

INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE WITHIN HISPANIC DIVORCING PARENTS

by

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Abstract

Little is known about intimate partner abuse (IPA) in divorcing Hispanic parents and how divorcing Hispanic parents utilize legal, social, or community services in regards to their experience of IPA. Research has identified many barriers for Hispanics attempting to access these services, including lack of knowledge of laws and services, lack of access, discrimination, and language barriers. This study aimed to understand the underlying dyadic structures of IPA and how such abuse affects the utilization of civil court processes in addition to social, community, and health services. Data sources included records from the civil court and mediation services, self-reports of intimate partner abuse, and law enforcement records. This paper focused on a subsample from a larger study and included 187 Hispanic couples and 467 non-Hispanic White couples. Results revealed differences between groups in terms of coercive controlling behaviors and their relationship with other forms of IPA. The strength of the relationship between coercive controlling behaviors and IPA victimization was equal for Hispanic husbands and wives, and also equal to White husbands' IPA perpetration, but had a weaker relationship between White wives' IPA perpetration. Overall Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White couples had similar interactions with the civil court system, ranging from time to complete the divorce and interactions with the court after divorce. Within the Hispanic group, couples with at least one partner preferring Spanish were significantly less likely to complete the divorce process, and had fewer contacts with the court after the divorce was finalized. Hispanic couples who were identified as experiencing IPA were significantly less likely to utilize certain helping services, but not others. Possible explanations, limitations, and future directions are explored.

Introduction

While the issue of divorce in the general population has been the subject of decades of research, little research concerning divorce has been focused on the Hispanic¹ population. However, as Hispanic couples are a quickly growing population in the United States (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011), Hispanics are making up a growing percentage of the divorcing population (Kranau, Green, & Valencia-Weber, 1982; Oropesa, & Landale, 2004; Padilla & Borrero, 2006). What is not entirely clear is how Hispanic couples are interfacing with the legal and social systems put in place for divorcing couples and whether being Hispanic creates unique obstacles for moving through the divorce process.

Alongside the phenomenon of divorce, the issue of intimate partner abuse (IPA²) often arises. IPA remains a major public health issue and frequently consists of more than just a single incident of aggression, often times being a systematic interactional pattern (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Divorcing couples experience IPA at rates estimated to be two to three times higher than the general population (Field & Caetano, 2005; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). This is especially true in contentious divorces, such as those where issues of custody and parenting time of children are not resolved by the couple prior to proceeding to court (Beck, Walsh, Mechanic, & Taylor, 2009; Beck, Walsh, & Weston, 2009). There is also a paucity of research into IPA in Hispanic couples generally and

¹ The term “Hispanic” is used throughout this paper as this is the term used for couples within the current dataset to self-identify. Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably, but can have some conceptual and regional differences that may lead to different classification.

²The term intimate partner abuse (IPA) will be used throughout this paper as this term encompasses more of the dynamics and behaviors that occur in intimate partner abuse. This term includes violent behaviors as commonly thought to be intimate partner violence (IPV), but also incorporates behaviors including psychological abuse and coercive controlling behaviors. I use the term IPV and violence when referencing previous studies as I am attempting to use the language referenced in those specific articles and utilize the definition of what the researchers investigated.

divorcing Hispanic couples in particular. Therefore, there is a serious lack of understanding about Hispanic couples' experiences with IPA, contested divorce, and the legal, social, and community systems involved with the divorce process.

Finally, the utilization of a variety of social and community services is associated with both divorce and the experience of IPA. Depending on the presence of children, severity of IPA, or contentiousness of the divorce, these services can include police, therapists, Child Protective Services (CPS), or medical services. While the patterns and motivations behind utilizing these services have been studied in general (Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, & Weintraub, 2005), Hispanic couples (and individuals) may experience unique pressures, which impact decisions to utilize such resources. For example, language barriers may make interacting with doctors and nursing staff frustrating or unhelpful, leading to an avoidance of hospitals. Without a firm understanding of the way that ethnicity interacts with issues of divorce, IPA, and social and community service utilization, it will not be possible to ensure that essential services are being provided in a way that maximizes their utilization, and therefore maximizes the safety and welfare of the mothers, fathers, and children involved in the family court system.

The current investigation examined a subsample from a larger study (Beck, Walsh, Mechanic, Figueredo & Chen, 2011), which integrated information from self-report measures of IPA from both partners, court and divorce mediation records, and law enforcement contact information. To address the gaps in the literature concerning Hispanic divorcing couples who experience IPA, the current study aimed to: (1) determine whether underlying structures of IPA were the same in Hispanic and White

couples, (2) explore the differences between White and Hispanic couples in their utilization of the courts for the purposes of divorce, and (3) explore the differences in the utilization of social and community systems between White and Hispanic couples.

I will first review the current literature on IPA with Hispanic couples, focusing specifically on the research identifying the underlying structure of IPA and its risk factors, then concentrating specifically on how Hispanic couples may differ from White couples. Next, I will move to discussing research identifying how Hispanic couples interact with the police, court system, as well as other helping systems such as hospitals, CPS, and psychotherapy.

Determining Underlying Structures of IPA with Hispanic Couples

Research results present contradicting rates of IPA for Hispanic couples, with some studies finding that Hispanics are at an increased risk of IPA compared to non-Hispanics, especially non-Hispanic Whites, while other studies find that Hispanics experience IPA at the same or slightly lower rates than non-Hispanics (Caetano, Field, Ramisetty-Mikler, & McGrath, 2005; Cummings, Gonzalez-Guarda, & Sandoval, 2012; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). There are many possible reasons for these contradictory findings, including definitions of the behaviors which constitute IPA, measurement of these behaviors, and accounting for socioecological variables.

Two influential nationally representative studies addressed the question of IPA in the general population. One nationwide phone survey with 8,000 female and 8,000 male participants (not partnered), assessed for victimization in general, including intimate partner abuse (The National Violence Against Women Survey “NVAW”, Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). IPA was defined by behaviors representative of physical assault, rape,

and stalking by an intimate partner. While the NVAW definition was limited to these behaviors, data were also collected on partner jealousy, controlling behaviors, and verbal abuse. There were no statistically significant differences between reports of IPA between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants for both men and women. There was, however, a higher percentage of rapes reported by Hispanic participants (7.9 %) than White participants (5.7%). It should be noted that the ethnicity of the participants' partners were not taken into account for these comparisons.

A second influential study utilized data from the National Alcohol Survey (NAS) to look at prevalence of intimate partner violence (Caetano & Clark, 1998). This was a longitudinal nationwide probability sample of United States households in which in-person home interviews were conducted. Caetano, et al., (2005) utilized a subset of this larger dataset that included heterosexual couples who were married or cohabitating and where both individuals of the couple identified as Hispanic (n=527) or White (n=555). Data were collected separately for each partner and resulted in matched couple data. The determination of intimate partner violence was binary (IPV occurred or IPV did not occur) and was determined by at least one partner endorsing any one of 11 items focused on violent behavior in the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale in the past 12 months (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Buncy-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). Caetano et al. (2005) found higher incidence of IPA reported by Hispanic couples (26%) than White couples (17%) at initial interview, as well as at 5 year follow-up (Hispanic 25% and White 11% for couples still together at follow-up). It is noteworthy that Hispanic couples had a significantly lower separation rate (12.8%) at the five year follow-up than White couples (22%) and no data were reported about incidence of IPV for those couples that did separate.

One critical problem with these studies is that they are only incorporating limited behaviors associated with IPA. Most of these studies do not include other forms of IPA, such as psychological abuse and coercive controlling behaviors, but instead rely purely on reports of physical violence. Even in examining physical violence, many of the studies use binary coding, which does not provide rich information about the extent or pattern of IPA these couples experience.

Beyond the rates and definition of IPA, it is important to understand the underlying structure or pattern of the abuse. A component of IPA, which has been gaining attention, is a particular form of psychological abuse defined as coercive controlling behaviors, which can occur in isolation or in conjunction with physical violence (Stark, 2007). Coercive controlling behaviors encompass coercion and control over most tangible aspects of one's partner's associations with others, activities, finances and associated resources, and household decisions (Beck & Raghavan, 2010; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007). Scholars are now arguing that it is very important to understand the level of coercive controlling behaviors in a relationship and its function with IPA as a whole. Coercive controlling behaviors have been shown to be a precursor to other forms of abuse, such that when coercive tactics fail to control a partner's behavior, one may move on to threats and intimidation, including emotional abuse and physical and sexual violence (Sugihara & Warner, 2002; Tanha, Beck, Figueredo, & Raghavan, 2010). Prior analyses of the data utilized in the current study showed more coercive controlling behaviors and overall victimization by male partners of female victims, but also demonstrated that the pattern of coercive controlling behavior motivating other forms of IPA was consistent for both male and female perpetrators

(Tanha, et al., 2010). Prior research with this data did not, however, investigate if there are differences in coercive controlling behaviors by ethnicity.

