you so much for your interest! I will send you a reminder email or phone call the day before.

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer for Qualitative Phase



Males Wanted for Research Study...

- Are you a male between the ages of 16 and 20?
- Are you heterosexual?
- Have you never been in a sexual/romantic relationship with someone of the same sex?

If yes: you are eligible to participate in a research study being conducted through the University of Windsor about attitudes regarding conflict in romantic relationships

WHAT: Participation in a focus group discussion

WHERE: University of Windsor campus

WHEN: Contact Kelly at anthonyk@uwindsor.ca to schedule

HOW LONG: 60-90 minutes

You will receive \$20 as a thank-you for participating

For more information or to volunteer for this study, email Kelly at:

anthonyk@uwindsor.ca

**This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

I am _____ years old.

2. Are you currently enrolled as a student at the University of Windsor?

Yes

No

3. Are you currently enrolled as a student at St. Clair College?

Yes

No

4. What year of study are you in?

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Fifth Year or Above

5. What is your major or what program are you registered in?

6. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Other

7. Which race(s), ethnicity(ies), or culture(s) do you identify with the most?

8. Are you an international student currently studying in Canada?

Yes

No

9. What, if any, is your religious affiliation?

8. With what sexual orientation do you identify most?

- Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other
- Not sure

9. Are you currently, or have you ever been in a sexual or romantic relationship with someone of the same sex?

Yes

No

10. What is your current relationship status?

- Single
- Dating
- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Engaged
- Cohabiting

11. Who do you currently live with (check all that apply)?

- Nobody
- Dating partner
- Roommate(s) who is not my current dating partner.
- Parent(s) or other Family Member(s)
- Other (specify)

12. What is your parent 1's level of education:

- Elementary school
- Some high school (e.g., Grade 9 and 10)
- Graduated from high school
- Some community college or technical school
- Graduated from community college or technical school
- Some university
- Graduated from university
- More than four years of university
- Other (please specify) _____

13. In question 12, who is parent 1?

- Mother
- Father
- Grandparent
- Other (specify)

14. What is your parent 2's level of education:

- Elementary school
- Some high school (e.g., Grade 9 and 10)
- Graduated from high school
- Some community college or technical school
- Graduated from community college or technical school
- Some university
- Graduated from university
- More than four years of university
- Other (please specify) _____

15. In question 15 (or 14 if you delete the Q above), who is parent 2?

- Mother
- Father
- Grandparent
- Other (specify)

16. What is parent 1's highest level of education?

- Less than high school
- High School Diploma
- Vocational / Technical School
- College Diploma

Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctoral Degree
Professional Degree (e.g., MD)
Other (specify)
Unknown

17. What is your parents' combined income (make your best estimate)?

Under \$20,000
\$20,000 to \$39,999
\$40,000 to \$59,999
\$60,000 to \$79,999
\$80,000 to \$99,999
\$100,000 or Greater

Appendix F: Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form

Please answer the following statements according to your personal beliefs. Mark each statement true or false by checking the appropriate box.

	True	False
1. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.		
2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my own way.		
3. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.		
4. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.		
5. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.		
6. There have been occasions where I took advantage of someone.		
7. I'm always willing to admit it if I make a mistake.		
8. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.		
9. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.		
10. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.		
11. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.		
12. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.		
13. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.		

Appendix G: Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory

Please check the statement that best applies to you:

- I have not begun dating¹
- I have dated someone before and/or have/had a boyfriend/girlfriend [PEOPLE WHO CHECK THIS OPTION DO NOT FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING MEASURE]

The next few pages ask you to answer questions thinking about the person you are dating right now or someone you recently dated. Please check which person you will be thinking of when you answer these questions:

- the person I am dating right now
- a person I recently dated (within the past 3 months)
- a person I dated within the past year
- a person I dated more than a year ago

The following questions ask you about things that may have happened to you with your boyfriend/girlfriend while you were having an argument. Check the box that is your best estimate of how often these things have happened with your current or ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend in the past. Please remember that all answers are confidential. As a guide use the following scale:

