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Understanding College Students Perceptions of Unhealthy Dating Relationships

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Abstract

This study addresses the prevalence and perceptions of unhealthy relationships at a medium size catholic college campus. An online voluntary survey measured student's perceptions and understanding of unhealthy relationships through the use of silhouettes. Additionally, participants were asked to define psychological abuse. Results revealed that many of the college students were able to correctly identify types of abuse in relationships. Participants defined psychological abuse to include manipulation, control and guilt. Practice and policy implications were addressed as well.

Understanding College Students Perceptions of Unhealthy Dating Relationships

Across the country the topic of unhealthy, violent dating relationships is prevalent but not acknowledged. According to The Crisis Intervention Center nationwide, 1 out of every 3 women will be sexually assaulted during the course of her lifetime (Crisis Intervention Center, 2010). The United States rape rate is four times higher than Germany, furthermore compared to Japan the United states rape rate is 20 times higher (Crisis Intervention Center, 2010). Sexual assault and dating violence is occurring all over the world; however it is the most evident in the United States as demonstrated by statistics from The Crisis Intervention Center. The major issue being addressed in this paper is dating violence and its prevalence on college campuses.

"Relationships violence" is a pattern of abusive coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual and psychological attack that adolescents use against their intimate partners. A violent relationship constitutes but is not limited to habitual controlling or aggressive behaviors within the romantic relationship in order to gain power and control over the person that they are dating (Crisis Intervention, 2010). There are many forms of abuse such as: emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual. Emotional abuse can be defined as a verbalization or behavior which puts down another person, and may cause harm to ones self-esteem or cause feelings of shame. Some examples of emotional abuse may include but are not limited to: put downs, threats, controlling behaviors, and withholding affection (Yampavalley, 2009). Physical abuse is a behavior and any action which causes physical pain or injury. Physical abuse may include but is not limited to, punching, hitting, spitting, kicking, slapping, or shaking. Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual advance or contact (Yampavalley, 2009). Lastly, sexual abuse, may include but

is not limited to unwelcomed sexual comments, forced upon sexual activities, forced intercourse and unwanted touching. Physically violent relationships along with sexual assaults and sexual abuse have been well documented and studied over the years.

It is evident that the severity of physically/sexually abusive relationships are prevalent. Braithwaite, Fincham, Cui, and, Pasley (2008) found that there are 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence against women a year. Their study also revealed that "it would be incorrect to believe intimate partner violence is limited to more established intimate relationships, such as marriage and cohabitation" (p. 260). The researchers also note that there are high estimates of violence in college student dating relationships (Braithwaite, Fincham, Cui, & Pasley, 2008). When the research was conducted it was found that the estimates ranged from 13 percent to 74 percent; however the most consistent rates range from 20 to 30 percent (Daley & Noland, 2001; Spencer & Bryant, 2000; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997; Smith, Thompson, Tomaka, & Buchanan, 2005, as cited in Braithwaite, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008). In a study by Braithwaite, Fincham, and Pasley (2008) it was documented that 34 percent of college students in dating relationships reported the occurrence of physical aggression in their relationships over the past year (Straus & Ramirez, 2002 as cited in Braithwaite, Fincham, Cui, & Pasley, 2008). Intimate partner relationships on college campuses were found to result in physical injury, medical attention seeking, psychological distress, low grade point average, disciplinary problems, and rapid repeat pregnancies (Makepeace, 1986; Coffey, Leitenberg, Henning, Bennet, & Jankowski, 1996; Reuterman & Burcky, 1989; Jacoby, Gorenflo, Black, Wunderlich, & Eyler, 1999 as cited in Braithwaite, Fincham, Cui, &Pasley, 2008). Murray and Kardatzke (2007) estimated that rates of physical and sexual dating violence vary widely due to numerous definitions; however, the incidents of sexual violence among the college populations are

significantly high. It has been documented that 35.5 percent of college women have been involved in an unwanted sexual encounter/ activity (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Nicholson et al., 1998 as cited in Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Ultimately, these findings suggest that one in three college women are victims of sexual dating violence (Murray & Kardatzke, 2007).

The literature suggests a strong relationship between college aged individuals and unhealthy relationships. As noted by many studies and statistics, physical and sexual abuse is not something to take lightly. However, the area that has been overlooked a countless number of times is the emotional/ verbal abuse issue in relationships. This form of abuse leaves long lasting psychological effects on an individual and furthermore the actions of emotional and verbal abuse are signs that the relationship may advance into a more violent physical unhealthy relationship. Emotional abuse on college campuses can be a precursor to more physical and sexual forms of abuse. This study is designed to take a closer look at this form of abuse and its detrimental effects. This paper will address the concerns and severity of unhealthy dating relationships as it relates to verbal and emotional abuse.

The problem of dating violence in college student relationships is especially important to social work practice, policy, and research. The relationship between intimate partner violence in dating relationships among college students and intimate partner violence in martial relationships is very strong. It is important to address the issue of dating violence before it reaches the marital level. The paper will specifically focus on emotional and verbal abuse; although these types of abuse do not leave a physical and visible scar, they leave emotional scars which victims carry with them for their entire lives.

Literature Review

Makepeace (1981) was the first to publish a report on dating violence as it pertains to college students. It was evident that one in five couples are involved in violent dating

relationships (Makepeace, 1981). More recently a number of studies have determined that as many as one in three college couples will experience at least one incident of relationship violence (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000; Jackson, 1999; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001 as cited in Gidycz & Luthra, 2006). Additionally, a sample of 21 year old women revealed that 84% had experienced psychological violence from their male partner (Magol et al, 1997 as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Psychological abuse is found in as many as 88% of college student dating relationships (Shook, Gerrity, Jurich & Segrist, 2000; White & Koss, 1991 as cited in (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). The literature and statistical evidence supports that psychological abuse is widespread and disquieting (Vezina & Herbert, 2007). It is also evident through studies that the psychological violence that occurs in college dating relationships may result in physical aggression later during the relationship (Shook et al. as cited in Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). In other words it is safe to say that there is a high prevalence of intimate partner violence over the course of college dating relationships.

Risks

As noted the prevalence of college dating violence is high and therefore it is crucial to understand the risk factors behind dating violence. The presence of violence in an adolescent romantic relationship is a main risk factor for the occurrence of abuse in later adulthood (Hendy et al., 2003). Statistics and research confirm that prevalence of intimate partner violence is significant and therefore it is important to identify risk factors for adolescent and young adults in order to prevent victimization from occurring.

