

# **Adding Insult to Injury: Development and Initial Validation of the Partner-Directed Insults Scale**

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Women who are verbally abused by their intimate male partners suffer serious mental health consequences and often experience physical violence in their relationship. Despite the importance of studying verbal abuse, no previous research has investigated the specific content of the insults men use to derogate their partners. We present the development and initial validation of a new measure designed to assess the specific content of insults used by men against their intimate partners. In a preliminary study, we used feedback from battered women, along with a review of the relevant literature, to identify specific insults for inclusion in the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (PDIS). We administered the PDIS to a sample of United States participants (Study 1) and a sample of New Zealand participants (Study 2), allowing for a cross-national investigation of the specific insults that men use to derogate their partners. The results demonstrate the practical need for such a scale and provide evidence for the discriminant validity of the PDIS by documenting that men's use of insults predicts their use of controlling behaviors and physical violence.

**Keywords:** verbal insults; intimate partner violence; violence against women

**A**buse of women by men plagues many intimate relationships. Broadly speaking, this abuse can occur as physical or nonphysical abuse. Physical abuse includes acts such as hitting, kicking, and choking. Nonphysical abuse includes psychological and emotional abuse, often occurring in the form of verbal insults (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001). Much previous research has addressed physical abuse of women by their intimate partners (see Arriaga & Oskamp, 1999, for a review) as well as several forms of psychological and emotional abuse (see O'Leary & Maiuro, 1999, 2001, for reviews). Less research has specifically addressed verbal abuse, however. Nonetheless, a number of important findings have emerged. It has been documented, for example, that the targets of verbal abuse by intimate partners suffer

negative health consequences (O'Leary, 1999), that physical abuse often accompanies verbal abuse (Gondolf, Heckert, & Kimmel, 2002; Wilson, Johnson, & Daly, 1995), and that verbal abuse early in a relationship predicts subsequent spousal abuse (Schumacher & Leonard, 2005). Moreover, studies examining components and factors of psychological abuse have found that components associated with insults (such as criticism, ridicule, and denigration) have stronger associations with physical abuse than do other components (Murphy & Hoover, 1999; Sullivan, Parisian, & Davidson, 1991). These findings are valuable, but missing from the literature is an examination of the *specific content* of verbal abuse. What are these men saying to their partners?

The primary objective of the current research was to design a measure to assess the specific content of insults used by men against their intimate partners. It is well established that women whose partners call them names and put them down are more likely to experience physical violence in their relationship (e.g., Wilson, Johnson, & Daly, 1995), but little is known about the specific content of such insults. Are men insulting their partner's character, physical attractiveness, intelligence, or some other trait? Existing measures do not help to answer these questions. Measures that broadly assess verbal abuse in the context of an intimate relationship include, for example, the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989), the Index of Psychological Abuse (Sullivan et al., 1991), and the Measurement of Wife Abuse (Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993). For a detailed review of these and other measures of psychological abuse, see O'Leary (1999). Although scales measuring verbal abuse are valuable and practical, they typically assess only the *frequency* with which an individual yells at or insults his partner—they do not assess the specific content of the insults directed at the partner. For example, although the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) includes a subscale on verbal aggression, it does not assess the content of the partner-directed insults. Some measures of psychological abuse include subscales of verbal abuse that assess the content of insults, but these assessments are typically restricted to a few items. The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989), for example, includes items such as "My partner told me my feelings were irrational or crazy" and "My partner blamed me for his problems," but of the 50 total items, only five mention the specific content of an insult. A full scale dedicated to assessing the many insults that men might direct at their partners is necessary.

A second objective of the current research was to identify the specific insults (or categories of insults) that might predict men's partner-directed controlling behavior and physical violence. For example, is violence more likely to occur if a man derogates his partner's intelligence or her sexual fidelity? To this end, we assessed the occurrence of men's controlling behavior, physical violence, and injuries to women resulting from physical violence in conjunction with assessments of men's use of partner-directed insults. It may be of theoretical and practical importance to identify which insults predict men's coercive and sometimes violent attempts to control their intimate partners.

