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Melissa A. Kinsella

Illinois Wesleyan University, [mkinsell@iwu.edu](mailto:mkinsell@iwu.edu)

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Self-Reported Experiences of Dating Abuses among College Students  
in Romantic Relationships

Melissa Kinsella  
Illinois Wesleyan University  
April 25, 2014

Honors Committee  
James P. Sikora, Project Advisor  
Teodora Amoloza  
Meghan Burke  
Maura Toro-Morn

ABSTRACT

Past researchers have examined the prevalence of dating violence among college-aged students in the United States. Using a self-reported survey of the experiences of current college students, this study analyzed some of the factors related to physical, emotional, and sexual abuses in their romantic relationships. From that analysis, comparisons were drawn with the research from other college-university samples, attempting to describe and explore the problem of violence in premarital relationships. In the sample, race, number of past serious romantic relationships, and frequency of experienced anger was associated with minor physical abuse. Non-involvement in Greek Life was associated with experiencing major physical abuse. Gender, sexual orientation, and current year in school were associated with experiencing sexual abuse. Number of months spent in a most recent romantic relationship, consuming alcohol, and weekly alcohol consumption were associated with experiencing sexual abuse.

Dating violence prevails as a problem for college-aged students in the United States, with abusive behaviors linked to physical injury, substance abuse, low self-esteem, and mental disorders such as depression and certain anxiety disorders (Kaukinen et al. 2011; Christopher and Kisler 2012). That problem deserves attention. This study sought to do two things, to: 1) describe the factors affecting students' attitudes and experiences related to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in romantic relationships, and 2) compare the sample of respondents' responses to previous studies on university aged students' experiences of abuse in romantic relationships. Part of the present research examines the different motivations of college students, as developed in previous studies, primarily the possible effects of gender, membership in select campus organizations, relationship characteristics, alcohol consumption, and the effects of stress and anger on dating abuses (Makepeace 1981; 1983; 1986; 1987; LeJeune and Follette 1994; Williams and Smith 1994; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997; Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe 2001; Smith et al. 2003; Hettrich and O'Leary's 2007; Miller 2010; Kaukinen et al. 2011; Shorey et al. 2011; Christopher and Kisler 2012; Franklin et al. 2012; Leisring 2012; Mason and Smithey 2012).

### *Dating Abuse among College Aged Students*

In early research, Makepeace (1981), while studying parent-child violence and incidences of wife battering, observed that little past attention had been devoted to the study of courtship violence. That prompted him to study college students' experiences of dating and courtship violence resulting in a series of studies attempting to describe and explore the problem of violence in premarital relationships (Makepeace 1981; 1983; 1986; 1987). In his initial sample, Makepeace (1981:98) found that 21.2% of participants had experienced actual or threatened abuse from a dating partner. Other researchers reported that 19% of their student respondents reported at least one incidence of abuse (Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten 1985:203). And in a recent national survey, 43% of dating college-aged women reported experiencing abusive behaviors in their dating relationships (Knowledge Networks 2011:11). The general consensus is that, on average, 30% percent of respondents reported dating violence among college and high school students (Lewis and Fremouw 2001:109; Sugarman and Hotaling 1989:8).

The majority (61.5%) of respondents reported knowing someone in an abusive relationship (Makepeace 1981:98). Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten (1985:203) also found 61% of their college student sample personally knew about an incidence involving dating abuse. Similarly, a 2010 national survey found that 52% of college women reported knowing a friend who has experienced abusive dating behavior (Knowledge Networks 2011:11). Whether abuse is happening to a peer or themselves, physical abuse seems fairly common in college-aged romantic relationships, with one estimate of one in four college students indicating that they were in a romantic relationship where "at least two acts of physical abuse [occurred], as a recipient, perpetrator, or both" (Miller 2010:77). And 29% of college women indicated that they had been in an abusive dating relationship (Knowledge Networks 2011:11).

Furthermore, Smith, White, and Holland (2003) noted that the rates of dating abuse increased with each subsequent year of enrollment in a university. Over the duration of their study, 88% of the college women respondents experienced "at least one incident of physical or sexual victimization and 63.5% experienced both" (Smith et al. 2003:1106). By the end of the survey period, of the female respondents in their fourth year in college, 42.3% of women had self-reported that they had been verbally threatened with physical harm and 5.0% had been hit with something hard (Smith et al. 2003:1106). Furthermore, they found that 21% of the women respondents reported being "verbally sexually coerced" at least once by the end of their senior

year, and that all of the perpetrators of the reported abuses were listed as 'romantic partners' (Smith et al. 2003:1106). However, the study failed to address whether participants experienced abuse from one partner during the same relationship or were involved in multiple relationships, experiencing a series of abuses from multiple partners (Smith et al. 2003).

One way of considering the likelihood of violence developing within a relationship is to examine the level of seriousness and commitment within the relationship, hypothesizing that the more romantically involved a partnership, the more likely violence will develop (Arias et al. 1987; Hanley and O'Neill 1997; Lander 1983; Laner and Thompson 1982; Pederson and Thomas 1992 in Lewis and Fremouw 2001). Later research supported those previous findings: the length of a relationship is positively correlated with the chances of experiencing abuse in that relationship (Mason and Smithey 2012). Thus, the longer partners were involved in a romantic relationship, the greater their chances of experiencing abuse. Specifically, Mason and Smithey (2012) found a significant positive effect between time spent in a relationship and the likelihood of a partner committing physical assault or using sexual coercion.

#### *Types of dating abuse occurring within relationships*

Dating abuse for this paper includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Including the three different forms of abuse, rather than limiting the definition of abuse to only physical, examines the forms of abuse used and under what conditions they are used. There appears to be gender differences between the forms of abuse used by males and females. For example, women seem to be perpetrators of mostly emotional and physical abuse in dating relationships; in one study alone, 95% of the women indicated that they had perpetuated "at least one act of emotional abuse" against their romantic partner (Leisring 2012:1446). Their self-reported rates of emotional abuse were higher than rates of physical abuse; however, some women, 30.5% of the sample, admitted to committing "at least one act of physical aggression" against their romantic partner (Leisring 2012:1446). Considering only the perpetration of physical abuse, 30% of women respondents had committed minor physical aggression, while 6% had committed major, or severe, acts of physical aggression (Leisring 2012:1446).

The types of physical abuse used may differ for females compared to males, in that male respondents were more likely to sustain less severe forms of violence, such as "pushing slapping, kicking," while female respondents were more likely to sustain more severe forms of violence, "struck with an object, beaten up, other" (Makepeace 1986:384). Or, as reported recently, women were more likely to engage in physically aggressive behaviors such as "pushed, grabbed, or shoved; slapped; kick, bit, or hit," while males were more likely to try to physically restrain their partner and/or force oral sex (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007:1137). Lewis and Fremouw (2001) caution that it is important when reviewing rates of physical abuse perpetrated by males and females to keep in mind that males and females cannot do the same amount of harm, so to speak, to each other.

#### *Labeling abuses*

Whiting et al. (2012) noted that victims of abuse use several different strategies in order to avoid the label of abuse because victims do not wish to view themselves as someone who would "let abuse happen," or who would stay with an abuser. The researchers reported that often the victim makes excuses for the perpetrator's behavior, using denial to convince themselves the abuse never occurred, or combining denial with love and guilt to maintain a positive image of their partner. Denial also helped those victims protect their self-image, with many victims of

abuses feeling that their partner's actions reflected on them and their choice in individuals (Whiting et al. 2012). Victims minimized the abuse, as well as justified their partner's actions by validating their experiences of abuse as a condition of dating. Victims also blamed external factors, such as consuming alcohol, for their partner's actions, as well as blamed themselves for their partner's actions. Whiting et al. (2012) stated that it was common among abusers to use distortions, when an abusive partner convinces their partner to believe something they would not typically believe, to increase self-doubt and damage self-concept, which inevitably fuels the cycle of abuse.

Victims' perceptions of their abusive situations are largely manipulated, which may prevent them from viewing the situation as abusive (Whiting et al. 2012). The victims in Hammond and Calhoun's (2007) study indicated that more severe and less recent assaults, as well as assaults that happened without a current relationship to the perpetrator, were the most likely to be acknowledged. However, this finding led researchers to believe that while victims may likely label violence in a rape scenario, they may have difficulty labeling violence with an intimate partner, as evidenced by 14% of victims who reported sexual assault and continued a sexual relationship with the perpetrator (Hammond and Calhoun 2007:378). Distortion, self-blame, and guilt, as well as protecting one's self image, may be all at work to keep victims from labeling the abusive behaviors from a romantic partner as problematic, and from considering themselves victims.

#### *Women as victims of abuses*

Leisring's (2012:1446) research found that 24% of female respondents reported that they had received physical aggression from a romantic partner, and of those same women, 23% reported minor physical aggression, while 5% reported severe, or major, physical aggression. Kaukinen et al. (2011:152) found that 27% of college females self-identified as being victims of physical abuse within the twelve months prior to completing the survey. Christopher and Kisler (2012:166) reported that college women experience an overlap of verbal and physical aggression in relationships.

#### *Female perpetrators of physical abuse*

Despite commonly held beliefs that dating abuse is often one-sided, with the male partner as the likely perpetrator, past research has shown that dating abuse among college-aged students is more mutual (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007; Miller 2010; Kaukinen et al. 2011). In fact, in a recent research survey women were more likely than males to be perpetrators of physical abuse in dating relationships, with 30.4% of the females as perpetrators of physically abusive behavior based on the criteria of committing two or more abusive incidents, compared to 17.0% of male respondents who perpetrated physical abuse (Miller 2010:74). Similarly, Kaukinen, Gover, and Hartman (2011:152) found that women were just as likely, or more likely, to be the perpetrators of violence in romantic relationships; 39% of women respondents were perpetrators of physical abuse against their romantic partners. Hettrich and O'Leary (2007:1139) reported that 32% of their sample of female college students indicated perpetrating some sort of physical abuse against their partner. It appears as if roughly one-third of female partners were committing physical abuse against their romantic partners.

### *Women's motives for engaging in abusive behavior*

Women's most commonly reported motives for engaging in physical aggression were primarily motivated by emotional hurt, which can be understood in this context as emotional upset (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007; Leisring 2012). Moreover, Leisring (2012) further found that the motives for engaging in minor physical aggression and emotional abuse against one's romantic partner were the same, with women reporting anger, retaliation for emotional hurt, and stress as the main reasons. Hettrich and O'Leary (2007) also found that anger was listed among the top reasons for female partners to commit physical abuse. The most common reasons for physical abusive behavior that they found were, "anger, verbal argument that escalated, frustration, emotions hurt, retaliation for a verbal act, poor communication, to show seriousness, external act by the boyfriend, he lied, externally cued, and prevent boyfriend from leaving argument" (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007:1138).

Anger was the most common reason for physical abuse against a partner (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007), and in Leisring's research (2012:1448), 60% of the women respondents indicated anger as a motivation to engage in physical and emotional abuse against their romantic partner. Over 30% of the women who reported perpetuating minor physical aggression, and over 40% of the women who reported perpetuating severe physical aggression, engaged in the behavior as a form of retaliation for emotional hurt from romantic partners (Leisring 2012:1448). Interestingly enough, "drugs/alcohol" and "self-defense" topped the list for not being causes for females to engage in physical abuse against a partner (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007:1138).

### *Comparison of dating abuse between genders*

Men and women might not be identifying abuse the same way. Early on, Makepeace (1981:99) reported that 31.8% of his male respondents identified as a victim of dating violence, while 91.7% of female respondents identified as a victim. In a later study, Makepeace (1986:384) again reported that more female respondents identified as a victim compared to male respondents, 72.9% of females compared to 41.2% of males, respectively. When asked about their perpetration of abuse, no male respondents indicated their partner sustained a moderate or severe injury, although almost eight percent (7.7%) of female respondents reported a moderate to severe injury (Makepeace 1986:386). On the whole, male respondents did not perceive their partner ever receiving any injuries greater than their own (Makepeace 1986). The reported results that overall, males and females were experiencing similar rates of victimization, and perpetration, led Makepeace (1986) to suggest that perceptions of victimization affected reporting rates. Later research where males and females reported similar rates of victimization seems to support the possibility that reporting behavior is influenced by perceptions of victimization (Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Miller 2010). Analyzing a number of data sets, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989:8) noted that 36.2% of females and 33.3% of males reported experiencing victimization from a romantic partner. Even more recently, Miller (2010:74) noted that 25.0% of males, and 24.6% of females, reported experiencing at least two acts of physical abuse in their dating relationship.

### *Males' motives for engaging in abusive behavior*

While relationship factors become important predictors of women's perpetration of dating abuse, men may be more motivated by environmental, such as exposure to past family violence and the development of negative attitudes regarding gender, according to researchers Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe (2001). They concluded that negative beliefs about the opposite gender were

associated with the use of violence, as was the association with peers who endorsed similar negative views (Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe 2001). This is consistent with Miller's (2010) research, which revealed that males were significantly more likely than females to hold beliefs that endorse the acceptability of abuse within a romantic relationship. Miller (2010) surveyed undergraduates regarding their beliefs on the acceptability of dating abuse given their most recent/current dating relationships, and the majority of participants did not indicate that abuse was "normal, effective, appropriate, acceptable, or necessary" (Miller 2010:74). However, upon further examination, the data revealed significant gender differences in beliefs about abuse, specifically, males were 2.7 times more likely to believe that abuse is effective, 5.2 times more likely to believe abuse is appropriate, and 3.5 times more likely to believe that abuse is acceptable and necessary (Miller 2010:74).