Research specifically addressing coercive controlling behaviors is limited in general, and even more so within Hispanic couples. One study considered the impacts of dominance within relationships of Mexican Americans, specifically regarding whether dominance leads to IPA (Sugihara & Warner, 2002). Participants consisted of 316 Mexican Americans recruited through a community convenience sampling procedure in the Southcentral United States. All participants were English speaking and the majority were married (over 70%). Measured behaviors of dominance included possessiveness, power, decision-making, and devaluation of partner, behaviors that are synonymous with coercive controlling behaviors. IPA was again measured utilizing the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, et al., 1996). Overall, the data revealed a similar motivational pattern in domineering behaviors on overall IPA for Mexican American couples. Possessiveness and power by men were predictive of IPA against female partners and power and decision-making by women were predictive of IPA against male partners.

It is also important, in understanding the underlying structure of IPA in different groups, to account for the context in which IPA is occurring. That is, those social and demographic factors which can act to increase or decrease the likelihood of IPA occurring. In the literature, this concept is most easily accessed through research into risk and protective factors.

Risk and Protective Factors for IPA

Studies that have compared risk and protective factors of IPA for different ethnicities have found different predictors are important across ethnicities (Caetano, et al., 2005; Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002); thus, it is important to further evaluate IPA from a cultural perspective. Many studies examining predictive factors of IPV for Hispanic couples used data from the NAS (see below). These studies looked at many factors including alcohol use, but of particular interest to the current study are demographic factors that may not otherwise be included in an IPA screening.

The research identified several consistent risk and protective factors of both male-perpetrated IPA and female-perpetrated IPA. For example, findings suggested that several variables were predictive of increased risk of male-perpetrated violence. These included a lower household income (Cunradi, Caetano, Clark, & Schafer, 2000; Cunradi, et al., 2002), the male partner being unemployed (Caetano, Cunradi, Clark, & Schafer, 2000; Caetano, Nelson, & Cunradi, 2001; Cunradi, et al., 2000), and younger mean age of the couple (Cunradi, et al., 2000). Variables identified as protective factors included the female partner being unemployed (Caetano, et al., 2000), the female partner being older (Cunradi, et al., 2000; Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, & McGrath, 2004), and being married (Caetano, et al., 2000; Cunradi, et al., 2000).

Variables that were predictive of increased risk of female-perpetrated violence included conflicting findings on variables regarding education of the couple, as one study found that low levels of education were a risk factor (Caetano, et al., 2000) and another using the same data in a different approach found that higher education was a risk factor (Cunradi, et al., 2000). Younger age of the male partner and, relatedly, a lower mean age

for the couple was also associated with increased violence. Finally, low income was also associated with increased risk of female-perpetrated violence (Caetano, et al., 2001).

Variables that were identified as protective against female-perpetrated violence included the female partner being older (Caetano, et al., 2000), the female partner having higher educational attainment (Caetano, et al., 2001), and the female being perceived as having a “homemaker” status (Caetano, et al., 2004).

Another contextual component that is missing in the literature is investigating Hispanic couples who are divorcing. The literature identified being married as a protective factor against male-perpetrated violence (Caetano, et al., 2000; Cunradi, et al., 2000), and it is unclear whether divorce eliminates that protective factor or even becomes a risk factor for IPA during the divorce process. The NVAW study found that for the overall sample (including all races and ethnicities), married couples who were separated reported higher rates of IPA (20% of women separated compared to 5.4% living together; 7% of men separated compared to 2.4% living together) (Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000). The authors discussed that the temporal relation of IPA and separation is unclear, not knowing which came first (Tjaden & Theonnes). Similarly, couples who are divorcing have documented higher rates of IPA (Cummings, et al., 2012; Ellis & Stuckless, 2006).

In summary, the intersection of divorce and ethnicity is particularly important, as legal actors, including judges, make important decisions for families. Of particular interest are decisions concerning the future parenting arrangements for the children in these families. In Arizona, the judge must consider many things in deciding child custody, including any known IPA and/or associated proceedings, such as orders of protection or domestic violence charges against one or both parents (A.R.S. § 25-1039).

Given this information, it is clear that IPA can become unavoidably intertwined with the court system and, as will be explained below, a number of other systems intended to assist and/or intervene when it comes to IPA

Hispanic Couples Utilization of Police and the Court System

Given how intertwined they are, it is important to understand how Hispanic couples interact with the courts and other social and community service systems. This is because being Hispanic may be associated with barriers to a legal divorce, lack of access of law enforcement and social or community services, which could lead to an increased risk of IPA. Though cultural sensitivity has been upheld as an important consideration in legal decisions concerning divorce and child custody, the court systems and judges are often not aware of the unique factors that cultural differences might bring to the divorce process, particularly in cases where one or both members of the couple only speak Spanish (Dominguez, 1999; Weller, Martin, & Lederach, 2001).

In cases where there are inequities in the way different groups are treated in the legal system, psychological science can serve an important role in helping to identify and correct that inequity. Research finds institutional systems interact differently with minorities than the majority (Pettit & Western, 2004). While there is very little research specifically addressing the opinions of Hispanic participants regarding the civil court system, which processes divorces and orders of protection, there is more research addressing Hispanics victimization rates and Hispanics opinions of the criminal court system (Brabeck & Guzman, 2008; Danis, 2003; Lopez & Livingston, 2009).

Utilization of law enforcement.

Hispanics were more likely to be a victim of a personal crime, a crime including violence or threat of violence, and they were less likely to report it to police than non-Hispanic Whites or non-Hispanic Blacks (2006 National Crime Victimization Survey, Rand & Catalano, 2007; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). A general distrust of police (Lopez & Livingston, 2009) has been found, due in part to ethnic biases and disproportionate arrest and incarceration rates of minorities (Pettit & Western, 2004).

Hispanics report a general lack of confidence in the criminal justice system to help (and not harm) them (Lopez & Livingston, 2009). As such, Hispanics are unlikely to call law enforcement for assistance (Danis, 2003). There is concern amongst Hispanics about getting arrested and having their children removed from their custody if they call the police for IPA (Murdaugh, Hunt, Sowell, & Santana, 2004; Braback & Guzman, 2008). Historically, women who were victims of IPA could have their children removed for “failure to protect” their children from exposure to IPA, though statutes vary based on jurisdiction (Kantor & Little, 2003). In addition, many states moved towards a mandatory arrest policy, in which arrest and prosecution of the perpetrator was no longer dependent on the victim to “press charges”, but seen as a crime against the state and not an individual (as with most crimes). One consequence of this shift was “dual arrests” in which both partners are arrested if law enforcement has reasonable evidence that both parties were engaged in criminal IPA behaviors, or in some cases if law enforcement cannot determine the primary aggressor of the incident (Hirschel & Buzawa, 2002). These shifts in policy may lead some to be reluctant to call police in response to IPA victimization, especially when it may have perceived negative consequences for the

victim and his or her children. A lack of trust is a huge potential barrier to obtaining assistance in dealing with IPA as calling the police is often one of the first formal legal system responses to IPA. Another concern is that through calling the police, they may end up in the legal system.

Attitudes toward court systems.

Views of law enforcement and court personnel were explored in a random national sample consisting of over 2,000 Hispanic participants, (2008 National Survey of Latinos, Lopez & Livingston, 2009). Forty-four percent of Hispanics stated they have just some to very little confidence that the court system would treat Hispanics fairly (Lopez & Livingston, 2009). If Hispanics do not differentiate between the types of court systems, civil versus criminal, then they are more likely to hold the same views of the civil system and underutilize even the avenues designed to assist them in dealing with IPA, such as orders of protection and court hearings related to the divorce, parenting time and custody of their children.

Some evidence for this is that in one study of Mexican American women who had experienced IPA, lawyers were reported to be the least helpful of the formal help seeking services, which included police, shelters, counselors, healthcare, and social workers (Brabeck & Guzman, 2008). While lawyers may be found at every step in the divorcing process and could be a tremendous asset for victims, it does not appear that Mexican American women found lawyers were responsive to their needs in addressing IPA.

Mediation is often mandated in high conflict divorcing couples who do not agree on custody and parenting time (Beck & Sales, 2001; Tondo, Coronel, & Drucker, 2001). Mediation in the context of parenting decisions is a time limited, goal directed alternative

dispute resolution process (Beck & Sales, 2001). In some jurisdictions, attorneys are not allowed to be active in this mediation process while in others they can participate in mediation sessions (Weller, et al., 2001). Theoretically, parents would be more satisfied with the process as both parents have a voice during negotiations and parents would be more likely to follow the parenting plans. One study, including a majority of non-Hispanic White families, concluded that this was in fact the case, finding that mediation reduced conflict between parents and increased the likelihood that the parents would follow a parenting plan post-divorce (Emery, Sbarra & Grover, 2005).

One study interviewed mediators, and the majority of mediators stated there was no difference to their approach with Hispanic and non-Hispanic couples (Weller, et al., 2001). This could present issues if cultural differences are not being considered in family level decisions. It is unclear how court connected mediation is viewed by Hispanic divorcing parents; as part of the court system or as a separate helping system to assist in advocating within the court system; thus, the utilization of this service could be impacted.