Never: this has never happened in your relationship

Seldom: this has happened only 1-2 times in your relationship

Sometimes: this has happened about 3-5 times in your relationship

Often: this has happened 6 times or more in your relationship

During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend/girlfriend in the past year:

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often
1. I gave reasons for my side of the argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner gave reasons for his/her side of the argument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I touched my partner sexually when he/she did not want me to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner touched me sexually when I didn't want my partner to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I tried to turn my partner's friends against him/her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My partner tried to turn my friends against me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I did something to make my partner feel jealous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner did something to make me feel jealous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I destroyed or threatened to destroy something my partner valued	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner destroyed or threatened to destroy something I valued	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I told my partner that he/she was partly to blame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner told me that I was partly to blame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I brought up something bad that my partner had done in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner brought up something bad that I had done in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I threw something at my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner threw something at me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I said things just to make my partner angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner said things just to make me angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I gave my partner reasons why I thought he/she was wrong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner gave me reasons why he/she thought I was wrong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend/girlfriend in the past year:

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often
11. I agreed that my partner was partly right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner agreed that I was partly right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I spoke to my partner in a hostile or mean tone of voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner spoke to me in a hostile or mean tone of voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I forced my partner to have sex when my partner didn't want to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner forced me to have sex when I didn't want to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I offered a solution that I thought would make us both happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner offered a solution that he/she thought would make us both happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I threatened my partner in an attempt to have sex with him/her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner threatened me in an attempt to have sex with me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I put off talking until we calmed down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My partner put off talking until we calmed down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. I insulted my partner with put-downs

My partner insulted me with put-downs

Never: this has never happened in your relationship

Seldom: this has happened only 1-2 times in your relationship

Sometimes: this has happened about 3-5 times in your relationship

Often: this has happened 6 times or more in your relationship

18. I discussed the issue calmly

My partner discussed the issue calmly

19. I kissed my partner when he/she didn't want me to

My partner kissed me when I didn't want him/her to

20. I said things to my partner's friends to turn them against him/her

My partner said things to my friends about me to turn them against me

During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend/girlfriend in the past year:

21. I ridiculed my partner or made fun of my partner in front of others

My partner ridiculed or made fun of me in front of others

22. I told my partner how upset I was

My partner told me how upset he/she was

23. I kept track of who my partner was with and where he/she was

My partner kept track of who I was with and where I was

24. I blamed my partner for the problem

My partner blamed me for the problem

25. I kicked, hit, or punched my partner

My partner kicked, hit or punched me

During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend/girlfriend in the past year:

26. I left the room to cool down

My partner left the room to cool down

27. I gave in, just to avoid conflict

My partner gave in, just to avoid conflict

28. I accused my partner of flirting with another guy/girl

My partner accused me of flirting with another guy/girl

Never: this has never happened in your relationship

Seldom: this has happened only 1-2 times in your relationship

Sometimes: this has happened about 3-5 times in your relationship

Often: this has happened 6 times or more in your relationship

29. I deliberately tried to frighten my partner

My partner deliberately tried to frighten me

During a conflict or argument with my boyfriend/girlfriend in the past year:

Never Seldom Sometimes Often

30. I slapped my partner or pulled my partner's hair

My partner slapped me or pulled my hair

31. I threatened to hurt my partner

My partner threatened to hurt me

32. I threatened to end the relationship

My partner threatened to end the relationship

33. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner

My partner threatened to hit me or throw something at me

34. I pushed, shoved, or shook my partner

My partner pushed, shoved, or shook me

35. I spread rumours about my partner

My partner spread rumours about me

Appendix H: Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

0 = disagree strongly

1 = disagree somewhat

2 = disagree slightly

3 = agree slightly

4 = agree somewhat

5 = agree strongly

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

0 1 2 3 4 5

2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."

0 1 2 3 4 5

3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.

0 1 2 3 4 5

4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

0 1 2 3 4 5

5. Women are too easily offended.

0 1 2 3 4 5

6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.

0 1 2 3 4 5

7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.

0 1 2 3 4 5

8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.

0 1 2 3 4 5

9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.

0 1 2 3 4 5

10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.