Age is an underlying risk factor when evaluating dating violence and unhealthy relationships. Studies reveal that college students are highly vulnerable to dating violence. This is partially due to the fact that this population is so involved in romantic relationships during the

college time period (Fox et al, 2008). In short it is evident that age plays a role in unhealthy relationships but is not the only contributing risk factor. Evidence supports a link between heavy college drinking and intimate partner psychological abuse (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). A study conducted by Leahy, Roudsari & Walters (2008) found that among victims a higher percentage of females reported that their partner was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the verbal and emotional abuse. More specifically the researchers reported that 58% of the respondents male partners were intoxicated while verbally and emotionally abusing their female partner, and 55% of females reported that their male partners as intoxicated while threatening them (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). It is evident that many college students consume high quantities of alcohol which has a negative effect on dating relationships and can positively contribute to violence in those relationships.

Research shows that men who are violent demonstrate more problems with alcohol use their male counterparts who are non-violent (Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Additionally, physically and psychologically violent college men reported that they had greater issues with alcohol than those nonviolent college men in dating relationships (Lundeberg, Stith, Pen &Ward, 2004 as cited in Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). It has been noted since the 1950's that substance abuse is directly linked to unhealthy relationships during the college years (Nicholson et al., 1998, as cited in Gidycz & Luthra, 2006). It has been concluded that both the perpetrator and the victim of the violence have admitted to higher levels of alcohol consumption than those who are not involved in unhealthy relationships (Gidycz & Luthra, 2006).

It is evident that are a multitude of factors besides age and substance abuse which influence dating violence among college couples. A link was found between factors of dating victimization and socioeconomic status. Malik et al. (1997) concluded that there was a positive

correlation between education level and victimization. It is also documented by researchers that living in rural areas are a risk factor for unhealthy, abusive relationships (Reuterman & Burcky, 1989; Spencer & Bryant, 2000; as cited in Vezina & Herbert 2007). It is speculated that dating victimization is occurring due to patriarchal ideologies, social isolation and lack of resources/ recreational activities (Olimb, Brownlee, & Tranter, 2002 as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007).

The link between socioeconomic status and family stability plays a large role in the risk for dating violence. Many studies show that living in a broken home can be a risk factor for dating victimization (Fox et al., 2008). This statement suggests that living in a two parent family has a protective factor against psychological violence in healthy adult hood (Magdol et al., 1998; as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Therefore those who are coming from homes where they witness unhealthy relationships and conflicts tend to mirror these interactions (Tourigny et al. 2006 as cited in Vezina, & Herbert, 2007). There is a connection between aggression inside the home and a predictor of one's involvement in an unhealthy dating relationship (Riggs & O'Leary, 1989; as cited in Gidycz & Luthra, 2006). It has been suggested that females who have more estranged relationships with their parents are more likely to be victimized (Cleveland et al, 2003; Ehrensaft et al, 2003; Lavoie &Vezina, 2002; Magdol, 1998; Reuterman & Burcky, 1998; as cited in Vezina& Herbert, 2007). Magdol et al. (1998) cite that if a female has a personal and open relationship with her parents then she is more likely to engage in good interpersonal skills which will transfer over into her adult romantic relationships (as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). It can be concluded that females who have distant and unsupportive relationships with their parents or guardians are more likely to be at risk for unhealthy dating relationships (Ehrensadt et al., 2003 Magdol et al, 1998; Reuterman & Burcky, 1998; Small & Kerns, 1993 as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007).

There is an association between being victim of dating violence and violence within the home (Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Vezina & Herbert (2007) applied Bandura's (1977) social learning theory to draw a link between family violence and dating violence. Bandura (1977) claims that violence is learned through exposure and models, therefore being a witness or victim would contribute to the toleration and acceptance of this behavior (as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Riggs & O'Leary (1989) have developed a model which demonstrates how aggression in intimate partners can be learned (as cited in Gidycz &Luthra, 2006). The conclusion that is drawn is that aggression in relationships becomes "normalized" once it is witnessed inside the home either between parents or parents and child (Gidycz &Luthra, 2006). Furthermore, Fox et al (2008) conducted a study and found that 64% of those who witnessed father to mother violence are more at risk to perpetrate and experience psychological abuse. Additionally, Fox et al. (2008) found that females who were victims of abuse were 63% more likely to experience physical violence by their dating partner than their female counterparts who did not experience abuse as a child. This statistic poses the link between those who witness violence and being a victim of abuse.

Additionally, a study conducted by Wekerle et al. (2001) demonstrated that childhood maltreatment has a direct correlation with violent dating relationships. Females who were involved with child protective services scored significantly higher on dating violence than their male counterparts. Additionally, in the sample 54% of the participants disclosed that they were frightened of being hurt within their family however they failed to label it as abuse (Wekerle et al, 2006). The study concluded that the contribution of childhood maltreatment was correlated with dating violence, and the trauma was noted to be a significant predictor of dating violence (Wekerle et al., 2001). Fox et al (2008) conducted a similar study around violence and family of

origin as well with a sample size of 2,541 college students from two universities, and found that 59% of the participants who were abused in childhood were also victims of psychological abuse. This supports the relationship between childhood abuse and physiological abuse as it pertains to dating violence. In short, if maltreatment is occurring in the home during the childhood years there is a strong link that this maltreatment or violence will transform over into their later adult relationships.

Lastly similar results were found by Shoda & Zayas's (2007) in a study on psychological male treatment and potentially abusive dating partners in which they found a positive relationship between the two variables (Shoda & Zayas, 2007). It was noted that women who reported the highest frequencies of psychological abuse were three times more likely to participate in a relationship with an abusive partner (Shoda & Zayas, 2007). It has been repeatedly confirmed that there is a correlation between past maltreatment and current abusive relationships.

Not only are home life situations influential on unhealthy relationships, but peers have a strong impact as well. Multiple studies have indicated that knowing others or having friends who are involved in violent romantic relationships act as a strong risk factor for dating victimization (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Foshee, Benefield et al.; 2004; Lavoie et al., 2001; Reuterman& Bucky, 1989; as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). When violence is "normalized", not only physical/sexual but emotional as well, it can increase the risk that a girl is willing to accept this behavior in the dating relationship. Individuals who are involved with peers who engage in delinquent behaviors are at a higher risk for victimization (Lavoie et al., 2001; as cited in Vezina& Herbert, 2007). The interactions between these individuals who are involved in delinquent behaviors are more likely to be involved in risky behaviors and therefore to have a

deviant romantic partner (Howard et al., 2003; as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). The research suggests that females wish to be accepted by their dating partner and furthermore fear rejection, and with this attitude they turn to acceptance and tolerance. A male partner who has strong patriarchal values can be sexually, physically and psychologically abusive towards their female partners according to Jewkes et al, 2005 (as cited in Dania, Duru & Lzugbara, 2008). Lastly, it has been documented that those who possess an accepting attitude / behavior of hostility towards women are more likely to be a perpetrator of violence against women (Carr & Van Deusen, 2002; Pipes & LeBov- Keeler, 1999, as cited in Murray &Kardatzke, 2007).