Hispanic Couples Utilization of Other Helping Systems

Though rates of IPA and risk and protective factors vary in the research, one thing that is consistent is that the consequences for Hispanics who have experienced IPA are worse when compared to non-Hispanics, or when compared to Hispanic women who did not experience IPA (Bonomi, Anderson, Cannon, Slesnick, & Rodriguez, 2009). These outcomes include lower mental health functioning; including more suicidal ideation and more physical health symptoms. Hispanics are also more likely to be murdered in IPA incidents (Azziz-Baumgartner, McKeown, Melvin, Dang, & Reed, 2011).

One study conducted in a large urban hospital in Southcentral United States examined utilization of healthcare services (including mental health) and social services included police, legal aid, social or case worker, housing assistance, and parenting classes for 182 women who had experienced IPA (Lipsky, Caetano, Field, & Larkin, 2006). All participants were either married or cohabiting and reported experiencing physical violence by endorsing at least one of nine items of physical violence from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS, form R; Straus 1990) or one of two items of physical or sexual violence from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, et al., 1996). Accounting for sociodemographic variables (age, marital status, education, employment, pregnancy status, and substance abuse), Hispanic victims of IPA were significantly less likely to utilize both healthcare services and social services than Black or White victims.

Another study examined factors associated with formal help seeking (medical services, therapy, shelters, social worker, police, or lawyer) and informal help seeking (family, friends, coworkers, or religious leaders) (Brabeck & Guzman, 2009). They recruited 75 women of Mexican decent through IPA agencies in the Southcentral United States who had experienced IPA (psychological, physical, or sexual) in the previous six months. Women that ascribed to *familismo*, a strong value on family, even over the self, were more likely to seek out assistance from informal sources. They also found that those who did not speak English were less likely to seek assistance from formal sources than those who did speak English.

In a study conducted in the Southeastern United States that included over 300 Hispanic, primarily Spanish speaking women, many barriers to help seeking were identified (Murdaugh, et al., 2004). A questionnaire was developed from focus groups to

assess primary aspects of IPA within this Hispanic community. Participants answered a questionnaire in their language of choice (Spanish or English) through a Hispanic outreach program. Many of the participants (77%) who were injured from IPA did seek medical services at a local emergency room, though 74% of those women did not report that the injuries were related to IPA. These participants reported shame and embarrassment as well as language barriers as major factors for not reporting. One-third of the women also feared their children would be taken away from them and that they did not know they could report this to the medical staff. Barriers to other services to help address IPA were identified as language and transportation issues, financial constraints (both money and insurance), and again fear that their children would be removed from their care. Not knowing what services were available or how to access them, along with fear of their abuser, were found to be additional barriers. The participants reported that having access to information (about IPA, legal services, and their rights) would be beneficial in accessing services. These women also expressed that having assistance through the legal process and with transportation and childcare would increase their likelihood to utilize services to address IPA.

In a qualitative study with small focus groups consisting of a total of 14 Hispanic women who had immigrated to the United States (median of 6 years in U.S.), women identified reasons they had not sought out formal services to address IPA they had experienced (Bauer, Rodriguez, Quiroga, & Flores-Ortiz, 2000). Participants were recruited from culture-specific community organizations on the West coast and had experienced IPA within the past two years. Common themes identified included social isolation and not knowing where to turn for help. They discussed not knowing what

services were available nor what legal rights they had, including calling the police or getting orders of protection. Some women identified that translators led to longer wait times for services and did not allow them to develop trust in the relationship with providers. Another common theme was having experienced ethnic prejudice in interactions with providers, which left them feeling “disconnected, disempowered, and mistreated” within the formal systems designed to provide assistance for IPA (Bauer et al., 2000, p 37). Another major factor was dedication to their children and not knowing how seeking help would impact this.

Summary

Research on the underlying structure of IPA suggests that coercive controlling behaviors play a major role in motivating intimate partner abuse. Furthermore, the literature on risk and protective factors suggests the importance of accounting for ecological variables when considering the occurrence of IPA. Additionally, investigations into Hispanic couple's interactions with the courts and the police appear to suggest that Hispanics and other minority groups' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors when it comes to dealing with these systems of authority is very different from that of individuals in the majority. Unfortunately, especially given the robust connection between divorce and IPA, there is a dearth of information specifically about how divorcing Hispanic couples interact with such systems. Likewise, while the previous literature can provide some clues as to why and how Hispanic victims of IPA interact with other social services, there is still room to expand this understanding, especially when it comes to divorcing couples.

Current Study Aims and Hypotheses

The overarching goal of the present study was to examine the differences between IPA in Hispanic and White Non-Hispanic couples, and to examine the way that Hispanic couples utilize the legal, law enforcement, and other support systems. As such, the present study had three main aims: (1) compare the underlying structure of IPA in Hispanic and White Non-Hispanic Couples, (2) examine differences between the same groups in regards to the court system utilization, and finally (3) examine the differences between the same groups in how they utilize other social support systems.

With regard to the first aim of the study, and drawing from the above referenced literature on coercive controlling behaviors, the first hypothesis is that wife and husband reports of experiencing coercive controlling behaviors will predict victimization, but the precise pattern (relative strengths, direction, etc.) would vary depending on the ethnicity of the couple.

In examining the second aim, there were three distinct hypotheses. These included: (a) Hispanic couples would have less interaction with the court system, resulting in a shorter length of time from filing for divorce to divorce decree and fewer post decree contacts with the court after the divorce is finalized, (b) the effect just described would be even more robust for those whose primary language is Spanish, and (c) IPA would act as a moderator for Hispanic couples' interactions with the civil court system, with higher levels of IPA leading to less involvement with the court system.

Finally, in regards to the third aim, it was hypothesized that (a) Hispanic couples would have fewer police calls than non-Hispanic White couples, and (b) Hispanic couples would utilize other helping services less than non-Hispanic Whites (this includes

orders of protection, therapy, domestic violence shelters, medical care, psychiatric care, CPS, number of mediation sessions, and lawyers).

Method

Participants

The overall sample consisted of 965 divorcing couples with mutual, minor children, who attended the court connected mediation service for a first time mediation in conjunction with a pending divorce between May 1998 and October 2000 in Pima County, Arizona. The mediation service assisted in resolving disputes over custody or parenting time agreements. Just over 25% of the overall sample identified themselves as Hispanic, and about 5% of the total sample preferred using Spanish. There were 187 couples in which both the wife and husband identified as Hispanic and 467 couples in which both the husband and wife identified as non-Hispanic White. This study utilized these 654 couples in the analyses. Of the 187 Hispanic couples included in the analyses, 17% were identified having a Spanish language preference. This group was identified as couples where at least one partner requested Spanish in at least one proceeding in the divorce or mediation process, either through a translator or the proceeding being conducted in Spanish.

Procedure

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Arizona approved all procedures and data collection. This data were collected as part of a grant awarded by the National Institute of Justice. Archival data came from multiple sources, including court connected mediation files, Superior Court records, and law enforcement records from two law enforcement agencies.

Collection of data from mediation files and divorce files.

Researchers were given access to the mediation court file as well as the Superior Court divorce file at the mediation center providing the services. Data were gathered, input to a database and de-identified before being released to the researchers. The mediation file data included self-report survey materials, including a measure of IPA (the Relationship Behavior Rating Scale) completed independently by both spouses prior to the start of mediation orientation. The self-report IPA measure was developed for program research purposes related to in-house mediation and was not utilized by the mediator as an assessment of IPA or in determining if mediation was appropriate. Instead, the mediator conducted a semi-structured, pre-mediation screening which included assessing risk factors for IPA, the presence of IPA, and other contraindications for completing mediation. In addition, the mediation file included information such as number of mediation sessions attended and specific arrangements in parenting time agreements (if any were negotiated). The Superior Court divorce file included all motions, hearings, actions, and orders by the judge, as well as cross-listed city court cases for orders of protection.

Collection of data from local law enforcement agencies.

Data were gathered for IPA-related or family-related calls to law enforcement that resulted in a law enforcement response and where the members of the divorcing couple were the identified parties. Law enforcement officers from both the local city police department and county sheriff's department gathered the call data in accordance with the law enforcement data collection tool created for this project. The law enforcement agents completed handwritten forms for the researchers, who in turn entered the data concerning

the calls into the larger database. Law enforcement calls were collected from two years prior to the filing for divorce through five years after filing the divorce decree or February 2007, whichever came first. It should be noted that after the data collection period ended and after the identifiable link was destroyed, it was identified that law enforcement call data were not collected from one small independent jurisdiction within Pima County.

Constructs and Measures

Demographic and court file data.

Demographic data were obtained from both the Superior Court divorce file and the mediation file. Demographic variables of interest in this study include: age, ethnicity, income, number of mutual minor children, and primary language. Court data were collected from the Superior Court divorce file and included key divorce-related and post-decree case dates (date of marriage, date of filing for divorce, date of first mediation session, date of divorce decree, and number of post-divorce decree actions). Additionally, data were collected concerning use of services at the beginning of mediation, including: number of therapy sessions attended by each partner prior to mediation, presence of orders of protection, utilization of shelters, hospitalizations for mental or physical health related reasons, hospitalization for injuries as a result of IPA, CPS involvement, number of mediation sessions, and degree of legal representation.

Law enforcement calls.