In a preliminary study, we used feedback from a sample of battered women, along with a review of the relevant literature, to identify specific insults for inclusion in a new Partner-Directed Insults Scale (PDIS). We next administered the PDIS to a sample of United States participants (Study 1) and a sample of New Zealand participants (Study 2), allowing for a cross-national investigation of the occurrence and frequency of specific insults that men use to derogate their intimate partners.

## PRELIMINARY STUDY: INSULT NOMINATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PDIS

### Method

**Participants.** Responses from 14 women from a South Florida shelter for physically abused women provided the initial pool of insults used to select the final items comprising the PDIS. This sample was used because physically abused women are also often the targets of verbal abuse (Gondolf et al., 2002). Informal interviews with several hundred men and women from a South Florida community provided additional insight into the specific insults that men direct at their intimate partners.

**Materials and Procedure.** Each of the 14 women from the shelter was given a nomination form and asked to record up to 15 specific insulting things a past or current partner has said to them to make them feel bad. Participation was voluntary and unrewarded.

### Results and Discussion

Following the insult nomination procedure and informal interviews with community men and women, we identified 47 distinct insults men use to derogate their intimate partners. In addition to insults nominated by the abused women and community sample, the final set included several insults suggested by a review of the relevant literature. First, because men's violence against their intimate partners has been linked with male sexual proprietariness (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992) and because nonlethal and lethal violence in intimate relationships is often a consequence of male sexual jealousy (Buss, 2000; Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dutton, 1998), we included several insults related to promiscuity or sexual infidelity (e.g., "My partner called me a whore or a slut," "My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with another man"). Second, because men tend to prefer as intimate partners women who are young, healthy, and physically attractive (e.g., Buss, 1989), we included several insults related to physical attractiveness (e.g., "My partner told me that I am getting old," "My partner told me that my breasts are ugly"). Items retained for the scale also include more general insults (e.g., "My partner called me a 'bitch,'" "My partner told me that I make him unhappy").

### STUDY 1: UNITED STATES SAMPLE

We administered the PDIS to a sample of United States men and women. We performed principal components analyses and investigated how responses on the PDIS total scale and components correlate with controlling behaviors, physical violence, and injuries resulting from physical violence. We next used multiple regression analyses to investigate the extent to which each insult component uniquely predicts men's controlling behaviors, their physical violence, and the injuries resulting from their violence. We provide initial empirical support for the validity and reliability of the PDIS full-scale and component scores and demonstrate its utility for researchers and clinicians.

### Method

**Participants.** The PDIS was administered to 327 people (134 men and 193 women) currently living in the United States and attending a South Florida university. The mean age of the male participants was 22.5 years ( $SD = 7.1$ ), the mean age of their partners was 21.8 years

( $SD = 6.1$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 25.3 months ( $SD = 33.7$ ). The mean age of the female participants was 25.7 years ( $SD = 7.0$ ), the mean age of their partners was 28.8 years ( $SD = 8.4$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 48.0 months ( $SD = 51.9$ ).

**Materials.** Participants completed a brief biographical section, the PDIS, and three additional indexes developed by Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, and Lewis (1995, 1996): the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI). The CBI, VAI, and IAI measure the occurrence and consequences of violence and coercion in intimate relationships. The CBI, VAI, and IAI were designed to address shortcomings of other measures of intimate partner violence, such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979). The CTS, for example, does not provide an explicit context for the violence. Without a context for the violence, men and women are portrayed as equally "violent," which may be true, but does not capture the psychological terrorism and severe physical and emotional costs that violent men inflict on their partners (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992). The CBI, VAI, and IAI, in contrast, use a context-specific approach and have been demonstrated by Dobash and colleagues (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000) and by other researchers (e.g., Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Shackelford, Goetz, Buss, Euler, & Hoier, 2005) to provide valid and reliable assessments of the occurrence and consequences of intimate partner abuse and violence. This validation includes demonstrating the scales' convergent and discriminative validity by correlating scores on these scales with scores on other measures of intimate partner abuse and violence and with relationship satisfaction, documenting that men arrested for spousal battery score higher on these measures than do men not arrested for spousal battery, and replicating an interpretable pattern of relationships among the Dobash et al. measures and other forms of partner-directed violence and abuse across independent samples of college students and community members in several different countries. Additional information about these measures is provided in subsequent sections.