0 1 2 3 4 5

11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

0 1 2 3 4 5

12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

0 1 2 3 4 5

13. Men are complete without women.

0 1 2 3 4 5

14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

0 1 2 3 4 5

15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

0 1 2 3 4 5

16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

0 1 2 3 4 5

17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.

0 1 2 3 4 5

18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.

0 1 2 3 4 5

19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.

0 1 2 3 4 5

20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

0 1 2 3 4 5

21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.

0 1 2 3 4 5

22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix I: Multidimensional Power Measure

- 1 = Not at all**
2 = A little
3 = Somewhat
4 = Quite a bit
5 = A lot

1. To what degree does being involved with your partner increase your contact with people who you desire to be associated with?

1 2 3 4 5

2. To what degree does being involved with you increase your partner's contact with people he or she desires to be associated with?

1 2 3 4 5

- 1 = Never**
2 = Seldom
3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently
5 = Almost Always

3. My partner sees me as not measuring up to him/her

1 2 3 4 5

4. I think that my partner looks down on me

1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel that my partner sees me as not good enough

1 2 3 4 5

6. My partner sees me as small and insignificant

1 2 3 4 5

7. I feel insecure about my partner's opinion of me

1 2 3 4 5

8. My partner sees me as unimportant compared to others

1 2 3 4 5

9. My partner sees me as defective as a person

1 2 3 4 5

1 = My partner always does

2 =

3 = We both do

4 =

5 = I always do

10. When you and your partner disagree on something, who usually wins?

1 2 3 4 5

11. Who decides how much time you should spend together?

1 2 3 4 5

12. Who generally decides what you and your partner do together?

1 2 3 4 5

13. When you and your partner talk about important things, who usually makes the final decision?

1 2 3 4 5

14. When it comes to decisions about sex, who usually has the final say?

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix J: Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 =
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

1. There is no excuse for a girl to threaten her boyfriend

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
2. There is never a good enough reason for a girl to swear at her boyfriend

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
3. Girls have a right to tell their boyfriend how to dress. A guy should always do what his girlfriend tells him to do.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
4. If a girl yells and screams at her boyfriend it does not really hurt him seriously.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
5. Girls have a right to tell their boyfriends what to do.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
6. It is important for a guy to always dress the way his girlfriend wants.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
7. Sometimes girls just can't help but swear at their boyfriends.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
8. A guy should always ask his girlfriend first before going out with his friends.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
9. It is O.K. for a girl to bad mouth her boyfriend.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
10. It is understandable when a girl gets so angry that she yells at her boyfriend.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
11. Sometimes girls have to threaten their boyfriends so that they will listen.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
12. A girl should not control what her boyfriend wears.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
13. It is O.K. for a girl to slap her boyfriend if he deserves it.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1 = Strongly Agree

2 = Agree

3 =

4 = Disagree

5 = Strongly Disagree

14. It is no big deal if a girl shoves her boyfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Sometimes girls just cannot stop themselves from punching their boyfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

16. Some guys deserve to be slapped by their girlfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

17. Sometimes a girl must hit her boyfriend so that he will respect her.

1 2 3 4 5

18. A girl usually does not slap her boyfriend unless he deserves it.

1 2 3 4 5

19. A girl should not hit her boyfriend regardless of what he has done.

1 2 3 4 5

20. There is never a reason for a guy to get slapped by his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

21. Pulling hair is a good way for a girl to get back at her boyfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

22. It is never O.K. for a girl to slap her boyfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

23. Some girls have to pound their boyfriends to make them listen.

1 2 3 4 5

24. A guy should break up with a girl when she slaps him.

1 2 3 4 5

25. A girl should not touch her boyfriend unless he wants to be touched.

1 2 3 4 5

26. There is nothing wrong with a guy changing his mind about having sex.

1 2 3 4 5

27. A guy should break up with his girlfriend if she has forced him to have sex.

1 2 3 4 5

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 =
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

