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Examining Emotion Regulation Levels in Perpetrators of In-Person and Cyber Dating Abuse

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Abstract

Teens and young adults experience higher levels of dating abuse than any other cohort. In the past, in-person abuse was the dominant form of abuse. However, cyber abuse is becoming a prevailing issue, especially among younger individuals. This study set out to examine emotion regulation as a factor relating to perpetration of dating abuse, as well as cyber dating abuse. It was hypothesised that poor emotion regulation abilities would have a significant positive relationship with in-person and cyber dating abuse perpetration. Additionally, it was hypothesised that female perpetrators of abuse would have poorer emotion regulation abilities in comparison to males. A sample of 97 high school students were asked to fill out self-report measures of emotion regulation, dating abuse, and cyber dating abuse, as well as demographic information. A regression analysis of dating and cyber abuse perpetration indicated no significant prediction by participant's emotion regulation abilities. Additionally, t-test evaluations found no significant differences between gender and emotion regulation abilities. Correlational analyses were able to determine a relationship between victimization and perpetration of cyber and in-person abuse.

Examining Emotion Regulation Levels in Perpetrators of In-Person and Cyber Dating Abuse

Dating relationships in adolescence represent a normative developmental task. By age 17, approximately 70% of teens have had a recent romantic relationship (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzler, 2006). Although healthy dating relationships offer many positive benefits (Miller et al., 2015), not all adolescents receive such benefits from their intimate relationships. Dating abuse is defined as offensive and hurtful behaviours that are experienced through current or past involvement in a romantic relationship (Mulford & Blachman-Demne, 2013). The abuse can consist of physical, which is purposeful injury to another individual, such as hitting, smacking, kicking, etc. (Appleton & Stanley, 2011), as well as sexual abuse, described as forced engagement of an individual in sexual activity. Emotional abuse, sometimes used interchangeably with verbal abuse, or psychological abuse, consists of using words to purposefully damage an individual's emotional life, and undermine their self-esteem (O'Hagan, 1995). These abusive behaviors can be experienced either in person or through cyber communication (Zweig, Dank, Lachman, & Yahner, 2013). Korchmaros, Ybarra, Langhrichsen-Rohling, Boyd, and Lenhart (2013) and colleagues found that of the 46% of youth who had perpetrated teen dating violence, 41% had used technology as their primary or secondary medium of perpetration.

Cyber abuse can consist of controlling, manipulative, sexual, and emotionally abusive language, experienced through use of technology. A study done by Zweig et al. (2013) found that a little over one fourth of youth surveyed had experienced some form of cyber dating abuse within the last year alone. With youth spending an average of 6.5 hours a day using media, much of their free time revolves around technology usage (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2012). Research

examining cyber dating abuse has increased dramatically in recent years but most studies are descriptive in nature and there remain many unanswered questions about the origins of cyber dating abuse and the overlap between predictors of types of abuse.

Any individual who is dating can be at risk of abuse, no matter the age. However, Rennison and Welchans (2000) found that women between the ages of 16-24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence, indicating that adolescents and young adults may be particularly vulnerable. In one study, 10% of adolescence from grades 9 to 12 reported experiencing physical abuse and 10% reported instances of sexual abuse that had happened once within at least 12 months of the survey (Kann et al., 2014). Research has found teen dating abuse, such as threats, physical attacks, or undesired sexual activity, to be prevalent in approximately 17% of girls and 9% of boys in high school. Of the boys and girls that were experiencing physical and sexual violence, 50% of them reported they remained in the relationship for fear of physical harm (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, & Hannan, 2003). Rennison and Welchans (2000) found that from between age groups 12-15 and 16-19 the number of females that experienced victimization rose 1.4% and 0.1% for males. Another study found that 10% of 3,745 adolescents surveyed had perpetrated cyber dating abuse (Zweig et al., 2013).

Banyard and Cross (2008) found that individuals who have experienced dating abuse in some form were more likely to experience suicide ideation, and depression, as well as lower grades, less school attachment, and higher dropout rates. In relation to cyber abuse, Zweig, Lachman, Yahner, and Dank (2014) found depressive symptoms, anger/hostility, and delinquency to be correlated with victimization. Recently, Parker and Bradshaw (2015) found that teens who were victims of dating abuse were more likely to use substances (i.e., alcohol, marijuana, etc.) than non-victims. These negative outcomes for victims of dating abuse

necessitate further research in order to understand the origins of dating abuse and plan prevention and intervention strategies accordingly (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

Studies have repeatedly found childhood maltreatment to be a strong influencing factor in the perpetration of teen dating abuse (Wolfe et al., 2003); specifically, emotional abuse faced during childhood can negatively impact one's relationship functioning in the future (Wekerle et al., 2009). Another concern among contributing factors for teen dating abuse is a simple lack of knowledge among teens surrounding abusive behaviour. Lavonie, Vézina, Piché, and Boivin (1995) found that two educational sessions, were enough to find a significant increase in understanding and awareness of controlling behaviour and rights of individuals within a dating relationship. Finally, several studies have demonstrated the close connection between the peer and dating context, suggesting the continuity of conflict resolution strategies between friends and dating partners (Ellis & Wolfe, 2015; Ellis, Chung-Hall & Dumas, 2012).