**Procedure.** Participants were at least 18 years of age and currently involved in a committed heterosexual relationship. On arrival at a scheduled time and location, the researchers handed each participant a consent form and the survey packet. The participants were instructed to read and sign the consent form, complete the survey, place the completed survey in an envelope, and then seal the envelope. To maintain anonymity, participants were asked to place the signed consent form in a separate envelope that contained other signed consent forms. The PDIS section contained the following instructions:

Men sometimes try to hurt their female partner's feelings by saying insulting things to them. The following list includes insulting things that a man might say to his partner. In the column labeled "How often," write the number from the scale below to indicate how often you have said each insulting thing to your partner [for women: ... how often your partner has said each insulting thing to you] (0 = Never, 1 = 1 time, 2 = 2 to 5 times, 3 = 6 to 10 times, 4 = 11 to 24 times, 5 = 25 or more times).

Men provided self-reports of their partner-directed insults, whereas women provided partner reports of their male partner's insults directed at them.

## Results and Discussion

**Principal Components Analyses.** We conducted a series of principle components analyses (followed by varimax rotation) on responses to the 47 insult items. These analyses produced four interpretable components, each with eigenvalues greater than 4.0. The first component (eigenvalue = 8.4) accounted for 18% of the variance. The second component

(6.5) accounted for 14% of the variance. The third component (4.8) accounted for 10% of the variance, and the fourth component (4.6) accounted for 10% of the variance. Together the four components accounted for 52% of the total inter-item variance. The results of the principle components analysis are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Component Loadings for the Four Components of the Partner-Directed Insults Scale**

<b>Loading</b>	
<b>Derogating Physical Attractiveness</b>	
.84	My partner told me that my breasts are ugly.
.76	My partner told me that I am a bad sex partner.
.76	My partner told me that most women are more attractive than I am.
.75	My partner told me that he is too good for me.
.71	My partner told me that I am ugly.
.71	My partner told me that he wants to have sex with one of my female friends.
.70	My partner told me that I look old.
.69	My partner told me that I have an unattractive body.
.68	My partner told me that I am sexually abnormal.
.67	My partner told me that I am not good enough for him.
.64	My partner told me that I am getting old.
.62	My partner told me that I could never make it without him.
.57	My partner told me that I don't deserve to live.
.56	My partner told me that I am fat.
.50	My partner told me that I will never find someone better than him.
.47	My partner told me that he wants to watch me have sex with one of my female friends.
.42	My partner told me that our family is a failure because of me.
.42	My partner told me that no man would ever treat me better than he treats me.
<b>Derogating Value as a Partner/Mental Competency</b>	
.74	My partner told me that I make him unhappy.
.72	My partner told me that I make his life miserable.
.67	My partner told me that it is my fault when something bad happens.
.67	My partner told me that I am stupid.
.64	My partner told me that I give him nothing.
.61	My partner told me that I do not do anything for him.
.61	My partner told me that the time he has spent in a relationship with me has been "wasted time."
.60	My partner told me that I "ruin everything."
.58	My partner called me a bitch.
.57	My partner told me that I am ignorant.
.56	My partner told me that I am mentally ill.
.56	My partner called me an idiot.
.55	My partner told me that no one likes me.
.39	My partner told me that I will never be able to keep a man happy.
.35	My partner told me that I worry too much.
.34	My partner told me that I don't have any real friends.
<b>Derogating Value as Person</b>	
.82	My partner called me a nobody.
.78	My partner told me that nothing I do is important.

- .70 My partner told me that I am worthless.  
 .67 My partner told me that I will never amount to anything.  
 .56 My partner told me that he wishes I would meet another man so I wouldn't be his problem anymore.  
 .39 My partner told me that I deserve everything bad that happens to me.

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#### Accusations of Sexual Infidelity

- .89 My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with many other men.  
 .89 My partner accused me of having sex with another man.  
 .84 My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with another man.  
 .83 My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with one of his friends.  
 .82 My partner accused me of having sex with many other men.  
 .60 My partner called me a whore or a slut.  
 .39 My partner told me that my family is worthless.
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*Note.* Component analysis is based on data provided by United States sample (Study 1),  $N = 327$ .