28. A girl should only touch her boyfriend where he wants to be touched.

1 2 3 4 5

29. A guy who goes into a girl's bedroom is agreeing to sex.

1 2 3 4 5

30. It is alright for a girl to force her boyfriend to kiss her.

1 2 3 4 5

31. Girls should never get their boyfriends drunk to get them to have sex.

1 2 3 4 5

32. If a guy says "yes" to sex while drinking, he is still allowed to change his mind.

1 2 3 4 5

33. After a couple is going steady, the girl should not force her boyfriend to have sex.

1 2 3 4 5

34. Girls should never lie to their boyfriends to get them to have sex.

1 2 3 4 5

35. To prove his love, it is important for a guy to have sex with his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

1. A guy should not insult his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

2. A guy should not tell his girlfriend what to do.

1 2 3 4 5

3. A girl should ask her boyfriend first before going out with her friends.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Relationships always work best when girls please their boyfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

5. There is never a reason for a guy to threaten his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Sometimes guys just can't help but swear at their girlfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

1 = Strongly Agree

2 = Agree

3 =

4 = Disagree

5 = Strongly Disagree

7. A girl should always change her ways to please her boyfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

8. A girl should always do what her boyfriend tells her to do.

1 2 3 4 5

9. A guy does not need to know his girlfriend's every move.

1 2 3 4 5

10. There is never a good enough reason for a guy to swear at his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

11. It is understandable when a guy gets so angry that he yells at his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

12. It is O.K. for a guy to bad mouth his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

13. There is never a reason for a guy to yell and scream at his girlfriend

1 2 3 4 5

14. It is important for a girl to always dress the way her boyfriend wants.

1 2 3 4 5

15. A girl should break up with a guy when he hits her.

1 2 3 4 5

16. Some girls deserve to be slapped by their boyfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

17. It is never O.K. for a guy to hit his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

18. Sometimes guys just cannot stop themselves from punching their girlfriends.

1 2 3 4 5

19. Sometimes a guy cannot help hitting his girlfriend when she makes him angry.

1 2 3 4 5

20. There is no good reason for a guy to slap his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

21. Sometimes jealousy makes a guy so crazy that he must slap his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

1 = Strongly Agree

2 = Agree

3 =

4 = Disagree

5 = Strongly Disagree

22. Girls who cheat on their boyfriends should be slapped.

1 2 3 4 5

23. Sometimes love makes a guy so crazy that he hits his girlfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

24. A guy usually does not slap his girlfriend unless she deserves it.

1 2 3 4 5

25. It is O.K. for a guy to slap his girlfriend if she deserves it.

1 2 3 4 5

26. When a guy pays on a date, it is O.K. for him to pressure his girlfriend for sex.

1 2 3 4 5

27. Guys do not own their girlfriends' bodies.

1 2 3 4 5

28. When guys get really sexually excited, they cannot stop themselves from having sex.

1 2 3 4 5

29. Guys should never get their girlfriends drunk to get them to have sex.

1 2 3 4 5

30. A guy should not touch his girlfriend unless she wants to be touched.

1 2 3 4 5

31. It is alright for a guy to force his girlfriend to kiss him.

1 2 3 4 5

32. Often guys have to be rough with their girlfriends to turn them on.

1 2 3 4 5

33. To prove her love, it is important for a girl to have sex with her boyfriend.

1 2 3 4 5

34. A girl who goes into a guy's bedroom is agreeing to sex.

1 2 3 4 5

35. It is no big deal to pressure a girl into having sex.

1 2 3 4 5

36. It is alright to pressure a girl to have sex if she has had sex in the past.

1 2 3 4 5

37. After a couple is going steady, the guy should not force his girlfriend to have sex.

1

2

3

4

5

Appendix K: Focus Group Interview Guide

Opening Question

1. We are meeting to talk about your views, opinions, and feelings about conflict in dating relationships. To begin, what types of words do you use to label romantic relationships or involvement?

Introductory Question

2. As I mentioned we are here to talk about conflict in dating relationships. (a) When I talk about dating aggression, what sorts of things do you think about? (b) What about when I talk about violence? What about abuse?

Transition Question

3. There is a lot of talk these days about violence or abuse that goes on in romantic relationships, including dating relationships. Are there things that go on between university/college students that you would call violence or abuse?