However, the relationship between childhood contexts and dating abuse perpetration is complex and likely involves contributions from social relationships as well as individual risk factors. Gratz, Paulson, Jakupcak, and Tull (2009) found that emotion dysregulation was a mediator between the relationship of childhood maltreatment and perpetration of dating abuse. This is in reference to the findings by Wolfe et al. (2003) suggesting that maltreatment within an individual's childhood can increase the possibility of becoming a perpetrator of dating abuse, but this effect might only be seen in specific cases. Emotion regulation can be defined as an individual's acknowledgement, understanding, and control over their emotions to fit situational expectations and align with goal achievement. Children and adolescents who have low emotion regulation generally experience lower levels of academic achievement, social competence, and

poorer student-teacher relationships (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012; Leerkes, Paradise, O'Brien, Calkins, & Lange, 2008; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009).

Emotion regulation within dating relationships is often required most when couples get upset with one another. An individual that has proper emotion regulation abilities would be able to recognize that they are angry and find an acceptable solution to reduce or channel their anger in that situation. For example, an individual who gets very angry during a fight with their partner might choose to walk away and settle down before continuing with further discussion, when they are in a more calm and rational state (Roberton, Daffern, & Bucks, 2012). Emotion regulation can benefit relationships by creating closer more trustworthy bonds between partners from sharing emotions. When emotions are shared in a healthy manner and supportive feedback is provided from their relationship partner, this aids in an individual's regulation (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Therefore, emotion regulation within relationships helps promote healthy communication and empathy which will further reinforce regulating their emotions.

There is a connection between emotion regulation abilities and perpetration of abuse (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012; McNulty & Hellmuth, 2008; Shorey, Brasfield, Febres, & Stuart, 2011; Stuart et. al, 2006). For example, Lilly and Mercer (2014) investigated perpetration of intimate partner violence by females and the effect of poor emotion regulation abilities. Results showed that difficulties with emotion regulation were significantly related to female perpetration of both physical and psychological dating abuse. However, the same link between emotion regulation and perpetration of dating abuse has also been found for males (Tager, Good, & Brammer, 2010).

Kelley, Edwards, Dardis, and Gidycz (2015) investigated various potential factors as motives for perpetrators of dating violence. Findings suggested emotion regulation, or lack thereof, as one of the motives for perpetration of physical abuse. It was found that in female perpetrators specifically, dysregulation of emotions was a primary motive. However, findings indicate that in general males are more likely to be the perpetrators of dating violence. In addition, Shorney, McNulty, Moore, and Stuart (2015) looked at various factors associated with negative affect (irritated, hostile, depressed, etc.) on intimate partner violence, as well as the potential for moderation of such factors by emotion regulation. The study's findings indicated that certain negative affect factors were moderated by an individual's level of emotion regulation. Specifically, hostile, sad, and irritated responses were associated with physical aggression only when the individual had low emotion regulation.

To date, little research has focused on examining emotion regulation as a predictor of cyber dating abuse specifically. Cyber dating abuse often overlaps with other forms of abuse but has several distinct elements. Perpetrators of cyber dating abuse have constant access to their partner through the use of technology; this allows controlling behaviour to prevail. Cyber communication permits easy distribution of private information that was not intended to be public, publicising this can be done to embarrass or even blackmail victims (Zweig et al., 2014) In addition, harassment can happen over social networking sites, again in a public display (Zweig et al., 2013). Lenhart et al. (2011) found 88% of teens reported witnessing others being mean or cruel on social media. These instances can have multiple negative effects on individuals. Völlink, Bolman, Dehue, and Jacobs (2013) examined adolescents' coping strategies when facing cyberbullying-- something which can consist of the same behaviours seen in cyber abuse. Expressing emotions (i.e. showing anger) was a strategy more commonly used by perpetrators

and victims of cyberbullying than that of palliative coping (i.e. doing something to calm their mind). Avoidance, emotional expression, and depressive coping strategies used regularly were related to individuals who used depressive forms of coping specifically when being cyberbullied.