Component 1, which we labeled Derogating Physical Attractiveness, includes insults in which men derogated their partner's physical appearance (e.g., "My partner told me that I am ugly," "My partner told me that I look old"). Component 2, which we labeled Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity, includes insults in which men verbally attack the qualities that make one a good companion or partner (e.g., "My partner told me that I make his life miserable," "My partner told me that I make him unhappy") and insults in which men derogated their partner's mental abilities (e.g., "My partner called me an idiot," "My partner told me that I am mentally ill"). Component 3, which we labeled Derogating Value as a Person, includes insults in which men derogate their partner's general worth as a person (e.g., "My partner called me a nobody," "My partner told me that I am worthless"). Finally, component 4, which we labeled Accusations of Sexual Infidelity, includes insults related to the partner's sexual fidelity (e.g., "My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with one of his friends," "My partner called me a whore or a slut").

Some of the components included items that were less clearly linked conceptually to their assigned label. For example, component 1, Derogating Physical Attractiveness included items such as "My partner told me that he is too good for me," "My partner told me that I don't deserve to live," and "My partner told me that our family is a failure because of me." It is not clear why some items loaded on components that were not related directly to the items, but we retain the current structure because the majority of items are conceptually related and loadings are sufficiently high (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Next we calculated alpha reliabilities for each of the components and for the total scale, first for the full sample and then separately for men's self-reports and women's partner reports. The full sample alpha reliabilities for the four components (Derogating Physical Attractiveness, Derogating Value as a Partner/Mental Capacity, Derogating Value as a Person, and Accusations of Sexual Infidelity, respectively) were  $\alpha = .91, .87, .84$ , and  $.88$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .94$ . Alpha reliabilities for the four components for men's self-reports were  $\alpha = .94, .81, .78$ , and  $.87$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .91$ . For women's partner reports, alpha reliabilities for the four components were  $\alpha = .87, .90, .85$ , and  $.90$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .93$ . Intercorrelations

**TABLE 2. Study 1 (United States): Partner-Directed Insults Scale Component Intercorrelations for Full Sample (Men and Women, Upper Panel), Men's Self-Reports (Lower Left Panel), and Women's Partner Reports (Lower Right Panel)**

	PDIS (Total)	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
PDIS (total)	1.00				
Derogating physical attractiveness	.81***	1.00			
Derogating value as a partner/mental capacity	.82***	.41***	1.00		
Derogating value as a person	.70***	.52***	.50***	1.00	
Accusations of sexual infidelity	.46	.19***	.21***	.30***	1.00
PDIS (total)	1.00	.82***	.88***	.75***	.50***
Derogating physical attractiveness	.84***	1.00	.54***	.58***	.27***
Derogating value as a partner/mental capacity	.69***	.29***	1.00	.62***	.26***
Derogating value as a person	.65***	.66***	.11	1.00	.27***
Accusations of sexual infidelity	.40	.11	.11	.45***	1.00

Note.  $N = 327$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

among the total PDIS and the four components for the full sample of men and women, for men's self-reports, and for women's partner reports are displayed in Table 2. These intercorrelations are uniformly positive but small to moderate in size. Overall, the results indicate that the 47 insults can be organized into four interpretable components, each of which demonstrates sufficient reliability to warrant further analyses.

**PDIS and Controlling Behavior.** The Controlling Behavior Index (Dobash et al., 1996) measures the occurrence of men's partner-directed nonphysical controlling and coercive behaviors. Responses are recorded using a 6-point Likert-type scale anchored by 0 (*never*) and 5 (*11 or more times*), following Dobash et al. (1996). Example items include "Check her movements," "Deliberately keep her short of money," and "Restrict her social life." Administration of the CBI in conjunction with the PDIS allowed for correlational analyses between scores on the two measures. If the PDIS is to be a useful predictor of controlling and coercive behaviors in intimate relationships, we expect positive, but not perfect, correlations with scores on the CBI. Correlations between scores on the PDIS (full scale and each of the four components) and scores on the CBI appear in Table 3. The correlations are uniformly positive but also indicate that the PDIS total and component scores do not share more than 40% of the variance with scores on the CBI. This provides initial support for the discriminant validity of the PDIS. The PDIS appears to measure behaviors that are associated with, but distinct from, coercive and controlling behaviors as assessed by the CBI. For reportorial completeness, separate correlations by sex between scores on the PDIS (full scale and components) and scores on the CBI appear in Table 4. Controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results (analyses available on request).

