

# Physical violence perpetration in teen dating relationships: The role of behaviors and subjective perceptions in daily conflicts

Andréanne Fortin<sup>1,3</sup>, Alison Paradis<sup>1,3</sup>, Andréanne Lapierre<sup>1,3</sup>, & Martine Hébert<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, <sup>2</sup> Department of sexology, Université du Québec à Montréal, <sup>3</sup> Laboratoire d'étude sur le bien-être des familles et des couples (LÉFAC)

## Introduction

- Rates of dating violence (DV) are alarmingly high during adolescence (Wincentak et al., 2016)
- DV often occurs during conflicts when partners are using **destructive conflict management strategies** (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2018).
  - Destructive strategies refers to **conflict engagement** (e.g., losing control, criticizing) or **withdrawal** (e.g., acting distant, being cold).
- Since conflict management depends on a variety of implicit factors and **subjective perceptions**, it might be relevant to investigate the **interplay** between self-reported and **perceived partner's conflict management strategies**

## Objectives

- 1) Explore associations between daily self-reported conflict management strategies and same day physical DV perpetration.
- 2) Examine cross-over interactions of perceived partner's conflict behaviors.

## Method

### Participants and procedures

- 216 adolescents (57.4% girls,  $M_{age} = 17.03$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ), were selected according to the following inclusion criterias:
  - a) being aged between **14 and 19 years** and
  - b) being **currently involved in a dating relationship** lasting at least **1 month without cohabiting** with their partner.
- Teens filled out a **baseline questionnaire** online. Then, they were asked to complete **daily diaries** for 14 consecutive days.

### Measures

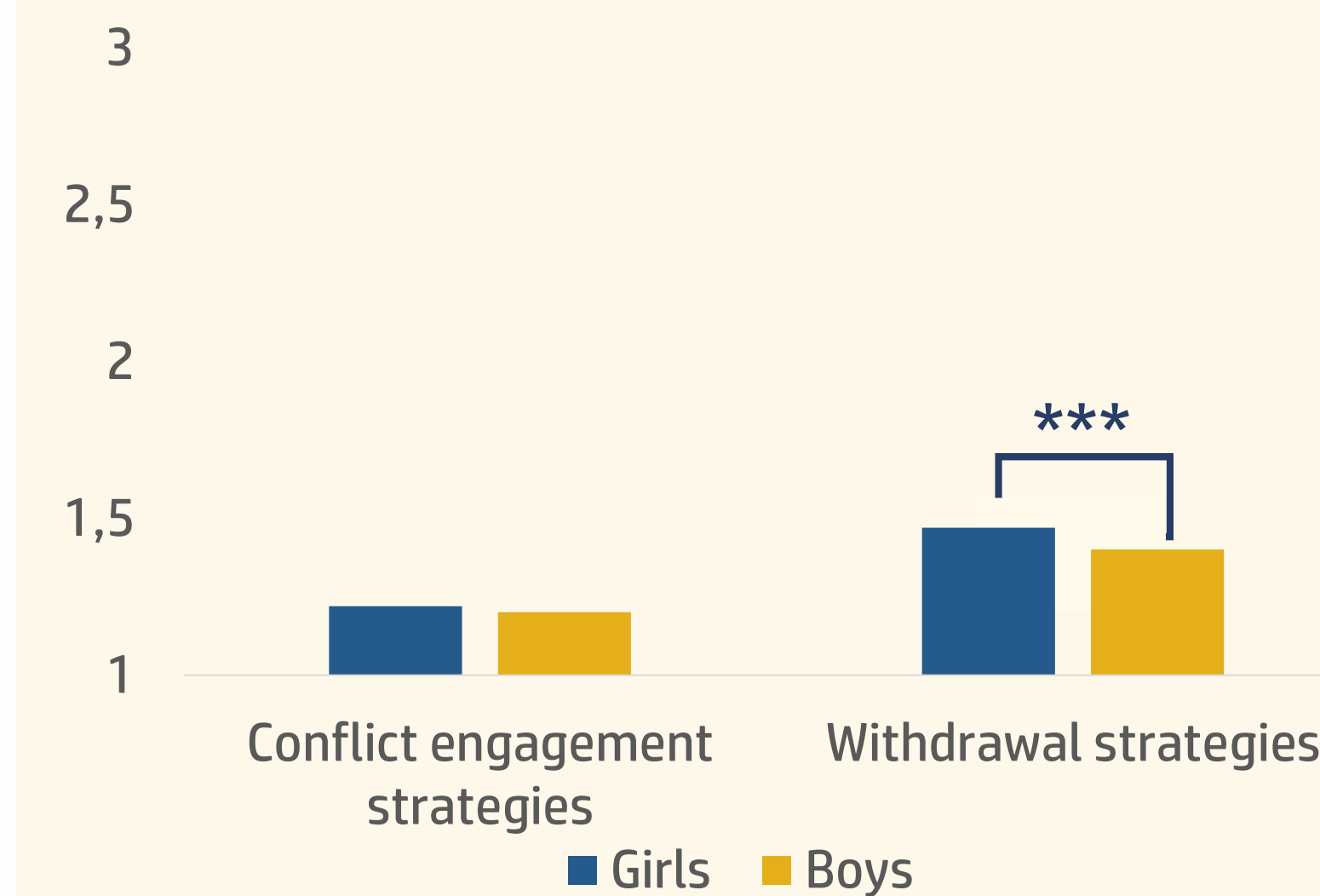
- **Daily conflict management strategies.** French adaptation of the **Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Fortin et al., 2020)**
  - 16 items measured on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not at all to Very much*) → The conflict engagement and withdrawal subscales were used.
- **Daily physical violence perpetration.** Revised **Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Lussier, 1997; Straus et al., 1996)**.
  - 4 items from the physical assault subscales were used and measured on a 3-point Likert scale (*Never to 3 times or more*)