Hormes, Kearns, and Timko (2014) investigated undergraduates' social networking use to determine whether or not such activity is addictive and to determine if social networking addictions may be associated with an individual's emotion regulation. They found a significant multivariate main effect between the relationship of dysfunctional social networking and emotion regulation problems. However, research has also been able to find that emotion regulatory abilities provide victims with resiliency under instances of cyberbullying, suggesting their ability to regulate their emotions accords them stronger inner support (Gianesini & Brighi, 2015). Taken together, previous research has clearly shown that poor emotion regulation is generally related to a range of negative effects on adolescents' peer and dating relationships. Although previous research has examined the relationship between emotion regulation and physical dating abuse, to date no research has examined the link between emotion regulation and cyber dating abuse.

As such, the goal of the present study was to investigate the relationship between emotion regulation and dating abuse. More specifically, our goal was to determine if aspects of emotion regulation could independently predict types of dating abuse, specifically cyber dating abuse and in-person abuse. It was hypothesised that poor emotion regulation abilities would have a significant positive relationship with in-person and cyber dating abuse perpetration. In addition, it was hypothesized that female perpetrators would have inferior emotion regulation abilities than that of male perpetrators due to past research indicating poor emotion regulation was related, and

a primary motive for, female dating abuse perpetrators (Kelley et al., 2015; Lilly & Mercer, 2014).

Method

Participants

The initial data used for this study was collected within a larger project from the Center for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) as an evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Program for youth (Clinical Trials Registry NCT02140099). This data was comprised of 212 students from 5 different secondary schools in southwestern Ontario. Of the 212 students, 97 (46%) of the participants reported being in a relationship at the baseline data collection, and therefore only their data was analyzed for this study. The sample consisted of 63 females and 34 males. Participants ranged from 14-16 years of age, with an average age of 15.51(*SD*= 0.59). Approximately 89% of participants indicated their ethnic background to be Caucasian, and 11% identified as other. The students participating were recruited through a voluntary basis by posters displayed in their school guidance office, and offered gift cards for their time.

Materials

The larger project used a longitudinal design in order to assess the effectiveness of the Healthy Relationships Plus Program; however for the purposes of this study only pre-test information of participants was used. Pre-test was selected so that we did not need to account for the effects of the program on dating experiences. The materials for this study included three questionnaires, all of which were randomly presented and filled out by each participant and can be found in the Appendices sections of this paper. Participants also answered a variety of demographic questions regarding their sex, age, SES, sexual orientation, and family structure.

Emotion Regulation. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescence (ERQ-CA; Gullone & Taffe, 2012) was used for collecting data on participants' emotion regulation abilities (see Appendix A). This 10 item emotion regulation measure uses six items to asses cognitive reappraisal (α=.83) containing questions such as "when I want to feel happier about something, I change the way I'm thinking about it", and four to assess emotion suppression (α=.71) with questions like "I control my feelings by not showing them". Answers were given based on a five-point scale (1) indicating *strongly disagree* to (5) representing *strongly agree* and averaged for each subscale.

In-Person Dating Abuse. The Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI; Wolfe et al., 2001) was altered to exclusively include the subscales of threatening and physical abuse behaviour, making it a 16-item self-report (see Appendix B). All questionnaires administered were the same as the original, aside from changes made to the pronouns used pending the participant's gender and sexual orientation. Each statement addressed the abuse in the form of asking if the participant was the perpetrator, as well as if they were the victim of the abuse. Four of the items addressed perpetration of physical abuse with statements such as "I pushed, shoved, or kicked her/him" (α=.95), and four items were for victimization of physical abuse, for example "S/He pushed, shoved, or kicked me" (α=.72). There were four items each for identifying perpetration of threatening behaviour such as "I destroyed or threatened to destroy something s/he valued" (α=.87), and victimization of threatening behaviour "S/He destroyed or threatened to destroy something I value" (α=.25). Answers to the questions were given using a provided a three-point scale (0) indicating *never* to (2) indicating *more than once* and averaged for perpetration and victimization scores.

Non-sexual Cyber Dating Abuse. Cyber dating harassment was measured using a scale by Zweig, Dank, Lachman, and Yahner (2013) (see Appendix C). This measure consists of 14 items focusing on cyber abuse between intimate partners within the past year. This measure included measurement of victimization statements such as "sent threatening text messages to me" (α=.64), and perpetration such as "wrote nasty things about him/her on my profile page (e.g. Facebook, etc.)" (α=.50). Questions were rated on a three-point scale from (0) *never,* to (2) *more than once* and averaged for perpetration and victimization scores.

