

# A Self-Report Measure of Legal and Administrative Aggression Within Intimate Relationships

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Although experts agree that intimate partner violence (IPV) is a multidimensional phenomenon comprised of both physical and non-physical acts, there is no measure of legal and administrative (LA) forms of IPV. LA aggression is when one partner manipulates the legal and other administrative systems to the detriment of his/her partner. Our measure was developed using the qualitative literature on male IPV victims' experiences. We tested the reliability and validity of our LA aggression measure on two samples of men: 611 men who sustained IPV and sought help, and 1,601 men in a population-based sample. Construct validity of the victimization scale was supported through factor analyses, correlations with other forms of IPV victimization, and comparisons of the rates of LA aggression between the two samples; reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha. Evidence for the validity and reliability of the perpetration scale was mixed and therefore needs further analyses and revisions before we can recommend its use in empirical work. There is initial support for the victimization scale as a valid and reliable measure of LA aggression victimization among men, but work is needed using women's victimization's experiences to establish reliability and validity of this measure for women. An LA aggression measure should be developed using LGBTQ victims' experiences, and for couples who are well into the divorce and child custody legal process. Legal personnel and practitioners should be educated on this form of IPV so that they can appropriately work with clients who have been victimized or perpetrate LA aggression. *Aggr. Behav.* 41:295–309, 2015. © 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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## INTRODUCTION

Experts on intimate partner violence (IPV) argue that it is a multidimensional and heterogeneous phenomenon that needs to be measured in multiple ways to increase knowledge of IPV, and capture its range, extent, and severity (e.g., Follingstad & Rogers, 2013; Woodin, Sotskova, & O'Leary, 2013). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have moved towards acknowledging this complexity by stating that there are four main types of IPV: physical violence; sexual violence; threats of physical or sexual violence; and psychological or emotional violence (Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelle, 2002). In their 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS; Black et al., 2011), the CDC provided what many consider a model for measuring and surveying the U.S. population on these forms of IPV. Their data show that 47% of the victims of physical IPV in a 1-year time period are women. When sexual violence and stalking perpetrated by an intimate are added to this estimate, 57% of the victims in a 1-year time period are women. Finally, when psychological aggression is also added to the definition, 49% of IPV

victims in a 1-year time period are women (Black et al., 2011).

Although this survey (Black et al., 2011) represents the largest and most comprehensive assessment of IPV to date in the United States, some may argue that it is still limited in its measurement of IPV, particularly non-physical forms of IPV. One notable absence is the measurement of legal and administrative (LA) aggression, which Tilbrook, Allan, and Dear (2010) define as occurring when "some perpetrators manipulate legal and administrative resources to the detriment of their... partners" (p. 20). The present study represents a first step

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toward the development and validation of a scale to measure this form of IPV.

### WHAT IS LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AGGRESSION?

The basis for the development of our scale is Tilbrook et al.'s (2010) qualitative study of 15 male IPV victims and 5 significant persons in the lives of male IPV victims. Through the analysis of their interview data, Tilbrook et al. found that a distinct form of IPV emerged: LA abuse. We prefer the term "IPV" or "aggression" to "abuse" when considering the measurement of this concept because "abuse" connotes certain cut-offs or patterns of behavior that cannot adequately be captured by existing scales of IPV (McHugh, Rakowski, & Swiderski, 2013). LA aggression occurs when one partner uses the LA system to the detriment of the other partner. Tilbrook et al. (2010) postulated that this form of IPV may be unique to men as victims and women as perpetrators because employees of relevant non-governmental (e.g., domestic violence agencies) and governmental (e.g., family courts) agencies hold stereotypes that men are always the perpetrators of IPV and that women are always the victims. Tilbrook et al. provided supporting accounts from men who spent much money, time, and other resources to prove their innocence in a court of law because of restraining orders being filed against them under false accusations of abuse; men who said the police assumed the men were at fault; and men whose wives used domestic violence service agencies to further manipulate the men (e.g., by telling the services they were the victims and then using that against him in further legal battles).