**PDIS and Relationship Violence.** The Violence Assessment Index and the Injury Assessment Index developed by Dobash and colleagues (1995, 1996) assess the occurrence and consequences of violence in intimate relationships. The VAI is designed to measure specific physical assault tactics, objects used in assaults, and parts of the body to which assaults are directed. Example items include "Slapped her on the face, body, arms, or legs," "Pushed, grabbed, and shoved her," and "Dragged her or pulled her by the hair." The IAI measures the physical consequences of violence against partners. Example items include "Bruise on her body," "Blackout or unconsciousness," and "Split lip." For each index, responses are recorded using a 6-point Likert-type scale anchored by 0 (*never*) and 5 (*11 or more times*), following Dobash and colleagues (1995, 1996). If the PDIS is to be a useful predictor of physical violence, we expect positive, but not perfect, correlations

**TABLE 3. Study 1 (United States): Correlations Between the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (Total and Four Components), the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI)**

	PDIS (Total)	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
CBI	.63***	.45***	.53***	.44***	.39***
VAI	.55***	.28***	.62***	.26***	.30***
IAI	.23***	.13*	.29***	-.01	.11

*Note.*  $N = 327$ . Means (and  $SD$ ) for the PDIS, CBI, VAI, and IAI were 14.6 (18.3), 9.1 (10.9), 4.4 (7.4), and 0.3 (1.1), respectively.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).



**TABLE 4. Study 1 (United States): Correlations Between the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (Total and Four Components) and the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI) According to Men's Self-Reports (M) and Women's Partner Reports (W)**

	PDIS (Total)		Component 1		Component 2		Component 3		Component 4	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
CBI	.49***	.70***	.28***	.62***	.50***	.54***	.26**	.49***	.25**	.46***
VAI	.49***	.60***	.22**	.38***	.70***	.60***	.10	.29***	.02	.44***
IAI	.24**	.23**	.11	.15*	.35***	.26***	.04	-.03	.02	.17*

Note.  $N = 327$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

with scores on the VAI and the IAI. Correlations between scores on the PDIS (full scale and four components) and scores on both the VAI and the IAI appear in Table 3. The correlations are uniformly positive but also indicate that the PDIS total and component scores do not share more than 38% of the variance with scores on the VAI and IAI. This provides further evidence for the discriminant validity of the PDIS. The PDIS appears to tap into a construct distinct from those measured by the VAI and IAI. At the same time, it appears to be a reliable predictor of physical violence in intimate relationships and may therefore be of considerable use to both researchers and clinicians who assist female victims of domestic abuse. For reportorial completeness, separate correlations by sex between scores on the PDIS (full scale and components) and scores on the VAI and IAI appear in Table 4. Controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results (analyses available on request).

**Unique Predictive Utility of the Insult Components.** To identify whether any of the insult components uniquely predict men's controlling behaviors and relationship violence, we conducted nine multiple regressions. The first three involved assessing the extent to which the four components of the PDIS predicted scores on the CBI, VAI, and IAI, respectively, using the entire sample. Subsequent analyses involved using the four components to predict scores on the CBI, VAI, and IAI for men only and for women only. Each of the nine models was significant overall (mean  $F = 30.12$ , mean  $R^2 = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ; analyses available on request). Investigation of the individual standardized regression coefficients indicated that one component (component 2: Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity) uniquely predicted men's scores on the CBI, VAI, and IAI in all nine of the regression analyses (analyses available on request). The other components uniquely predicted men's controlling behaviors and relationship violence, but not as consistently as component 2 (i.e., not across all nine analyses). Controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results (analyses available on request).