Procedure

After ethical approval was obtained from CAMH, the participating school board was contacted to request permission to recruit participants from local schools. Five schools were selected based on convenience and socioeconomic diversity (based on neighbourhood demographics). Principals agreed to participate in the study. In May and June, posters requesting research participants were hung in the guidance offices of the five schools. Students who were interested in the study were instructed to collect a package from their counsellor containing information and consent forms. Only students who returned their parental and youth assent completed the surveys (see Appendices A, B, & C).

The larger study involved participating in a healthy relationships program (or control program) over two weeks in the summer months. The data was collected during the first day before the program began and took place at student's home schools. A minimum of two trained research assistants, and at least one teacher was present at the school for the administration of the surveys, which were completed on a computer for four of the schools and paper-based surveys

were administered to fifth school. Surveys took 60-90 minutes to complete. After completion of the survey students were given a 25$ gift card and thanked for their time.

Results

Demographic Information: Descriptive Statistics about the Sample

An analysis of the sample's demographic information was conducted in order to evaluate the make-up of the dating participants in comparison to data collected on non-dating individuals. Approximately 17% of dating participants indicated that they had same sex sexual attraction in comparison to 22% of non-daters. The majority of dating participants indicated that they were white (89%), with the rest indicating other (11%). While the non-dating participants were 66% white and 34% non-white. Social economic status for participants was evaluated based on the parent(s) highest level of education ranging from "high school or less" to "post-university study". The majority of both dating (31%) and non-dating participants (36%) indicated their parents had some post-secondary education. Approximately 53% of daters lived in a two-parent family structure in comparison to 65% of non-daters.

Victimization and Perpetration Behaviours

Frequency analyses of cyber abuse and in-person and threatening abuse were calculated to determine rates of victimization and perpetration for both forms of abuse. Twenty-five percent (n=23) of the sample indicated victimization on the in-person dating abuse measure, while 20% (n=18) indicated victimization from the cyber abuse measure. In-person dating abuse perpetration was found in 16% (n=13) of participants, and cyber abuse perpetration was rendered by 13% (n=11) of the participants. To assess the sample's total victimization and perpetration of abuse levels, a new variable combining the experiences of both was computed and analyzed.

Victimization of both abuse forms was found in 33% of the sample, while perpetration was found in 25%.

Gender Differences and Correlational analysis

Independent t-tests were used to analyze gender differences between the variables and their subscales. The relationships between gender, emotion regulation re-appraisal, emotion regulation suppression, perpetration and victimization of cyber abuse were non-significant. However, there was a marginally significant difference between gender and in-person dating abuse perpetration $t(80)= -.91, p=.06$, signifying that females perpetrated more physical and threatening abuse than males.

Correlational analyses were computed between cyber dating abuse and in-person dating abuse, emotion regulation, and age and are presented in Table 1. A significant correlation was found between victimization on the in-person dating abuse measure and victimization on the cyber abuse measure $r(86)=.44$, $p<.001$, indicating the more in-person dating abuse participants experienced, the more cyber abuse they did as well. Additionally, there was also a significant correlation between cyber abuse victimization and in-person dating abuse perpetration $r(78)= .48$, $p< .001$, demonstrating that the more victimization experienced on cyber abuse the more perpetration was done in in-person dating abuse. Perpetration of cyber abuse was significantly correlated with in-person dating abuse victimization $r(80)= .52$, $p<.001$, indicating that the more victimization faced the more cyber abuse was perpetrated. Cyber abuse perpetration was significantly correlated with in-person dating abuse perpetration $r(71)=.49$, $p<.001$, signifying an increase in one form of perpetration along with an increase in perpetration of the other. Lastly, a significant correlation was found between emotion regulation re-appraisal and cyber abuse

Table 1

Correlations Between Age, Perpetration of In-Person Dating Abuse, Victimization of In-Person Dating Abuse, Perpetration of Cyber Dating Abuse, Victimization of Cyber Dating Abuse, Emotion Regulation Re-appraisal, and Emotion Regulation Suppression.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	-						
2. Victimization on Dating Abuse	.02	-					
3. Perpetration of Dating Abuse	.18	1.00**	-				
4. Victimization on Cyber Abuse	.04	.44**	.48**	-			
5. Perpetration of Cyber Abuse	-.00	.52**	.49**	1.00**	-		
6. Emotion Regulation Re-appraisal	-.06	.03	.12	.22*	.17	-	
7. Emotion Regulation Suppression	.04	-.08	-.08	.03	.14	.01	-

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

victimization $r(84)= .22$, $p=.05$, demonstrating that victims of cyber dating abuse have higher levels of positive emotion regulation abilities.