These external influences have a tremendous impact on dating relationships and there are many internal factors that impact relationships as well. Studies have examined depressive symptoms and have concluded that there is statistical significance with physical or sexual violence. It can be noted that depression is an antecedent to dating victimization (Roberts et al., 2003; as cited in Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Cross sectional studies also conducted research on this same topic and found that reports of low self-esteem were correlated with dating victimization (Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996; Lavoie & Vezina, 2002, O'Keefe & Treister, 1998; Pirog- Good, 1992; Sharpe & Taylor, 1999; as cited in Vezina& Herbert, 2007). In addition numerous psychological and emotional factors can be linked to college dating violence including: "low self-esteem, anti- social behavior, high levels of jealousy, angry temperament, daily stress, and lack of social support" (Clements, Olge, & Sabourin, 2005).Conversely, some studies have shown that high self-esteem can work to deter victimization. For example, a study by Walsh and Foshee (1998) found that females who are confident in their ability to self-protect from perpetrators are less likely to be sexually victimized (as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Similarly, Gover (2004) conducted a study which resulted in findings that when one is satisfied

with their life they are less likely to be a victim of physical abuse (as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). This research implies that if one is unsatisfied with their intimate life some girls would be willing to pay any price for their intimacy search, even at the risk of denying their own self needs (Lavoie et al., 2001, as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). All of these qualities are personal attributes that make college women more vulnerable to victimization.

Damaging Effects

All forms of abuse leave numerous scars on a victim, whether they are physical wounds or psychological battles/ trauma they are fighting against. Dating victimization and violence are associated with numerous adjustment problems in girls, some of which are eating disorders, behavior problems, post-traumatic stress, depressive symptoms, and suicidal tendencies (Ackard & Neumark- Sztainer, 2002; Callahan, Tolman & Saunders, 2003; Coker et al., 2000; Roberts & Klein, 2003; Zweig, Crokett, Sayer & Vicary, 1999 as cited in Vezina & Herbert, 2007). Effects may also include health complications and alcohol use (Arias, Harper, & Straight, 2003). Many of these damages are depicted in female college victims. The psychological abuse along with all other forms of abuse that victims face have long and short term effects on their life.

Female College Perceptions

College student victims interpret their long and short term damaging effects differently than most of the general population. Their perceptions of the violence and effects seem to be skewed, and for these victims' scars and bruises do not necessarily mean immediate danger. Activities and actions become normalized and accepted among this population. It is important to note that peers have a strong influence on one another. Additionally, the perceptions of peers contribute to the acceptable behaviors that occur within a young adult intimate partner relationship (Bukva & Miller, 2001). In many cases verbal aggression and violence can be the

precursor to physical and sexual advances/ behaviors (Katz, 1998; as cited in Bukva & Miller, 2001). Bandura's (1977) social learning theory claims that through witnessing, learning and action we are more likely to engage in a behavior. However, there is another point to this theory, that the social actor also concludes and perceives that the action is either going unpunished or is being rewarded. If this conclusion is drawn then they are more likely to engage in the activity (Bukva & Miller, 2001). Therefore for the college population of young adults, much of the intimate partner abuse, physical, sexual and psychological, goes unpunished or undetected (Bukva & Miller, 2001). Verbal abuse goes unpunished more frequently because there is less evidence to support it and furthermore abuse in any form between intimate partners is underreported.

When participants in Bukva & Miller's study (2001) responded to vignettes the participants judgments were clear, and indicated that intimate partner violence is serious whether or not there are physical markings or lasting emotional effects. But it's interesting to still note that although respondents could identify the abuse, there is still an extreme prevalence of abuse occurring. When rating the violent actions between intimate partners sexual assault following a verbal argument there was more serious threat than any other form of intimate violence (Bukva & Miller, 2001). However the verbal abuse was the precursor to the aggressive act, so therefore if we can stop the verbal abuse from occurring then maybe the aggression will stop. The finding suggests that perceptions of all forms of violence within a relationship increase in severity by injury for example cuts, bruises and hospitalization (Bukva & Miller, 2001). According to Bukva & Miller (2001) college students don't perceive verbal abuse to be as significant and therefore it is more socially accepted.

It is important to recognize young women's experiences of dating violence. According to a qualitative study on young women's experiences and understandings of dating violence, female victims of male violence are viewed in two different lights, "they are responsible for the violence because they have not made good decisions about the men they date and 'choose' to stay with them…they are vulnerable to being victims because they have low self-esteem or another personal inadequacy which is why they choose to stay in the relationship" (Chung, 2007, p. 1292). Neither conclusion addresses the man's role of his tendency to act in a violent or nonviolent manner (Chung, 2007, p. 1292). These same results can also be applied to domestic violence issues. Chung (2007) states that "a …similarity to domestic violence is related to the tendency by some women to minimize their male partner's violence and excuse or justify his actions; additionally, young women tend to view dating violence as an individualized problem, not an expression of gender inequality" (Chung, 2007, p.1293). This issue needs to be addressed on college campuses where there is a prevalence of dating violence, but also an ignorance of how a male partner should act in a dating relationship. Chung (2007) has provided a backbone of information for self-blame, by noting that in no instance should a female be responsible for the violence and harm that is placed upon her. This perspective appears to develop because women are more accepting of their male partner's violence and are furthermore minimizing the violence instead of holding their partner accountable for his actions.

College victims are not only ignorant about a male's role, but seem to also misunderstand control and what is acceptable in a relationship. In a study conducted in Africa by Dania, Duru & Lzugbara, (2008), it was found that a majority of participants thought that violence was common in their relationship and extremely difficult to stop. The participants found the violent behaviors to be normal and inevitable aspect of dating relationships. Lastly some of the participants went

so far to say that the violence strengthens their relationship and binds them more closely (Dania,

Duru, & Lzugbara, 2008). One respondent in the Dania, Duru, & Lzugbara (2008) study said

that:

> "Men are funny…..they want to keep you in check but they hate to be checked. When I
> raised the issues of this girl, he got angry….he was dating the girl. I challenged him about
> it and he beat me severely…men are like that…they hate women monitoring them"
> (p.474).

This quote depicts the evidence that there is an unequal balance of power in the relationship and

what is acceptable by one gender but not the other.