### Analyses

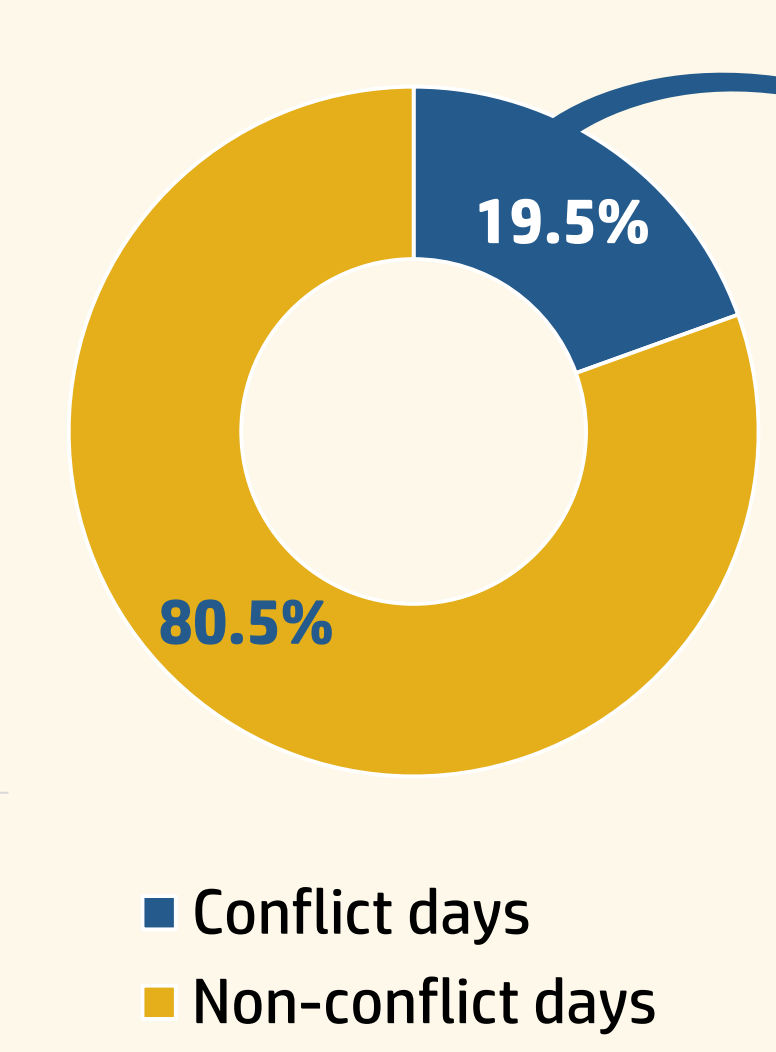
- Multilevel moderation analyses were conducted with Mplus 8.0
- Control variables were included: *gender, age and relationship length*