A series of correlational analyses also were done to examine any relationships between the 14 cyber abuse and 16 in-person dating abuse individual measure items, and emotion regulation re-appraisal and suppression. Only one significant correlation was found. This was for the item "used his/her social networking account without his/her permission" $r(93)=.30$, $p=.004$, indicating that participants perpetrating that particular cyber abuse item had poorer emotion regulation abilities.

Hypothesis testing

Regression analyses were conducted in order to evaluate the hypothesised connection between emotion regulation, cyber abuse, and in-person dating abuse as well as investigate other potential relationships in the data (see Table 2). All the regressions controlled for age, sex, and SES of the participants. These controls were found to be non-significant in all models and are not reported in Table 2 but did remain in each model.

The first regression was computed to evaluate if emotion regulation was a significant predictor of in-person dating abuse perpetration. This model was found to be non-significant, $F(5,66)= 1.27$, *ns*, demonstrating no prediction from emotion regulation ability.

The second regression evaluated emotion regulation as a significant predictor of cyber abuse perpetration. Results showed a non-significant finding $F(5,67)= .61$, *ns*. This signifies no significant predicting of cyber abuse perpetration by emotion regulation ability. The third regression interpreted if emotion regulation was a predictor of cyber abuse victimization. The

Table 2

Regression 1: Predicting Perpetration of In-Person Dating Abuse from Emotion Regulation

Variable	**Beta**	**SE**	***t***
Emotion Regulation (Re-appraisal)	.17	.01	1.35
Emotion Regulation (Suppression)	-.09	.01	-.70

Regression 2: Predicting Perpetration of Cyber Dating Abuse from Emotion Regulation

Variable	**Beta**	**SE**	***t***
Emotion Regulation (Re-appraisal)	.15	.01	1.18
Emotion Regulation (Suppression)	.07	.01	.60

Regression 3: Predicting Victimization from In-Person Dating Abuse from Emotion Regulation

Variable	**Beta**	**SE**	***t***
Emotion Regulation (Re-appraisal)	.01	.01	.08
Emotion Regulation (Suppression)	-.16	.02	-1.37

Regression 4: Predicting Victimization from Cyber Dating Abuse from Emotion Regulation

Variable	**Beta**	**SE**	***t***
Emotion Regulation (Re-appraisal)	.21	.01	1.80+
Emotion Regulation (Suppression)	-.05	.02	-.48

Note. + $p < .08$

regression was found to be non-significant $F(5,75)=1.54$, *ns,* however emotion regulation suppression was found to have a marginally significant correlation with cyber abuse victimization $t(74)= 1.80$, $p=. 08$. This indicates a potential prediction of victimization based of an individual's emotion regulation abilities.

The fourth regression was interpreting if emotion regulation was a predictor of in-person dating abuse victimization. This model was also found to be non-significant $F(5, 75)=.80$, *ns*. This indicates that emotion regulation was not a predictor of in-person dating abuse victimization.

Discussion

The hypothesis of this study was that poor emotion regulation ability is a predictor of perpetration of abusive cyber and in-person dating behaviours. The results of this study show the hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant correlation between the variables. Additionally, it was theorised that female perpetrators of in-person dating and cyber abuse would have poorer emotion regulation abilities; however no significant gender differences were found.

The demographic information analyses comparing daters and non-daters showed a consistent pattern throughout. Non-dater's reported higher percentages of SES, living in a two parent households, and with their biological parents than the dating sample. These findings align with previous research that has found adolescents from non-intact family structures are more likely to date sooner, potentially explaining why the sample of non-daters came from a more traditional family structure (Coleman, Ganong, & Ellis, 1985). Additionally, the dating sample had a higher percentage of white individuals than the non-dater sample. Past research by Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureño, and Rea (2004) found Asian American adolescents were more likely

to begin dating at a later age than that of other white participants. Therefore the ethnic structure of this sample may be reflective of common differences in the start of dating relationships; cultural differences and values dictating when dating is appropriate may come into play.

Additionally, the prevalence rates of dating abuse were similar to the rates found in other research. Haynie et al. (2013) investigated prevalence rates of dating abuse perpetration and victimization in U.S. adolescents and found perpetration in 31% of participants and victimization in 35%. The 33% of victimization found in this study is similar to the prevalence found by Haynie et al. (2013), although this study found significantly less perpetration (25%). However, this perpetration percent difference could be due to underreporting of perpetration from social desirability or other demographic differences.