Another study conducted by Chung (2007) explored young women's experiences and

understandings of dating violence. Chung (2007) conducted a small qualitative study in which

88% of the participants felt that there was pressure to be in a committed relationship. The

interviews that were conducted in this study portrayed participants responses as a need to be in a

relationship so they do not experience personal inadequacy (Chung, 2007). "But if you don't

have anyone you do feel bad about yourself" (Chung, 2007, p. 1277). Additionally, one woman

noted that "my boyfriend is a lot nicer to me when it is just us two, but when we are in front of

all our friends" he acts as if he hold all the control (Chung, 2007, p. 1279). Here it is depicted

that young women put up with these types of behaviors within their relationships. It is a common

theme that the male partner in the relationship is acting controlling/ yelling "'for her own good'"

(Chung, 2007, p. 1279). Many young women seem to believe that their boyfriend's protective

behaviors are a sign of their strong love and commitment to the relationship (Leahy, Roudsari &

Walters, 2008). In this case the young women do not see the situation as controlling but rather

she sees it as compassion (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). Another example of a young

woman's interpretation of an unhealthy relationship is Kate's story found in Leahy, Roudsari &

Walters,   (2008) study:

Kate denies her boyfriend's responsibility for his behaviors; in fact she blames his childhood trauma from his father for his current behaviors. Kate says that his father was really tough on him growing up so sometimes he gets physical with her but she says it is only a result of his childhood "abuse". Kate like most women is confused between intimacy and control. The last perception that women tend to share is self-blaming, these victims feel as if it is their fault and is a result of "choosing" the wrong boyfriend (p. 1895)

This is further demonstrated when Emma, another participant, stated that some women" let themselves actually get raped or physically abused" (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). Emma feels as if a lot of people stay in their relationship because they feel like they must remain loyal so it is their fault that they continue on in the relationship (Leahy, Roudsari & Walters, 2008). Young adults have many views on intimate partner violence and unhealthy relationships and various college student perceptions are skewed around abuse of any form. Through all the documentation and research some women are unable to see that the violence is unhealthy and they are confused between intimacy and control within a relationship. As a college population the men and women within unhealthy dating relationships seem to be ignorant on what is acceptable versus what is unacceptable.

Psychological Abuse

Murphy and Hoover (1999) suggest that there is substantially less research being conducted on psychological dating violence in college relationships. Meanwhile, research suggests that psychological dating violence alone is more common on college campuses than physical and sexual dating violence (Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Partner psychological abuse, an entity that affects victims independently of the physical abuse that they face, has just begun to receive attention (Arias, Harper & Straight, 2003). In a study that surveyed 4,707 college students, 81 % of male participants were found to be perpetrators of psychological dating violence and in women 88 % were victims of psychological dating violence (White & Koss,

1991 as cited in, Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Similarly a study conducted by Harned (2002) reported a high percentage (82%) of psychological abuse for women (as cited in Fox et al, 2008). It was noted that the rates of those perpetrated or victimized by physical violence were lower, the percentages ranged from 33 to 39 % for men and women (White & Koss, 1991, as cited in Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Research concludes the psychological violence is prevalent and co-occurring with other forms of abuse such as sexual and physical (Aosved & Long, 2005; Murphy & Hoover, 1999, as cited in Murray & Kardatzke, 2007). Murphy and Kardatzke (2007) state that psychological abuse plays a large role in the stability of a college student's mental health, and furthermore the negative effects of psychological abuse impact the victim's self-esteem, and these effects outweigh those of physical violence. Although all forms of abuse are extremely important to study it is noteworthy that individuals who have experienced physical abuse and physiological abuse claimed to find the psychological abuse more detrimental and furthermore linked to post traumatic stress symptoms (Arias & Pape, 1999 as cited in Gromley & Lopez, 2009).

The psychological abuse that victims face have damaging effects and symptoms but also play a large role in the physical injury that victims are facing (Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). Higher levels of depression are significantly associated with severe abuse (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Katz & Arias, 1999; Walker, 1994; as cited in Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). Furthermore a study conducted by Arias, Harper & Straight (2003), found that psychological abuse was significantly related to drug use after they controlled for the length of the dating relationship along with the physical victimization. There is a link between substance abuse and psychological abuse, but this is not the only link that has been noted by researchers.

Psychological abuse has been predicted to be a precursor to more violent physical forms of abuse (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989 as cited in Gromley & Lopez, 2009). Additionally, those who have experienced and reported both physical and psychological abuse claim that the psychological abuse is worse (Murphy & Cascardi, 1999 as cited in Gromley& Lopez, 2009).In essence the female victims are admitting to the detrimental effects that psychological abuse leaves and furthermore that it is in some cases more powerfully than the physical violence they endure. In addition to the verbal and emotional abuse that students face they may also be subjected to intimate partner terrorism which involves an intimate partner using a coercive approach as well as physical violence to gain dominance and control over their romantic partner (Jonson, 1995, Jonson & Ferraro, 200; Johnson & Leone, 2005 as cited in Gromley& Lopez, 2009). It has been noted through a qualitative study that males admitted to using coercive relationships tactics to gain control over their female partner however their female counter parts do not possess the same behaviors in the relationship (Lavoie, Robitaille, Herbert, 2000 as cited in Gromley & Lopez, 2009).

Much of the emotional abuse and coercive behaviors are a result of stressors males are facing in their life. Gromley & Lopez (2009) also discovered that higher levels of stressful personal problems are the strongest contributors to men who psychologically abuse their partners. Higher levels of female emotional abuse were statistically linked to their male partner's high level of stress and personal problems (Gromley & Lopez, 2009). Males who have problems with attachment are likely to engage in unhealthy and insecure adult romantic relationships. The reasons for the attachment insecurity is due to attachment anxiety which is fear of abandonment and attachment avoidance which is when one partner experiences discomfort with the closeness level (Gromley & Lopez, 2009). It has been shown that insecure

romantic attachment orientation contributes to men's' intimate partner violence and psychological abuse of romantic partners.

Perceived control is another form of psychological abuse, and is defined as a belief that an individual can affect desired outcomes (Alloy & Clemet's, 1992; as cited in Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). In a study conducted by Katz and Arias (1999) it was found that perceived control was a mediator for relationship abuse along with psychological distress (as cited in Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). Students who were facing the interpersonal control from their partners showed low levels of dysphoria (Katz& Arias, 1999; as cited in Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). In a study conducted by Clements, Ogle, and Sabourin (2005) it was evident that women who had been involved in perceived control had lower levels of self-esteem and optimism. The psychological distress of control is associated with their poor perception of self-worth and positive attitude. Participants who have reported high levels of abuse showed an increase in helplessness (Kasian & Painter, 1992; Umberson et al., 19998 as cited in Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005). Lastly women who were in abusive relationships with high perceived control, and physiological distressed reported more dysphoria (distress, anxiety, depression, & uneasiness) than their male counterparts (Clements, Ogle, Sabourin, 2005).

The extensive research in dating violence has noted that there are 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence against women each year (Centers for Disease Control, 2007).Violence among college students is not limited to North America. A study conducted by Straus (2004) of 31 universities samples in 16 countries found that at the medium sized university, 29% of the student were physically assaulted by a dating partner within the last 12 months (as cited in Braithwaite, Cui, Fincham, Pasley, 2008). Again it is noted that physical violence is studied repeatedly but there is a severe gap in research of psychological violence.

This study intends to bridge the gap in the lack of research regarding psychological abuse and the college population. As 82% of college women are victims of psychological abuse (Harned, 2002; as cited in Fox et al., 2008) and furthermore they are a high risk population (Fox et al., 2008), it can be concluded that the prevalence of psychological abuse is high and therefore more extensive research needs to be conducted pertaining to this form of abuse. By sampling a college population this study intends to gain an increased understanding of the college perception, prevalence and severity of psychological abuse in dating relationships. The results will contribute to a better understanding of prevention and resources that need to be provided on a college campus for victims and perpetrators.

Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive exploratory study design intended to gather information on college dating relationships specifically focusing on psychological abuse.

Sample

A convenience sample of about 100 students were surveyed at a medium size catholic college campus. It was not required that the participants be in a current dating relationship or in an unhealthy relationship. All students from the medium size catholic college had a chance to respond to the survey.

Dating Gathering

The information was gathered by an online survey in order to ensure anonymity (see Appendix A). A Facebook event group targeted only the specific campus population. To participate in the study an individual needed to have a Facebook account with a valid e-mail

address given by the campus being surveyed. Students were able to access the survey through an event entitled a survey of college dating relationships in which a link to the online survey was available. The consent form was available online for participants and through participation in the online survey students consented to the study (See Appendix B)

Data Analysis

Once the data from the online survey was gathered, it was downloaded and inputted into SPSS18. The data was analyzed in terms of the prevalence of unhealthy psychological abusive relationships at the institution. Male and female perceptions of unhealthy relationships were examined as well. Correlations were drawn between class year and involvement in a psychologically abusive relationship. The researcher also analyzed the student's perceptions of psychological abuse as it pertained to themselves or peers. A correlational analysis was performed between gender, class year and involvement in physiologically abusive relationships. The survey was designed to measure whether or not students were able to identify a psychologically abusive relationship. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn between those who have been in psychologically abusive relationships and their capability to recognize abusive relationships versus their counterpart's perceptions who have not been involved in a psychologically abusive relationship.

Findings

This study focused on the perceptions psychological abuse on a college campus. Additionally, the study sought to identify the prevalence of types of abuse on a college campus by using silhouettes to measure students' perceptions of the severity and impact of abuse. One open-ended question was asked of participants to define psychological abuse.

Initially 114 participants started the on-line survey, but only 77 completed it. There were 24.6% male participants (28) and 75.4% (86) female participants. All the participants were enrolled in a four year college with 56.1% seniors (64) 29.8%(34) sophomores, 2.6%(3) and 11.4%(13) freshman. Ages of participants ranged from 18-23 and ethnic backgrounds included Caucasian, Asian, Philippians, Hispanic, Polish, Arabic, Puerto Rican and Cape Verdean. A majority of the sample was Caucasian.

Silhouette One: Descriptive Findings

This silhouette was intended to illustrate a healthy relationship with no abuse indicated. In the first silhouette 6.7%(7) of participants stated that there was abuse and 93.3%(98) of participants said there was no abuse. Of the participants who replied that there was abuse present, they identified that there was sexual abuse 1 %(1), financial abuse 1%(1) and physiological/emotional abuse 9.5%(10). Additionally, those who identified that the relationship was abusive were asked about the severity of the abuse. Figure 1 illustrates how participants reported their perceptions of abuse for silhouette 1.

Figure 1

Not Severe	Slightly severe	Neutral	Somewhat severe	Very Severe
10.7%(11)	5.8% (6)	2.9%(3)	0%(0)	0%(0)

  Additionally, participants were also asked to identify the degree of impact that the abuse had on the relationship. Figure 1.1 indicates the participant's perceptions of the impact of the abuse.

Figure 1.1

No impact	Slight Impact	Neutral	Somewhat Strong Impact	Strong Impact
9.7% (10)	7.8%(8)	2.9%(3)	1.9%(2)	0%(0)

It is interesting to note that more than a majority of participants identified no abuse in the first silhouette which is what was intended.

Silhouette Two: Descriptive Findings

The next silhouette included examples of sexual and psychological emotional abuse. 76.7% (66) of the participants stated that there was abuse present in the silhouette. Additionally 23.3% (20) of participants stated that there was no abuse present. Of those who responded yes to abuse, they then further identified the type of abuse (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Financial Abuse	Psychological/ Emotional Abuse
0% (0)	16.7%(17)	0%(0)	65.7%(67)

When the participants were asked about the severity of the abuse present 14% (12) said that the abuse was not severe in the relationship, 29.1% (25) said that the abuse was slightly severe, 12.8% (11) said that the abuse was somewhat severe and 0%(0) of participants said that the abuse was very severe. Figure 2.1 indicates the participant's perceptions of the level of impact of the abuse within silhouette 2.

Figure 2.1

No impact	Slight Impact	Neutral	Somewhat Strong Impact	Strong Impact
2.3%(2)	26.7%(23)	8.1%(7)	36%(31)	8.1%(7)

The participants were again clearly able to identify the abuse present in the dating relationship and the correct forms of abuse present.

Silhouette Three: Descriptive Findings

In the last silhouette participants were asked to respond to the same set of questions. This silhouette addressed the issue of psychological and emotional abuse. When participants were asked to identify if there was abuse present in the relationship, 92.9% (78) of participants were able to correctly identify the abusive relationship, however 7.1% (6) said that there was no abuse

present in the relationship. Again the participants were asked what forms of abuse were present

in the relationship and 16.2(6) % stated there was physical abuse present. However physical

abuse was not present in this silhouette. Additionally, 77.8% (77) of the participants stated that

there was psychological/ emotional abuse present in the relationship. When the participants were

asked about the severity of the abuse they reported the following:

Figure 3

Not Severe	Slightly severe	Neutral	Somewhat severe	Very Severe
3.6%(3)	9.5%(8)	6.0%(5)	41.7%(35)	33.3%(28)

The participants were asked about the impact of the abuse within the dating relationship. The

participants reported the following statistics in regards to impact of abuse within the silhouette.

Figure 3.1

No impact	Slight Impact	Neutral	Somewhat Strong Impact	Strong Impact
2.4%(2)	10.7%(9)	4.8%(4)	27.4%	51.2%(43)

This last silhouette demonstrated emotional/psychological abuse within the dating relationship. It

was expressed that the partners in the relationship were playing on each other emotions in order

to gain what they wanted from the other partner. This silhouette contained the most severe case

of abuse, however just over half the participants identified the abuse as having a strong

impact.(See Figure 3.1)

In addition to silhouettes, the study contained one open ended question to gain

information about how participants define psychological abuse (N=73). There were many

common themes identified throughout the participant's responses. The three most reoccurring

themes and patterns revolved around manipulation of the partner, guilt of the partner and controlling behavior of the partner.

When reviewing the participant's definitions, the theme of manipulation was mentioned sixteen times throughout. Emotional manipulation in order to gain happiness or a desired behavior was a common theme. One participant stated that "it is when a person manipulates their significant other into other feelings which they should not be feeling". Another participant spoke to manipulation as well by stating that psychological abuse is a "combination of manipulation and coercion". Similar to what this participant stated another one noted that:

> "Psychological abuse is when one person is controlled by another though manipulation and domination…. It is usually apparent to people outside the relationship, but any advice about the abuse is usually disregarded as a result of either fear or blindness of the abuse."