Key Questions

4. One issue we have talked about is the types of violent acts or behaviours. Let's discuss these one at a time: (a) emotional/verbal abuse, (b) physical abuse, (c) sexual abuse

I've separated these three types, but talk about whether these types ever happen at the same time, or go together, or are related or not?

5. Where or when is it "ok" to use these behaviours?

6. What people or things influence your definitions of what dating violence is? Where do your definitions come from?

7. Are there people your age who you know disagree with you or have different views of these types of behaviours? What do they think? What do your friends think? What do your parents think?

Ending Question

8. Given everything we have discussed today, what stood out as most important for you? What would you have liked to comment on more?

Summary

9. [Provide summary of group's points.] Is my summary of our group's discussion accurate? Have I left out any important points?

Ending Question

10. Is there anything we have missed? Are there other questions that need to be asked in reference to dating violence and how you define it?

Appendix L: Qualitative Phase Description for Participant Pool Recruitment

Description: The purpose of this study is to find out more about thoughts and feelings young people have about conflict in romantic relationships. We want to learn more about how young people feel about these experiences so that we can better understand their point of view.

Duration: 60 minutes

Points: 1

Testing Dates: This study is conducted online and can be completed at any time.

Restrictions: You are eligible to participate in this study if:

- You are male
- You are between the ages of 16 and 20 years old
- You identify primarily as being heterosexual
- You have never been in a sexual or romantic relationship with someone of the same sex

Research Contact Information:

Kelly Anthony-Brown, graduate student, anthonyk@uwindsor.ca
Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, supervisor, pfritz@uwindsor.ca

Appendix M: Information Letter for Quantitative Phase



Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships

My name is Kelly Anthony-Brown and I am a graduate student from the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. I am looking for university students who are interested in participating in a research study.

You can participate if:

- You are between the ages of 16 and 20 years old
- You identify primarily as being heterosexual
- You have never been in a sexual or romantic relationship with someone of the opposite sex

The purpose of this study is to find out more about thoughts and feelings young people have about romantic relationships. We want to find out more about what thoughts and feelings are related to conflicts and other relationship qualities. Information gathered from this study will be used for my PhD dissertation research, under the supervision of Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, a professor from the Department of Psychology.

If you decide you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey about your experiences in romantic relationships (if applicable), difficulties in your dating relationships (if applicable), and what you think about types of conflict that happen in relationships. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. **Your answers will remain confidential and will not affect your grades or your standing at the University of Windsor.** Your answers will only be released as summaries grouped with other people's responses. Completing the entire survey should take you between 30 and 45 minutes.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or would like any extra information, please feel free to contact me through email at anthonyk@uwindsor.ca. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707).

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you! Please print this letter for your records.

Kelly Anthony-Brown
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Psychology
University of Windsor

Appendix N: Consent Form for Quantitative Phase



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships**

You are asked to participate in an online research study conducted by Kelly Anthony-Brown, a graduate student from the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. Information gathered from this study will be used as part of Kelly's PhD dissertation. This research will be supervised by Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, a professor from the Department of Psychology. The Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Windsor has given permission for this research study to take place.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me through email at anthonyk@uwindsor.ca. You are also welcome to contact my research supervisor, Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out more about thoughts and feelings young people have about conflict in romantic relationships. We want to learn more about how young people feel about these experiences so that we can better understand their point of view.

PROCEDURES

- Read through this consent form to decide whether you would like to participate in the study.
- You can print a copy of:
 - this consent form by clicking on the "Print Form" button
 - the "Web Safety Instruction" form by clicking on the "Print Web Safety Instruction" button, and
 - the "Resource List" by clicking on the "Print Resource List" button.
- Click the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you would like to participate. By clicking the "I Agree" button, you have given consent to participate.
- To enter the study, you will need to enter the **User ID** and **password** provided at the bottom of this page. Please **DO NOT** use your University of Windsor User ID and password.
- Please follow the instructions at the beginning of each survey section before completing the surveys and answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible.