Due to time constraints on the officers, the focus of data collection gathered was on IPA-related or family-related calls to law enforcement. The data collected on each call included: date of call, type of call, suspect and victim, and if an arrest was made. Types

of calls included: Assault, Trespassing, Harassment, Phone Harassment, Stalking, Interfering with Custody, Child Abuse, Custodial Violation, Threats, Criminal Damage, Keeping the Peace, Order of Protection, Violation of Order of Protection, and Other Miscellaneous Domestic Violence. A single call could result in more than one presenting issue, thus be included in more than one category, but still only being counted as one call.

Relationship Behavior Rating Scale (RBRS).

This 41 item self-report questionnaire assesses a multitude of behaviors encompassing IPA victimization experienced from the other partner. Each partner was asked to rate on a scale of 0-6 (0 = none of the time, to 6 = all of the time) how often they had experienced each specific act in the past 12 months. Psychometric properties of the RBRS were found to be sound with this sample as a whole (Beck, Menke & Figueredo, 2013; Beck, Menke, O'Hara & Figueredo, 2009).

Coercive Controlling Behaviors scale included 10 items assessing behaviors of coercion and control (e.g., did not want me to have female/male friends, demanded I obey, controlled how much money I could have and how I spent it). Alphas for Hispanic and White husbands and wives were all above .80 (see Table 1).

IPA Victimization scale included 31 items encompassing many types of victimization including: *Psychological Abuse* (e.g., puts me down, insulted or shamed me in front of others); *Physical Abuse* (e.g., pushed or shoved, hit or punched, bit or scratched); *Sexual Assault, Intimidation and Coercion* (e.g., demanded sex acts I did not want, insisted on sex whether I wanted it or not, physically forced sex); *Threats of and Escalated Physical Violence* (e.g., threatened me with or used a weapon against me,

broke one or more of my bones, kicked my face and head). Again, Alphas for Hispanic and White husbands and wives were all above .80 (see Table 1).

Results

Demographic Differences of the Sample

Examination of the demographic data revealed that Hispanic and non-Hispanic White couples in the sample differed in several ways (see Table 2 for means and significance tests discussed below). For the Hispanic couples, husbands and wives tended to marry and file for a divorce at younger ages and have shorter marriages. Additionally, both husbands and wives of the Hispanic couples reported significantly lower gross incomes than their White counterparts. These differences are significant as these have previously been identified as ecological risk factors of IPA and decreased utilization of helping services, and will be taken into account for further analyses. There were no significant differences between groups in regards to the number of mutual minor children of the couple, nor for total number of children for husbands or wives. White husbands and wives tended to have a statistically higher number of previous marriages, though the overall mean was small for both comparisons.

Next, several constructs of IPA victimization were compared between Hispanic and White couples (see Table 3). The proportion of mediator's determination of couple IPA was significantly higher for Hispanic couples (66.14%) than for White couples (55.25%), $\chi^2(1,656)=6.59, p=.006$. This finding did not carry over to partner's ratings of victimization measured using data from the RBRS. There were no significant differences between Hispanic and White couples on any of the RBRS measures, including couple's

RBRS total ratings, Wife or Husband's subscale ratings (coercive controlling behaviors and IPA victimization ratings).

Aim 1: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model of IPA

Traditional statistical methods assume independence between observations; however, when examining data involving couples, these methods do not incorporate the complexity of dyadic influences. The actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) was developed to account for the interdependence of models involving identifiable dyads (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). At its core, this model allows for synchronized estimation of effects of one person's predictor variable on both their own dependent variable (actor effect) and their partner's dependent variable (partner effect).

Statistical analysis was performed utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) with Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) within an APIM framework. Pathway results are reported as unstandardized regression weights (B) on a zero to six point scale and comparisons are presented below in the form of χ^2 difference tests (i.e., $\Delta\chi^2$). As shown in Figure 1, APIMs included risk variables (covariates) correlated amongst themselves and correlated with coercive controlling behavior variables (predictor variable) with direct paths to victimization variables (outcome variables) with correlated residual parameters (error terms). Each partner's self-report of experiences of coercive controlling behaviors was linked in a predictive pathway to their own reported victimization (aW and aH), and then to their partner's reported victimization (pW and pH). Included in the model as risk factor variables for IPA were: wife and husband age at marriage, standardized gross income for husband and wife, number of children, and length of time the couple was married before filing for divorce. The initial model allows

for all paths to be estimated, making the model recursive, with zero degrees of freedom, thus fit statistics are not calculable.

Model testing with Hispanic couples.

Model 1(actor effects) provides estimates of husbands' and wives' self-reported experiences of coercive controlling behaviors in relation to their own ratings of IPA victimization, accounting for interdependent partner data and the effects of risk factors of IPA noted above. Self-report experiences of coercive controlling behaviors were positively associated with respondent's reported experience of IPA victimization. For every one point increase in coercive controlling behaviors reported by the wife, there was a .43 increase in the wife's reported victimization. This pattern was the same, with a .43 increase in victimization reported by the husband for every one point increase on coercive controlling behaviors on a six point scale (see Table 4 for regression weights and significance values). The equality of the strength of actor pathways (husband and wife) were tested by constraining both actor pathways to be equal, and were found to not be significantly different for wives and husbands, $\Delta\chi^2(1, n=187) = .014, p = .906$.

Model 2 (partner effects) provides estimates of wives' and husbands' dyadic coercive controlling behaviors experience in relation to partners' rating of IPA victimization, accounting for risk factors of IPA. Neither partner effect was statistically significant (see Table 4), and thus no chi-square difference tests were calculated.

Model testing with Non-Hispanic White couples.

Model 1(actor effects) was tested with all the White couples in the sample ($n=467$) to provide estimates of husbands' and wives' self-reported experiences of coercive controlling behaviors on their own ratings of IPA victimization, accounting for

interdependent partner data and the effects of covariates related to risk factors of IPA noted above. Individual reported experiences of coercive controlling behaviors were positively associated with respondent's reported experience of IPA victimization. For every one point increase in coercive controlling behaviors reported by the wife, there was a .39 increase in the wife's reported victimization and a .33 increase in victimization reported by the husband for every one point increase on reported coercive controlling behaviors on a six point scale (see Table 4 for regression weights and significance values). The equality of actor pathways was tested by constraining both actor pathways to be equal. Self-reported experiences of coercive-controlling behaviors were a stronger predictor of reported IPA victimization for wives than for husbands, $\Delta\chi^2(1, n=467) = 6.99, p = .01$.

Model 2 (partner effects) provides estimates of wives' and husbands' dyadic coercive controlling behaviors experienced in relation to their partners' rating of IPA victimization, accounting for covariates of risk factors of IPA noted above, being statistically significant for both wives' partner effects and husbands' partner effects (Table 4). For every one point increase of coercive controlling behaviors reported by the wife there was a .07 point increase on the husband's experienced victimization. For every one point increase in reported coercive controlling behaviors experienced by the husband, there was a .06 point increase in reported victimization of the wife. The equality of strength of partner pathways was tested by constraining both partner pathways to be equal. There was no significant difference in strength of the partner effects for husbands or wives, $\Delta\chi^2(1, n=467) = .056, p = .76$.

Models 3 and 4 assessed comparative strength of experienced actor and partner effects for wives (model 3) and husbands (model 4). The strength of experienced coercive controlling behaviors had a stronger effect on one's own experienced IPA victimization than on their partner's experienced IPA victimization for wives ($\Delta\chi^2(1, n=467) = 259.21, p < .001$) and for husbands ($\Delta\chi^2(1, n=467) = 171.98, p < .001$).

Model comparisons between Hispanic and White couples.

Multiple group comparisons were conducted between Hispanic and White couples' APIM models on each pathway to determine differences between the relative strength of the pathways. The first comparison was accomplished by constraining the actor effect pathways to be equal across groups for the wives. There was no statistically significant difference in the strength of the relationship between self-reported experiences of coercive controlling behaviors and self-reported experiences of IPA victimization by wives between the White and Hispanic couples, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.55, p = .21$. Next, the same pathway constraints were conducted to compare the husbands' actor effects. The relationship between self-reported experiences of coercive controlling behaviors and self-reported experiences of IPA victimization was significantly stronger for husbands in the Hispanic couples than the husbands in the White couples, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 13.54, p < .001$.

Partner effects for experienced coercive controlling behaviors on husbands' experienced IPA victimization and for husbands' experienced coercive controlling behaviors on wives' experienced IPA victimization were not compared between groups as these pathways were not significant for Hispanic couples.

Aim 2: Interactions with the Civil Court

Completion of the divorce process.

Overall, 570 couples (87.2% percent) completed the divorce process, as defined by having a finalized divorce decree filed with the Superior Court. Broken down by ethnicity, the same percentage (12.8% of both groups) of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White couples did not complete the divorce process by filing a divorce decree during the study period and therefore were not formally divorced by the end of the study. Both couple ethnicity and couple standardized gross income were entered into a binary logistic regression model to predict couples completing the divorce process. The final model was not significant, $X^2(2, N = 654) = 5.669, p = .059$. This finding suggests that couple ethnicity, while holding income constant, is not a significant predictor of couples completing the divorce process.