#### *The complicated relationship between victimization and perpetration*

While Miller (2010) revealed that males and females reported similar rates of dating abuse for both perpetration and victimization, even more interesting was Gray and Foshee (1997:134) findings that 66.2% of their sample indicated mutual *violence* in their romantic relationship. Overall, Kaukinen et al. (2011:154) discovered a similar pattern, that 24.5% of women were both perpetrators and victims of physical abuse in their relationships. They concluded, based on their data, that the most likely explanation was mutual physical abuse occurring in romantic relationships: if a woman reports being the victim of physical abuse, she may also be perpetuating the behavior as well. Lewis and Fremouw (2001) acknowledge that in relationships where there is mutual violence, one partner may be initiating abuse while the other is responding with abuse as a defense mode. In a relationship with bidirectional abuse, Lewis and Fremouw (2001) argue that it is highly likely that partners may act as both perpetrators and victims of dating abuse.

Christopher and Kisler (2012:175) found similar results; however, they claimed that mutual abuse was only one reason for their results. Another hypothesis supported verbal aggression, and minor and major physical violence as explained by either "situational couple violence," or "intimate terrorism." Since their analysis showed a statistical association between sexual assault and minor and major physical violence, the researchers' concluded that participants were experiencing "intimate partner terrorism" (Christopher and Kisler 2012:176).

#### *The University Campus and Dating Abuse*

Branch, Richards and Dretsche (2013) maintain that young adults usually arrive at college with limited life experiences, and perhaps with even less knowledge about romantic relationships and what constitutes appropriate adult behavior. There can be difficulty recognizing abuses, and young adults may be particularly hesitant to admit abuse is occurring within their own relationship because of a sense of "failed independence," which the authors describe as "feel[ing] as if they have failed at taking care of themselves" (Branch et al. 2013:3388).

One of the aims of this research was an attempt to grasp a better understanding of the relationship between the university setting and dating abuse. Among the research on dating abuse, some of the factors researchers have proposed that influence the perpetration of abuse include: gender, social support buffers such as membership to a fraternity or sorority, relationship characteristics, levels of stress, and consumption of alcohol (Makepeace 1981; 1983; 1987; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; LeJeune and Follette 1994; Williams and Smith 1994; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997; Levin and Madfis 2009; Shorey et al. 2011; Mason and

Smithey 2012; Franklin et al. 2012). While not all of these factors are solely associated with the campus setting, it may be any one of these factors, or a combination, that turns the college campus into a setting where the perpetration of abuse occurs with little inquiry from outside sources. This research examines those variables on one college campus.

### *Academic strain*

Makepeace's (1983) data found a correlation between life change stress and dating abuse. There was a significant relationship between the amount of adverse life change and dating abuse, which was true for the male respondents, but not associated with female respondents (Makepeace 1983). Robert Merton (1938) proposed Strain Theory as a result of the lack of fit between culturally prescribed means and goals among certain individuals. He described innovation as the most common response to strain, consisting of using illegitimate means to achieve socially acceptable goals. Mason and Smithey (2012) hypothesized that dating abuse can be understood as an adaptation to strain in the form of innovation. They argue that in the case of college-aged students, earning a college degree is the socially prescribed goal that entails enough strain to cause individuals to resort to dating abuse. Moreover long-term strain such as trying to earn a degree, combined with short-term everyday strain, may increase the occurrence of violence (Levin and Madfis 2009 in Mason and Smithey 2012). Mason and Smithey (2012) argue that dating abuse can be viewed as trying to gain some control over an otherwise uncontrollable circumstance, perhaps not doing well in school. Academic strain may also increase along with year in school; more is expected from upper level students than a first-year student, which most likely coincides with levels of strain (Mason and Smithey 2012). As school becomes more difficult, or as students feel that they are losing control over their grades or falling behind in their classes, dating abuse may act as a release for students grappling with control.

Mason and Smithey (2012) even proposed that increased commitment most likely contributes to increased strain; the longer the duration of the relationship, the greater the exposure to strain. This could be due to the fact that as a relationship progresses, and becomes more serious, partners may expect more from each other. Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory contends that in addition to failure to achieve conventional goals, "escape from painful relationships" can also be a source of strain (Beirne and Messerschmidt 2011:118). Strain can occur through the presentation of negative stimuli, stressful life events such as an upset partner, or even a poor grade in a class. Agnew (1992) offers that events such as these can trigger negative emotions, i.e. anger which can then result in a negative response.

### *Male peer support*

DeKeseredy's (1988) early model of Male Peer-Support rested heavily on the ideas of relationship stress and social support influence. He argued that men experience stress as a result of their dating relationship, and while some men may try to handle the stress on their own, others ask male peers for advice. It is the influence of the guidance from male peers that encourages or dissuades the individual from committing abuses against their partner, depending on their beliefs about women and masculinity that male peers may hold. They further note that male peer-support can even influence males to abuse their partners without the prerequisite of stress (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997). They later added to the Male Peer-Support Model by incorporating four factors they believed better reflected the complexity of the issue of abuse by putting less emphasis on the individual perpetrator, and including the influence of broader social factors such as beliefs of family and courtship patriarchy, alcohol consumption, membership in



social groups such as social fraternities, and the absence of deterrence. This later became known as the Modified Male Peer-Support Model. Franklin, Bouffard, and Pratt (2012) continued to add to the model; they took Gottfredson and Hirschi's ideas concerning low self-control, and empirically tested Schwartz and DeKeseredy's (1997) model. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) put forth that individuals with low self control are more likely to act on temptations toward crime and deviance, to engage in more gratifying behavior linked to deviance, and associate with like-minded individuals (Franklin et al. 2012).

In the Modified Male Peer-Support Model, Schwartz and DeKeseredy introduced the fraternity as one all-male social group with a history of sexual assault (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997). Franklin, Bouffard, and Pratt (2012) reported that group secrecy and peer pressure for sex directly affected sexual assault. They also reported that gender role ideology and having friends who supported sexually abusive behavior was linked to peer pressure for sex, and thus predicted sexual assault. Yet, only peer pressure for sex was indirectly linked to fraternity membership; the other variables, while linked to sexual assault, were not specifically linked to fraternity membership (Franklin et al. 2012). Membership in a fraternity indirectly predicted sexual assault through alcohol consumption (Franklin et al. 2012).

### *Alcohol use*

Alcohol plays a significant role in college-aged students' lives, and potentially the rates of relationship abuse. Makepeace (1981:99) first reported that almost thirty-two percent (31.6%) of his sample respondents had been drinking, and fifty percent indicated that their partner had been drinking. LeJeune and Follette (1994:137) reported that 32.1% of their sample respondents had indicated that they, or their partner, were under the influence of alcohol when violence occurred within their dating relationship. For both studies, roughly one-third of respondents indicated that alcohol was involved in some capacity in their reported incidences of dating violence. Furthermore, alcohol's involvement and incidences of dating violence did not seem to be gendered. Forty-six percent (46.2%) of males and 35.3% of females were under the influence of alcohol during an incidence of violence (Makepeace 1981:99). LeJeune and Follette (1994:137) found results similar to Makepeace (1981); 35% of male respondents and 30.3% of female respondents reported that alcohol was involved in an incidence of violence. However, while these studies established that alcohol was involved in dating violence for both men and women, they did not establish a connection between alcohol consumption and perpetration of abuses, or victimization of abuses.

Less than one percent of Hettrich and O'Leary's (2007:1139) female participants indicated that "drugs/alcohol" was a motivation for their physical abuse. Yet, Shorey et al.'s (2011) review of the literature regarding alcohol and dating violence found that for both males and females, alcohol problems (defined by the researchers as problems that occur as a result of alcohol use) were associated with perpetration of physical and psychological aggression. They also reported that as the frequency of alcohol consumption increases, so does dating violence perpetration. Alcohol problems were also related to victimization (Shorey et al. 2011). They reported that both male and female victims of abuses were under the influence of alcohol for a large percentage of the time they were being physically and psychologically victimized. It was reported that peak blood alcohol content levels during the past month were associated with experiencing increased psychological aggression from a romantic partner (Shorey et al. 2011).

Not only does consumption of alcohol have a possible affect on incidences of abusive behavior in a dating relationship, but drinking patterns may influence abusive behavior.

Makepeace (1987:89) found that dating violence was more common among those who drink "somewhat more than most," than among respondents who drink "much more." In another study, lower alcohol use was associated with greater violence (Williams and Smith 1994). It may be that moderate alcohol intake has the greatest influence on incidences of abuse. They acknowledged that low-to-moderate levels of alcohol reduce self-control, which likely facilitated abusive behaviors. The flip side is that higher levels of alcohol consumption make abusive behaviors for perpetrators more difficult to commit due to the side effects of ingesting large amounts of alcohol (Williams and Smith 1994). Alcohol may be a factor in dating violence; however, the affect may be limited by the amount of alcohol consumed.

A review of the literature suggests a number of observations that students' experiences with abuse are multifaceted; abuse can appear in many forms, and partners can be both perpetrators and victims. The previous studies present the social and personal forces such as levels of stress, anger, and alcohol consumption, membership in social Greek, and relationship characteristics as factors that influence the prevalence of abuse in romantic relationships. This study will focus on reported characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and membership in Greek Life, relationship characteristics such as number of past serious romantic relationships and duration of most recent romantic relationship, and behaviors such as the affect of students' reported rates of stress, anger, and alcohol consumption.

### *Hypotheses*

Specifically, this research will test the following hypotheses:

1. Male respondents are more likely to experience physical abuse from their partners.
2. Female respondents are more likely to experience sexual abuse from their partners.
3. Upper-class respondents are more likely to experience abuses from their partners.
4. Members of Greek Life are more likely to experience abuses.
5. Respondents with a history of fewer serious romantic relationships are more likely to experience abuses.
6. Respondents in romantic relationships for a longer amount of time are more likely to experience abuses.
7. Respondents who drink alcohol are more likely to experience abuses.
8. Respondents who drink a high amount of alcohol on a weekly basis are more likely to experience abuses.
9. Respondents who report stress more frequently are more likely to experience abuses.
10. Respondents who report anger more frequently are more likely to experience abuses.

## METHODS

### *Sample*

Data came from a representative sample of undergraduate students currently enrolled, Fall 2013, in a private, liberal arts college in the Midwest. Stratified sampling was used to draw the sample for data collection. The entire student population was divided into four stratum based on year in school: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior/or older. Of the total 2,003 students, 554 were first-year, 441 were sophomores, 478 were juniors, and 530 were seniors or older. Using proportional allocation, the sample size selected from each stratum was calculated. Sample sizes for each stratum were based on an oversampling size of 600, with a desired sample size of at least 400. Simple random sampling was used to draw the appropriate number of sampling units

from each stratum. Within each stratum, the student population was numbered consecutively, and the sample was drawn using an online random number generator. While 202 questionnaires were started, only 183 questionnaires were completed.

A second wave of the survey was sent out the following semester, Spring 2014, to a new random sample of the university's students. The 600 students already randomly selected for the first wave of the questionnaire was subtracted from the entire population, and a new group of 600 students was randomly selected from the remaining 1,403 students. The questionnaire and the distribution of the questionnaire remained the same. All together, 414 questionnaires were started, and 362 questionnaires were completed.

Table 1 shows the distribution of sample students according to various demographic characteristics. The majority of participants who responded to the questionnaire were female (65.2%). Participants represented roughly a quarter of each of the four years in school; 23.5% of participants were freshmen, 20.5% were sophomores, 26.2% were juniors, and 29.9% were seniors or older. The majority of participants were between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. Participants were mostly heterosexual (90.4%) and predominately Caucasian (79.8%). Approximately a third of the participants were members in a social Greek organization on campus (31.3%).

The majority of participants were not currently engaged in a dating relationship: 51.2% of participants were not engaged in any kind of dating relationship at the time of the distribution of the questionnaire. The majority of respondents have had at least one serious romantic relationship over the past five years (80.6%). There was quite a range for the duration of the most recent romantic relationship. See Table 2 for the distribution of sample students according to various relationship characteristics.

Table 1. Distribution of Sample Students According to Various Demographic Characteristics.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Gender (N=399)</b>		
Male	139	34.8
Female	260	65.2
*3 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<b>Sexual Orientation (N=397)</b>		
Homosexual	17	4.3
Heterosexual	359	90.4
Bisexual	18	4.5
Other	3	0.8
*6 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<b>Race (N=396)</b>		
African American	13	3.3
Asian American	15	3.8
Caucasian	316	79.8
Hispanic or Latino/a American	16	4.0
Identified by two or more	16	4.0
Other	20	5.1
*7 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<b>Year in School (N=405)</b>		
Freshman	95	23.5
Sophomore	83	20.5
Junior	106	26.2
Senior	118	29.1
Fifth Year	3	0.7
*5 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<b>Member of Social Greek Organization (N=400)</b>		
Yes	125	31.3
No	275	68.7
*4 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		

Table 2. Distribution of Sample Students According to Various Relationship Characteristics.