Cyber and In-Person Dating Abuse Measures

Correlational analyses found a relationship between cyber abuse and in-person dating abuse perpetration and victimization. This demonstrates that there is a connection between the two measures and that if an adolescent is experiencing or perpetrating one form of abuse, they are more likely to experience or perpetrate the other as well. A study by Zweig, Dank, Yahner, and Lachman (2013) on teens experiences of cyber abuse and dating violence also found a large connection between those who experienced cyber abuse and dating abuse. The researchers found that teens who experience cyber victimization were significantly more likely to also experience dating abuse victimization than teens who did not experience the cyber abuse, the same was seen in perpetration as well. This is likely because the abuse is reflected throughout the relationship, not just online. Therefore, if an individual is perpetrating cyber abuse they are likely to also be abusive in other forms than individuals who are not perpetrators. It is also important to note that

when victims of dating violence experience a combination of two or more types of abuse (i.e., emotional, physical, psychological, and/or sexual) they report the highest rates of mental health symptoms (Eshlman & Levendosky, 2012).

Emotion Regulation, Cyber, and In-Person Dating abuse

The primary hypothesis of this study was not supported, as there was no significant relationship between that of poor emotion regulation abilities and cyber and in-person dating abuse perpetration. Finding no connection between emotion regulation and dating abuse goes against past research that has been able to find such relationship (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012; McNulty & Hellmuth, 2008; Shorey, Brasfield, Febres, & Stuart, 2011; Stuart et. al, 2006). Although there is no previous research on a relationship between emotion regulation and cyber abuse perpetration, some evidence of a relationship was still present in this study. For example, while analyzing correlations with individual items of the cyber abuse measure, a significant correlation was found between emotion regulation suppression and "used his/her social networking account without his/her permission". This demonstrates a potential connection between poor emotion regulation abilities and perpetration of cyber abuse. Suppression is related to keeping one's thoughts and feelings to themselves, therefore doing something without their significant other's permission would relate to the secretive nature behind emotion regulation suppression.

A marginally significant correlation was found in the regression analyses between emotion regulation re-appraisal and cyber abuse victimization. There is no past research on re-appraisal and dating abuse, however Garnefski and Kraaij (2014) conducted a study on adolescent coping strategies for bullying, specifically examining emotion regulation. The

researchers found that emotion regulation re-appraisal was a significant moderator of the relationship between bullying and anxiety experienced by the victim. This indicates victims of abuse may use emotion regulation re-appraisal to alleviate their anxiety from facing abuse. Emotion regulation re-appraisal is the ability for an individual to acknowledge, understand, and control their emotions based on the situation they are facing, and their goals in terms of their actions (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). For example, if an individual's partner is sending them text messages that make them feel upset, they may use their emotion regulation re-appraisal in an attempt to lessen the distress they feel from the situation.

Gender and Emotion regulation and Dating Abuse

Although it was expected, there was no significant difference between female perpetrators emotion regulation abilities than males. This contrasts that of past research which has found poor emotion regulation to be significantly related to, and a primary motive of, perpetration of females physical and psychological dating abuse, above and beyond that of males (Kelly, Edwards, Dardis, & Gidycz, 2015; Lilly & Mercer, 2014).

A marginally significant t-test was found between gender and perpetration of in-person dating abuse, suggesting that females may have perpetrated more physical and threatening abuse measured in the in-person dating abuse measure than that of males. Many studies on adolescents and young adults do support these findings, suggesting that females are more likely to perpetrate physical violence than males (Haynie et al., 2013; Hines & Saudino, 2003; Schnurr, Lohman, & Kaura, 2010). However, Hines and Saudino (2003) found that males were more likely to perpetrate severe physical aggression, meaning it is possible that the females perpetrate more

minor acts of physical abuse. In general there is mixed support for gender differences in dating abuse perpetration.

Practical Implications

These findings have practical implication in that they provide further support for researchers to include cyber abuse measures when investigating abuse, specifically in adolescence. Correlations found between the in-person dating abuse and cyber abuse measures demonstrate the connection between perpetration and victimization experienced on both, with cyber abuse specifically effecting 25% of victims and coming from 20% of perpetrators. Technology is a large part of adolescents' communication, as they use it 12-17 times more often than any other age group (Temple et al., 2015). In addition, it provides teens with an opportunity to monitor one another's activities through constant availability of communication allowing for perpetration of more controlling behaviours. Therefore, research demonstrates that cyber abuse should consistently be included when observing adolescent dating abuse behaviours, as it plays a large role in their means of communication, and shows a direct correlation to victimization and perpetration of dating abuse behaviours. Additionally, education for teens on dating abuse should include information about cyber abuse as to teach them that abusive behaviours are present outside of in-person communication as well.