The next binary logistic regression model included only Hispanic couples. Whether the couple preferred to use Spanish or English was entered with standardized income to predict divorce completion. The final model was statistically significant $X^2(2, N = 187) = 13.68, p = .001$. In this model, whether or not either partner of a couple preferred using Spanish in the divorce process ($b = -1.040, \text{wald } \chi^2(1) = 4.708, p = .030$) and standardized gross couple income ($b = 3.577, \text{wald } \chi^2(1) = 5.749, p = .016$) were significant predictors. When holding income constant, couples who preferred using Spanish have 36% lower chance of completing the divorce process (see Table 5).

Length of divorce process.

Of the 570 couples who completed the divorce process, the mean number of days to complete the divorce process from filing for divorce to filing of the divorce decree was 335 ($SD = 175$). An independent groups ANOVA was conducted investigating the length of time to complete the divorce process based on couple ethnicity. No significant differences were found in time to complete the divorce process, $F(1, 568) = .423, p = .516$, between Hispanic couples ($N=163, M=327.15, SD=150.36$) and White couples ($N=407, M=337.71, SD=184.28$).

Another independent groups ANOVA was conducted comparing length of time to completion of divorce for just the Hispanic couples, based on the couples' preferred language. No significant differences were found in the time to complete divorce process, $F(1, 161) = .095, p = .759$, between Hispanic couples who prefer English ($N=136, M=325.53, SD=152.39$) and Hispanic couples who prefer conducting proceedings in Spanish ($N=27, M=335.29, SD=142.16$).

Post-decree contacts.

An independent groups ANOVA was conducted examining the number of post decree actions based on couple ethnicity. No significant differences were found in number of post decree actions, $F(1, 463) = .887, p = .347, MSE = 21.395$ between Hispanic couples ($N=120, M=3.02, SD=4.00$) and White couples ($N=345, M=3.48, SD=4.82$).

IPA influence on divorce process.

A between groups factorial ANOVA was conducted to explore the relationship between IPA (mediator's determination of couple IPA) and couple ethnicity on number of post decree actions. There were no significant main effects or interaction effect for this

model (Main effect for couple ethnicity $F(1,1)=1.977, p =.394$; Main effect for couple IPA $F(1,1)=4.231, p =.288$; Interaction effect $F(1,461)=.916 p =.339$).

Another between groups factorial ANOVA was conducted to explore the relationship between IPA and ethnicity on number of days to complete the divorce process. There were no significant main effects or interaction effect for this model (Main effect for couple ethnicity $F(1,1)=2.03, p =.389$; Main effect for couple IPA $F(1,1)=12.33, p =.177$; Interaction effect $F(1,566)=.552 p =.458$).

Similar between groups factorial ANOVAs were conducted with just the Hispanic couples investigating the effects of the couples' preferred language. There was no significant interaction effect for total post decree actions $F(1,116)=.001, p =.971$. There was a main effect for couples' preferred language ($F(1, 1) = 1736.61, p = .015$, partial $\eta^2 = .999$), such that the Spanish preferring couples had significantly fewer post decree actions ($M=1.75, SD=3.79, N=20$) than the English preferring couples ($M=3.27, SD=4.01, N=100$). There was also a main effect for couples who had experienced IPA ($F(1, 1) = 1586.84, p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .999$), such that the Hispanic couples who had not experienced IPA had significantly fewer post decree actions ($M=2.00, SD=2.91, N=39$) than the couples who had experienced IPA ($M=3.51, SD=4.36, N=81$) (see Figure 2).

Another between groups factorial ANOVA was conducted with Hispanic couples to explore the relationship between IPA and couples' preferred language on number of days to complete the divorce process. There were no significant main effects or interaction effect for this model (Main effect for couple preferred language $F(1,1)=.017, p =.918$; Main effect for couple IPA $F(1,1)=7.11, p =.288$; Interaction effect $F(1,159)=.74 p =.390$).

Aim 3: Utilization of Helping Services by Couples Experiencing IPA

Of the couples in the sample, 258 (55%) White couples and 123 (67%) Hispanic couples were positively screened as experiencing IPA by the mediator. Regressions were performed to ascertain the unique effect of couple ethnicity on utilization of specific helping services while accounting for covariates (wife and husband age at marriage, number of minor children of the couple, standardized income for the couple at time of filing for divorce, length of time married before filing for divorce, and number of previous marriages for wife and husband). Data screening showed no multicollinearity between independent variables, but Mahalanobis distance identified 11 outliers that were removed from these analyses. This resulted in 250 White couples and 120 Hispanic couples included in the analyses.

Law enforcement calls.

A multiple regression was performed for couple ethnicity on police calls while accounting for covariates noted above. The multiple regression model was not statistically significant, $F(8,361) = .678, p = .711$.

Hospitalization for mental or physical reasons.

The logistic regression model for utilization of hospital services for mental or physical reasons was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 21.73, p = .005$. Ethnicity of the couple was a significant predictor while holding covariates constant (Wald (1) = 8.02, $p = .005$, see table 6). The odds ratio showed that seeking hospital services was 2.06 times more likely for White couples than for Hispanic couples.

Hospital services for injuries due to IPA.

The logistic regression model for utilization of hospital services for injuries specifically as a result of IPA was not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (8) = 4.363, p = .823$.

Use of medications.

The logistic regression model for utilization of medications was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (8) = 20.53, p = .009$. Ethnicity of the couple was a significant predictor while holding above mentioned covariates constant (Wald $\chi^2 (1) = 7.41, p = .007$, see table 7). The odds ratio showed that utilization of medications was 1.95 times more likely for White couples than for Hispanic couples.

Shelter.

The logistic regression model for utilization of shelter services was not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (8) = 7.997, p = .434$.

Order(s) of protection.

The logistic regression model for utilization of orders of protection was not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (8) = 13.095, p = .109$.

CPS involvement.

The logistic regression model for child protective services involvement was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (8) = 34.289, p < .001$. Ethnicity of the couple was a significant predictor while holding other covariates constant, Wald $\chi^2 (1) = 6.806, p = .009$ (see Table 8). The odds ratio showed that child protective services were 1.95 times more likely to be involved with White couples than with Hispanic couples.

Representation by an attorney.

The full logistic regression model for husband's representation by an attorney was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 42.845, p < .001$. Ethnicity of the couple was not a significant predictor while holding other covariates constant, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 2.013, p = .156$. Couple's standardized income at time of filing for divorce was the only significant predictor in the model, Wald $(1) = 19.509, p < .001$.

The full logistic regression model for wife's representation by an attorney was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 59.313, p < .001$. Ethnicity of the couple was not a significant predictor while holding other covariates constant, Wald $\chi^2(1) = .390, p = .532$. Couple's standardized income at time of filing for divorce (Wald $(1) = 13.994, p < .001$), husband's age at marriage (Wald $(1) = 7.329, p = .007$), and length of time married (Wald $(1) = 9.622, p = .002$) were significant predictors in the model.

Number of therapy sessions.

A multiple regression was performed to ascertain the unique effect of couple ethnicity on number of therapy sessions attended prior to mediation while accounting for covariates mentioned above. The multiple regression model for number of therapy sessions attended by the wife was statistically significant, $F(8,361) = 3.996, p < .001$, adj. $R^2 = .061$. Ethnicity of the couple was statistically significant ($t = -2.492, p = .013$) along with length of time married before filing for divorce ($t = 3.596, p < .001$). Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 9. Results suggest that wives in Hispanic couples were less likely to attend therapy sessions and that the longer a couple was married, the more sessions the wife was likely to attend.

The multiple regression model for number of therapy sessions attended by the husband prior to mediation was also statistically significant, $F(8,361) = 3.036, p = .003$, adj. $R^2 = .042$. Ethnicity of the couple was statistically significant ($t = -2.418, p = .016$) along with husband's age at marriage ($t = 2.391, p = .017$) and length of marriage when filing for divorce ($t = 2.504, p = .013$). Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 10. Results suggest that husbands in Hispanic couples were less likely to attend therapy sessions. Additionally, the longer a couple was married and the older the husband at age of marriage, the more sessions the husband was likely to attend.

Number of meditation sessions.

A multiple regression was performed to ascertain the unique effect of couple ethnicity on number of mediation sessions while accounting for the covariates. The multiple regression model was not statistically significant, $F(8,361) = 1.412, p = .190$.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

In general, there were three aims within the investigation. The first aim was an examination of the underlying structure of IPA when comparing Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White couples. The second aim was to examine whether Hispanic couples interacted differently with the court system when it comes to divorce compared to Non-Hispanic White couples. Cultural influences, including language, within the Hispanic sample were also examined. The third aim was to examine the differences between the same two groups in terms of their interactions with other social and community support systems and resources. The presence of IPA was also examined as a potential moderating variable in the second aim and couples who had experienced IPA was the focus of the third aim. In discussing the findings, I will restate the main question being asked,

summarize the results, discuss how the results fit with the original hypotheses and the available literature, and offer possible explanations for the findings.