## Results

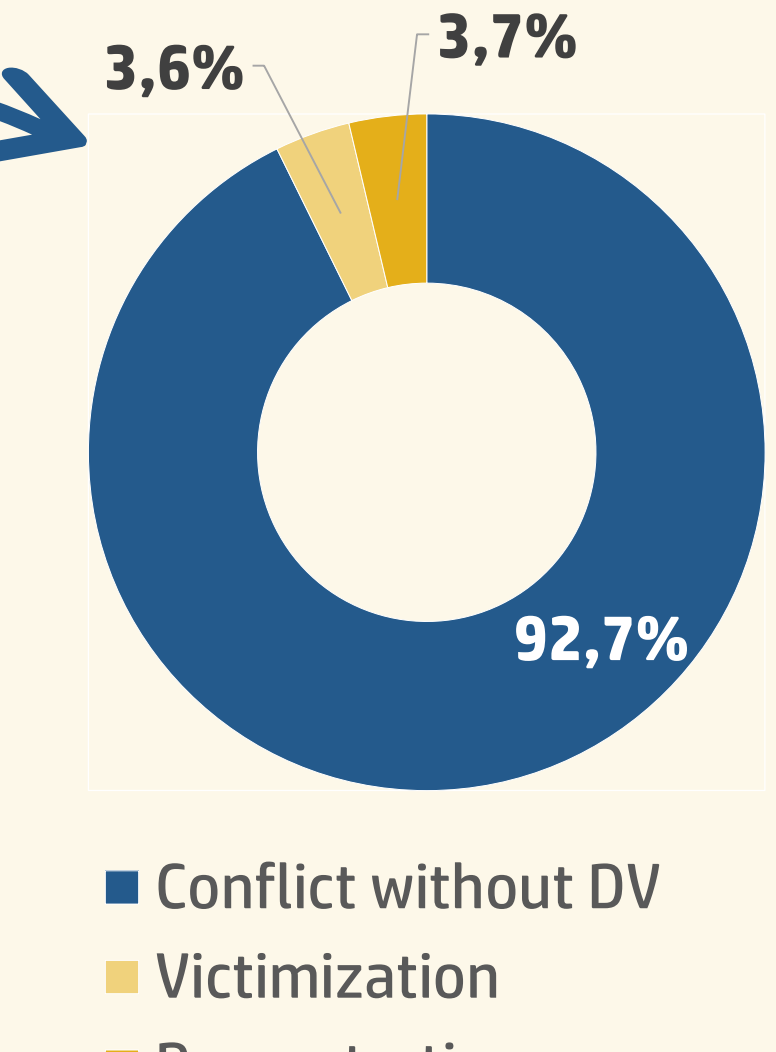
**Figure 1.** Mean score by gender for conflict management strategies