Findings from this study also support the idea of investigating emotion regulation re-appraisal as a coping mechanism for in-person dating and cyber abuse. Although past studies have found its use as a coping skill against bullying, research has yet to approach its benefits from a dating abuse standpoint. As mentioned, previous studies investigated poor emotion regulation as a predictor of abuse perpetration; however they included no mention of

victimization and positive emotion regulation. This study provides a starting point for investigation of the possible connection between abuse victimization and positive emotion regulation abilities. Teaching adolescence proper emotion regulation abilities may help to prevent perpetration of abuse, but also provide victims with greater resiliency and the ability to recognize improper treatment.

Potential Limitations and Future Directions

There were multiple limitations within this study, possibly leading to non-significant findings. Firstly, this studies sample was derived from a larger sample that did not directly collect participants based on their dating status, therefore limiting the number of participants eligible for the thesis of this study. Secondly, because the study targeted young adolescents, participants likely did not have a lot of dating experience to draw from when answering the various measures. Another factor potentially affected because of that, was a number of unanswered questions within studies which lead to a smaller numbers of data to analyze for various comparison tests.

Moreover, a significant correlation was found between “used his/her social networking account without his/her permission” from the cyber abuse perpetration scale and emotion regulation suppression- poor emotion regulation abilities. Therefore, given a larger sample, finding a significant correlation between emotion regulation suppression and cyber abuse perpetration is a possibility. Additionally, given the past findings of connections between poor emotion regulation and perpetration of dating abuse, as well as the connection between cyber abuse and in-person dating abuse, there is likely the potential of finding significant correlations in larger research, Therefore, research should expand towards larger samples to investigate

emotion regulation abilities in perpetrators of cyber abuse in order to find more conclusive results.

A further, limitation of the study was the lack of inclusion of relational, sexual, and emotional abuse from the in-person dating abuse measure. Examination of multiple forms of dating abuse in addition to those used likely would have yielded more reports of victimization and perpetration experiences, as the low reports of abuse may have led to few significant correlations. This area would benefit from future research including multiple measure of in-person and cyber abuse when measuring dating abuse in adolescents. With multiple means of communication for abuse perpetration, it is imperative to include investigation of all areas where abuse where can happen.

In addition, the measure for emotion regulation may have also limited significant findings, as many of the findings cited that found a relationship between emotion regulation and dating abuse used the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) (Lilly & Mercer, 2012; Shorey, Brasfield, Febres, & Stuart, 2011; Shorey, McNulty, Moore, & Stuart, 2015). The DERS scale uses reverse coding to create one general rating of an individual's emotion regulation abilities, rather than two subscale ratings for proper and improper emotion regulation. This possibly allows for better comparison as it prevents a participant from having the ability to rate high on the two opposing subscales.

However, although this study was unable to find significance with poor emotion regulation abilities and abuse perpetration, using the subscale measure enabled the discovery of a potential relationship between proper emotion regulation and victimization. Based off of this study's conclusions, research should begin to explore positive emotion regulation abilities as

coping mechanisms in victims of abuse, as it may be beneficial for prevention and resiliency education.

Furthermore, factors that could potentially have had minor effects on the results were the gender of the participant, as it was recorded by their parent, therefore limiting participants from stating their gender based off their own identification. This may have affected any gender based testing that was done. As well, the SES of participants were based off of parent's highest education level, however education level is not a direct indication of a family's financial well-being. This could therefore limit the conclusions drawn from a families demographic standing.

Major Conclusions/Contributions

The present study offers further support for the use of cyber abuse in investigating abusive behaviour among adolescents. Although no relationship between emotion regulation abilities, in-person dating abuse, and cyber abuse was found, it is clear that there is a strong connection between in-person dating and cyber abuse victimization and perpetration. It was also discovered that females may be more physically abusive; however research is mixed in supporting that notion, with some stating that I may be reflective of lack of reporting from males or reporting of minor physical abuse perpetration from females. As well, demographics of the dating population reflect findings from other studies, suggesting that a person's family background may play a role in their dating habits. Nevertheless, this study provides a unique insight into investigating positive emotion regulation abilities as a coping mechanism for resiliency when facing abuse. By offering research into emotion regulation and cyber dating abuse it opens the opportunity for future research to expand in such area.