Before beginning a discussion of the main aims, however, there are several noteworthy differences between the groups on demographic and other individual difference variables. First, Hispanic couples married at a younger age, as well as filed for divorce at a younger age. The length of marriage in Hispanic couples was shorter in this study; contrary to findings from the literature. Mutual number of children was the same between Non-Hispanic White couples and Hispanic couples, despite common stereotypes of Hispanic families having more children than White couples. Consistent with the literature, both partners of the Hispanic couples tended to have a lower gross income than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts.

These factors are notable in that they represent differences between the groups in regards to the context in which IPA was occurring (i.e. the risk and protective factors). Given the other aims of the study, the remaining analyses attempted to account for these factors as much as possible so as to determine if ethnicity was predictive above and beyond these ecological differences.

Another interesting and unexpected finding was the difference between self-reported and other-identified IPA in Hispanic couples. In this study, while Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White couples did not appear significantly different based on their self-report of IPA, mediators were significantly more likely to identify IPA as being present in Hispanic couples compared to Non-Hispanic White couples. There are at least two reasons why this could be the case. One possibility is that Hispanic couples were more likely to report IPA in person, rather than on a self-report inventory which was explained

as for research purposes. Another possibility is that mediators were more likely to attribute IPA to Hispanic couples, either due to a divergent interpretation of the same information or some projection or expectation onto the couple. This problem of self-report versus mediator-identified IPA may pose limitations to results from aims two and three, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Aim 1: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model of IPA

The first aim of the investigation was to determine if coercive controlling behavior served the same function in IPA victimization with Hispanic and White couples. Though there were no differences noted in regards to reported amounts of victimization based on couple ethnicity, there was a couple level difference between groups in the dyadic pattern of coercive controlling behavior and victimization. The results did not suggest a difference between husbands in different ethnic groups when examining the relationship between coercive controlling behaviors and victimization. However, the findings did indicate that wives who engaged in coercive controlling behaviors were more likely to also engage in other victimization behaviors in Hispanic couples when compared to White couples. Within Hispanic couples the relationship between coercive controlling behaviors and IPA victimization was equal between husbands and wives, but in White couples this relationship was much weaker when examining the victimization of husbands. In White couples, the relationship between one partner's coercive controlling behaviors and their own reports of being victimized while small, was still significant. This was not the case in Hispanic couples.

These results paint a picture of the differences in the underlying structure of IPA in Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White couples. In the Hispanic couples, if either the wife

or husband engages in coercive controlling behaviors over their partner, they are both equally likely to also engage in some other form of IPA victimization (e.g. physical abuse, psychological abuse, etc.). In White couples, however, when wives engaged in coercive controlling behaviors towards their partners, it was less likely to result in other forms of IPA victimization against their partners when compared to their husbands' use of coercive controlling behaviors and other forms of IPA against his wife. It is important to note, however, that this is only true if the husband or wife engages in coercive controlling behaviors, and does not necessarily suggest that both partners engage in these behaviors at equal rates.

In addition to the above, the effects of coercive controlling behaviors in White couples appeared to be more interactional in nature. That is, if a wife engaged in coercive controlling behaviors it was more likely to adversely impact her own victimization, and if the husband engaged in coercive controlling behaviors it was more likely to adversely impact his own victimization. In Hispanic couples, however, partners' own coercive controlling behaviors did not appear to have negative consequences in the form of their own victimization.

As this data were archival in nature, and represents IPA information from a single time point, it is difficult to tease apart the exact causes of these differences. In general, it is conceptually feasible that coercive controlling behaviors ought to be related to other IPA behaviors (Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007; Tanha, et al., 2010). In particular, in the context of couples separating, the results could suggest coercive controlling behaviors as being motivated by a desire to pressure partners into staying in the relationship. If not effective, they may move on to other forms of IPA, which was found to be especially true

with male perpetrators (Dutton and Starzomski, 1994). Even with Hispanic men in particular, the past literature suggests these men who express jealousy and possessiveness (classic traits of coercive controlling behavior) are more likely to engage in IPA (Sugihara and Warner, 2002). What these findings cannot explain, however, is why the relationship between a women's coercive controlling behaviors and other forms of IPA would be stronger in the Hispanic group when compared to the White women, or why they would be equivalent for Hispanic women and men, but not for White women and men.

One possible explanation concerning the underlying structure of IPA for wives in Hispanic couples is that, if suddenly trying to exert more control in the relationship (through coercive controlling behaviors) fails, they may also move on to utilizing other forms of IPA. This is particularly salient since the couples in the sample were parents and divorcing, which requires that both partners become individual decision makers in their own lives. Previous research suggests that Hispanic women who engaged in behaviors of power and decision making, some of which are synonymous with forms of coercive controlling behaviors, were more likely to engage in IPA (Sugihara & Warner, 2002).

Another factor to consider as a component in this explanation is that all of these women are mothers. Since traditional Mexican culture emphasizes the role of the woman as responsible for family activities (Sugihara and Warner, 2002), the issue of parenting time and custody in the context of a dissolving marriage provided further impetus for Hispanic women to try and exert control within the relationship for the sake of their children. Within the same line of reasoning, it is also important to note that research has shown that Hispanic parenting styles do not map on to the same parenting styles common

to parenting research (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful). In Hispanic families, the majority were found to utilize a form labeled “protective parenting,” which was a combination of warmth, demandingness, and less autonomy (see Domenech Rodriguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009). These parenting style differences may contribute to utilization of coercive controlling behaviors against the husband, focused on trying to gain power and decision making within the dyad, ultimately motivated by wanting to parent in a way that the mother has the most autonomy. Similar to male partners, Hispanic women may move on to other forms of IPA if the husband is resistant to this newly asserted role by the wife.

While these theories may partially explain the differences in the motivations for coercive controlling behaviors and IPA victimization, we cannot be sure of the motivations behind these behaviors. Further analyses with the current data could be conducted to determine if there are different types of coercive controlling behaviors being exerted between husbands and wives as well as between Hispanic and non-Hispanic couples. Additionally, a qualitative study is needed to discern the motivations behind these behaviors (motivated by trying to keep the family together or by trying to assert new power and decision making). This qualitative research is needed to tease apart the function of coercive controlling behavior by Hispanic women. Furthermore, a comparison with non-divorcing couples would shed new light on the idea that role changes through separation impact IPA behaviors.

Aim 2: Interactions with the Civil Court

The second aim was to determine if there was a difference between how Hispanic and non-Hispanic White couples interacted with the civil court system in regards to the

divorce. Contrary to hypotheses, overall, Hispanic couples had similar interactions as non-Hispanic White couples with the court process. There were no significant differences in proportions that completed the divorce process, length of time it took to complete the divorce process, or number of post decree interactions with the court. The presence of IPA also did not appear to interact with the legal divorce process.

However, differences did arise when preferred language spoken was considered. As hypothesized, Hispanic couples preferring to interact with the court in the Spanish language were less likely to finish the divorce process (filing a divorce decree) when compared to Hispanic couples who interacted with the court in the English language, even when accounting for income (as legal divorce costs money). Both preferred language and IPA had an impact on number of post decree actions by Hispanic couples. Those Hispanic couples who preferred to speak Spanish tended to have a lower number of post decree actions than Hispanic couples who participated in proceedings in English. Additionally, Hispanic couples not experiencing IPA also tended to have a lower number of post decree actions, likely because those divorces without IPA were less conflict-ridden in general. For Hispanic couples who did complete the divorce process, the presence of IPA and language preferred did not have an effect on the length of time to complete the divorce process.

In general, it appears that Hispanic couples did not have more difficulty interacting with the court system than their White counterparts, possibly falling out of line with past research into Hispanic attitudes and behaviors in regards to criminal courts. This could be for several reasons. One is that Hispanic couples do not view the civil court system in the same way they view that of the criminal court, and as such, they do not take

extra measures to avoid it. This appears likely for several reasons. One is that the civil court process is essential and impossible to avoid when it comes to divorce. It is also possible to proceed through the divorce process with minimal interactions with the court for both White and Hispanic couples. The timing of the divorce process is formulaic, especially if a couple does not utilize the court or mediation to further resolve disputes. There are a set number of days for responses and set procedures after the petition for divorce is filed with the court through when the final decree is filed. This process can take longer if a couple attends multiple mediation sessions to come to an agreement on custody and parenting time or if the couple attends multiple hearings to finally come to a resolution of disputes. This procedural process may guide both White and Hispanic couples along at a similar rate if they are not engaging in further dispute resolution, either because they did not have disputes or they were trying to have minimal interactions with the court.

Spanish language preference seemed to have the biggest impact on how a couple interacts with the court, leading to less completed divorces and fewer post-decree actions. This could suggest that for such couples, the court process was aversive enough to discourage completing the divorce process or a lack of knowledge about the legal system in general could be overwhelming. Additionally, the need for a translator could have made the formal court proceedings confusing and uncomfortable, making them feel it was impossible to voice their concerns or truly interact with the court. Also, some court services might be offered in Spanish, but others (including all the small interactions with clerks, bailiffs, secretaries, etc.) might not be translated. Organization of a translator might represent additional scheduling difficulties. The use of the court for post-decree

actions relating to further parenting disputes would likely be adverse for similar reasons. Unfortunately, it is not possible based on this data to determine whether those couples that did not complete the divorce after filing actually remained together or informally ended the marriage.