<b>Relationship Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<i>Relationship Status (N=391)</i>		
Engaged	3	0.8
Exclusive dating relationship	153	39.1
Casual dating relationship	35	8.9
Not engaged in a dating relationship	200	51.2
*5 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<i>Number of serious romantic relationships (N=376)</i>		
0	73	19.4
1	148	39.4
2	110	29.3
3	34	9.0
4	6	1.6
5 or more	5	1.3
*4 students responded "Do not know/refuse to answer"		
<i>Duration of relationship (N=324)</i>		
Less than 2 months	57	17.6
2 to 3 months	36	11.1
4 to 6 months	43	13.3
7 to 9 months	20	6.2
10 to 12 months	36	11.1
13 to 15 months	16	4.9
16 to 18 months	9	2.8
19 to 21 months	10	3.1
22 to 24 months	19	5.9
25 months or more	78	24.0

### *Procedures*

Data were collected by online survey. An e-mail explaining the purpose of the study, along with an informed consent form, was sent to the randomly selected students through their university e-mail accounts. Participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they could skip any item, withdraw at any time, or refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. The e-mail also contained the questionnaire link that enabled students to participate in the study. By clicking the link, participants affirmed that they were at least 18 years of age, and that they voluntarily consented to participate in the research study.

### MEASUREMENT

Students' attitudes and experiences were measured using questions constructed and then administered through a questionnaire (Appendix). Questions were designed to measure the attitudes and experiences of students regarding physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in their most recent romantic relationship.

#### *Demographic Questions*

Respondents self-reported their gender, sexual orientation, race, and year in school.

#### *Dependent Variables*

##### *Students' experiences and attitudes regarding physical abuse*

Students' experiences of physical abuse were determined using questions designed to measure the percentages and self-perceived severity of physical abuse in their most recent dating relationship. Participants were asked the question, "Has your partner used minor/major negative physical contact with you?" The terms minor physical and major physical came from Christopher and Kisler's (2012) measures, although in our study, there was no mention of violence, or characteristics associated with either form of abuse. Nor was there any distinction made about the criteria for minor or major negative physical contact thus, it was up to students' interpretations of those terms and their perceptions of what had occurred in their dating relationship.

##### *Students' experiences regarding sexual abuse*

Students' experiences of sexual abuse were determined using questions designed to gauge the percentage of respondents who had experienced sexual abuse and the methods used to engage romantic partners in unwanted sex play. Sex play was defined for participants as "anything that you have defined as unwanted physical contact." Participants were asked the yes/no question, "Have you experienced unwanted sex play from a romantic partner?" If participants indicated that they had experienced unwanted sex play, they were asked a follow-up question: "Which of the following have been used to engage you in unwanted sex play?" Responses included: threat of physical force, insults, lies, physical force, intoxication, threat of ending relationship, or other. The "other" response choice also had a text response where participants could write in their responses. Participants were asked to mark all that applied. Response choices for sexual coercion came from Christopher and Kisler's (2012) measures with the addition of threatening to end relationship.

##### *Students' experiences regarding emotional abuse*

Students' experiences of emotional abuse were determined using questions designed to measure the forms of emotional abuse in their most recent dating relationship. The question posed to participants asked them to indicate the forms of abuse that their partner had used against them in their most recent dating relationship. Responses included: threatens to break up, lies or purposely withholds information, ridicules ability as a romantic partner, insults partner, swears at partner, refused to talk to partner, said or do something with the intention to spite their partner, stomped out of a room, and destroyed a partner's belonging. The measures, insult, swear, stomp out of room, refuse to talk, said/did something with the intention to spite, also came from Christopher and Kisler's (2012) measures for verbal aggression. The other measures were added by the researcher.

#### *Independent Variables*

##### *Membership in Greek social organization*

Participants were asked if they were a member of a social Greek organization on campus by selecting either yes or no.

##### *Duration and number of relationships*

The duration of participants' most recent romantic relationships were measured by asking participants to indicate the number of months spent they have been in their most recent romantic relationship. The response choices ranged from less than two months to 25 months or more.

Participants were asked to indicate the number of serious romantic relationships they have had in the past five years. Response choices varied from 0 to 5 or more.

#### *Stress and anger*

Participants were asked about their academic stress level, "How often do you feel stressed when you think of your academic situation?" Response choices included never, less than once a month, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week, 2 to 3 times a week, and daily.

Participants were asked about their general anger level, "How often do you experience anger?" with response choices of daily, weekly, monthly, or seldom.

#### *Consumption of Alcohol*

Participants were asked if they drank alcohol, and if they indicated yes, they were then asked a follow-up question. For this study, a drink was defined for participants as a bottle of beer, a glass of wine, a wine cooler, a shot of liquor, or a mixed drink. Participants were asked "What is the average number of drinks you consume on a weekly basis?" with responses 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9, 10 or more drinks, or do not drink on a weekly basis.

## RESULTS

### *Reported Experiences with Minor Negative Physical Contact*

Table 3-A. Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Characteristics	<u>Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact</u>		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Gender: (N=337)</i>			
Female (n=222)	14.4	85.6	2.278 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.131)
Male (n=115)	20.9	79.1	
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=334)</i>			
Heterosexual (n=305)	17.0	83.0	0.201 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.654)
Other (n=29)	13.8	86.2	
<i>Race: (N=336)</i>			
Caucasian (n=280)	18.2	81.8	2.897* (p= 0.089)
Other (n=56)	8.9	91.1	
<i>Current Year in School: (N=337)</i>			
First-Year (n=77)	10.4	89.6	3.470 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.325)
Sophomore (n=68)	17.6	82.4	
Junior (n=90)	15.6	84.4	
Senior/Fifth Year (n=102)	20.6	79.4	
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=336)</i>			
Yes (n=110)	19.1	80.9	0.692 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.405)
No (n=226)	15.5	84.5	

\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.1$ ; ns = not significant

Of the 339 respondents, 16.5% (56) experienced minor negative physical contact. Cross-tabulations were computed to determine if experiencing minor negative physical abuse was significantly associated with students' gender, sexual orientation, race, year in school, or involvement with Greek Life. Gender was not significantly associated with experiencing minor physical abuse, yet more males reported experiencing minor negative physical contact than females, 20.9% compared to 14.4%, respectively. Sexual orientation was not significantly associated with experiencing minor physical abuse, but more heterosexuals reported abuse than non-heterosexuals, 17.0% compared to 13.8%, respectively. Current year in school was not associated with experiencing minor physical abuse, although more senior/fifth year students reported experiencing minor negative physical contact than first-year, sophomore, or junior students. Almost twice the percentage of senior/fifth year students reported experiencing minor physical abuse as compared to first-year students (20.6% to 10.4%, respectively). Yet, the second largest reported percentage (17.6%) was among sophomore respondents. Membership in a social Greek organization was not associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact, but more respondents involved in Greek Life experienced minor physical abuse than respondents not involved, 19.1% compared to 15.5%, respectively. The results of the chi-square tests were not significant for any of the abovementioned variables.

Race had an association with experiencing minor negative physical contact chi-square result significant at the ten percent level. More Caucasians reported experiencing minor negative physical contact than other races; almost twice the percentage of Caucasians reported experiencing minor physical abuse compared to other races, 18.2% to 8.9%, respectively.

Table 3-B. Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Relationship Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	<u>Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact</u>		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years:</i> (N=335)			
0 (n= 54)	1.9	98.1	9.767* (p= 0.021)
1 (n= 142)	19.0	81.0	
2 (n= 99)	18.2	81.8	
3 or more (n= 40)	20.0	80.0	
<i>Number of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship:</i> (N=301)			
Less than 2 (n=52)	9.6	90.4	3.796 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.434)
2 to 6 (n=72)	16.7	83.3	
7 to 15 (n=66)	18.2	81.8	
16 to 24 (n=36)	25.0	75.0	
25 or more (n=75)	18.7	81.3	

\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.1$ ; ns = not significant



Cross-tabulations were computed to determine if experiencing minor negative physical abuse was significantly affected by the number of serious romantic relationships in the past five years or number of months spent in their most recent romantic relationship. The number of serious relationships was associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact from a romantic partner, chi-square results were significant at the five percent level. Respondents who indicated at least one serious romantic relationship in the past five years experienced higher rates of minor negative physical contact than those who had not indicated being in a serious romantic relationship. Only two percent (1.9%) of those who reported not having a serious romantic relationship in the past five years had experienced minor negative physical contact. Further, students who had three or more serious romantic relationships in the past five years reported the highest rate of experiencing minor physical abuse, 20% of respondents who had three or more romantic relationships in the past five years had experienced minor negative physical contact.

In our sample the length of respondent's most recent romantic relationship was not associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact. However, the respondents with longer relationship durations were more likely to experience minor negative physical contact than those who reported being in a relationship for a shorter period of time.

Table 3-C. Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Behaviors of Respondent Population by Percent.

Behaviors	Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact		
	Yes	No	x <sup>2</sup> value
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=337)</i>			
Yes (n= 253)	17.8	82.2	1.002 <sup>ns</sup>
No (n=84)	13.1	86.9	(p=0.317)
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=337)</i>			
1-3 drinks (n=55)	21.8	78.2	5.574 <sup>ns</sup>
4-6 drinks (n=55)	12.7	87.3	(p=0.350)
7-9 dinks (n=43)	18.6	81.4	
10 or more drinks (n=49)	24.5	75.5	
Does not drink weekly (n=49)	12.2	87.8	
Does not drink (n=86)	12.8	87.2	
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=339)</i>			
Less than once (n=117)	13.7	86.3	1.062 <sup>ns</sup>
Once (n=57)	17.5	82.5	(p=0.786)
2 to 3 times (n=82)	18.3	81.7	
Daily (n=83)	18.1	81.9	
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=335)</i>			
Daily/Weekly (n=135)	22.2	77.8	4.983*
Monthly (n=74)	12.2	87.8	(p=0.083)
Seldom (n=126)	13.5	86.5	

\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.1$ ; ns = not significant

Cross-tabulations were computed to determine if experiencing minor negative physical abuse was significantly affected by consumption of alcohol, weekly academic stress, or the

frequency respondents experienced anger. Consuming alcohol was not associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact, chi-square results were not significant. However, more respondents who reported that they drank experienced minor physical abuse than respondents who did not drink, 17.8% compared to 13.1%, respectively. Weekly alcohol consumption was not associated with experiencing minor physical abuse, with no clear trend among number of drinks consumed weekly and experiencing minor physical abuse.

The frequency of academic stress was not associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact, chi-square result was not significant. Although, more respondents experienced academic stress 2 to 3 times a week and daily and also experienced minor negative physical contact, that respondents who experienced academic stress once a week or less than once a week.

The frequency of experiencing anger is associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact from a romantic partner, chi-square results were significant at the ten percent level. The respondents who experienced anger more often were more likely to experience minor negative physical contact than those who reported experiencing anger on a monthly basis or less. Twenty two percent (22.2%) of respondents had experienced anger daily and/or weekly and had also experienced minor negative physical contact. In contrast, only twelve percent (12.2%) who had experienced anger monthly had also experienced minor negative physical contact from their romantic partner.

Table 4-A. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact, by Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Current Year in School, and Membership in Greek Life by Percent.

Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact
<i>Gender: (N=56)</i>	
Female (n=32)	57.1
Male (n=24)	<u>42.9</u>
	100.0
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=56)</i>	
Heterosexual (n=52)	92.9
Other (n=4)	<u>7.1</u>
	100.0
<i>Race: (N=56)</i>	
Caucasian (n=51)	91.1
Other (n=5)	<u>8.9</u>
	100.0
<i>Current Year in School: (N=55)</i>	
First-Year (n=8)	14.5
Sophomore (n=12)	21.8
Junior (n=14)	25.5
Senior/Fifth Year (n=21)	<u>38.2</u>
	100.0
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=56)</i>	
Yes (n=21)	37.5
No (n=35)	<u>62.5</u>
	100.0

Of the 56 participants who experienced minor negative physical contact, the majority were female, heterosexual, Caucasian, junior or senior standing, and were not involved in Greek Life. Examining only those who reported experiencing minor negative physical contact by gender, a greater percentage of females reported experiencing minor negative physical contact as compared to males, 57.1% compared to 42.9%, respectively. Looking at the sexual orientation of those individuals who reported experiencing minor negative physical, almost ninety-three percent (92.9%) reported being heterosexual, as compared to seven percent (7.1%) of non-heterosexuals. When examining the race of victims of minor negative physical contact, ninety-one percent were Caucasian (91.1%), compared to almost nine percent (8.9%) of other races. When reviewing the year in school of respondents who indicated that they had experienced minor physical abuse from a romantic partner, 63.7% were upper-class students. Specifically, 38.2% were senior/fifth year students and 25.5% were juniors. Examining membership in Greek Life of the victims experiencing minor negative physical, 62.5% were not involved in Greek Life as compared to 37.5% of victims who were members of Greek Life.

Table 4-B. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact, by Number of Serious Romantic Relationships, and Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years: (N=54)</i>	
0 (n=1)	1.9
1 (n= 27)	50.0
2 (n=18)	33.3
3 or more (n=8)	<u>14.8</u>
	100.0
<i>Numbers of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship: (N=52)</i>	
Less than 2 (n=5)	9.6
2 to 6 (n=12)	23.1
7 to 15 (n=12)	23.1
16 to 24 (n=9)	17.3
25 or more (n=14)	<u>26.9</u>
	100.0

When we examine only the respondents who reported experiencing minor negative physical contact by relationship characteristics, the majority (83.3%) of victims had been in one or two serious romantic relationships in the past five years. Fifty percent reported one serious romantic relationship in the past five years, while 33.3% had been involved in two romantic relationships, and only 14.8% of victims had three or more serious romantic relationships within the past five years. The majority (63.5%) of victims had been in their most recent romantic relationship between two to twenty-four months. The highest reported percentage (26.9%) of experiencing abuse was among respondents who had been in their most recent romantic

relationship for 25 months or longer: 23.1% indicated two to six months, and another 23.1% indicated seven to 15 months. Only 9.6% of victims had been in their most recent romantic relationship for two months or less.