Additional evidence of this type of IPV occurring against men appears in the scant literature on male IPV victims, and the perception that LA aggression can be carried out because of IPV stereotypes seems to be supported. For example, in a qualitative study, Cook (2009) provided case studies showing that male IPV victims unjustly lose their homes, possessions, and a continued relationships with their children because of false claims of abuse made by their female partners. For example, protective orders are sometimes used by their female partners as a means to get possession of the house and custody of the children. Cook noted that the male IPV victims in these cases believed that the judicial system was stacked against them because of their gender, and that gaining custody of the children would be difficult, if not impossible. The men in these cases also believed that physical custody of their children would be granted to their female partners, and that any contact with their children granted by the court would be blocked by their partners in a continued effort to control and abuse them.

They also feared being falsely accused of sexually molesting the children, a tactic used by their partners to block them from having access to their children: in several cases, that actually happened.

Hines, Brown, and Dunning's (2007) study of male helpseekers to the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men used the term "manipulating the system" to describe the behavior of some perpetrators who knew that the domestic violence system is less responsive to men and who use that to their advantage. Just under half of the male helpline callers in this sample reported that their female partners engaged in this type of behavior, which included filing for a restraining order under false pretenses or manipulating the court system to gain sole custody of the children. In addition, 67.3% of the men reported that their wives threatened to remove the children from the home. In qualitative accounts, men talked about false charges being filed against them with child protective services.

Similarly, in an analysis of what prevents men from leaving a female partner who uses more severe forms of IPV, Hines and Douglas (2010a) found that one of the top reasons was a fear that they would never be allowed to see their children again. In qualitative accounts, the men reported that their female partners threatened to ruin their reputation in the community and at work with false allegations of physical and/or sexual abuse against their partners and/or the children. In addition, a substantial percentage of male victims reported that such false accusations had been carried out against them: 67.2% reported that their partner falsely accused them of hitting or beating their partners; 38.7% reported that their partners filed a restraining order against them under false pretenses; 48.9% said that their partners falsely accused them of physically abusing the children; and 15.4% reported that their partners falsely accused them of sexually abusing the children.

Some may argue that this form of IPV is a form of psychological IPV; however, no measure of psychological IPV has captured this construct. For example, the Follingstad Psychological Aggression Scale (Follingstad, 2011) measures 17 categories of psychological aggression, none of which include the issues discussed thus far. The construct that seems to come closest is romantic relational aggression (Bagner, Storch, & Preston, 2007; Carroll et al., 2010; Goldstein, Chesir-Teran, & McFaul, 2008; Lento-Zwolinski, 2007; Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002; Murray-Close, Ostrov, Nelson, Crick, & Cocco, 2010). This construct has been assessed primarily among college students (Bagner et al., 2007; Goldstein et al., 2008; Lento-Zwolinski, 2007; Linder et al., 2002), and encompasses a range of tactics, such as shunning, purposeful ignoring, making one's partner jealous, cheating on one's partner for revenge, threatening to

break up with them to get one's way, and gossiping about them. Carroll et al. (2010) investigated this construct among married couples, and found that women engaged in relational aggression more than men. In their study, this construct consisted of: sharing private information about one's partner that the partner did not want shared, recruiting others to take one's side in an argument, gossiping about one's partner or spreading negative information when angry, embarrassing one's partner in front of others when angry, spreading rumors about one's partner to be mean, and threatening to disclose negative information to get one's partner to do what one wants the partner to do.

Romantic relational aggression is a construct that is close to LA aggression, but the behaviors that one engages in during LA aggression have potentially devastating consequences, in that the victims can lose their children, jobs, homes, financial stability, reputation, and so on. In other words, perpetrators who use romantic relational aggression target their partner's peer groups in their efforts to sully their partner's reputation, whereas perpetrators who use LA aggression target people in positions of power to exact these potentially devastating consequences on their victims. Therefore, LA aggression seems to be a different form of IPV that has not been adequately measured thus far. Moreover, it is likely that the perpetrator is able to engage in these behaviors because of existing widespread notions in both the public and legal sector that IPV is exclusively something that men do to women (Follingstad, Coyne, & Gambone, 2005; McHugh et al., 2013).