You will be asked to fill out a survey about your thoughts and feelings about dating relationships and the types of conflicts that can occur in dating relationships, as well as your experiences in dating relationships (if applicable). Please answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. Your responses will be automatically sent to the researchers over a secure Internet connection. This survey may be completed in any location and will take about 30-45 minutes to complete.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This study does not have any major risks except that you may have some negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, anger) in response to some of the things that you will be asked to think about and

share. However, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating in this study at any time without penalty. Should you experience any form of distress after being in this study, please either contact someone from the list of community resource found below or contact Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz. Additional resources and sources of help in the community will be provided to all people taking part in this study. Please contact any of these sources if you would like to talk more about any of your experiences.

Teen Health Centre (THC)

519-253-8481

www.teenhealthcentre.com

Essex Youth Centre

519-776-9000

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

Amherstburg Community Services

519-736-5471

Maryvale Adolescent & Family Services

519-258-0484

Windsor-Essex Youth Line

519-973-7671

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& Safekids Care Center**

519-255-2234

Distress Centre Line Windsor / Essex

519-256-5000

**Community Crisis Centre of
Windsor-Essex County**

519-973-4411 ext. 3277

24 Hour Crisis Line

519-973-443

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Information obtained from this study will add to our understanding about what allows young people to have good relationships. Such information can be used to help raise awareness and develop prevention and treatment programs aimed at helping individuals build healthy relationships. In addition, some people report that they learn something about themselves in the process. Your participation will help us learn more about the experiences young people have in romantic relationships and what they think about conflicts that occur with romantic partners. We want to learn more about how young people feel about these experiences so that we can better understand their point of view.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

If you are enrolled in a psychology course that offers bonus credit points for participating in psychology studies, you will receive **1 bonus credit point** for completing this online survey. In order to receive your bonus credit you will be asked to click the "Click here to receive bonus points" button on the debriefing page. If you click this button your name and student number will be downloaded to a separate file and you will receive your points. If you click to receive bonus marks you will no longer be anonymous – the experimenter will know that you participated in the study. If at any time you choose to stop participating and/or withdraw your responses you will still be directed to the debriefing form and given the option of clicking to receive your bonus points. You may choose not to receive bonus credit.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. All of the information that you fill out in the survey will be kept private and will only be accessed by researchers directly involved with the study. Information about the computer and Internet service provider you are using will not be collected. Your survey

responses are entered into a non-identifiable data file with other people's responses. This data file will be downloaded onto a password-protected computer accessed only by researchers in this study. In accordance with the American Psychological Association, your data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after they have been published.

Your participation in the study will be anonymous unless you would like to receive bonus points for participation or be contacted for future research studies. At the end of the study you will be asked to click a button "Click here to receive bonus points." If you click this button your name and student number will be downloaded into a separate file from your responses and the researchers will assign your points. Only the researchers will have access to this file. If you wish to remain completely anonymous, do not click to receive bonus marks. Also at the end of the study you will be invited to give consent to be contacted about participation in future research studies. If you consent to be contacted you will be asked to enter your contact information (name, email, phone number). Only the researchers will have access to your contact information. If you wish to remain completely anonymous, do not consent to be contacted for future research. Your contact information will not be used for anything but arranging bonus points for participation and future research participation. Once you have received your bonus points and/or have been contact for future participation, all your contact information will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You will still receive course credit even if you choose not to answer certain questions or choose to exit the survey at any time. You can withdraw your survey at any time before the end of the survey by clicking on the "Withdraw Data" button at the bottom of each page. Once you have submitted your survey, however, it is no longer possible to withdraw your data.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

When this research study is finished, we will write a summary of the study results that you can access through the University of Windsor REB website (<http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb>) in the Fall of 2012.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

By clicking on the button labelled "I agree and wish to continue", I understand the information written above for the study **Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships**. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I am encouraged to print this form for my records.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix O: Consent for Future Contact

Would you be willing to be contacted in the future about other research studies to earn either money or additional research credits?

_____ No
 _____ Yes

As a participant in the Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships Study, I understand that the research staff may want to contact me in the future to discuss my possible participation in additional research. By giving my permission to be contacted in the future, I am agreeing only to discuss further participation, and I understand that I am completely free to decline further participation without giving a reason and without penalty. I also understand that giving my permission to be recontacted does not change the fact that all the information I have provided to the Study so far is confidential.

By entering my contact information and clicking “I Agree” below means that I have read the information in this consent form, and that I agree to be contacted in the future.