Table 4-C. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact, by Consumption of Alcohol, Frequency of Academic Stress and Experiences of Anger by Percent.

Behaviors	Percent Who Experienced Minor Negative Physical Contact
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=56)</i>	
Yes (n=45)	80.4
No (n=11)	<u>19.6</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=56)</i>	
1-3 drinks (n=12)	21.4
4-6 drinks (n=7)	12.5
7-9 dinks (n=8)	14.4
10 or more drinks (n=12)	21.4
Does not drink weekly (n=6)	10.7
Does not drink (n=11)	<u>19.6</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=56)</i>	
Less than once (n=16)	28.5
Once (n=10)	17.9
2 to 3 times (n=15)	26.8
Daily (n=15)	<u>26.8</u>
	100.0
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=56)</i>	
Daily/Weekly (n=30)	53.6
Monthly (n=9)	16.1
Seldom (n=17)	<u>30.3</u>
	100.0

Examining victims of minor negative physical abuse, the vast majority (80.4%) indicated that they drank alcohol. Of the victims who did consume alcohol, 21.4% consumed one to three drinks, and another 21.4% reported consuming 10 or more drinks weekly. Twenty-nine percent (28.5%) of victims experienced academic stress less than once a week, 26.8% reported 2 to 3 times a week, and 26.8% reported that they experienced stress daily. The majority (53.6%) of victims reported experiencing anger daily/weekly. Thirty percent (30.3%) of victims reported seldom experiencing anger compared to 16.1% who reported experiencing anger monthly.

*Reported Experiences with Major Negative Physical Contact*

Table 5-A. Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Characteristics	<u>Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact</u>		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Gender: (N=346)</i>			
Female (n=229)	14.8	85.2	0.086 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.769)
Male (n= 117)	13.7	86.3	
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=343)</i>			
Heterosexual (n=314)	17.2	82.8	0.226 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.635)
Other (n=29)	14.0	86.0	
<i>Race: (N=345)</i>			
Caucasian (n=285)	14.4	85.6	0.015 <sup>ns</sup> (p= 0.902)
Other (n=60)	15.0	85.0	
<i>Current Year in School:(N=346)</i>			
First-Year (n=78)	21.8	78.2	5.563 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.135)
Sophomore (n=68)	8.8	91.2	
Junior (n=94)	12.8	87.2	
Senior/Fifth Year (n=106)	13.2	86.8	
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=345)</i>			
Yes (n=112)	8.9	91.1	4.143** (p=0.042)
No (n= 233)	17.2	82.8	

\*\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; ns = not significant

Of 348 respondents, 14.4% (50) experienced major negative physical contact. Cross-tabulations were computed to determine if experiencing major negative physical abuse was significantly affected by the variables of gender, sexual orientation, race, year in social, or association with Greek Life. Gender was not associated with experiencing major physical abuse, both males and females reported experiencing similar rates of major negative physical contact from their partner, 13.7% of males compared to 14.8% of females. Sexual orientation was not associated with experiencing major physical abuse, but more heterosexual respondents had experienced major negative physical abuse than non-heterosexuals, 17.2% compared to 14.0%, respectively. Race was not associated with experiencing major negative physical contact; Caucasians and non-Caucasians reported similar rates of experiencing major physical abuse, however non-Caucasians did report slightly higher rates of abuse, 14.4% compared to 15%, respectively. Year in school is not associated with experiencing major negative physical contact, although more first-year students reported experiencing major negative physical abuse than any other year in college, 21.8% of first-year respondents, compared to 8.8% of sophomores, 12.8% of juniors and 13.2% seniors/fifth year students. There did not seem to be a clear pattern regarding year in school and experiencing major physical abuse; first-year students reported the

highest rate, while sophomores reported the lowest, and juniors and seniors reported rates somewhere in the middle. More first-year by far reported experiencing major negative physical contact than any other year in school. The results of the chi-square tests were not significant for the previously mentioned variables.

Non-membership in Greek Life was associated with experiencing major negative physical contact, with chi-square results significant at the five percent level. More respondents who were not involved in Greek Life reported experiencing abuse than members of Greek Life, 17.2% compared to 8.9%, respectively. There is a relationship between not participating in Greek Life and experiencing major physical abuse.

Table 5-B. Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Relationship Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years:</i> (N=344)			
0 (n=54)	16.7	83.3	1.891 <sup>ns</sup> (p= 0.595)
1 (n=145)	11.0	89.0	
2 (n= 106)	14.2	85.8	
3 or more (n= 39)	17.9	82.1	
<i>Number of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship:</i> (N=310)			
Less than 2 (n=54)	20.4	79.6	4.717 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.318)
2 to 6 (n=73)	9.6	90.4	
7 to 15 (n=68)	11.8	88.2	
16 to 24 (n=38)	10.5	89.5	
25 or more (n=77)	18.2	81.8	

ns = not significant

The number of serious romantic relationships was not associated with experiencing major negative physical abuse, the results of the chi-square test were not significant. Nevertheless, more respondents who reported three or more serious romantic relationships, or zero relationships, reported experiencing major physical abuse than respondents who indicated one or two serious romantic relationships.

The duration of the most recent romantic relationships was not associated with experiencing major negative physical abuse, the results of the chi-square test were not significant. Respondents who had been in a romantic relationship for less than two months exhibited a similar rate of physical abuse as those who had been in a relationship for twenty-five months or more. Those who reported being in a relationship between two and twenty-four months all reported similar rates of experiencing major physical abuse.

Table 5-C. Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact in Regards to Self-Reported Behaviors of Respondent Population by Percent.

Behaviors	Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=346)</i>			
Yes (n=260)	12.7	87.3	1.858 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.173)
No (n=86)	18.6	81.4	
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=346)</i>			
1-3 drinks (n=58)	15.5	84.5	11.397** (p=0.044)
4-6 drinks (n=57)	8.8	91.2	
7-9 dinks (n=42)	26.2	73.8	
10 or more drinks (n=49)	8.2	91.8	
Does not drink weekly (n=52)	7.7	92.3	
Does not drink (n=88)	19.3	80.7	
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=348)</i>			
Less than once (n=120)	15.8	84.2	1.184 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.757)
Once (n=60)	10.0	90.0	
2 to 3 times (n=82)	14.6	85.4	
Daily (n=86)	15.1	84.9	
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=344)</i>			
Daily/Weekly (n=141)	12.1	87.9	1.292 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.524)
Monthly (n=75)	17.3	82.7	
Seldom (n=128)	15.6	84.4	

\*\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; ns = not significant

Consuming alcohol was not associated with experiencing major negative physical abuse, the results of the chi-square test were not significant. However, more respondents who do not consume alcohol reported major negative physical contact than those who drink alcohol, 18.6% compared to 12.7%, respectively. Weekly alcohol consumption is associated with experiencing major negative physical abuse, the results of the chi-square test were significant. It appears that respondents who consumed alcohol weekly were more likely to experience major physical abuse as compared to those who do not drink alcohol weekly. The highest prevalence (26.2%) of major negative physical contact from a romantic partner was among those individuals who consumed seven to nine drinks weekly.

The frequency of experiencing academic stress was not associated with experiencing major negative physical contact, the results of the chi-square were not significant. Respondents reported similar rates among the different frequencies of academic stress of experiencing major physical abuse. The highest rate (15.8%) was among respondents who experienced academic stress less than once a week and had experienced major negative physical abuse.

The frequency of experiencing anger was not associated with experiencing major negative physical contact, the results of the chi-square were not significant. Individuals who experienced anger daily/weekly, monthly, or seldom, all reported that they had experienced roughly similar rates of major physical abuse. However, there did seem to be a slight trend that

those who experienced anger less frequently reported higher rates of major negative physical contact as compared to respondents who experienced anger more frequently.

Table 6-A. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact, by Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Current Year in School, and Membership in Greek Life by Percent.

Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact
<i>Gender: (N=50)</i>	
Female (n=34)	68.0
Male (n=16)	<u>32.0</u>
	100.0
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=49)</i>	
Heterosexual (n=44)	89.8
Other (n=5)	<u>10.2</u>
	100.0
<i>Race: (N=50)</i>	
Caucasian (n=41)	82.0
Other (n=9)	<u>18.0</u>
	100.0
<i>Current Year in School: (N=49)</i>	
First-Year (n=17)	34.7
Sophomore (n=6)	12.2
Junior (n=12)	24.5
Senior/Fifth Year (n=14)	<u>28.6</u>
	100.0
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=50)</i>	
Yes (n=10)	20.0
No (n=40)	<u>80.0</u>
	100.0

Of the 50 participants who experienced major negative physical contact, the majority were female, heterosexual, Caucasian, and were not involved in Greek Life. A greater percentage of females reported experiencing major negative physical contact than their male counterparts. Sixty-eight percent of females had experienced major negative physical contact from a romantic partner as compared to thirty-two percent of males. When we examine victims of major negative physical contact by sexual orientation, ninety percent (89.8%) of victims were heterosexual in contrast to ten percent (10.2%) of non-heterosexuals. When examining the victims of major negative physical contact by race, eighty-two percent were Caucasian compared to eighteen percent of other races. Looking at the victims by year in school, the slight majority (53.1%) were upper-class students. However, the greatest single number of victims was among first-year students, thirty-five percent (34.7%) of victims of major physical abuse were first-year students. Examining the relationship between victims and membership in Greek Life, eighty percent of victims were not members of Greek Life as compared to twenty percent of victims who were involved in Greek Life.



Table 6-B. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact, by Number of Serious Romantic Relationships, and Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years: (N=47)</i>	
0 (n=9)	19.2
1 (n=16)	34.0
2 (n=15)	31.9
3 or more (n=7)	<u>14.9</u>
	100.0
<i>Numbers of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship: (N=44)</i>	
Less than 2 (n=11)	25.0
2 to 6 (n=7)	15.9
7 to 15 (n=8)	18.2
16 to 24 (n=4)	9.1
25 or more (n=14)	<u>31.8</u>
	100.0

When we examine only those who reported experiencing major negative physical contact by relationship characteristics, the majority (65.9%) reported that they had one to two serious romantic relationships in the past five years. Thirty-four percent of victims had been involved in one serious romantic relationship in the past five years, while 31.9% had been involved in two serious relationships. In contrast, nineteen percent (19.2%) of victims had never been in a serious romantic relationship within the past five years. When examining victims of minor negative physical contact by months spent in their most recent romantic relationship, 31.8% of victims had been in their most recent romantic relationship for twenty-five months or longer. In contrast, 25% of victims had been in their most recent relationship for less than two months, 15.9% reported two to six months, and 18.2% reported seven to fifteen months. Only 9% of reported victims had been in a relationship for sixteen to twenty-four months.

Table 6-C. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Major Negative Physical Contact, by Consumption of Alcohol, Frequency of Academic Stress and Experiences of Anger by Percent.

Behaviors	Percent Who Experienced Major Negative Physical Contact
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=49)</i>	
Yes (n=33)	67.3
No (n=16)	<u>32.7</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=50)</i>	
1-3 drinks (n=9)	18.0
4-6 drinks (n=5)	10.0
7-9 dinks (n=11)	22.0
10 or more drinks (n=4)	8.0
Does not drink weekly (n=4)	8.0
Does not drink (n=17)	<u>34.0</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=50)</i>	
Less than once (n=19)	38.0
Once (n=6)	12.0
2 to 3 times (n=12)	24.0
Daily (n=13)	<u>26.0</u>
	100.0
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=50)</i>	
Daily/Weekly (n=17)	34.0
Monthly (n=13)	26.0
Seldom (n=20)	<u>40.0</u>
	100.0

The majority (67.3%) of victims of major negative physical abuse indicated that they drank alcohol, compared to 32.7% who reported not consuming alcohol. Of the victims who drank alcohol, 18% of victims drank one to three drinks weekly, 10% reported four to six drinks, and 22% reported seven to nine drinks weekly. Thirty-eight percent of victims of major physical abuse reported experiencing academic stress less than once a week, 24% reported two to three times a week, and 26% reported that they experience academic stress daily. Forty percent of victims reported seldom experiencing anger. Twenty-six percent reported experiencing anger monthly, compared to 34% of victims who reported they experience anger daily/weekly.