This statement and definition is very true of psychologically abusive relationships. Those involved either deny the abuse is occurring or do not see the abuse because of their feeling and emotions towards the other in the relationship. The participant is accurate in stating that manipulation is a large part of psychological abuse. Lastly, another participant stated that "psychological abuse includes the manipulation of the mind or feelings in order to exert control over another". This response is interesting to note because it brings in both the theme of manipulation and control.

Control plays a large critical role in psychological abuse. Control was mentioned twenty times throughout the participant's definitions of psychological abuse. A participant stated that psychological abuse pertained to "using someone's love for you as a tool to get what you want and to control aspects of their lives without their awareness". This response is interesting because the participant notes that the control is often undetected to the partner or partners involved in the relationship, much like a previous participant's response about manipulation within the relationship. Additionally, another participant stated that psychological abuse occurs

"when another individual has become dominant and controlling in such a way that they negatively impact another's emotional well-being". Control is the underlying characteristic mentioned in this participant's response. It underlines the importance and significant of controlling ones emotions within the dating relationship. An additional participant also speaks to control within dating relationships. This participant notes that psychological abuse occurs:

> "When one partner intends to control the life of the other. For example constant text messaging to check what they are doing and who they are with (not in a small-talk way, but controlling way), following them around, preventing the other partner from hanging out with their friends of telling them they need to get new friends".

This participant's definition is interesting to note because it speaks to what most college students experience as victims of psychological abuse. Lastly a participant states that psychological abuse is "also making their partner feels guilty about their actions." Again, this participant incorporated another key theme of psychological abuse.

In addition to manipulation and control many participants spoke about the guilt that is felt within the relationship. It is evident that emotions and feelings are a large part of psychological abuse; making a partner feel guilty within the relationship, is a characteristic of psychological abuse as it is defined by a self selected college population in the New England area. Guilt was noted by participants fifteen times as a main characteristic of psychological abuse. When speaking about guilt a participant stated that psychological abuse occurs when "someone has the ability to make you feel bad about yourself for things that are normal and should never be viewed as bad". In this case the participant is speaking to the guilty feeling a partner experiences as a result of the perpetrator. Again, the guilt is usually caused by the perpetrator controlling and manipulating the partner into viewing their actions as wrong when in most cases they would not be viewed negatively. Victims will often times feel bad or upset for actions they took or failed to take due to their partner "playing on their emotions". Another participant described

psychological abuse as "forcing someone to behave a certain way through guilt". Again, it is

interesting to note that both control and guilt are mentioned in this participant's definition. Often

times the partner will use the guilty feeling in order to control or gain a desired behavior from the

victim. Lastly, a participant noted that:

> "Psychological abuse is some sort of emotional hurt that one gets from another person by the way in which they talk to them or force on feelings of blame. A lot of time the abuse is guilt different. Making the receiving person feel small and like they are worth nothing. Everything they do it wrong. They are the problem."

This participant speaks to many aspects of psychological abuse. Focusing on the guilty feeling

the victim experiences. Often times the abuser makes the victim the cause of the problem.In

addition to understanding participants perceptions of psychological abuse the study also intended

to identify personal experiences with and knowledge of abuse. When participants were asked if

during their college years they had been or are involved in an abusive relationship, 33.8% (26)

stated that they had been in an abusive relationship and 66.2% (51) stated that they had not been

in an abusive relationship. The participants were also asked to identify all forms of abuse which

were present in the dating relationship. Figure 4 illustrates the forms of abuse that participants

experienced.

Figure 4

Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Financial Abuse	Psychological/ Emotional Abuse
6.8%(6)	8.0%(7)	1.1%(1)	29.5%(26)

 Additionally participants were asked to identify the years or year that the abuse had occurred

(see figure 4.1)

Figure 4.1

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
24.4%(41)	26.5%(44)	19.6%(33)	20.8%(35)

It is interesting to note that there were 77 participants who answered this question and 168 responses. Therefore those who had identified themselves as being in a psychologically abusive relationship had experienced it multiple times or stayed in the relationship which was psychologically abusive over the course of their college years.

Participants were then asked to identify their peers on campus who had been in or is currently in a psychologically abusive relationship. 79.2%(61) of participants answered that they knew someone in an abusive relationship where 20.8%(16) stated that they did not know anyone on their campus who has or had been in a psychologically abusive relationship. When asked to identify the year or years the abuse occurred the results were as follows:

Figure 4.2

Freshman	**Sophomore**	**Junior**	**Senior**
23.5%(32)	22.8%(31)	17.6% (24)	18.4%(25)

Again out of the 77 participants who responded there were 136 total responses. Participants were then asked the forms of abuse present within their peers dating relationship. Figure 4.3 depicts the responses of the participants:

Figure 4.3

Physical Abuse	**Sexual Abuse**	**Financial Abuse**	**Psychological/ Emotional Abuse**
15.6%(19)	13.9%	9%(11)	42.6%(52)

Participants identified more than one form of abuse being witnessed in their peers past or current relationships. Lastly participants were asked to identify the impact that their peer's experiences from abuse: (See figure 4.4)

Figure 4.4

No impact	Slight Impact	Neutral	Somewhat Strong Impact	Strong Impact
2.6%(2)	16.9%(13)	7.8%(6)	23.4%(18)	19.5%(15)

Participants were then asked if they agreed that unhealthy relationships are prevalent on their

campus. Zero participants strongly disagreed, 7.8%(6) disagreed, 32.5%(25) were neutral, and

lastly 42.9%(33) agreed, and 16.9%(13) strongly agreed. Then participants were asked if they

agreed that there were many supports on campus for those in an abusive relationship, their

responses were as follows: (See figure 4.5)

Figure 4.5

Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Neutral	Agreed	Strongly Agreed
6.5%(5)	31.2%(24)	35.1%(27)	24.7%(19)	2.6%(2)

It is evident that many students feel as though there is a lack of supports provided to students on

campus in regards to unhealthy relationships and abuse. It is interesting to note the deficiency of

supports provided by the school in ratio to the experiences and feelings of those students who

have been in unhealthy relationships. Table 1 provides data of student's experiences of

experiences with physical harm, sexual assault, emotional/verbal abuse, financially abuse, and

feelings of guilt, control, coercion, manipulation, and domination. Their responses were as

follows:

Table 1

Participants Identified Feelings While in a Relationship

Feelings/ acts	% of participants	Raw Data
Physically Harmed	2.9%	7
Sexually Assaulted	7.00%	17
Emotionally/Verbally Abused	10.9%	48
Financially Abused	1.6%	4
Guilty	20.2%	49
Controlled	12.3%	30
Coerced	8.6%	21
Manipulated	14.0%	34
Dominated	7.0%	17
Not Applicable	6.6%	16

N= 76

After data analysis was conducted by using SPSS, though the information is not statistically significant, disparities were found in terms of gender. When comparing the mean ranks of severity and impact for the silhouettes two and three males identified the silhouettes as more severe and having a stronger negative impact than their female counterparts.