## STUDY 2: NEW ZEALAND SAMPLE

In Study 2, we secured data from New Zealand men and women to validate the PDIS with an independent sample. Using principle components analyses, we documented that the resulting components for the New Zealand sample are similar to those identified for

the United States sample. We investigated how responses on the PDIS total scale and components correlate with men's partner-directed controlling behaviors, physical violence, and injuries resulting from physical violence. We also used multiple regression analyses to investigate the extent to which each insult component predicted men's controlling behaviors, their physical violence, and the injuries resulting from this violence. Overall, the data from the New Zealand sample provide additional empirical support for the validity and reliability of the PDIS scale and the four components and further demonstrate its utility for researchers and clinicians.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were 298 people (113 men and 185 women) currently living in New Zealand and attending a university. The mean age of the male participants was 29.7 years ( $SD = 11.4$ ), the mean age of their partners was 28.2 years ( $SD = 10.3$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 65.2 months ( $SD = 82.3$ ). The mean age of the female participants was 25.3 years ( $SD = 8.7$ ), the mean age of their partners was 28.0 years ( $SD = 10.1$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 54.9 months ( $SD = 72.6$ ).

**Materials and Procedure.** Participants completed identical materials and followed identical procedures to those described in Study 1.

## Results and Discussion

**Principal Components Analyses.** We conducted a series of principle components analyses (followed by varimax rotation) on responses to the 47 insult items. These analyses produced four interpretable components closely paralleling the components identified in analyses of the data in Study 1 (e.g., 80% of the items loaded highest on the same component in this study as in Study 1). Due to this substantial overlap in the component solutions and for reportorial efficiency, we retained the specific assignment of insults to the components identified in the Study 1 sample. We calculated alpha reliabilities for each of the components and for the total scale, first for the full sample and then separately for men's self-reports and for women's partner reports. For the full sample, alpha reliabilities for the four components (Derogating Physical Attractiveness, Derogating Value as a Partner/Mental Capacity, Derogating Value as a Person, and Accusations of Sexual Infidelity, respectively) were  $\alpha = .79, .82, .68,$  and  $.77$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .93$ . For men's self-reports, alpha reliabilities for the four components were  $\alpha = .76, .85, .69,$  and  $.72$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .91$ . For women's partner reports, alpha reliabilities for the four components were  $\alpha = .80, .79, .67,$  and  $.80$ , and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .89$ . As with the alpha reliabilities from the original United States Study 1 sample, these results indicate that the total scale and four components have sufficiently high reliability to warrant their use and, moreover, that the 47 items can be organized into four interpretable components that broadly capture the content of men's partner-directed insults. Intercorrelations among scores on the total PDIS and the four components for the full sample of New Zealand men and women, for New Zealand men's self-reports, and for New Zealand women's partner reports are displayed in Table 5.

**PDIS and Controlling Behavior.** As with Study 1, we expected to find positive but not perfect correlations between scores on the PDIS (full scale and four components) and scores on the CBI. The correlations appear in Table 6. The correlations are uniformly posi-

**TABLE 5. Study 2 (New Zealand): Partner-Directed Insults Scale Component Intercorrelations for Full Sample (Men and Women, Upper Panel), Men's Self-Reports (Lower Left Panel), and Women's Partner Reports (Lower Right Panel)**

	PDIS (Total)	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
PDIS (total)	1.00				
Derogating physical attractiveness	.84***	1.00			
Derogating value as a partner/mental capacity	.93***	.65***	1.00		
Derogating value as a person	.67***	.59***	.53***	1.00	
Accusations of sexual infidelity	.65***	.35***	.52***	.42***	1.00
PDIS (total)	1.00	.82***	.91***	.66***	.56***
Derogating physical attractiveness	.88***	1.00	.60***	.56***	.20**
Derogating value as a partner/mental capacity	.94***	.72***	1.00	.52***	.44***
Derogating value as a person	.70***	.65***	.53***	1.00	.29***
Accusations of sexual infidelity	.78***	.60***	.63***	.63***	1.00

Note. N = 298.

\*\* p < .01. \*\*\* p < .001 (two-tailed).