This widespread notion of IPV is well-documented in the literature. Male IPV victims state that their friends often laugh when they tell them about the severe and dangerous violence that their female partners use (Cook, 2009). Vignette studies show that when the public is asked about their perceptions of IPV, in which the characteristics of the victim, abuser, and incident are experimentally manipulated, judgments against female perpetrators are less harsh and more likely to take contextual information into account, whereas male perpetration is seen as more severe, regardless of whether it is physical or psychological IPV (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). Similar findings exist with regard to the attitudes and perceptions of mental health professionals (Follingstad, DeHart, & Green, 2004).

There is evidence that domestic violence agency workers are not likely to believe or help men who are victimized by IPV (Cook, 2009; Douglas & Hines, 2011; Hines et al., 2007; Migliaccio, 2001; Tilbrook et al., 2010). These studies show that a majority of men who have sought help from these services have been turned away, told that the abuse must be his fault, that he did something to deserve it, that he must be the real abuser, or

that he is lying. Some men report being laughed at and ridiculed. Police sometimes show these same tendencies. For example, when a male IPV victim calls the police because his female partner is being violent with him, he is just as likely to be arrested as is his partner (Douglas & Hines, 2011).

Research also shows that judges grant restraining orders 16 times more often in cases of female victims than in cases of male victims, even after controlling for the severity of violence (Basile, 2005; Muller, Desmarais, & Hamel, 2009). Further, several high-profile publications for child custody assessors (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2011; Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008; Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson, 2003; Kelly & Johnson, 2008) provide guidelines for child custody evaluators that uniformly associate male gender with IPV perpetration and female gender with IPV victimization (see Dutton, 2006; Dutton, Hamel, & Aaronson, 2010, for more discussion). This combination of information suggests that men and women may be treated differently within the judicial system.

Thus, the evidence shows that women may be more able to engage in this type of IPV because the public and legal system conceptualize IPV as something that men do to women. When writing the items for our scale, we reviewed the literature on male victims' accounts of the types of LA aggression that they said their partners enacted to (1) keep them in their relationships, and (2) punish them if they tried to leave or immediately after they left. In the first instance, we noticed that, in general, partners' threatened LA aggression functioned to keep men in their relationships, whereas actual LA aggression was used to hurt men who were in the process of leaving or who had already left. Thus, our scale is divided into two parts: six items containing threats and six items where those behaviors were actually carried out.

### CAN THIS TYPE OF IPV HAPPEN TO WOMEN?

Although Tilbrook et al. (2010) argued that this type of IPV is unique to male victims of female perpetrators, a review of the literature indicates that male perpetrators engage in similar behaviors. For example, Beeble, Bybee, and Sullivan (2007) found that 69.9% of female IPV victims reported that their perpetrators had used the children to stay in their lives and 46.8% that their perpetrators tried to turn their children against them. Similarly, Eckstein (2011) found that some female IPV victims remained in their relationships because of fear that their abusers would take their children away from them.

Miller and Smolter (2011) discuss the term "paper abuse" with regard to battered women's experiences. The

types of behaviors included filing frivolous lawsuits, making false reports of child abuse, and threatening to take the children. Similarly, using emotionally abused women's experiences, Watson and Ancis (2013) discussed abusers seeking full custody of the children as a form of revenge, or if the ex-husbands had custody, limiting the extent of contact between the abused women and their children. Other tactics included: (1) failing to pay child support even when the fathers had adequate resources; (2) seeking changes in child support or filing other legal complaints in order to prolong the legal process and deplete the women of their financial resources; (3) hiding assets so that the fathers would not have to split them; (4) falsely accusing the mothers of being an incompetent or abusive parent, of being mentally ill, or abuse of substances; (5) falsely accusing the mothers of infidelity or sexual promiscuity; and (6) paying off witnesses to testify against her.