Summary and Implications

This study aimed to identify college student's perceptions of psychological abuse, their ability to identify abuse, abuse types, and the severity and impact of psychological abuse. In order to measure these perceptions the researcher used various silhouettes, which indicated, no abuse, mild abuse and a more serious forms of abuse. The silhouettes followed with questions about whether abuse was present, and if so, the type of abuse, the severity of it, and the impact it may have on the individual. Additionally, the researcher asked the participants to define psychological abuse in their own words.

After analyzing the data the researcher concluded that most participants were able to appropriately identify the abuse present in the silhouettes. Additionally, most participants noted that there would be a strong impact for the abuse present or no impact from no abuse present. In terms of severity most students ranged in their response to severity. However, it is interesting to note that in silhouette two and three where abuse was portrayed, males identified this abuse as more severe than their female counterparts. Female college student victims interpret their long term or short term abuse much differently than most of the general population. Additionally, their perceptions of violence is skewed for these victims' verbal scars or bruises do not mean immediate danger. Activities become normalized and accepted among the college age population, since peer influences are strong. The acceptance of behaviors amongst peers contributes to peers perceptions of healthy or unhealthy intimate partner relationships (Bukva & Miller, 2001).

The qualitative findings suggest that manipulation, control and guilt play a large part in defining psychological abuse as it pertains to the sample population. Additionally, it is interesting to note the insight participates have in regards to experiencing blindness of the psychological abuse. Participants included this "blindness" factor in their definition of abuse. Moreover, participants spoke about emotions and the role that partners may have in changing these emotions. Participants noted that many times psychological abuse involves making another feel guilty for actions that are not deemed "wrong". It can be concluded through the qualitative data that most participants have a basic, general, and accurate knowledge of psychological abuse.

Lastly, the participants were asked about themselves and their peers in regards to psychological abuse. Thirty- three percent (26) of participants identified that they have been involved in abusive relationships and identified that psychological abuse was the main form of

abuse present 29.5%(26). Participants were additionally asked about their peers' relationships and if abuse was present at anytime. 68.8% (53) participants identified a peer as being in an abusive relationship. Psychological abuse was identified as the most experienced type of abuse 42.6%(52), and physical abuse as the second most experienced 15.6%(19). Research conducted by Shook, Gerrity, Jurich & Segrist (2000), have noted that psychological abuse is found in as many as 88% of college students dating relationships (as cited Leahy et. al, 2008). Additionally, research suggests that psychological dating violence is more common on college campuses than physical and sexual dating violence (Murry & Kardatzke, 2007) and this confirms what the participants of this study reported. A majority of participants identified that they or their peer have been or are currently in a psychologically abusive relationship (N=114). These participants are well aware of the prevalence of unhealthy abusive relationships on campus as demonstrated by their understanding of silhouettes in which they were able to properly identify abusive relationships. Much like the literature suggested the prevalence of unhealthy relationships is extremely high; it has been noted by Jacksons (1999), Lewis & Fremouw (2000), that one in three college couples will experience at least one incident of relationship violence. Additionally, the drinking levels in college increase and evidence supports a link between substance use and intimate partner psychological abuse (as cited in Leahy, Roudarsi, & Walters et. al, 2008). The prevalence of abusive relationships has been documented through research and this study. When participants were asked about supports available on campus for those individuals who are experiencing unhealthy relationships, the responses concluded that there were not enough supports the school has to offer students.

In addition to the conclusions that can be drawn from the study, there were many limitations as well. The sample was a small representation of the catholic college and cannot

generalized to a large population on a whole. Additionally, the survey started with 114

participants; however only77 participants completed the survey in its entirety. This could be due

to the length of the survey, the fatigue of the participant or any discomfort that a participant may

have felt as a result of the subject material. Another limitation to this study is the fact that there

was a low male to female ratio; the sample population was heavily weighted with females.

Lastly, there was a limitation in regards to accessing the survey. A participant had to be invited

by another PC student to take the survey and additionally they needed to be a member of

Facebook. Lastly, none of the findings in this study were statistically significant. Although

descriptive findings are very powerful, any correlations between variables were found to be

insignificant.

This research was useful in terms of noting the needs of student supports through a small

sample size. Additionally, these findings suggest that there are a large number of students

experiencing various types of abuse on campus, specifically psychological abuse. It can be noted

that although students are educated on types of abuse and are able to properly identify these

types in a silhouette, students may be unable to identify themselves as being in abusive

relationships since unhealthy relationships have become part of the cultural norm of college

dating. These findings and conclusions contribute to the knowledge base of unhealthy

relationships, but additionally can be used to help effect policy change at this college campus.

Participants addressed the need for more supports on campus for those experiencing unhealthy

relationships. Additionally, the prevalence noted by the participants effects policy changes as

well; there should be more information provided to students on how to cope, identify abuse or

help a friend through this type of abuse.

These findings contribute to social work practice in regards to understanding students' perceptions of abuse and their ability to identify this abuse. Furthermore, this research provided an understanding of college student perception and definitions of psychological abuse. By gaining more knowledge social workers will be better equipped to understand their clients and empathize with them. This smaller study contributed to empirical research previously conducted and helps to raise awareness of what students/ participants are facing at this specific college campus.

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Appendix A

Dear Participant,

I am a Providence College student and a social work major. I am inviting you to participate in a study about dating on college campuses. The study will help the researcher discover individual's perceptions of relationship and the prevalence within a college campus. This study will help social workers understand college perceptions of acceptable relationship behaviors and its prevalence on a medium sized, Catholic College in New England. Data gathered in this study will be analyzed by using SPSS and written up in a paper for class.

There are no anticipated significant risks associated with involvement in this research. Participants are free to cease participation in this study at any time.

Confidentiality of participants will be protected by computer password protection. Once the data is obtained all identifying information linking the participant to his or her response will be destroyed so that responses can no longer be identified with individuals. For this study, the researcher is intending to find information on prevalence and perceptions as it pertains to gender and class year; therefore participants will be identified as male or female and by class year.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time until the researcher has removed the link between your response and identified data. Below you will find contact information from the researcher in case there are any further questions.

 BY COMPLETING THIS SURVEY IT INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Thank you for participating in this study.
Kristina Cofone
Kcofone@friars.providence.edu

<u>Appendix B</u>

Directions: Please identify your response to the corresponding question

Sex:

 Male or Female

Graduating Class:

2011   2012   2013   2014

Ethnicity:

_____

Age:

_____

Are you currently attending college?