**Figure 2.** Percentage of conflict days (n = 590)



**Figure 3.** Percentage of conflicts with DV (n = 43)



**Table 1.** Main effects of self-reported destructive strategies on daily physical DV perpetration

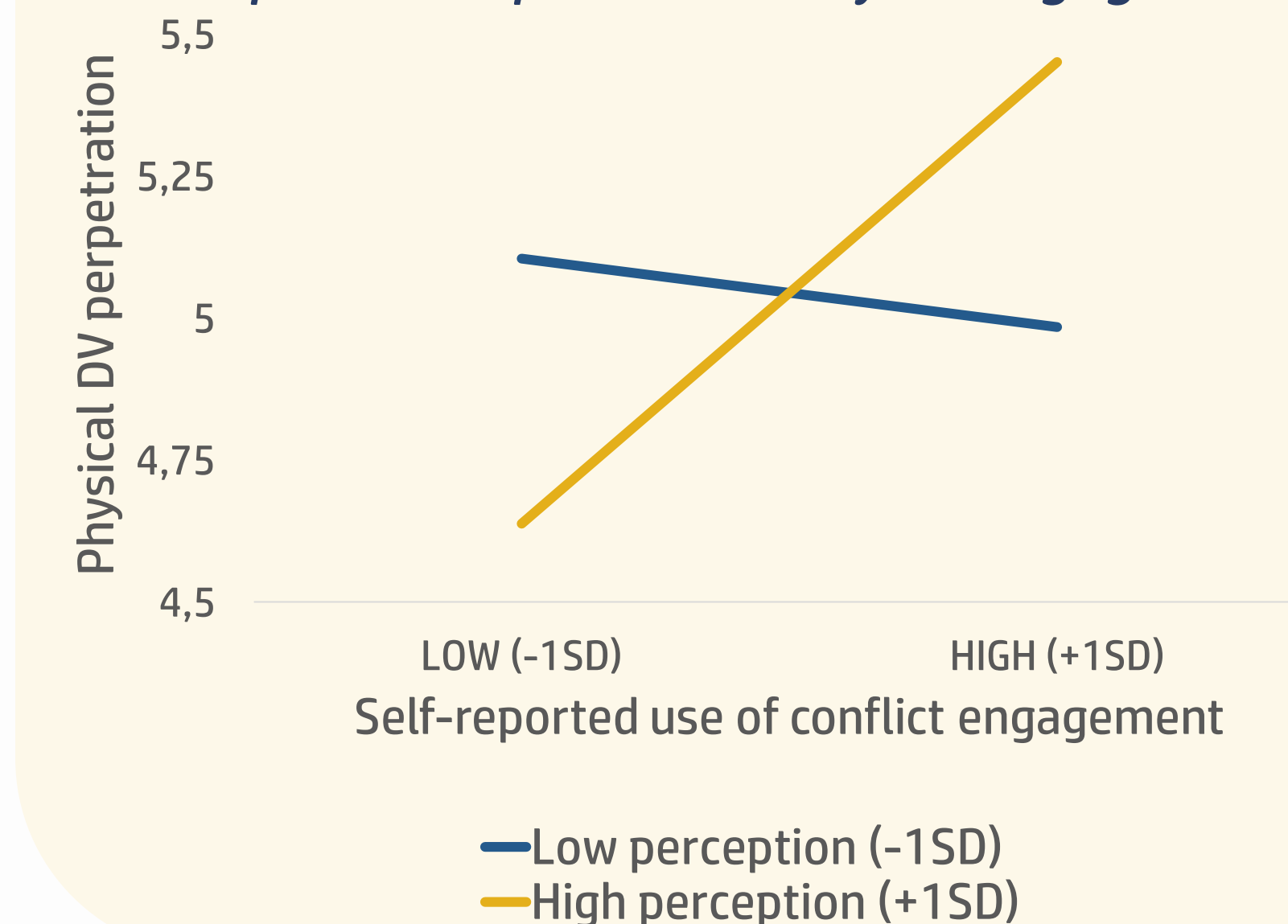
	Estimate	S.E.
<b>Within-person variables</b>		
Conflict engagement	1.16 *	0.48
Withdrawal	1.32	0.72
<b>Between-person variables</b>		
Conflict engagement	5.70***	1.95
Withdrawal	-1.66	1.12