These studies indicate that men also use LA tactics to abuse their female partners, and thus, we tested the psychometric properties of the scale we developed in terms of men's victimization and perpetration. We investigated whether the items in our scale indicate a cluster of IPV behaviors that both men and women use against their partners, or whether a different scale may need to be developed to reflect female victims' experiences. Because we conceptualized this scale using male victims' experiences and as a form of IPV that takes advantage of people's stereotypes of men, women, and IPV, we expect to find different psychometric properties for victimization and perpetration.

### THE CURRENT STUDY

To establish the psychometric properties of our LA aggression scale, we focused on establishing its construct validity and reliability. We established construct validity in several ways. First, we used the most common method of establishing construct validity: factor analysis (Follingstad & Rogers, 2013). Construct validity is further established through concurrent and criterion validity (Follingstad & Rogers, 2013), thus, we analyzed these two issues as well. For concurrent validity, we focused on establishing whether LA aggression was correlated with other forms of IPV because it is considered to be enacted particularly by controlling and violent partners (George, 2003; Miller & Smolter, 2011). For criterion validity, we followed Follingstad and Rogers (2013) and assessed whether known cases of greater severity (e.g., a sample of known IPV victims) have higher scores on the LA aggression scale than others (e.g., a population-based sample). Finally, we assessed the alpha reliability of the scales.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

Two separate samples of male participants were recruited for this study: a helpseeking sample of physical IPV victims and a population-based sample. For both samples, the men had to speak English, live in the United States, and be between the ages of 18 and 59 to be eligible; they also had to have been involved in an intimate relationship with a woman lasting at least 1 month in their lifetimes. Also, to be eligible for the helpseeking sample, the men had to have sustained a physical assault from their female partner at some point in their relationship, and they had to have sought assistance for their partner's violence from at least one of the following sources: medical doctor or dentist, domestic violence agency, domestic violence hotline, the Internet, a lawyer, the police, a clergy member, a family member, a friend, or a mental health therapist.

We recruited the helpseeking sample of men ( $n = 611$ ) from a variety of sources. We posted advertisements on our research webpage and Facebook page, and we posted ads on webpages and Facebook pages of agencies that specialize in male victims of IPV, the physical and mental health of men and minority men, fathers' issues, and divorced men's issues. We also sent out announcements to a database of researchers, practitioners, and other interested parties who signed up to be on our e-mailing list through our research webpage, which has been in existence since 2008. The advertisement stated that we were conducting "a study on men who experienced aggression from their girlfriends, wives, or female partners." The ad then provided a link to the anonymous online questionnaire. After providing consent, the next two pages of the survey contained questions to assess the above screening criteria. Men who were eligible were allowed to continue the survey. Men who did not meet the eligibility requirements were thanked for their time and were redirected to an "exit page" of the survey. Demographics of the helpseeking sample can be found in Table I.

Participants also included a population-based sample of 1,601 men. Their data were collected by the Internet survey research firm, Knowledge Networks (KN). KN offers the only Internet research panel of about 43,000 adults that is representative of the U.S. population. Panel members are chosen through an intensive, list-assisted random digit dial methodology, supplemented by traditional mailing addressed-based sampling to reach cell-phone only populations. They are invited to participate in the Web panel, and those who agree (~56%) are enrolled in the panel. Those who do not have Internet access are sent an Internet appliance and are provided with Internet access through KN. As incentives,