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Appendix A

1. When I want to feel happier, I think about something different.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. I keep my feelings to myself	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. When I want to feel less bad (e.g., sad, angry or worried), I think about something different.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. When I am feeling happy, I am careful not to show it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. When I'm worried about something, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me feel better.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I control my feelings by not showing them	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. When I want to feel happier about something, I change the way I'm thinking about it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. I control my feelings about things by changing the way I think about them.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. When I'm feeling bad (e.g., sad, angry, or worried), I'm careful not to show it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. When I want to feel less bad (e.g., sad, angry, or worried) about something, I change the way I'm thinking about it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Half and half	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appendix B

1. Have you had a dating relationship in the past 6 months? (yes/no/not sure) [DateFlag]

Note: If "no" is answered to 1, 2 to 17 will be skipped.

Never (0)	Once	More Than Once (2)	Not applicable; I have not dated in the past 6 months (77)

In the past 6 months, my dating partner has...

Threatening Behavior
1. Destroyed or threatened to destroy something I valued [DV.TBaX]
2. Deliberately tried to frighten me [DV.TBbX]
3. Threatened to hurt me [DV.TBcX]
4. Threatened to hit me or throw something at me [DV.TBdX]
Physical Abuse
1. Thrown something at me [DV.PAaX]
2. Kicked, hit or punched me [DV.PAbX]
3. Slapped me or pulled my hair [DV.PAcX]
4. Pushed, shoved or shook me [DV.PAdX]

In the past 6 months, I have...

Threatening Behavior
1. Destroyed or threatened to destroy something he/she valued [DP.TBaX]
2. Deliberately tried to frighten him/her [DP.TBbX]
3. Threatened to hurt him/her [DP.TBcX]
4. Threatened to hit him/her or throw something at him/her [DP.TBdX]
Physical Abuse
1. Thrown something at him/her [DP.PAaX]
2. Kicked, hit or punched him/her [DP.PAbX]
3. Slapped him/her or pulled his/her hair [DP.PAcX]
4. Pushed, shoved or shook him/her [DP.PAdX]

Note: The "not applicable" option was only included on the paper survey. On the computer version, individuals responding 'No' to question 1 were skipped out of questions 2 to 17.

Appendix C

Never (0)	Once	More Than Once (2)	Not applicable; I have not dated in the past 6 months (77)

Note: If "no" was answered to question 1 in the previous section, this section will be skipped.

In the past 6 months, my dating partner has…

1. Posted embarrassing photos or other images of me online [DV.EAaX]
2. Sent threatening text messages to me [DV.EAbX]
3. Taken a video of me and sent it to his/her friends without my permission [DV.EAcX]
4. Used my social networking account without my permission [DV.EAdX]
5. Sent me instant messages or chats that made me feel scared [DV.EAeX]
6. Wrote nasty things about me on his/her profile page (e.g., on Facebook, etc.) [DV.EAfX]
7. Created a profile page (like Facebook or YouTube) about me knowing it would upset me [DV.EAgX]
8. Sent me so many messages (like texts, e-mails, chats) that it made me feel unsafe [DV.EAhX]
9. Constantly sent me text messages on my cell phone to check up on me (where are you, what are you doing, who are you with, etc.) [DV.EAiX]
10. Spread rumours about me using a cell phone, email, IM, web chat, social networking site, etc. [DV.EAjX]
11. Used information from my social networking site to harass me or put me down [DV.EAkX]
12. Made me afraid when I did not respond to a cell phone call, text message, social networking post, IM, etc. [DV.EAlX]
13. Threatened to harm my physically through a cell phone call, text message, social networking post, etc. [DV.EAmX]

In the past 6 months, I have…

14. Posted embarrassing photos or other images of him/her online [DP.EAaX]
15. Sent threatening text messages to him/her [DP.EAbX]
16. Took a video of him/her and sent it to my friends without his/her permission [DP.EAcX]
17. Used his/her social networking account without his/her permission [DP.EAdX]
18. Sent him/her instant messages or chats in order to make him/her feel scared [DP.EAeX]
19. Wrote nasty things about him/her on my profile page (e.g., on Facebook, etc.) [DP.EAfX]
20. Created a profile page (like Facebook or YouTube) about him/her knowing it would upset him/her [DP.EAgX]
21. Sent him/her a lot of messages (like texts, e-mails, chats) to try to make him/her feel unsafe [DP.EAhX]
22. Constantly sent him/her text messages on his/her cell phone to check up on him/her (where he/she was, what he/she was doing, who he/she was with, etc.) [DP.EAiX]
23. Spread rumours about him/her using a cell phone, email, IM, web chat, social networking site, etc. [DP.EAjX]
24. Used information from his/her social networking site to harass him/her or put him/her down [DP.EAkX]
25. Tried to make him/her afraid when he/she did not respond to a cell phone call, text message, social networking post, IM, etc. [DP.EAlX]
26. Threatened to harm him/her physically through a cell phone call, text message, social networking post, etc. [DP.EAmX]