**TABLE 6. Study 2 (New Zealand): Correlations Between the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (Total and Four Components), the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI)**

	PDIS (Total)	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
CBI	.66***	.55***	.61***	.56***	.39***
VAI	.65***	.46***	.66***	.47***	.45***
IAI	.47***	.28***	.46***	.39***	.41***

Note.  $N = 298$ . Means (and  $SD$ ) for the PDIS, CBI, VAI, and IAI were 10.2 (13.9), 8.0 (11.2), 6.0 (10.1), and 0.6 (2.4), respectively.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

tive but also indicate that the PDIS total score and component scores do not share more than 44% of the variance with scores on the CBI. This provides support for the discriminant validity of the PDIS and parallels the results of Study 1. For reportorial completeness, separate correlations by sex between scores on the PDIS and scores on the CBI appear in Table 7. Controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results (analyses available on request).

**PDIS and Relationship Violence.** As in Study 1, we expected to find positive but moderate correlations between scores on the PDIS (full scale and components) and scores on the VAI and the IAI. The results appear in Table 6. All correlations were significant and positive, ranging from  $r = .19$  to  $r = .68$ , and controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results. This pattern of results replicates that found in Study 1.

**Unique Predictive Utility of the Insult Components.** As in Study 1, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses (using scores on the four PDIS components to predict CBI, VAI, and IAI scores) to identify whether any of the insult components uniquely predicted men's controlling behaviors and relationship violence. Once again, this involved conducting nine multiple regression analyses: predicting CBI, VAI, and IAI scores from the full sample, men only, and women only. Each of the nine models was significant overall (mean  $F = 36.59$ , mean  $R^2 = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ; analyses available on request). As in Study 1, component 2 (Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity) was particularly useful in predicting men's scores on the key measures. This component uniquely predicted men's scores on the CBI, VAI, and IAI in eight of the nine regression analyses. The exception

**TABLE 7. Study 2 (New Zealand): Correlations Between the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (Total and Four Components) and the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI) According to Men's Self-Reports (M) and Women's Partner Reports (W)**

	PDIS (Total)		Component 1		Component 2		Component 3		Component 4	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
CBI	.64***	.68***	.55***	.55***	.61***	.62***	.43***	.63***	.50***	.33***
VAI	.65***	.66***	.49***	.43***	.67***	.66***	.37***	.52***	.52***	.41***
IAI	.37***	.55***	.20*	.33***	.36***	.55***	.19*	.52***	.50***	.36***

Note.  $N = 298$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

was men's scores on the IAI, which was in the predicted direction but only marginally significant ( $b = 0.60$ ,  $t = 1.77$ ,  $p = .08$ ). The other components uniquely predicted men's controlling behaviors and relationship violence, but not as consistently as component 2. Once again, controlling for men's age, women's age, and relationship length did not significantly change these results (analyses available on request).

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The objectives of the current research were to design a measure to assess the specific content of insults used by men against their intimate partners and to identify the specific insults that best predict controlling behavior, physical violence, and injuries inflicted by men against women in intimate relationships. The Partner-Directed Insults Scale differs from other measures of psychological abuse in that it is the first scale designed to assess explicitly the prevalence and frequency of specific insults that men use to derogate their female intimate partners. A review of the literature on intimate partner violence, responses from informal interviews with several hundred men and women, and insult nominations provided by battered women were used to generate the final set of 47 insults that comprise the PDIS.

Using two large independent samples of men's self-reports and women's partner reports secured from residents of the United States and New Zealand, principle components analyses produced four interpretable components that capture efficiently the specific insults that men use to derogate their intimate partners: Derogating Physical Attractiveness, Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity, Derogating Value as Person, and Accusations of Sexual Infidelity. Across both studies, intercorrelations among scores on the total PDIS and scores on each of the four components are positive and generally moderate in size, indicating that each component measures a distinct category of insults, but also reflects the full scope of insults that men use to derogate their intimate partners. The PDIS and the four components demonstrated respectable reliabilities in both studies for the full sample, men's self-reports only, and women's partner reports only.