**Table 2.** Cross-over interactions of attributed-partner destructive strategies

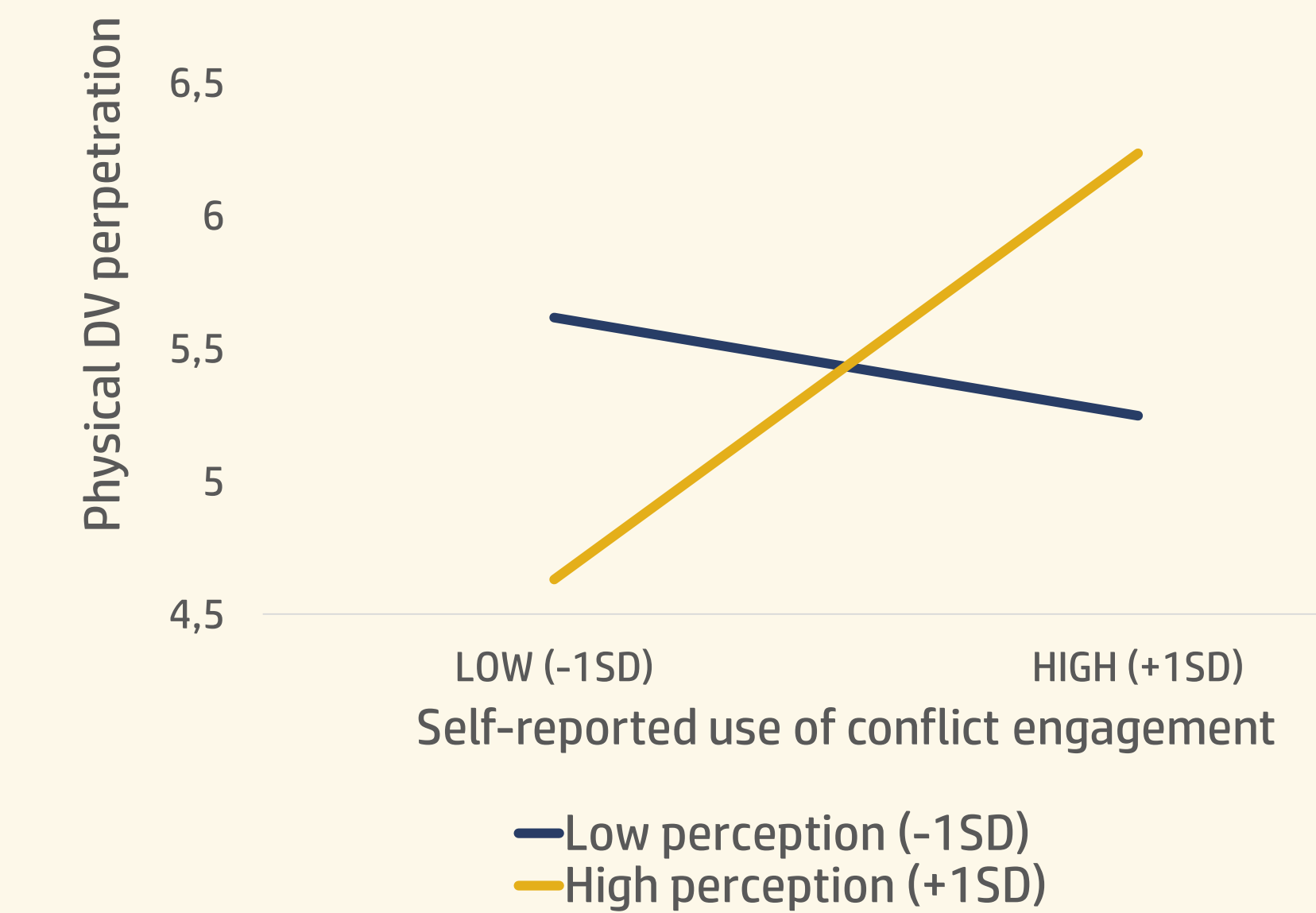
	Estimate	S.E.
<b>Cross-level interaction</b>		
Conflict engagement (S) x (P)	3.81 *	1.62
Conflict engagement (S) x Withdrawal (P)	3.56*	1.61