*Reported Experiences of Unwanted Sex Play*

Table 7-A. Experiencing Unwanted Sex Play from a Romantic Partner in Regards to Self-Reported Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Characteristics	Experienced Unwanted Sex Play		
	Yes	No	$\chi^2$ value
<i>Gender: (N=347)</i>			
Female (n=229)	20.1	79.9	5.502** (p=0.019)
Male (n= 118)	10.2	89.8	
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=344)</i>			
Heterosexual (n=313)	15.0	85.0	6.066** (p=0.014)
Other (n=31)	32.3	67.7	
<i>Race: (N=345)</i>			
Caucasian (n=284)	17.6	82.4	0.724 <sup>ns</sup> (p= 0.395)
Other (n=61)	13.1	86.9	
<i>Current Year in School:(N=347)</i>			
First-Year (n=78)	12.8	87.2	7.195* (p=0.066)
Sophomore (n=69)	8.7	91.3	
Junior (n=91)	17.6	82.4	
Senior/Fifth Year (n=109)	22.9	77.1	
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=346)</i>			
Yes (n=111)	19.8	80.2	1.330 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.249)
No (n= 235)	14.9	85.1	

\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.1$ ; \*\*= significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; ns = not significant

Of 349 respondents, 16.6% (58) experienced unwanted sex play from a romantic partner. Cross-tabulations were computed to determine if experiencing unwanted sex play was significantly affected by the variables of gender, sexual orientation, race, year in social, or association with Greek Life. Gender was associated with experiencing unwanted sex play. The result of the chi-square test was significant at the five percent level. The percentage of female participants indicating that they had experienced unwanted sex play was almost twice the percentage of male participants experiencing unwanted sex play, 20.1% compared to 10.2%, respectively.

Sexual orientation was associated with experiencing unwanted sex play, the result of the chi-square test was significant at the five percent level. More non-heterosexual respondents reported unwanted sexual abuse than heterosexual respondents, 32.3% compared to 15%, respectively. Non-heterosexual participants reported percentages twice that of non-heterosexual participants.

Race is not associated with experiencing sexual abuse, although, more Caucasian respondents reported abuse than other races, 17.6% compared to 13.1%.

Year in school is associated with experiencing unwanted sex play. More upper-class respondents reported experiencing unwanted sex play from a romantic partner than first-year and

sophomore students. 22.9% and 17.6% of senior/fifth year and junior students had experienced unwanted sex play from a romantic partner compared to 12.8% and 8.7% of first-year and sophomores, respectively.

Membership in Greek Life was also not associated with experiencing sexual abuse from a romantic partner, the results of the chi-square tests were not significant. Yet, more members of Greek Life reported experiencing sexual abuse than non-members, 19.8% compared to 14.9%, respectively.

Table 7-B. Experiencing Unwanted Sex Play from a Romantic Partner in Regards to Self-Reported Relationship Characteristics of Respondent Population by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	Experienced Unwanted Sex Play		
	Yes	No	x <sup>2</sup> value
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years:</i> (N=345)			
0 (n=58)	10.3	89.7	3.344 <sup>ns</sup> (p= 0.342)
1 (n=144)	16.0	84.0	
2 (n=103)	21.4	78.6	
3 or more (n= 40)	17.4	82.5	
<i>Number of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship:</i> (N=305)			
Less than 2 (n=51)	19.6	80.4	10.496** (p=0.033)
2 to 6 (n=74)	23.0	77.0	
7 to 15 (n=70)	24.3	75.7	
16 to 24 (n=34)	2.9	97.1	
25 or more (n=76)	11.8	88.2	

\*\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; ns = not significant

The number of serious romantic relationships was not associated with experiencing sexual abuse from a romantic partner, the result of the chi-square test was not significant. However, those who had reported having serious romantic relationships showed higher rates of unwanted sexual abuse than respondents who indicated zero serious romantic relationships in the past five years. Specifically, respondents who indicated two or more serious romantic relationships indicated the highest rates of experiencing sexual abuse.

The length of respondents' most recent romantic relationship was associated with experiencing unwanted sex play, the result of the chi-square test was significant at the five percent level. The respondents with shorter relationship durations were more likely to experience unwanted sexual abuse than those who reported being in a relationship for a longer period of time. Specifically, respondents who reported being in their most recent romantic relationship for less than 15 months reported the highest rates of experiencing sexual abuse.

Table 7-C. Experiencing Unwanted Sex Play from a Romantic Partner in Regards to Self-Reported Behaviors of Respondent Population by Percent.

Behaviors	Experienced Unwanted Sex Play		x <sup>2</sup> value
	Yes	No	
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=347)</i>			
Yes (n=257)	20.2	79.8	8.813*** (p=0.003)
No (n=90)	6.7	93.3	
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=347)</i>			
1-3 drinks (n=60)	23.3	76.7	13.791** (p=0.017)
4-6 drinks (n=57)	19.3	80.7	
7-9 dinks (n=39)	28.2	71.8	
10 or more drinks (n=49)	18.4	81.6	
Does not drink weekly (n=50)	12.0	88.0	
Does not drink (n=92)	6.5	93.5	
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=349)</i>			
Less than once (n=120)	17.5	82.5	0.119 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.989)
Once (n=60)	16.7	83.3	
2 to 3 times (n=82)	15.9	84.1	
Daily (n=87)	16.1	83.9	
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=345)</i>			
Daily/Weekly (n=144)	14.6	85.4	1.792 <sup>ns</sup> (p=0.408)
Monthly (n=73)	15.1	84.9	
Seldom (n=128)	20.3	79.7	

\*\* = significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; \*\*\*= significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ ; ns = not significant

Consuming alcohol was associated with experiencing unwanted sex play, the result of the chi-square test was significant at the one percent level. More respondents who indicated they drink alcohol experienced abuse as compared to respondents who do not drink alcohol, 20.2% compared to 6.7%, respectively. Almost three times the percentage of consumers of alcohol had experienced abuse compared to the percentage of respondents who do not drink and had experienced abuse. Furthermore, weekly alcohol consumption was associated with experiencing unwanted sex play. Respondents who indicated they drink alcohol on a weekly basis, as compared to those who do not drink on a weekly basis, or do not drink alcohol, were more likely to experience unwanted sex play. Twenty-three percent (23.3%) drank one to three drinks, 19.3% drank four to six drinks, 28.2% drank seven to nine drinks, and 18.4% of respondents who drink ten or more drinks on a weekly basis had experienced unwanted sex play compared to 12.0% who did not drink weekly and 6.5% who did not drink.

The frequency of experiencing academic stress was not associated with experiencing unwanted sex play, the result of the chi-square test was not significant. There was no clear trend among the reported frequencies.

Likewise, the frequency of anger was not associated with experiencing unwanted sexual abuse, the result of the chi-square test was not significant. The highest reported rate (20.3%) of experiencing abuse was among respondents who reported seldom experiencing anger. Roughly

fifteen percent of respondents reported experiencing academic stress monthly and daily/weekly, 15.1% and 14.6%, respectively.

Table 8-A. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Minor Negative Physical Contact, by Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Current Year in School, and Membership in Greek Life by Percent.

Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Unwanted Sex Play
<i>Gender: (N=58)</i>	
Female (n=46)	79.3
Male (n=12)	<u>20.7</u>
	100.0
<i>Sexual Orientation: (N=57)</i>	
Heterosexual (n=47)	82.5
Other (n=10)	<u>17.5</u>
	100.0
<i>Race: (N=58)</i>	
Caucasian (n=50)	86.2
Other (n=8)	<u>13.8</u>
	100.0
<i>Current Year in School: (N=57)</i>	
First-Year (n=10)	17.5
Sophomore (n=6)	10.5
Junior (n=16)	28.1
Senior/Fifth Year (n=25)	<u>43.9</u>
	100.0
<i>Member of Greek Life: (N=57)</i>	
Yes (n=22)	38.6
No (n=35)	<u>61.4</u>
	100.0

Of the fifty-eight participants who experienced unwanted sex play from a romantic partner, the majority of participants were female, heterosexual, and Caucasian. A greater percentage of females reported experiencing sexual abuse than their male counterparts, 79.3% compared 20.7%, respectively. When examining the victims of sexual abuse by sexual orientation, 82.5% of victims were heterosexual compared to 17.5% of other races. Eighty-six percent (86.2%) of victims were Caucasian compared to 13.8% of victims who reported being of a different race. The majority (72.0%) of victims were in their final year towards earning their undergraduate degree, 28.1% were juniors and 43.9% were senior/fifth year students. When examining the victims of sexual abuse by membership in Greek Life, the majority of victims were not a member of Greek Life, 61.4% compared to 38.6%, respectively.

Table 8-B. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Unwanted Sex Play, by Number of Serious Romantic Relationships, and Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship by Percent.

Relationship Characteristics	Percent Who Experienced Unwanted Sex Play
<i>Number of Serious Romantic Relationships in Past Five Years: (N=58)</i>	
0 (n=6)	10.3
1 (n=23)	39.7
2 (n=22)	37.9
3 or more (n=7)	<u>12.1</u>
	100.0
<i>Number of Months Spent in Most Recent Romantic Relationship: (N=54)</i>	
Less than 2 (n=10)	18.5
2 to 6 (n=17)	31.5
7 to 15 (n=17)	31.5
16 to 24 (n=1)	1.8
25 or more (n=9)	<u>16.7</u>
	100.0

When we examine the reported victims of unwanted sex play by relationship characteristics, the majority (77.6%) of victims reported that they had been involved in one to two serious romantic relationships in the past five years. Forty percent (39.7%) of victims reported one serious romantic relationship, while 37.9% reported that they had been involved in two serious relationships. Twelve percent (12.1%) of victims had three or more serious romantic relationships. When examining victims of unwanted sex play by months spent in their most recent romantic relationship, the majority of victims (63.0%) had been involved in their most recent romantic relationship for two to fifteen months. Thirty-two percent (31.5%) of victims had been in their most recent relationship for two to six months, and 31.5% of victims had been in their relationship for seven to fifteen months.

Table 8-C. Participants Who Reported Experiencing Unwanted Sex Play, by Consumption of Alcohol, Frequency of Academic Stress and Experiences of Anger by Percent.

Behaviors	Percent Who Experienced Unwanted Sex Play
<i>Consumes Alcohol: (N=58)</i>	
Yes (n=52)	89.7
No (n=6)	<u>10.3</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Alcohol Consumption: (N=57)</i>	
1-3 drinks (n=14)	24.6
4-6 drinks (n=11)	19.3
7-9 dinks (n=11)	19.3
10 or more drinks (n=9)	15.8
Does not drink weekly (n=6)	10.5
Does not drink (n=6)	<u>10.5</u>
	100.0
<i>Weekly Academic Stress: (N=58)</i>	
Less than once (n=21)	36.2
Once (n=10)	17.3
2 to 3 times (n=13)	22.4
Daily (n=14)	<u>24.1</u>
	100.0
<i>Frequency of Anger: (N=58)</i>	
Daily/Weekly (n=21)	36.2
Monthly (n=11)	19.0
Seldom (n=26)	<u>44.8</u>
	100.0

Ninety percent (89.7%) of victims of unwanted sex play indicated that they drink alcohol, compared to 10.3% who reported not consuming alcohol. Of the victims who drank alcohol, 24.6% reported that they consumed one to three drinks on a weekly basis, 19.3% reported four to six drinks, 19.3% reported seven to nine drinks, and 15.8% reported ten or more drinks weekly. Eleven percent (10.5%) of victims do not drink on a weekly basis. Thirty-six percent (36.2%) of victims of sexual abuse reported experiencing academic stress less than once a week, 22.4% reported two to three times a week, and 24.1% reported that they experienced academic stress daily. Forty-five percent (44.8%) of victims reported seldom experiencing anger. Nineteen percent (19.0%) of victims reported experiencing anger monthly. In contrast, thirty-six percent (36.2%) of victims reported experiencing anger daily/weekly.

#### *Methods used to engage partner in unwanted sex play*

If respondents indicated that they had suffered unwanted sex play from a romantic partner, then they were asked a follow-up question about the methods used to engage them in unwanted sex play.



Table 9. Participants' responses to the question, "Which of the following have been used to engage you in unwanted sex play? Please indicate all that apply." \*N=44

Method Indicated	Frequency Indicated	Percent of Subsample
Physical Force	22	50.0
Intoxication	22	50.0
Lies	11	25.0
Insults	7	15.9
Threat of ending the relationship	7	15.9
Threat of physical force	5	11.4
Other	11	25.0

\*12 students responded "Do not know/Refuse to answer"

Physical force and intoxication were predominately used to engage romantic partners in unwanted sex play; half of respondents (22) indicated that physical force was used to engage them in unwanted sex play, while twenty-two respondents also indicated the use of intoxication. Eleven respondents indicated the use of lies to engage them in unwanted sex play. Seven respondents had used insults to coerce their romantic partner into unwanted sex play. Eleven respondents also indicated "other." Within this category, three respondents indicated "repeated coercing" in the form of "begging/pleading" and "persistence in trying." Two respondents specifically indicated guilt as a mechanism to engage them in unwanted sex play. One respondent listed "various emotional threats," and another respondent cited "manipulation." Seven respondents reported threatening to end relationship, and five respondents indicated threatening to use physical forces, as techniques used by their romantic partner to engage them in unwanted sex play. All together, thirteen respondents indicated the use of threat to engage them in unwanted sex play.

#### *Experiences of Emotional Abuse*

Table 10. Distribution of students' experiences with emotional abuse. Respondents were asked to indicate all of the forms that applied to their most recent romantic relationship. \*N=185

<u>Form of Abuse</u>	<u>Abuse Indicated</u>	<u>Percent of Subsample</u>
Refusing to talk to partner	97	52.4
Lying or purposefully withholding information	93	50.3
Saying or doing something out of spite	79	42.7
Swearing at partner	73	39.5
Insulting partner	61	33.0
Stomping out of a room	56	30.3
Threatening to end relationship	51	27.6
Ridiculing ability as a romantic partner	27	14.6
Destroying a belonging	10	5.4

\*16 students responded "Do not know/Refuse to answer"

The most frequent form of emotional abuse indicated was refusing to talk to a romantic partner. Also frequently indicated was lying or withholding information, saying or doing something out of spite, and swearing at a partner. The least frequent response was destroying a belonging of a partner.