Again, a qualitative study with Spanish preferring couples is needed to determine the motivations behind not completing the divorce process or utilizing the courts for dispute resolutions in parenting after the divorce. It may be that these couples sought dispute resolution from other sources, such as family or clergy. Additionally, Spanish language accessibility in the court, number of Spanish translators available, and documentation readily available in Spanish needs to be considered.

Aim 3: Utilization of Helping Services by Couples Experiencing IPA

The third aim was to determine if there was a difference between how Hispanic and non-Hispanic White couples experiencing IPA utilized other helping services. There were some differences in utilization of helping services for couples with identified IPA based on couple ethnicity while accounting for ecological factors. Non-Hispanic White couples were twice as likely to seek services through a hospital, medications, and therapy. Additionally, CPS involvement was twice as likely for non-Hispanic White couples. There were no significant differences in use of shelters, orders of protection, seeking of emergency medical services for injuries related to IPV, number of mediation sessions attended, representation by an attorney, and number of responses by police for the couple based on ethnicity of the couple.

One possible explanation for the differences found with hospitalization, medications, and therapy may be explained by a non-measured variable of insurance. At

the time of data collection, there were no federal laws requiring or assisting with obtaining health insurance. Given the differences in income, it is reasonable to assume that purchasing insurance represented a greater burden for Hispanic couples, and thus they were more likely to forgo it. Hispanics have been shown to be more likely to be uninsured than non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks (Pleis & Lethbridge-Çejku, 2006). This, in and of itself, would make it difficult to access many of the services in which there were differences.

Another possible explanation is that several of the services are more choice based and Hispanic couples may have chosen to seek out more culturally-specific alternatives. For example, they may have chosen other services not measured such as family, clergy, and traditional healing methods rather than seek out therapy or medication. Consistent with previous studies, cultural, social, and political barriers for Hispanic women experiencing IPA in utilizing these services, including language barriers, discrimination, lack of access including transportation, and not being aware of the assistance these services could provide could be impacting utilization in the current study as well (Bauer, 2000; Brabeck & Guzman, 2009; Murdaugh, Hunt, Sowell, & Santana, 2004). The lack of interaction with these services could also explain at least partially explain the differences in CPS involvement, as Hispanic couples would have less contact with mandated reporters (i.e. doctors, nurses, therapists). It should be noted that personnel at schools are mandated reporters, and thus reporting cannot explain all of the variance.

Given research on Hispanic people's hesitation to call law enforcement when victimized (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008; Danis, 2003; Lopez & Livingston, 2009), there are two possible explanations to finding equal number of police responses to

Hispanic and White couples. The first is that someone outside of the couple, such as neighbors, coworkers, or witnesses, could have initiated the police calls in the study. Data were not gathered on who called the police, but just the number of times law enforcement responded to the couple. Another factor in the current data is that, as mentioned previously, data were not collected from one small independent jurisdiction within Pima County. This jurisdiction has a higher percentage Hispanic population, but as a very small jurisdiction within the county, the number of calls made to this jurisdiction is unknown. It is not clear to what extent this may have impacted the results if included.

The data collected for this study, though archival, included a unique sample, multiple sources of data, including partnered responses, and a large sample size. This allowed for good statistical power and ability to employ a variety of statistical techniques. One hindrance with archival data is the inability to parse out identified variables that were not collected as part of the usual records. Two major factors that were not explored in the current study were regional ethnicity and acculturation. Though this study's location is near the Mexican border and demographic census data of the county is representative of a majority of Hispanics from Mexican decent, we cannot be sure. This additionally applies to levels of acculturation, and within that context, number of years or generations within the United States. Acculturation may likely have an impact on knowledge of laws and services available to address IPA. Without these variables, we are limited in generalizability and are left to make attributions to Hispanics as a whole, which is potentially a heterogeneous group nationwide. The large sample size and non-convenience sample aids in our ability to interpret these results with confidence within

the Southwestern United States and provides information to address chasms in the existing literature.

Tables

Table 1
Alphas for RBRS Scales

		Wife report	Husband report
Coercive Controlling Behaviors Scale	Hispanic	.821	.827
	White	.857	.801
IPA Victimization Scale	Hispanic	.933	.923
	White	.924	.893

Table 2
Demographic Comparisons Based on Couple Ethnicity

	Hispanic	White	Statistic	<i>p</i> value
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>		
Wife age at marriage	23.33 (5.03)	25.23 (5.59)	$F(1,635) = 15.84$	<.001*
Husband age at marriage	24.94 (5.38)	27.49 (6.12)	$F(1,626) = 23.54$	<.001*
Wife age at filing	32.25 (7.06)	35.46 (7.14)	$F(1,648) = 27.05$	<.001*
Husband age at filing	33.66 (7.21)	37.64 (7.57)	$F(1,639) = 37.38$	<.001*
Length of marriage (months)	106.48 (75.82)	122.62 (70.48)	$F(1,652) = 6.70$	= .010*
Wife gross income	10,063 (9,323)	14,040 (15,301)	$F(1,652) = 11.04$	=.001*
Husband gross income	17,297 (13,400)	28,822 (25,571)	$F(1,652) = 34.52$	<.001*
Mutual number of children	1.92 (.77)	1.95 (.72)	$F(1,654) = .31$	=.576
Wife number of children	2.05 (1.04)	2.03 (.89)	$F(1,654) = .08$	=.777
Husband number of children	2.05 (1.05)	2.03 (.89)	$F(1,654) = .08$	=.777
Wife previous marriages	.10 (.29)	.22 (.50)	$F(1,654) = 9.81$	=.002*
Husband previous marriage	.09 (.32)	.18 (.46)	$F(1,652) = 6.16$	=.013*

Table 3
IPA comparisons

	Hispanic (<i>n</i> =187)	White (<i>n</i> =467)	Statistic	<i>p</i> value
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		
Mediator's Determination of Couple IPA	125 66.84%	258 55.25%	$\chi^2(1,656)=6.59$	=.006*
Couple RBRS Total	109.56 (53.24)	103.12 (50.00)	$F(1,652) = 2.14$	=.144
Wife RBRS CCB	2.43 (1.33)	2.34 (1.37)	$F(1,652) = .51$	=.477
Husband RBRS CCB	1.95 (1.23)	1.92 (1.33)	$F(1,652) = .08$	=.778
Wife RBRS Victimization	1.16 (.81)	1.06 (.72)	$F(1,652) = 2.28$	=.131
Husband RBRS Victimization	.85 (.69)	.76 (.58)	$F(1,652) = 2.80$	=.095

Table 4

APIM Estimates for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White Couples

	Hispanic			White		
	Regression Weights		P Value	Regression Weights		P Value
	B	β		B	β	
Actor Effects						
Wife report (aW)	.43	.75	<.001	.39	.73	<.001
Husband report (aH)	.43	.81	<.001	.33	.75	<.001
Partner Effects						
Wife to Husband (pW)	.06	.12	=.084	.07	.14	<.001
Husband to Wife (pH)	.03	.05	=.298	.06	.13	<.001

Table 5

Completion of Divorce Process Based on Couple's Preferred Language

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds	95% C.I.	
							Ratio	Lower
Upper								
Couple language**	-1.040	.479	4.708	1	.030	.35	.14	.90
Couple income (Z)	3.577	1.492	5.749	1	.016	35.75	1.92	665.13
Constant	3.025	.472	41.07	1		20.60		

Note $R^2=.071$ (Cox & Snell); .132 (Nagelkerke).

**Couple language contrast coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Table 6

Logistic Regression Predicting Utilization of Hospital Services

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds	95% C.I.	
							Ratio	Lower
Upper								
Couple ethnicity**	.724	.256	8.021	1	.005	2.062	1.250	3.403
Wife's # of marriages	-.002	.302	.000	1	.995	.998	.553	1.803
Husband's # of marriages	-.079	.322	.059	1	.807	.924	.492	1.738
Number of children	-.118	.128	.853	1	.356	.888	.691	1.142
Couple income (Z)	.100	.155	.415	1	.519	1.105	.816	1.496
Age of wife at marriage	-.048	.032	2.207	1	.137	.953	.895	1.015
Age of husband at marriage	.059	.027	4.715	1	.030	1.060	1.006	1.118
Length of marriage	.031	.020	2.406	1	.121	1.031	.992	1.073
Constant	-1.421	.693	4.202	1	.040	.241		

Note $R^2=.057$ (Cox & Snell); .077 (Nagelkerke)

**Couple ethnicity coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Table 7

Logistic Regression Predicting Utilization of Medications

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
							Lower	Upper
Couple ethnicity**	.667	.245	7.406	1	.007	1.948	1.205	3.149
Wife's # of marriages	-.165	.298	.306	1	.580	.848	.472	1.522
Husband's # of marriages	.066	.314	.044	1	.834	1.068	.577	1.975
Number of children	.079	.122	.426	1	.514	1.083	.853	1.374
Couple income (Z)	-.153	.189	.651	1	.420	.859	.593	1.244
Age of wife at marriage	.026	.031	.735	1	.391	1.027	.967	1.091
Age of husband at marriage	.019	.026	.539	1	.463	1.019	.968	1.073
Length of marriage	.045	.020	5.241	1	.022	1.046	1.007	1.088
Constant	-2.427	.693	12.259	1	.000	.088		