*Note. Significant interactions presented, S = self-reported, P = perceived partner's conflict behaviors*

**Figure 4.** Cross-over interaction of perceived partner's conflict engagement



**Figure 5.** Cross-over interaction of perceived partner's withdrawal



## CONTACT : Andréanne Fortin

fortin.andreanne.4@courrier.uqam.ca

**Références** Bonache, H., Gonzalez-Mendez, R., & Krahe, B. (2019). Adult attachment styles, destructive conflict resolution, and the experience of intimate partner violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 34(2), 287-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516640776>; Fortin, A., Paradis, A., Lapierre, A., & Hébert, M. (2020). Validation of the French-Canadian Adaptation of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory for Adolescents in Dating Relationships. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*. <http://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000173>; Gonzalez-Mendez, R., Rojas-Solis, J. L., & Ramirez-Santana, G. (2018). Exploring Conflict Resolution and Psychological Abuse Across Romantic Relationships. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 27(2), 220-235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2016.1327912>; Lussier, Y. (1997). Échelle révisée des stratégies de conflits conjugaux (CTS2). Unpublished paper, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières; Schrod, P., Witt P. L., & Shimkowski, J. R. (2014). A Meta-Analytical Review of the Demand/Withdraw Pattern of Interaction and its Associations with Individual, Relational, and Communicative Outcomes, *Communication Monographs*, 81:1, 28-58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2013.813632>; Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Boney-McCoy, S., & Sugarman, D. B. (1996). The revised conflict tactics scales (CTS2) development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of family issues*, 17(3), 283-316.; Wincentak, K., Connolly, J., & Card, N. (2017). Teen dating violence: A meta-analytic review of prevalence rates. *Psychology of Violence*, 7(2), 224. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0040194>

## Discussion

### Conflict engagement strategies

- **Between-person level:** Results indicate that teens **who use more conflict engagement strategies than their peers** have an increase risk of perpetrating physical DV on a daily basis.
- **Within-person level (i.e., daily level):** Results indicate that teens have a higher probability of perpetrating physical DV **on days that they use more conflict engagement strategies than they usually do.**
- Moreover, interaction between high self-reported and high perceived partner's conflict engagement was found to **exacerbate the probability of physical DV perpetration.**
  - **Results support the conflict escalation pattern**, in which both partner are actively and negatively engaged in the argument.

### Withdrawal strategies

- While prior research found a link between withdrawal and DV perpetration (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2018), no such associations were found regarding the use of withdrawal. The current results suggest that **avoiding conflicts on a daily basis** is not associated with DV perpetration.
- However, **perceived partner's withdrawal was found to moderate** the link between one's use of conflict engagement and physical DV perpetration.
- Results suggest that the **probability of perpetrating physical DV was significantly higher** on days in which teens reported using high levels of conflict engagement while also perceiving their partner as using high levels of withdrawal.
  - **Results support the demand/withdraw pattern**, in which one partner is pressuring the other to engage in the conflictive issue while the other partner stays silent and defensive or refuses to further discuss.

### Conclusion

- Many authors have previously documented the **link between destructive strategies and DV**, but this study is the first to examine these associations using an **intensive longitudinal approach.**
- Patterns of **conflict escalation** and **demand/withdraw** have previously been examined in **adult samples** (Bonache et al., 2019; Schrod et al., 2014), and this study add to **growing body of research** examining these patterns in the context teen dating relationships.
- It would be useful for future studies to examine the **interplay between both partners' strategies** during conflictual situations to better understand the relational dynamic from which DV occurs.
- **Preventive initiatives** should address the **interplay of conflict behaviors and cognitions** in relation to physical DV perpetration