*Minor physical abuse and emotional abuse*

Table 11. Respondents reporting minor physical abuse combined with the emotional abuse they indicated their partner used in their most recent romantic relationship.

<u>Form of Abuse</u>	<u>Participant Reports (N=56)</u>	<u>Percent of Subsample</u>
Refusing to talk to partner	31	55.4
Lying or purposefully withholding information	27	48.2
Saying or doing something to spite partner	27	48.2
Swearing at partner	25	44.6
Insulting partner	20	35.7
Threatening to end relationship	19	33.9
Stomping out of a room	18	32.1

Thirty-one respondents who had a romantic partner refuse to talk to them had experienced minor physical abuse. Twenty-seven respondents had a romantic partner who lied or withheld information from them, and had experienced physical abuse. Twenty-seven respondents had a partner who said or did something intending to spite them and had experienced minor physical abuse. Twenty-five respondents had a romantic partner swear at them and had experienced minor physical. Twenty respondents had a romantic partner who insulted them and had experienced minor physical abuse. Nineteen respondents had a romantic partner threaten to end the relationship and had experienced minor physical abuse. Eighteen respondents had experienced a partner stomp out of a room and had experienced minor physical abuse.

*Major physical abuse and emotional abuse*

Table 12. Respondents reporting major physical abuse combined with the emotional abuse they indicated their partner used in their most recent romantic relationship.

<u>Form of Abuse</u>	<u>Participant Reports (N=50)</u>	<u>Percent of Subsample</u>
Refusing to talk to partner	14	28.0
Insulting partner	11	22.0
Lying or purposefully withholding information	10	20.0
Swearing at partner	9	18.0
Saying or doing something to spite partner	7	14.0
Threatening to end relationship	7	14.0
Stomping out of a room	6	12.0

Fourteen respondents who had a romantic partner refuse to talk to them indicated experiencing major physical abuse. Eleven respondents had a romantic partner insult them and experienced minor physical abuse. Ten respondents had experienced a romantic partner who had lied or withheld information from them and had experienced minor physical abuse. Nine respondents have had a romantic partner swear at them and had experienced minor physical abuse. Seven respondents had experienced a romantic partner saying or doing something with the

intention to spite them and had experienced minor physical abuse. Seven respondents had a romantic partner threaten to end a relationship and had experienced minor physical abuse. Six respondents had a romantic partner who had stomped out of a room and had experienced minor physical abuse.

The original hypotheses and support or non-support for them based on data results are:

1. Male respondents are more likely to experience physical abuse from their partners.  
[Hypothesis 1 was supported in the case of minor physical abuse, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse.]
2. Female respondents are more likely to experience sexual abuse from their partners.  
[Hypothesis 2 was supported. ]
3. Upper-class respondents are more likely to experience abuses from their partners.  
[Hypothesis 3 was supported for minor physical abuse and sexual abuse, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse.]
4. Members of Greek Life are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 4 was supported for minor physical abuse and sexual abuse, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse.]
5. Respondents with a history of fewer serious romantic relationships are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 5 was not supported for minor, major, or sexual abuse.]
6. Respondents in romantic relationships for a longer amount of time are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 6 was supported for minor, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse or sexual abuse.]
7. Respondents who drink alcohol are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 7 was supported for minor physical abuse and sexual abuse, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse.]
8. Respondents who drink a high amount of alcohol on a weekly basis are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 8 was supported for minor, major, and sexual abuse.]
9. Respondents who report stress more frequently are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 9 was supported for minor, major, however, was not supported in the case of sexual abuse.]
10. Respondents who report anger more frequently are more likely to experience abuses.  
[Hypothesis 10 was supported for minor, however, was not supported in the case of major physical abuse or sexual abuse.]

## DISCUSSION

The current study sought to describe the factors affecting students' attitudes and experiences related to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in romantic relationships. Demographic characteristics, relationship characteristics, and behaviors relevant to the college-aged individual were studied, and the responses of our sample were compared to previous studies of college students' experiences of abuses in romantic relationships.

In informal conversations with students over the past year it became clear that students did not feel that dating violence was a problem for students on the campus. After asking about the current research, students acknowledged the importance of the subject of dating abuses, but

they also denied the presence of dating abuse on this campus. Dating abuses may not always be visible, however they still exist. In many ways the abused in dating relationships are privileged knowers in a warped sense, they know of the abuse going on, the dynamic of the couples' relationship, and the outside pressures each partner faces.

### *Prevalence of Abuse on College Campus*

Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten (1985:203) reported that 61% of college students personally knew about an incidence involving dating abuse. More recently, a 2010 national survey found that 52% of college women reported knowing a friend who has experienced abusive dating behavior (Knowledge Networks 2011:11). These figures are close to the responses of our sample's attitude toward dating abuse among college students. Sixty-three percent (62.8%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that dating abuse is common on college campuses. When later asked if dating abuse is common on their home institution's campus, the percentage of respondents who agree to strongly agree dropped to twenty-eight percent (27.7%). The research on college-aged dating relationships signifies that physical abuse is common among students in romantic relationships (Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten 1985; Miller 2010; Knowledge Networks 2011). Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten (1985:203) reported that 19% of student respondents cited at least one incidence of abuse. Miller (2010) later reported that one in four of their college sample were in a romantic relationship with at least two incidences of physical abuse, whether that was as a recipient, perpetrator or both. Among our sample, eleven percent (10.5%) of respondents had experienced at least one incidence of physical abuse from a romantic partner.

### *Reciprocity of Abuses*

The original questionnaire that was sent out asked respondents both about their experiences receiving abusive behaviors, as well as committing abusive behaviors against their most recent romantic partners. However for the use of this paper, partners' experiences of abuses were only analyzed due to the low response rate of perpetrators of abuses. While thirty-nine respondents reported that they had used minor negative physical contact with their romantic partner, only four respondents indicated that they had used major negative physical contact with their romantic partner, and eight respondents indicated that they had engaged their romantic partner in unwanted sex play.

### *Students' Characteristics*

#### *Gender*

Leisring (2012:1446) reported that 23% of her female respondents reported experiencing minor physical aggression, while in our sample, fourteen percent (14.4%) of female respondents indicated that they had experienced minor negative physical contact from a romantic partner. Our sample did not support her results, our female respondents' reported rate of experiencing minor negative physical contact was significantly less. On the other hand, while 5% of female respondents reported severe, or major, physical aggression, among our sample almost fifteen percent (14.8%) of female respondents indicated experiencing major negative physical contact. While the rate of reported minor physical abuse was low in our sample compared to Leisring (2012), the reported rate of major physical abuse was higher. These differences could be due to the fact that Leisring (2012:1441) sampled 348 women, while our sample included only 260 female respondents. It is also important to note that minor and major physical abuse were not

clearly defined for respondents, while Leisring's (2012:1441) respondents were given characteristics such as "threw something at your partner that could hurt," which were later scored as minor or severe physical abuse.

Yet, gender does not appear to be significantly associated with minor or major physical abuse. Miller (2010:74) reported that 25.0% of male respondents had experienced at least two acts of physical abuse in their dating relationship. Among our male respondents, twenty-one percent (20.9%) had experienced minor negative physical abuse, and fourteen percent (13.7%) had experienced major physical abuse. We hypothesized that more male respondents as compared to female respondents would experience minor physical abuse, and we found this to be the case. Our finding supports earlier research that describes male respondents as more likely to sustain less severe forms of violence than females (Makepeace 1986). For major physical abuse, however, male and female respondents reported experiencing similar rates of abuse. We hypothesized that female respondents would report more major physical abuse compared to males, but we found close to a one percent difference between the reported percentages of females and males. This finding does not support earlier research, and may be explained by the fact that there may be gender differences in reporting behavior. This discrepancy may also be due to the fact that neither abuse was definitively labeled. Respondents were not given characteristics such as "pushing, grabbing, etc." to avoid priming the respondents' minds. The terms used in the questionnaire were "minor negative physical contact" and "major negative physical contact." Respondents could have had different ideas of what constituted each form of abuse, and thus their responses would have differed.

Although gender was not significantly associated with experiencing minor or major physical abuse, gender was significantly associated with experiencing sexual abuse: 20.1% of female respondents had experienced unwanted sex play as compared to ten percent 10.2% of males. This finding supports our hypothesis that female respondents would be more likely to experience sexual abuse than males, and supports earlier research. This difference may reflect that men and women use different forms of abuses against one another. In earlier research, Makepeace (1986) found that female respondents were more likely to sustain more severe forms of violence than their male counterparts. Hettrich and O'Leary (2007) added that while women were more likely to engage in physical abuses, males were more likely to physically restrain and/or force oral sex from a romantic partner. Considering that our sample was largely heterosexual, the higher percentages of experiencing unwanted sex play among females may reveal that males are more likely than females to engage in sexual abuse against their romantic partner. It may be that sexual abuse is a decidedly male method of abuse.

More males reported experiencing minor physical abuse, which could be seen as a tactic to provoke one's partner as a way to justify their own increased use and severity of abuse. According to Whiting et al. (2012), one tactic of abusers is to get their partner to react to small abuses that would later justify the abuser's increased severity of abuse. Keep in mind, also, that women do not have the same physical strength capability as men; perhaps a women hitting as hard as she can only registers as minor physical abuse for a man. Both males and females reported relatively equal rates of major physical abuse, which may reflect that the university campus setting provides males and females with more of a sense of an equal status than might be observed in another environment. Overall, the majority of victims for all three forms of abuse were female. It seems as though females are more likely to experience abuse no matter the type.

### *Sexual orientation*

Throughout the literature on dating abuse, the characteristics of sexual orientation and race have not been studied in as much detail as other student characteristics due to small sample sizes of those populations on the studies' campuses (Lewis and Fremouw 2001; Sugarman and Hotaling 1989). Among the LGBT dating violence literature that has been done, it appears that non-heterosexual partners experience more dating violence than heterosexuals; 28% of heterosexual couples reporting physical abuse, in comparison to 48% of lesbian couples and 38% of gay male couple reported experiencing abuse (Burke and Follingstad 1999:498). A community survey at a LGBT event reported gay and lesbian couples reported higher prevalence rates than heterosexual couples across physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Freedner 2002). Among same-sex couples, 24.3% of participants had experienced some form of violence from their partner in the 18 months prior to the distribution of the interview, and eleven percent of participants indicated being the victims of physical violence (Halpern et al 2004:128). Most recently, results have indicated that non-heterosexuals respondents reported higher rates of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse compared to heterosexual respondents (Dank et al. 2014). Twenty-nine percent of heterosexual respondents had experienced physical abuse compared to 42.8% of LGB respondents, 46.4% of heterosexuals respondents had experienced emotional abuse compared to 59.2% of LGB respondents, and 12.3% of heterosexual respondents had experienced sexual abuse compared to 23.3% of LGB respondents (Dank et al. 201:851). For this research, the term non-heterosexual included the responses of gay, lesbian, and bisexual respondents. Sexual orientation was not significantly associated with minor or major negative physical contact. Yet, almost fourteen percent of non-heterosexuals reported experiencing minor and major physical abuse (13.8% and 14.0%, respectively). Further, sexual orientation was significantly associated with experiencing unwanted sex play from a romantic partner, with 32% of non-heterosexual respondents indicating that they had experienced some form of sexual abuse from a romantic partner. While our sample consisted mainly of heterosexual students, these results require further research. Further, research on dating violence among gay men, lesbians, and bisexual partners has shown that abuse among each couple is different, and thus future research is required (Burke and Follingstad 1999; Freedner 2002; Halpern et al 2004; Dank et al. 2014).

### *Race*

In the literature on dating abuse and race, Fusco (2010) found higher rates of physical abuses among interracial and minority partners after examining differences in reports of intimate partner violence among Caucasian, non-Caucasian, and interracial relationships. Using police reports of intimate partner violence for a year within one county, Fusco (2010:1791) reported that interracial relationships comprised 17.9% of events, white couples made up 25.8% of events, and non-Caucasian relationships were 56.3% of events. Interracial couples were more likely to engage in mutual assault than non-Caucasian and Caucasian couples, had higher rates of arrests, and also showed higher rates of victim injury (Fusco 2010). Martin et al. (2013) collaborated these findings in part; researchers found higher levels of intimate dating violence among interracial couples and African American couples. Both interracial and Black couples reported similar rates of mutual abuse, which were higher than the reported rates of White couples (Martin et al. 2013).

In our sample, race was significantly associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact, as Caucasian respondents were more likely to report minor physical abuse

experiences compared to respondents of other races: 18.2% compared to 8.9%, respectively. Similar to minor physical abuse, more Caucasian respondents (17.6%) reported experiencing sexual abuse compared to non-Caucasian respondents (13.1%). Race was not significantly associated with sexual abuse or major physical abuse. Caucasian and non-Caucasian respondents reported experiencing similar rates of major negative physical contact, 14.4% compared to 15.0%, respectively. Interestingly, slightly more non-Caucasians indicated major physical abuse as compared to Caucasians. This result speaks to the need for further research, including more minorities in the sample. It may be that non-Caucasians are experiencing more major physical abuse in their romantic relationships, but no conclusions can be made due to our small sample.