Name: _____
 Phone No.: _____
 E-mail(s): _____

Appendix P: Quantitative Phase Feedback Form

Thank you for participating. We are interested in studying teenagers' thoughts and feelings about conflict in dating relationships. We are focusing on the attitudes that young people have about conflict that occurs between romantic partners.

We hope that this research study will give us a better understanding of what people your age think about conflict that occurs between romantic partners. Thank you for helping us find out more about this topic.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (anthonyk@uwindsor.ca) or my supervisor (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

Once the study is finished, you will be able to view a report on the study results on the University of Windsor website: <http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb>

Thank you for your participation!

Sometimes when young people have questions or problems they may not know who to talk to or where to get help. Here is a list of services that are available in your area. If you, a friend, or a family member have questions, would like someone to talk to, or need help with a problem, one of these resources may be able to help

<http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>

www.awhl.org

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519-256-5000

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519-973-4411 ext. 3277

24 Hour Crisis Line

519-973-443

Appendix Q: Information and Consent Forms for Qualitative Phase



Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships – Part II

My name is Kelly Anthony-Brown and I am a graduate student from the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. I am looking for students who are interested in participating in Part II of a research study.

You can participate if:

- You are between the ages of 16 and 20 years old
- You identify primarily as being a heterosexual
- You have never been in a sexual or romantic relationship with someone of the same sex

The purpose of this study is to find out more about thoughts and feelings young people have about romantic relationships – in their own words. We want to find out more about what thoughts and feelings are related to conflicts and other relationship qualities. Information gathered from this study will be used for my PhD dissertation research, under the supervision of Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, a professor from the Department of Psychology.

If you decide you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a group interview in which you will be asked to share your thoughts and feelings about conflict that occurs in dating relationships. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. **Your answers and comments in the discussion will remain confidential and will not affect your grades or your standing at the University of Windsor.** Your answers and discussion comments will not be associated with your name or identifying information in any way. Participation in the group interview should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Group interviews will take place at the University of Windsor campus.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or would like any extra information, please feel free to contact me through email at anthonyk@uwindsor.ca. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707).

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you! Please keep this page for your records.

Kelly Anthony-Brown, M.A.
PhD Candidate
Department of Psychology



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: **Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships – Part II**

You are asked to take part in a research study conducted by Kelly Anthony-Brown, a graduate student from the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. Information gathered from this study will be used as part of her PhD dissertation. This research will be supervised by Dr. Patti Fritz, a professor from the Department of Psychology.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or would like any extra information, please feel free to contact me through email at anthonyk@uwindsor.ca. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Patti Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out more about thoughts and feelings young people have about romantic relationships – in their own words. We want to learn more about how young people feel about these experiences so that we can better understand their point of view.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

First, please read through this consent form and decide whether you would like to take part in this study. To begin the study please do the following:

- 1) After reading this consent form, you may sign at the bottom in the space provided. By signing this form you are providing consent to participate in this study.
- 2) Please follow the interview moderator's instructions for beginning the discussion.

You will be asked to participate in a group interview about your thoughts and feelings about dating relationships and the types of conflict that can occur in dating relationships. The interview moderator will help facilitate discussion by asking questions. You will be invited to share your thoughts and feelings in response to these questions and/or in response to other people's comments. You may participate as much or as little as you would like in the discussion. Please answer the questions and participate in the discussion as openly and honestly as possible. The entire discussion will be audio recorded and notes will be taken by a research assistant during the discussion. This group interview will take place at the University of Windsor campus and will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This study does not have any major risks except that you may have some negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, anger) in response to some of the things that you will be asked to think about and share. However, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating in this study at any time without penalty. Should you experience any form of distress after being in this study, please either contact someone from the list of community resource found below or contact Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz. Additional resources and sources of help in the community will be provided to all people taking part in this study. Please contact any of these sources if you would like to talk more about any of your experiences.