Yes or No

Please respond to the following silhouettes

Emily and Sean's relationship began 15 months ago. Emily and Sean are both 20 years old and are juniors in college. Friends are impressed with their open and honest relationship. Sean has begun to pick up on characteristics present in his peer's relationships that are not present in his current relationship. Emily and Sean have different circles of friends keeping a balance between their friendships and relationship's. Now however as Sean pays more attention to his buddy Christopher's relationship with his girlfriend he sees that Chris and his girlfriend text each other throughout the night. When Sean inquires why, Chris says that they like to check in with each other every half hour or hour to make sure everything is okay. Chris explains to Sean that he enjoys hearing from his girlfriend and it reassures him that she isn't talking to any other guys. As he reflects on his relationship with Emily and realizes that she doesn't text him. Sean is now worried that Emily is speaking with other guys who might try and pursue her. He is afraid that if he is not giving her constant attention, she is going to find it with some other guy.

1. Is Emily and Sean's relationship abusive?

   Yes or No

2. If yes please identify all forms of abuse you believe are occurring in this relationship?

Physical Abuse   **Sexual Abuse**   **Financial Abuse**   **Psychological/ Emotional Abuse**

3. If yes, how severe do you believe the abuse is in the relationship?

Not Severe   **Slightly severe**   **Neutral**   **Somewhat severe**   **Very Severe**

4. If yes what impact does this abuse have?

No impact   **Slight Impact**   **Neutral**   **Somewhat Strong Impact**   **Strong Impact**

Thomas and Katherine have been dating for two years. They are both seniors in college and are preparing to graduate in May. Katherine is so thankful to have Thomas in her life, they met at the perfect time and are both supportive of one another's academic and personal lives. Thomas and Katherine are both independent individuals who enjoy one another's company. They intend to remain together upon graduation and hope to start a future together. They have been sexually active since the first year of their relationship. Thomas is constantly telling Katherine how beautiful she is and how perfect she is in every way. She reassures him that there is no one that she would rather be with in this life than him. She encourages their future and career paths telling him that no one could make him happier then she can and no one would make her happier. Sometimes Thomas wants to have sex when Katherine isn't in the mood yet she engages because all she wishes to do is make him happy. In general they have a stable and healthy relationship however Katherine gets nervous when Thomas goes out without her. She knows that other girls are interested in him and is fearful she will lose him. Sometimes she asks Thomas to leave the bar early to spend time with her or asks him not to consume alcohol because she fears that it will cloud his thoughts. Katherine wishes to persuade Thomas to spend more quality time with her. Furthermore when Thomas goes out with his friends Katherine is constantly texting him and when he does not respond she gets angry. Thomas doesn't want to upset Katherine so he concedes to her requests however he is beginning to resent her for it. It is his senior year, wants to spend time with his friends and Katherine is making him feel guilty for going out. Is Katherine and Thomas's relationship abusive?

   Yes or No

5. If yes identify what forms of abuse are present?

Physical Abuse   **Sexual Abuse**   **Financial Abuse**   **Psychological/ Emotional Abuse**

6. If so how severe is the abuse in this relationship?

Not Severe   **Slightly severe**   **Neutral**   **Somewhat severe**   **Very Severe**

7. If yes what impact does this abuse have?

No impact   Slight Impact   Neutral   Somewhat Strong Impact   Strong Impact

Lilly and Kevin are both freshman in college, and the two began dating their senior year of high school. They have now been dating for 9 months and are inseparable. Lilly rarely goes out with her friends because she would rather spend time with Kevin before she leaves for college. Now Lilly is at Harrison University, and Kevin is attending a local college back home. However they decided to remain together. Now it is almost December and Kevin continues to call and text Lilly frequently. They call each other first thing in the morning and fall asleep talking on the phone together at night. He frequently calls to check in which gives Lilly a sense of security. Lately Lilly has less time because finals are around the corner and she hasn't been able to speak to Kevin before bed. Kevin is upset and has expressed concerns that she doesn't call at night anymore. He is crying because he is worried their relationship is beginning to fall apart. Lilly in turn feels like a bad girlfriend. Kevin has made Lilly feel guilty and ashamed for her actions, she is now beginning to blame herself for the trouble in their relationship. This past week Lilly went home to speak with Kevin about their relationship. She explained to Kevin that she cared deeply for him but felt as though she was too busy at school to be in a relationship. When Lilly suggested taking a break Kevin would not stand for it, however Lilly said she thought it was for the best. Later that week when Lilly returned to school she received a "drunk dial" from Kevin expressing how miserable he was without her and he couldn't bear to be without her. Lilly reiterated her feelings that it was only a short term break and that they needed to spend some time apart. Kevin responded that his life was meaningless without her and he had punched his hand through a wall before calling her. Lilly was worried for Kevin's health and safety. Then Kevin proceeded to tell Lilly that he could not continue on living without her. Lilly felt responsible and guilty for Kevin's misery and sadness, she proceeded to stay on the phone with Kevin for a few hours until she could finally calm him down and felt as if he was stable.

8. Is Lilly and Kevin's relationship abusive?

   Yes or No

9. If yes identify what forms of abuse are present?

Physical Abuse   Sexual Abuse   Financial Abuse   Psychological/ Emotional Abuse

10. If yes how severe is the abuse in this relationship?

Not Severe   Slightly severe   Neutral   Somewhat severe   Very Severe

11. If yes what impact does this abuse have?

No impact   Slight Impact   Neutral   Somewhat Strong Impact   Strong Impact

_____

12. During your college years have you been or are you currently involved in an abusive relationship? **Yes or No**

13. If yes please identify all the forms of abuse that were present in your past or current relationship.

Physical Abuse   **Sexual Abuse**   **Financial Abuse**   **Psychological/ Emotional Abuse**

14. If yes please identify the year or years it occurred or is presently occurring?
    Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior

15. Do you know anyone on this campus who is or has been in a psychologically abusive relationship?
    Yes or No
16. If yes please identify the year or years it occurred or is presently occurring
    Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior
17. Do you know anyone on this campus who is in an abusive relationship?
    Yes or No

18. If yes please identify all the forms of abuse that were present in this past or current relationship

Physical Abuse   **Sexual Abuse**   **Financial Abuse**   **Psychological/ Emotional Abuse**

If yes please identify the year or years it occurred or is presently occurring?

Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior

19. How much does the abuse impact you or your peer's day to day life?

Significantly   Somewhat Significantly   Neutral   Somewhat Insignificant   Insignificant

20. Do you agree that unhealthy relationships are prevalent on this campus?

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

21. Do you agree that the school provides many supports for those in abusive relationships?

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

22. During your college years have you ever felt the following, identify all that apply
    a.   **Physically harmed**
    b. **Sexual assaulted**
    c. **Emotional/ verbally abused**
    d. **Financially abused**

     e. Guilty
     f. Controlled
     g. Coerced
     h. Manipulated
     i. Dominated

23. In your own words define what you believe psychological abuse is:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____