#### *Year in school*

Smith, White, and Holland (2003) noted that the rates of dating abuse among their sample of respondents increased with each subsequent year of enrollment in a university. Following this observation, we hypothesized that upper-class students would be more likely to experience abuses than younger students. Our results showed that current year in school was not significantly associated with minor or major negative physical contact. Among respondents, there was a trend for more upper-class students, juniors and seniors, to have experienced minor physical abuse than first-year or sophomore students. This finding is consistent with earlier research that reported increased rates of dating abuse in their sample over succeeding years of enrollment in one university (Smith, White, and Holland 2003). Year in school was significantly associated with experiencing unwanted sex play, as upper-class students were more likely to experience sexual abuse than younger students, which also supports earlier research that rates of abuse are higher among older students (Smith, White, and Holland 2003). But, our sample reported that more first-year and sophomore students had experienced major physical abuse, a finding contrary to earlier reports as well as our hypothesis.

More juniors/seniors experienced minor and sexual abuse than younger students. Junior and seniors' experienced abuse can also be described by social support and alcohol. Older students would also have more social capital: having been on the campus for a longer period of time they would have more and further developed social networks because students would have had the time to build connections with other students. Students would also have an increased sense of belonging and accountability to the campus culture. In addition, students usually turn 21 during their junior year, increasing their legitimate access to alcohol, and perhaps their consumption of it. Yet, older students are also more likely to live off-campus where they would be less likely to face the deterrence of surveillance that occurs in Greek or residential housing. However, most students live with roommates who are most likely a part of their most intimate social network and would deter abuse that they could detect. Sexual abuse most likely occurs in partners' bedrooms, their private space among a communal living area, and thus would be hard to detect and deter as well as possibly seen as an intrusion of privacy among friends. Thus, what goes on behind closed doors may stay behind closed doors.

On the other hand, first-year students are the least likely to have been integrated into the campus culture and may not yet have developed the kind of social ties that would moderate their abuse, which would explain the higher reported rates of major physical abuse. First-year students may also still be in relationships from high-school or deciding that they no longer wish to be in these relationships, and attempting to end the relationship may result in abuses as their partner desperately tries to hold onto the relationship.

### *Greek Life*

Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997) argue that relationship stress is buffered by support offered through social networks. One form of a social support network found on the college campus is through the social organizations of Greek Life. They argued specifically that male membership in Greek Life could be associated with sexual assault, reasoning that fraternity social networks might provide males with negative views of women and their relationships, thus making abusive behaviors part of the group norm. Based on our observations, those in Greek Life largely associate with one another, especially in social functions settings where alcohol is present. We hypothesized that those who were members of Greek Life would be more likely to experience abuses. If male membership in Greek Life was associated with sexual assault and social functions largely occur at fraternity housing, then those in Greek Life could be at higher risk of abuses due to who they are associating with and where they are associating. Among our sample, membership in Greek Life was not significantly associated with sexual abuse or minor physical abuse. Nonetheless, more members of Greek Life reported experiencing minor physical abuse and sexual abuse as compared to non-members. These findings do not directly support the male-peer support theory due to the low response rate of respondents regarding their perpetration of abuses, but our results gave an idea of the rate of abuses among this group. Greek Life comprises roughly one third of the population on campus, and of our sample, respondents were reporting 19.1% of minor physical abuse and 19.8% of sexual abuse.

Involvement in Greek Life was associated with major physical abuse; however, in the opposite trend as predicted. Respondents not involved in Greek Life had higher percentages of experiencing major physical abuse than members of Greek Life. Furthermore, when examining only the respondents who had experienced minor and major physical abuse and sexual abuse, the majority of victims for all three forms of abuse were not involved in Greek Life. These findings may seem counterintuitive; however, as Franklin et al. (2012) reported, maybe predictors of sexual assault are not directly associated with fraternity membership. Male peer-support may exist throughout all-male peer groups on the college campus, the ideologies of group secrecy and a peer pressure for sex may pervade athletic teams, all-male residence halls, or other male friendship networks, making it so that the ideologies of fraternities are not entirely dissimilar from the general male college population.

But, those involved in Greek Life were more likely to experience minor and sexual abuse than individuals not involved in Greek Life. However, non-involvement in Greek Life was statistically significantly with experiencing major physical abuse. Greek Life may facilitate minor and sexual abuse through the use of alcohol and male dominated groupthink, while hindering major physical abuse due to the presence of social support. Likewise, alcohol use is related to experiencing minor and sexual abuse, but not major abuse. Overall, individuals in Greek Life drink more than individuals not involved in Greek Life. Drinking can easily lead to arguments with one's partner, however, the support and visibility of Greek Life on the university's campus dissuades or moderates the violence. As Michalski (2004) proposes, the likelihood of a partner resulting to violence can be affected by the availability of support. Members of Greek Life often have available support. Not only do they live in a house together for approximately two years, members take classes together, share meals together, and socialize on the weekends together. Major physical abuse would leave visible bruising and other contusions that would become obvious among a group that lives and spends the majority of their time together, as well as regularly participates in campus activities. Additionally, the abuse would have to take place somewhere with some form of privacy, and Greek housing does not



necessarily facilitate privacy. Further, Michalski (2004) suggests that the individuals most vulnerable are those who lack social support. Among all of the victims of abuses, the majority responded that they were not involved in Greek Life. That is not to say that Greek Life is the only form of social support on a university campus, but other organizations and clubs do not spend nearly as much time together, and have the same frequency of interactions together, as those members.

While data on the partner of the respondent were not gathered, it would be interesting to note if partners involved in Greek Life would be more likely to commit violence against their partners if the partner is not involved. Greek Life members would have more social capital than individuals not involved in Greek Life; after all, a large part of Greek Life involves socializing. If one partner was involved in Greek Life and the other was not, the one involved might hold more control over the other through their available social network.

### *Relationship Characteristics*

Mason and Smithey (2012) found that the length of a relationship is positively correlated with the chances of experiencing abuse: the longer a partner was involved in a romantic relationship, the greater their chances of experiencing abuse. Our sample did not support their results. Our results show that the number of serious romantic relationships in the past five years was significantly associated with experiencing minor negative physical contact; more respondents who had indicated a larger number of serious partners had experienced minor physical abuse. One would reason that a greater number of partners within a five year period would signify shorter relationship durations. According to Mason and Smithey (2012), abuse would be less likely to occur within a shorter relationship. However, respondents who indicated having serious romantic relationships within the past five years had much higher rates of experiencing minor negative physical contact, as compared to respondents who did not report any serious romantic relationships. Perhaps consideration of a relationship as serious signifies on some level that the relationship has existed long enough that the initial honeymoon phase has worn off, and this is the time when partners become more vulnerable to abuse. After all, Mason and Smithey (2012) do not report after a specific duration when risk of experiencing abuse is higher, only that longer relationships are associated with increased chance of experiencing abuse. We also found that the number of serious romantic relationships was not significant for major negative physical contact, or unwanted sex play. Furthermore, there did not even appear to be any trends among the percentages of respondents with serious romantic relationships who experienced major physical or sexual abuse. While we predicted that respondents with fewer serious romantic relationships would be more likely to experience abuse, we reported no association between number of serious romantic partners and physical and/or sexual abuse. Additionally, more serious romantic partners seemed to signify an increased likelihood of experiencing minor physical abuse. It is worth noting that the determination of "serious romantic relationship" was up to the respondent so there may be inconsistencies about the criteria for constituting a serious relationship that may have affected results.

Specifically Mason and Smithey (2012) found a significant positive effect between time spent in a relationship and the likelihood of a partner committing physical assault or using sexual coercion. While the months spent in the majority of respondents' most recent romantic relationship was not significant for minor or major negative physical contact, it was significant for experiencing unwanted sex play from a romantic partner. However, in contrast to what Mason and Smithey (2012) found, it was respondents who indicated being in a relationship for

fifteen months or less that had the highest rates of experiencing sexual abuse. Within our sample, it seemed that respondents were experiencing a reverse of the trend that Mason and Smithey (2012) found. Respondents with shorter relationship durations were more likely to experience unwanted sexual abuse than those who reported being in a relationship for a longer period of time. Although not significant, there was a trend within the data that the greater number of months spent in a relationship was associated with experiencing higher rates of minor negative physical contact. This finding is consistent with Mason and Smithey's earlier work, that the more time spent in a relationship would predict a greater risk for experiencing physical abuse. Even more interesting, and conflicting, was that respondents in a relationship for less than two months, or twenty-five months or more, reported similar rates of experiencing major physical abuse. These percentages were also much higher than those in a relationship for two to twenty-four months. Previous literature would explain that being in a relationship for longer would be correlated with a greater likelihood of experiencing physical abuse, however, the similar findings among respondents in a relationship for less than two months do not support earlier results (Mason and Smithey 2012). Perhaps the form of abuse tempers how well a partner will receive it, for example, sexual abuse may not at all be tolerated by a partner, while minor physical abuse maybe thought to be more acceptable. Or, perhaps the form of abuse is related to when it shows up in a relationship.

#### *Students' Reported Behaviors*

##### *Academic stress*

Mason and Smithey (2012) argue that dating abuse is a form of innovation in response to strain. The more stress a student feels, the more they may resort to using dating violence, and the behavior may be introduced into the relationship. Although not significant, there did appear to be a trend among respondents who reported higher percentages of more frequently experiencing academic stress, and experiencing minor negative physical contact: 18.3% of respondents who experienced stress 2 to 3 times a week, and 18.1% of respondents who experienced stress daily, had experienced minor physical abuse. These results support our hypothesis that respondents who experienced academic stress more frequently were more likely to experience abuse. Academic stress was not significantly associated with experiencing major negative physical contact, yet again, the more frequently a respondent reported experiencing academic stress, the higher the percentages of experiencing major negative physical contact, 14.6% for 2 to 3 times a week and 15.1% for daily. The only exception to this trend was the reported response rate for experiencing stress less than once a week and experiencing major physical contact, which was 15.8%. The frequency of experiencing academic stress was not significantly associated with experiencing unwanted sex play. Further, there appeared to be the opposite of the trend observed with minor and major physical abuse. The less frequent a respondent reported experiencing academic stress, the higher the percentage of experiencing sexual abuse, and the highest percentage was among respondents who experienced stress less than once a week. This finding is contrary to our hypothesis that respondents who experience more stress would be more likely to experience abuse. It may be that academic stress is a motivating factor for perpetrators of abuses, but it is not associated with experiencing abuses. Victims can experience abuse no matter their academic stress levels, especially if the respondents were solely victims of abuses and were not partaking in any mutual abusive behavior.

It is also worth noting that the questionnaire was not administered during a usual period of high academic stress in either the first or second semester. The first wave of the questionnaire

was sent out the week before Thanksgiving recess; the second wave was administered the week after students returned from their winter vacation. Students' perceptions of their stress levels could have been lower, resulting in underestimating their stress, with no clear pattern emerging between high levels of stress and experiencing dating abuses. Furthermore, the questionnaire asked about the overall frequency of experiencing academic stress, rather than present a scale of stress to respondents.

### *Alcohol*

Shorey et al. (2011) reported that alcohol problems were related to victimization, and that both male and female victims of abuses were under the influence of alcohol for a large percentage of the time that they were being physically and psychologically victimized. Thus, we reasoned that consumption of alcohol and frequency of alcohol would be associated with experiencing abuses. Experiencing minor and major physical abuse was not significantly associated with consuming alcohol, but more respondents who consume alcohol reported experiencing minor physical abuse than respondents who do not consume alcohol. This finding supports earlier research and our hypothesis that respondents who drink alcohol would be more likely to experience abuses. However, the opposite was true of major physical abuse: more respondents who claimed that they do not drink alcohol indicated experiencing major physical abuse. This finding did not support earlier research. It may be that while the partner experiencing major physical abuse was not drinking, the partner perpetrating the abuse was drinking. Makepeace (1986) and LeJeune and Follette (1994) both reported that roughly one-third of respondents indicated that alcohol was involved in some capacity in their reported incidences of dating violence. These studies did not explicitly state how alcohol was involved, only that it was a factor. However, among the victims who had experienced minor and major physical abuse, the majority indicated that they drink alcohol.

Weekly alcohol consumption in our sample was not significantly associated with experiencing minor physical abuse, although the highest reported rate of experiencing minor physical abuse was among respondents who reported consuming ten or more alcoholic drinks weekly. The higher reported rates of those consuming seven or more drinks per week lends support to our hypothesis, and the highest rate of experiencing minor physical abuse is among respondents who indicated one to three drinks per week. This interaction might be getting at some of what Makepeace (1987) reported, his results indicated that dating violence was more common among those who drink "somewhat more than most," than among respondents who drink "much more." And Williams and Smith (1994) reported that lower alcohol use was associated with greater violence. Among our sample weekly alcohol consumption was significantly associated with experiencing major physical abuse, and the highest percentage was among respondents who consume seven to nine drinks weekly. This finding supports our hypothesis that respondents who drink a high amount of alcohol on a weekly basis will be more likely to experience abuses.

Further, consumption of alcohol and weekly alcohol consumption were significantly associated with experiencing unwanted sex play from a romantic partner: 20.2% of respondents who drink alcohol had experienced sexual abuse from a romantic partner. The highest percentage of reported sexual abuse was among weekly drinkers who consumed seven to nine drinks. Overall, it appeared that those who reported consuming one to three drinks weekly experienced the highest percentages of sexual abuse. Additionally, twenty-two out of fifty-six respondents indicated the use of intoxication from a romantic partner to engage them in unwanted sex play.