Given the prevalence and consequences of violence inflicted on women by their intimate partners, it is important to develop instruments such as the PDIS that identify the correlates and predictors of this violence. Across both studies, scores on the PDIS (full scale and each of the four components) correlate positively with scores on the Controlling Behavior Index, the Violence Assessment Index, and the Injury Assessment Index but never share more than 50% of the variance with scores on these measures. The first finding provides evidence of the predictive validity of the PDIS, whereas the second provides evidence of its discriminant validity. The PDIS appears to measure behaviors that are associated with, but distinct from, coercive and controlling behaviors, violent behaviors, and injuries resulting from physical violence.

Identifying which insult components best predict men's partner-directed controlling behavior, violence, and injuries inflicted as a result of this violence might have both theoretical and clinical utility. With this in mind, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses and identified one component that best predicted men's controlling behaviors and relationship violence: Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity. This component includes insults in which men verbally attack the qualities that make one a good companion or partner (e.g., "My partner told me that I make his life miserable," "My partner told me that I make him unhappy") and insults in which men derogate their partner's mental

abilities (e.g., "My partner called me an idiot," "My partner told me that I am mentally ill"). The results suggest that men who derogate their partner's worth and intelligence are the most dangerous to their partners; these men are most likely to use controlling behaviors and violence in their intimate relationships.

### Limitations and Future Directions

One potential limitation of the current research is the use of convenience samples that include college students who tend to be less violent and abusive than non-college student adult samples. The current data, however, suggest that substantial levels of violence and abuse are occurring in both the United States and New Zealand samples. The vast majority of participants reported experiencing verbal insults, coercion, and violence. In the U.S. sample, 92.4% reported some verbal abuse, and in the New Zealand sample, 91.6% reported some verbal abuse. Regarding coercion and violence, 82.6% of the U.S. sample reported some coercion and violence, and 77.9% of the New Zealand sample reported some coercion and violence. These data are consistent with previous literature using these measures (e.g., Dobash et al., 1995, 1996, 2000; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Shackelford, Goetz, Buss, Euler, & Hoier, 2005).

Although the pattern and strength of correlations are similar for men's self-reports and women's partner reports, these associations tended to be larger for women's partner reports. Because the men and women surveyed were not partnered to each other, we cannot assess the possibility that apparent sex differences in the strength of these associations are attributable to differences in the veracity of men's self-reports and women's partner reports. Future research would benefit from obtaining cross-spouse reports to address such concerns. Relatedly, a clear future direction might be to examine women's partner-directed insults, because, like men, women also physically and psychologically abuse their partners (Archer, 2000; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005).

Future research also might address the *intent* underlying the insults that men use to derogate their intimate partners. For example, do men insult their partners to prevent defection from the relationship, or, conversely, do men derogate their partners to promote defection and subsequent termination of the relationship? Men who derogate their partner's attractiveness may be doing so to lower the self-esteem of their partner, thus decreasing the likelihood that their partner will attempt to defect from the relationship. On the other hand, cruelty and unkindness are universal tactics for terminating a relationship (Conlan, 2000), and so men's use of insults may function to promote termination of the relationship. An investigation of men's mate retention behaviors and use of insults may provide insight into the underlying intentions of the men who insult their partners.

Examining the relationships between partner-directed insults and acts of sexual coercion may enrich our understanding of sexual abuse in intimate relationships. For example, men who accuse their partners of sexual infidelity may be more likely to use sexual coercion in their relationships. Assessing the co-occurrence of sexual coercion tactics with measures such as the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004), and insult content with the PDIS may provide additional insight into intimate partner violence.

In conclusion, Maiuro (2001) distinguished four primary dimensions of psychological abuse among intimate partners: Denigrating Damage to Partner's Self-Image or Esteem, Passive-Aggressive Withholding of Emotional Support and Nurture, Threatening Behavior, and Restricting Personal Territory and Freedom. The PDIS relates directly to Maiuro's first dimension, Denigrating Damage to Partner's Self-Image or Esteem,

by assessing the specific content of insults used by men against their intimate partners. Because there is an absence of measures designed to assess the specific content of verbal abuse, and given that scores on the PDIS reliably predict the co-occurrence of controlling behavior, physical violence, and injuries resulting from physical violence, the PDIS provides researchers and clinicians with a valuable tool to assess verbal abuse and its co-occurrence with physical abuse in intimate relationships.

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