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24 Hour Crisis Line

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POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Information obtained from this study will add to our understanding about what allows young people to have good relationships. Such information can be used to help raise awareness and develop prevention and treatment programs aimed at helping individuals build healthy relationships. In addition, some people report that they learn something about themselves in the process. Although you will not gain any personal benefit from being in this study, your participation will help us learn more about the experiences young people have in romantic relationships and what they think about conflicts that occur with romantic partners. We want to learn more about how young people feel about these experiences so that we can better understand their point of view.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will receive 1 bonus point for 60 minutes of participation towards the psychology participant pool, if registered in the pool and enrolled in one or more eligible courses. In order to receive your bonus credits you will be asked to write down your name and email for the researcher. This identifying information will be kept separate from discussion group data and accessed only by the researcher for the purpose of assigning bonus credit points. If at any time you choose to stop participating and/or withdraw your responses you will still be given a debriefing form and given the option of providing your name and email to receive your bonus points. You will receive compensation no matter how much or how little you participate in the group discussion.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The focus group is a group event. This means that while confidentiality of all the information given by the participants will be protected by the researchers themselves, this information will be heard by all the participants and therefore will not be strictly confidential. The following steps will be taken in an effort to keep your personal information confidential in this study:

- (1) Your research records (questionnaire and audio recordings) will not have any identifying information on them, but will instead be coded with a number;
- (2) Your data (including the audio recordings) will be stored in a secured, limited access location;
- (3) Only research staff directly involved with the study will have access to your information;
- (4) Your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation of the results of this research.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed; your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. This means that there may be rare situations that require us to release personal information about you (for instance, in cases in which a judge requires such release in a lawsuit; if you tell us of your intent to harm yourself or someone else; and behaviours consistent with child abuse). In terms of the audio recordings, your responses to interview questions will be transcribed (i.e., typed out) and content analyzed by trained research staff only. Once the audio recordings have been transcribed and content analyzed, they will be destroyed. Please note that the audio recordings will be identified only by a code number. You may listen to the audio recordings if you wish. **By signing this consent for you also agree to keep all information from discussion groups confidential (i.e., other participants' responses, comments, identities).**

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You will still be allowed to receive payment even if you do not answer all the survey questions.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

When this research study is finished, we will write a summary of the study results that you can access through the University of Windsor REB website (<http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb>) in the Fall of 2012.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study **Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships – Part II** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix R: Consent for Audio Recording

**CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING**

Participant's Name: _____

Title of the Project: **Understanding Thoughts and Feelings About Conflict in Dating Relationships – Part II**

I consent to the audio-taping of my interview.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by leaving the room or remaining silent for the remainder of the discussion. The taping will not stop if a participant wishes to withdrawal. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. The tape recordings will be filed by number only and stored in a secure, limited-access location.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio recording will be for professional use only.

I understand that transcriptions of my audio recordings may be used in subsequent studies.

Participant's Signature_____
Date

Appendix S: Feedback Form for Qualitative Phase

Thank you for participating. We are interested in studying older teenagers' thoughts and feelings about conflict, aggression, and violence in dating relationships. We are focusing on how young people define dating aggression and how their past experiences influence their attitudes about dating aggression. We want to get a better sense of what opinions people your age have about aggression between romantic partners and what influences in your life contribute to these opinions.

We hope that this research study will give us a better understanding of what you think about dating partners using aggressive behaviour with each other. Thank you for helping us find out more about this topic.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (anthonyk@uwindsor.ca) or my supervisor (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

Once the study is finished, you will be able to view a report on the study results on the University of Windsor website: <http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb>

Thank you for your participation and for keeping this discussion confidential!

Sometimes when young people have questions or problems they may not know who to talk to or where to get help. Here is a list of services that are available in your area. If you, a friend, or a family member have questions, would like someone to talk to, or need help with a problem, one of these resources may be able to help.

<http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>

www.awhl.org

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519-973-4411 ext. 3277

24 Hour Crisis Line

519-973-443

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Kelly Alexis Anthony-Brown

PLACE OF BIRTH: London, Ontario

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1982

EDUCATION: A. B. Lucas Secondary School, London, Ontario
1996-2001

Queen's University, B.A.H., Kingston, Ontario
2001-2005

University of Windsor, M.A., Windsor, Ontario
2007-2009

University of Windsor, Ph.D., Windsor, Ontario
2009-2016