The use of alcohol may be involved in two different ways for perpetrators and victims. While alcohol may lower the self-control of abusers and increase aggression, as Makepeace (1987) observed, its affects may have a limiting factor as the number of drinks were consumed. Moderate drinkers are the most likely to perpetrate abuse (Makepeace 1987). Perhaps the frequency of drinks is also associated with victimization, and maybe heavy drinkers are more likely to experience abuse than low level drinkers.

It was common among victims of all three types of abuses to indicate that they drink alcohol. Alcohol use was related to experiencing minor physical abuse; alcohol would lower self-control, causing a partner to say something that she/he would not normally say when they were not drinking. Obviously, this leads to couples arguing, and situational couple violence as couples who are both drinking argue back and forth. Partners can even fight over consuming alcohol and the level of consumption of their partner.

Drinking alcohol, and drinking weekly, was associated with unwanted sex play. Alcohol is common in the college campus culture, a part of students' beliefs and expectations not just at the individual level, but also for the entire student population. In combination with the pervasiveness of alcohol, is a date rape culture among campuses where the use of alcohol suddenly seems to make the victim less credible, and thus the crime less wrong. It is among this culture that women find themselves often the victims of sexual assaults, whether from strangers, acquaintances, or their boyfriends.

When alcohol is involved partners experience minor or sexual abuse, but major abuse was statistically significant with not consuming alcohol. Major physical abuse may signify something other than relational aggression in a relationship. A typical scenario might be the following. When one partner drinks and the other does not, the drinking partner may make comments about the non-drinker either due to lower self-control, or in an attempt to provoke them to engage in mutual abuse. When the partner that is not drinking tries to reason with the partner who is drinking, it becomes apparent that the one not drinking is more in control of themselves and the situation. The partner drinking may feel angry and threatened. They feel as if they need to do something to regain control over the situation. Future research should ask about other types of drugs, both illegal and prescriptive, other than alcohol.

### *Anger*

Hettrich and O'Leary (2007) reported that anger was the most common reason for physical abuse against a romantic partner. Leisring (2012:1448) also reported that a majority, 60% of the women respondents, indicated anger as a motivation to engage in physical and emotional abuse against their romantic partner. Among our sample, the frequency of experiencing anger was significantly associated with experiencing minor physical abuse. Respondents who experienced anger more often, on a daily/weekly basis, were more likely to experience minor physical contact than respondents who experienced anger on a monthly basis or less. This finding supports our hypothesis that respondents who report experiencing anger more frequently are more likely to experience abuses. Frequency of anger was not significantly associated with experiencing major negative physical contact. There was not a clear trend. Interestingly, respondents who expressed feeling anger on a less frequent basis, monthly or seldom, had higher percentages of major physical abuse than respondents who reported experiencing anger daily/weekly. This finding does not support our hypothesis. It may be that anger is a motivating factor for perpetrators of abuses, but is not associated with experiencing abuses, similar to academic stress. Due to the low response rate of respondents indicating that

they had perpetrated abuses against their partner, this study could not sufficiently examine this possibility.

Although previous research studies did not include sexual abuse in their operational definition of abuse, we went ahead and explored the possibility of frequency of anger being associated with experiencing sexual abuse (Leisring 2012). The frequency of anger was not significantly associated with experiencing unwanted sex play; the trend appeared in the opposite direction of what one would expect given the literature. The less frequent a respondent experienced anger, the higher the percent of experiencing unwanted sex play from a romantic partner; this finding does not support our hypothesis. Yet, perhaps frequency of anger is only a factor for perpetrators of abuses as mentioned previously for minor and major physical abuse.

One-directional violence would not necessarily be affected by the emotional states of abusers; however, it could be that individuals who are more laid-back are more acceptable of abuse. Those who experienced major and sexual abuse, experienced stress less than once a week and seldom experienced anger. Since these individuals are not easily agitated, it could also be that they are more forgiving and more likely to make excuses for their partners' abusive behavior.

Because minor physical abuse is reciprocal between couples, it is not surprising that those who experienced minor physical abuse also reported experiencing stress at least twice a week and experienced anger daily/weekly. These individuals are more likely to get upset and react as demonstrated by their increased frequency of experiencing stress and anger.

Obviously there are personal considerations, such as a history of abuse, witnessing familial abuse, etc. that factor into experiencing and perpetrating abuses against a partner. Also worth noting, is the fact that respondents' partners did not necessarily attend the same institution as the respondent. Regional factors could also be affecting students' reported experiences.

### *Overlap of Emotional and Physical Abuses*

Christopher and Kisler (2012:166) reported that college women experience an overlap of verbal and physical aggression in relationships. Our sample indicated that there was an overlap between experiencing emotional abuse and experiencing minor physical abuse from a romantic partner. Roughly thirty-three to fifty-five percent of sample respondents had experienced some form of emotional abuse and minor physical abuse. The overlap between experiences of emotional abuse and major physical abuse was less prevalent compared to the percentages reported between emotional and minor physical abuse. The highest reported percentage of overlap of emotional and major physical abuse was twenty-eight percent of respondents who reported experiencing a romantic partner refusing to talk to them and experiencing major physical abuse. That reported twenty-eight percent, which was the highest percentage of overlap for emotional and major physical abuse, is still less than the least reported percentage among those experiencing emotional and minor physical abuse. In comparison, fifty-five percent of respondents had experienced a romantic partner refuse to talk to them and had experience minor physical abuse. Interestingly, the most reported emotional abuse for both respondents who had experienced minor and major physical abuse was experiencing a partner refusing to talk.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study is limited by several factors. The first limitation may be the sensitive nature of the topic. Although participants were reassured that their responses were confidential, participants may still have not felt comfortable participating in such a questionnaire. This may have been especially true for participants who were, or are currently, in an abusive romantic

relationship. Since participants were warned of the potential risks, including questions that have the potential to make participants feel uncomfortable or emotional vulnerable, those with experience in an abusive relationship may not have wanted to share their experience. Secondly, the sample came from the researcher's own university campus.

Other limitations due to methodology may be the nature of the self-report questionnaire; results were dependent entirely upon participants' responses. Bias is obviously an issue whenever participants are asked to report on their experiences and attitudes. For instance, recall bias can affect participants' memories and perception of events. Response bias is also a factor since those who have experienced abuse may not want to indicate themselves as a victim, while perpetrators of abuse may not want to identify themselves as abusers. There is also the issue of social desirability bias since perpetrators of abuse most likely know that their actions or attitudes are not condoned by society, and are thus more likely to underreport what is considered conventionally "bad" behavior. And lastly, the study population used for this research was a small, mostly homogeneous sample of Midwestern university students. Due to this fact, these findings may not be generalizable to other college campuses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Gathering information on students' experiences with abuse in their most recent romantic relationships has the practical application of providing the university's counseling and consultation services with information on students' experiences of dating abuse while enrolled in the university. Understanding the prevalence of abuse, recognizing who the perpetrators of abuse are, as well as the forms of abuse that are taking place, will help to better develop counseling services for students. The determination of factors specific to the campus atmosphere, such as rates of alcohol consumption and membership in a social Greek or athletic organization, will better help the counseling and consultation services to target their services to students in need of help.

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## APPENDIX - "Questionnaire"

1. Q. What is your current year in school?

- ☐ First Year
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Fifth Year
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

2. Q. What is your age?

Self-designated \_\_\_\_\_

If you are not at least 18 years old, thank you for your interest, but you are not eligible for this study.

3. Q. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other Please Specify \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

4. Q. How would you classify your race?

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino/a American
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Identified by two or more
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

5. Q. Are you member of a social Greek organization on campus?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

6. Q. Do you play on a sports team at IWU? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Yes, on a varsity team
- ☐ Yes, on an intramural team
- ☐ Yes, on a club team
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

7. Q. How often do you experience stress?
- ☐ Never
  - ☐ Less than once a month
  - ☐ Once a month
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a month
  - ☐ Once a week
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a week
  - ☐ Daily
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
8. Q. How often do you feel stressed when you think of your financial situation?
- ☐ Never
  - ☐ Less than once a month
  - ☐ Once a month
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a month
  - ☐ Once a week
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a week
  - ☐ Daily
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
9. Q. How often do you feel stressed when you think of your academic situation?
- ☐ Never
  - ☐ Less than once a month
  - ☐ Once a month
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a month
  - ☐ Once a week
  - ☐ 2 to 3 times a week
  - ☐ Daily
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
10. Q. How often do you experience anger?
- ☐ Daily
  - ☐ Weekly
  - ☐ Monthly
  - ☐ Seldom
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
11. Q. Do you drink alcohol?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

12. Q. What is the average number of drinks you consume on a weekly basis? A drink is defined as a bottle of beer, a glass of wine, a wine cooler, a shot of liquor or a mixed drink.

- ☐ 1-3 drinks
- ☐ 4-6 drinks
- ☐ 7-9 drinks
- ☐ 10 or more drinks
- ☐ I do not drink on a weekly basis
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

13. Q. During the last 30 days, how many days did you consume alcohol?

Self-designated \_\_\_\_\_

14. Q. Think back over the last two weeks. How many times have you had five or more drinks in one sitting?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ 1 time
- ☐ 2 times
- ☐ 3 or more times
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

15. Q. How would you classify your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

16. Q. Which of the following best describes your current romantic relationship status?

- ☐ Engaged
- ☐ In an exclusive dating relationship
- ☐ In a casual dating relationship
- ☐ Not engaged in a dating relationship
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

**Please answer the following questions based on your most recent romantic relationship.**

17. Q. How many serious romantic relationships have you had in the past five years?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

18. Q. How long have you been in your most recent romantic relationship?

- ☐ less than 2 months
- ☐ 2 to 3 months
- ☐ 4 to 6 months
- ☐ 7 to 9 months
- ☐ 10 to 12 months
- ☐ 13 to 15 months
- ☐ 16 to 18 months
- ☐ 19 to 21 months
- ☐ 22 to 24 months
- ☐ 25 months or more
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

19. Q. How often do you feel stressed when you think of your romantic situation?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ 2 to 3 times a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ 2 to 3 times a week
- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

20. Q. Now think about your romantic partner. How often do you experience anger because of your romantic partner?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Multiple times a day
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

There have been accounts in the news of dating abuse being common on college campuses. Using your own experience, please answer the following questions.

21. Q. Dating abuse is common on college campuses.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

22. Q. Dating abuse is common on Illinois Wesleyan's campus.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

23. Q. How many times have you experienced physical abuse from a romantic partner?

- ☐ 0 times
- ☐ 1 time
- ☐ 2 or 3 times
- ☐ 4 or more times
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

24. Q. What forms did it take? Please be as specific as possible.

Self-designated \_\_\_\_\_

25. Q. How many times have you engaged in physical abuse towards a romantic partner?

- ☐ 0 times
- ☐ 1 time
- ☐ 2 or 3 times
- ☐ 4 or more times
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

26. Q. How wrong do you think it is to retaliate against a partner by using physical contact?

- ☐ Very wrong
- ☐ Wrong
- ☐ Not wrong
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

27. Q. If physically injured by my partner I would leave the relationship.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

28. Q. Has your romantic partner used minor physical contact with you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

29. Q. Have you used minor physical contact with your romantic partner?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
30. Q. Has your romantic partner use major physical contact with you?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
31. Q. Thinking about that same relationship, do you use major physical contact with your romantic partner?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
32. Q. It is wrong for a man to hit a woman.
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
33. Q. It is wrong for a woman to hit a man.
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer
34. Q. In my most recent romantic relationship, my romantic partner has used the following...  
(Please check all that apply)
- ☐ Threatens to break up with you
  - ☐ Lies or purposely withholds information
  - ☐ Ridicules you as a romantic partner (calling you a lousy lover)
  - ☐ Insults you
  - ☐ Swears at you
  - ☐ Refused to talk to you
  - ☐ Said or did something with the intention to spite you
  - ☐ Stomped out of a room
  - ☐ Destroyed something that belongs to you
  - ☐ None of the above
  - ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

35. Q. In my most recent romantic relationship, I have used the following... (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Threaten to break up with my romantic partner
- ☐ Lied or purposely withheld information
- ☐ Ridiculed my romantic partner (calling you a lousy lover)
- ☐ Insulted my romantic partner
- ☐ Swore at my romantic partner
- ☐ Refused to talk my romantic partner
- ☐ Said or did something with the intention to spite my romantic partner
- ☐ Stomped out of a room
- ☐ Destroyed something that belongs to my romantic partner
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

*For this research, sex play is anything that you have defined as unwanted physical contact*

36. Q. Have you experienced unwanted sex play from a romantic partner?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

37. Q. Which of the following have been used to engage you in unwanted sex play? Please indicate all that apply.

- ☐ Threat of physical force
- ☐ Insults
- ☐ Lies
- ☐ Physical force
- ☐ Intoxication (alcohol or drug induced)
- ☐ Threat of ending the relationship
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer

38. Q. Have you engaged your romantic partner in unwanted sex play?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer



39. Q. Which of the following have you used to engage your romantic partner in unwanted sex play? Please indicate all that apply.

- ☐ Threat of physical force
- ☐ Insults
- ☐ Lies
- ☐ Physical force
- ☐ Intoxication (alcohol or drug induced)
- ☐ Threat of ending the relationship
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Do not know/ Refuse to answer