Note $R^2=.054$ (Cox & Snell); .072 (Nagelkerke)

**Couple ethnicity coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Table 8

Logistic Regression Predicting Child Protective Services Involvement

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
							Lower	Upper
Couple ethnicity**	.827	.317	6.806	1	.009	2.285	1.228	4.253
Wife's # of marriages	.524	.343	2.328	1	.127	1.689	.861	3.309
Husband's # of marriages	-.124	.370	.112	1	.738	.883	.428	1.825
Number of children	.404	.139	8.476	1	.004	1.497	1.141	1.965
Couple income (Z)	-1.964	.571	11.848	1	.001	.140	.046	.429
Age of wife at marriage	-.020	.038	.277	1	.599	.980	.911	1.055
Age of husband at marriage	.057	.030	3.447	1	.063	1.058	.997	1.123
Length of marriage	.002	.026	.004	1	.949	1.002	.953	1.053
Constant	-3.998	.892	20.086	1	.000	.018		

Note $R^2=.054$ (Cox & Snell); .072 (Nagelkerke)

**Couple ethnicity coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Table 9

Multiple Regression Summary for Number of Therapy Sessions Attended by the Wife

	B	Std. Error	Beta
Intercept	-3.495	2.988	
Couple ethnicity**	-2.586	1.038	-.131*
Wife's number of marriages	-1.455	1.303	-.063
Husband's number of marriages	.259	1.377	.010
Number of children	-.278	.531	-.028
Couple income (Z)	.351	.372	.049
Age of wife at marriage	.160	.133	.094
Age of husband at marriage	.103	.114	.067
Length of marriage	.306	.085	.198*

Note adj. $R^2 = .061$

* $p < .05$

**Couple ethnicity coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Table 10

Multiple Regression Summary for Number of Therapy Sessions Attended by the Husband

	B	Std. Error	Beta
Intercept	-.827	2.389	
Couple ethnicity**	-2.007	.830	-.128*
Wife's number of marriages	-.546	1.101	-.027
Husband's number of marriages	.259	1.377	.010
Number of children	.263	.425	.033
Couple income (Z)	-.117	.297	-.020
Age of wife at marriage	-.117	.107	-.086
Age of husband at marriage	.217	.091	.178*
Length of marriage	.170	.068	.139*

Note adj. $R^2 = .042$

* $p < .05$

**Couple ethnicity coded as 0=Hispanic, 1=White

Figures

Figure 1

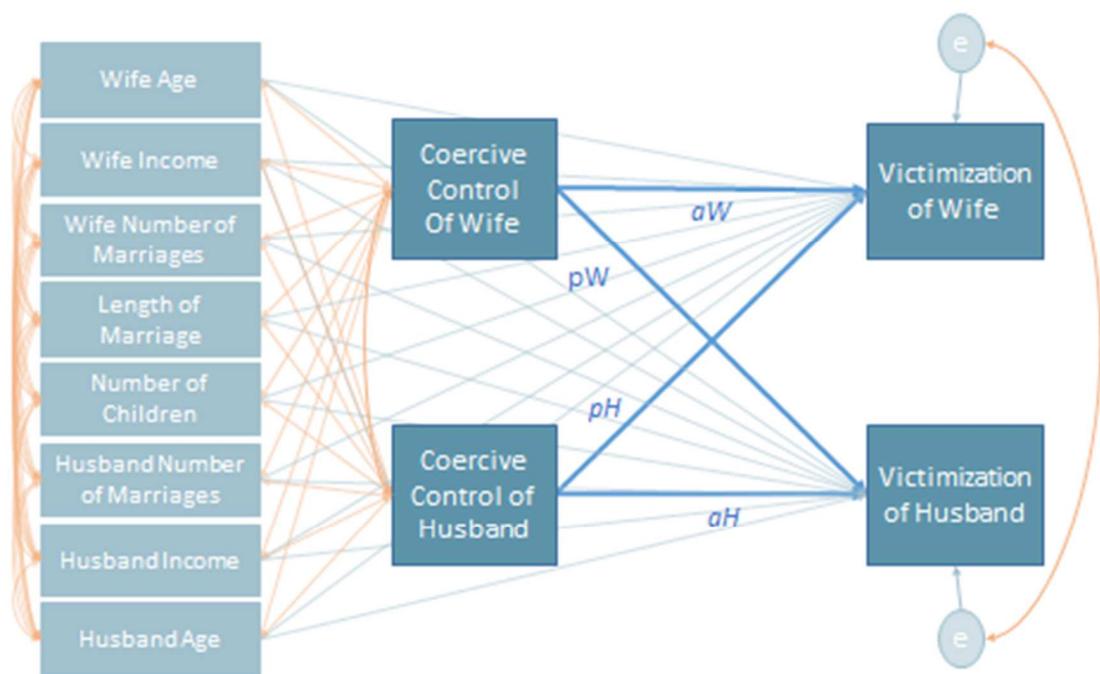
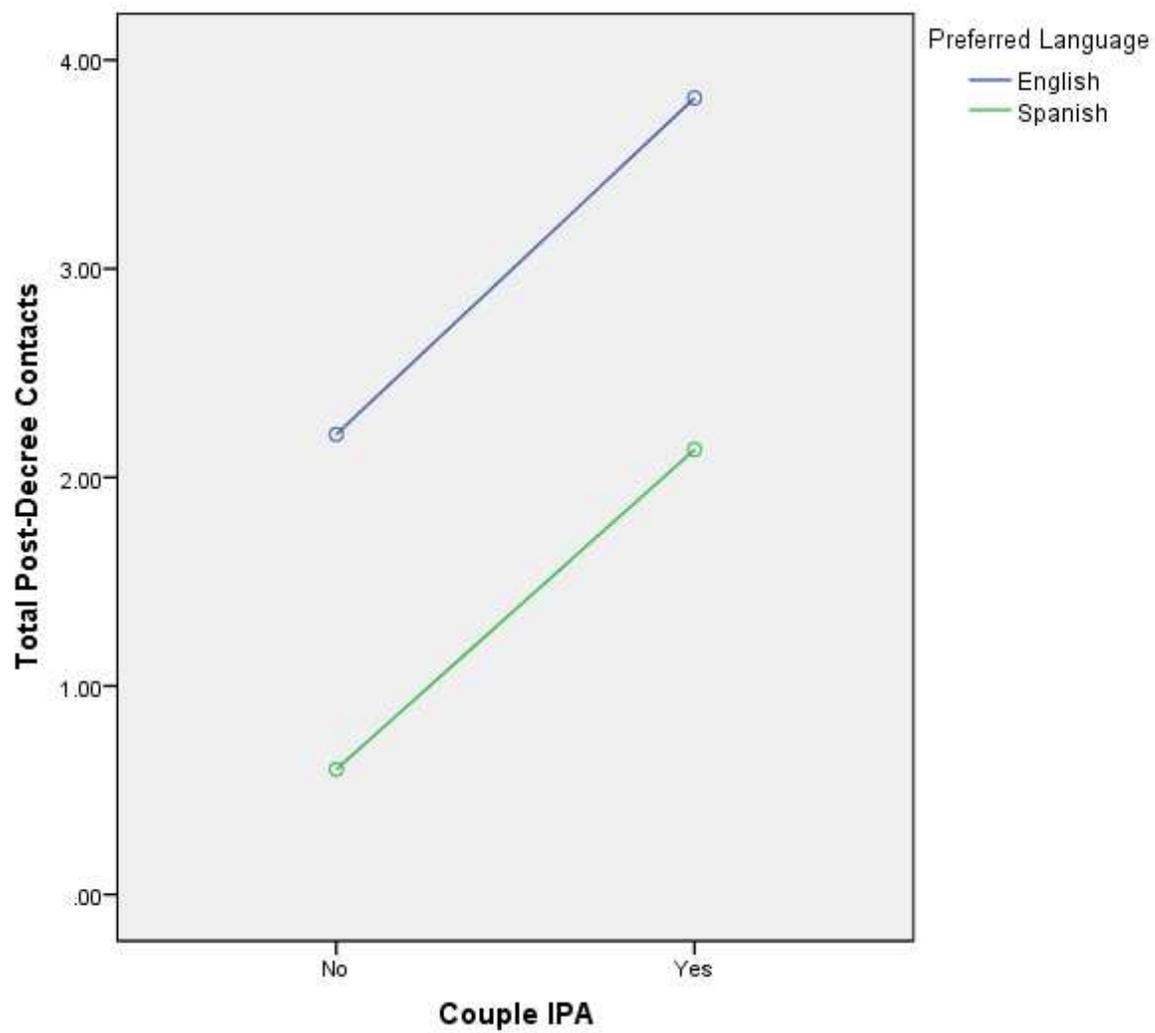
Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

Figure 2

Hispanic Couples' Number of Post Decree Actions based on Preferred Language and IPA



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