TABLE I. Demographics

	Population-Based Sample ( <i>n</i> = 1,601)	Helpseeking Sample ( <i>n</i> = 611)	$\chi^2$ or <i>t</i>
	% or <i>M</i> (SD)	% or <i>M</i> (SD)	
Male participant demographics			
Age	41.77 (11.35)	43.89 (9.18)	4.52***
White	76.5%	75.5%	0.28
Black	10.2%	4.1%	21.09***
Hispanic/Latino	11.8%	4.9%	23.57***
Asian	1.9%	4.3%	10.16***
Native American	1.4%	2.9%	5.54*
Income (in thousands)	48.5 (27.6)	47.7 (27.7)	0.63
Educational Status <sup>1</sup>	3.68 (1.83)	4.71 (1.63)	12.90***
Female partner demographics			
Age	40.28 (11.60)	40.77 (9.53)	1.02
White	75.5%	67.4%	14.76***
Black	8.1%	4.1%	10.74***
Hispanic/Latina	9.9%	9.7%	0.02
Asian	4.0%	5.7%	3.10
Native American	1.4%	1.0%	0.71
Income (in thousands)	36.8 (23.5)	43.9 (29.6)	5.14***
Educational Status <sup>1</sup>	3.79 (1.78)	4.17 (1.77)	4.40***
Relationship demographics			
Currently in a relationship	86.5%	26.3%	730.93***
Relationship length (months)	150.09 (122.86)	112.33 (87.62)	8.05***
Time since relationship ended (in months)	6.55 (29.91)	45.17 (54.33)	16.63***
Minors involved in the relationship	41.6%	67.7%	118.83***
# of Minors involved in relationship	0.79 (1.12)	1.12 (1.03)	6.58***
Victimization from CTS2 Scales (% Ever)			
Severe Psychological Aggression	24.3%	95.8%	514.97***
Controlling Behaviors	18.9%	94.3%	571.57***
Physical Aggression	23.6%	100%	580.14***
Sexual Aggression	11.3%	48.1%	179.26***
Injuries	5.7%	72.3%	522.48***
Perpetration of CTS2 Scales (% Ever)			
Severe psychological aggression	20.5%	34.5%	25.73***
Controlling behaviors	16.5%	38.3%	61.13***
Physical aggression	17.1%	46.1%	102.55***
Sexual aggression	21.4%	14.6%	7.46**
Injuries	5.4%	21.1%	61.55***

<sup>1</sup>Educational status: 1, less than high school; 2, high school graduate or GED; 3, some college/trade school; 4, two-year college graduate; 5, 4-year college graduate; 6, at least some graduate school.

\**P* < .05.

\*\**P* < .01.

\*\*\**P* < .001.

panelists are enrolled in a points program where they accumulate points by completing surveys and then trade them in for prizes.

To increase the likelihood of the panel members' participation in our study, KN provided extra incentives and sent reminder emails three times during the month of data collection. KN's email was sent to male panel members between the ages of 18 and 59, and it informed them about a study, supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on how well men and women get along, and men's health. Of the 3,536 men who were invited to participate, 2,174 (61.5%) entered the survey; 90% of them consented to participate, and of those who

consented, 82.5% were eligible. Demographic information on this sample can be found in Table I.

The methods for this study were approved by the boards of ethics at our institutions of higher education. All participants were apprised of their rights as study participants. All of the men in the helpseeking sample participated anonymously. Participants in the population-based sample participated confidentially. KN links the data from each survey to the demographic and other information that it maintains on each participant. However, KN did not release any identifying information to the investigators on this project. Participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential,

that their confidentiality would be protected with a Certificate of Confidentiality obtained from the NIH, that KN would not release any identifying information to the investigators, and that they could not be personally identified in any reports that resulted from their participation. In addition, steps were taken to ensure all participants' safety: At the completion of the survey the participants were given information about obtaining help for IPV victimization or psychological distress, and on how to delete the history on their Internet web browser.

## Measures

Both the helpseeking and population-based samples were given the same questionnaires regarding demographics, aggressive behaviors that they and their female partners may have used, their mental health, their physical health, various risk factors for IPV, and if applicable, their children's witnessing of IPV, their children's mental and physical health, and other risk factors for their children. Only the questionnaires used in the current analyses are described here.

**Demographic information.** Men were asked basic demographic information about both themselves and their partners, including age, race/ethnicity, personal income, and education. Men were also asked about the current status of their relationship, the length of their relationship with their partners, how long ago the relationship ended (if applicable), and how many minor children were involved in that relationship, if any.

**Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2).** The CTS2 (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) was used to measure the extent to which the men in the study perpetrated and sustained psychological, physical, and sexual aggression, and injuries in their relationships. The items used for this study included four items assessing severe psychological aggression (e.g., threatening to hit or throw something at partner, calling partner fat or ugly), 12 items assessing physical aggression (e.g., slapping, beating up), six items assessing injuries (e.g., having a small cut or bruise, broken bone, passing out), and six items assessing sexual aggression (e.g., insisting on, threatening, or using force to have sex when the partner did not want to).

Consistent with our previous research on male victims (e.g., Hines & Douglas, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), we supplemented the CTS2 with nine items from the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI; Tolman, 1995) that focused on controlling behaviors and could be applied to men as victims. A factor analysis (Hines & Douglas, 2010b) showed that these items represented a unique factor that was distinct from the severe psychological aggression items of the CTS2.

Participants responded to items depicting each of the conflict tactics by indicating the number of times these

tactics were used by the participant and his partner. Participants indicated on a scale from 0 to 7 how many times they experienced each of the acts, 0 = never; 1 = 1 time in previous year; 2 = 2 times in previous year; 3 = 3–5 times in previous year; 4 = 6–10 times in previous year; 5 = 11–20 times in previous year; 6 = more than 20 times in previous year; 7 = did not happen in the previous year, but has happened in the past.

In order to obtain an approximate count of the number of times each act occurred in the previous year, we recoded the original items in the following way: 0 = 0 acts in previous year (includes never and did not happen in the past year but has happened before); 1 = 1 act in the previous year; 2 = 2 acts in the previous year; 3 = 4 acts in the previous year; 4 = 8 acts in the previous year; 5 = 16 acts in the previous year; 6 = 25 acts in the previous year. We also recoded each item according to whether it *ever* happened during the course of the relationship, where 0 = no, and 1 through 7 = yes.

Each subscale of the CTS2 (i.e., perpetration and victimization of each type of IPV) was then scored in four different ways:

1. Whether any of the types of aggression ever happened (dichotomous yes/no variable).
2. The number of different acts of each type of aggression that ever happened (e.g., there were a total of 12 items of physical aggression, so participants could be victimized by up to 12 types of physical aggression). This method of scoring is recommended by Moffitt et al. (1997), who showed that it provided a reliable and valid assessment of the severity and frequency of the various forms of IPV, without violating statistical assumptions.
3. Whether any of the types of aggression happened in the previous year (dichotomous yes/no variable).
4. Frequency of the different types of aggression within the past year (i.e., adding up the number of times each of the acts occurred in the past year for each of the items that comprised a given type of aggression).

The CTS2 has been shown to have good construct and discriminant validity and good reliability (Straus et al., 1996). Reliability statistics for the current samples ranged from .69 (perpetration of severe psychological aggression) to .94 (victimization from physical aggression). The percentage of men who were ever victimized or ever perpetrated each of the forms of aggression, separated by sample type, is presented in Table I.

**Legal and administrative aggression scale.** The LA aggression scale was divided into two components: (1) A 6-item scale that we added on to the CTS2, and (2) a 6-item scale comprised of dichotomous yes/no questions. The first component

was added onto the end of the CTS2, and contained six items asking participants how often they and their partners threatened to engage in various types of LA aggressive acts. These acts are certainly aggressive, but to differentiate them from the second component of the scale, we refer to this component as the “threatened LA aggression” subscale. Using the same response options as the CTS2, participants indicated how often they and their partner threatened each of the following acts: (1) make false accusations to authorities that the partner physically or sexually abused the other; (2) make false accusations to authorities that the partner physically or sexually abused the children; (3) leave and take the children away; (4) leave and take all the money and possessions; (5) ruin the partner’s reputation at work; and (6) ruin the partner’s reputation in the community. This scale was scored in the same manner as the other scales of the CTS2 (see above). To conduct factor analyses and reliability analyses on this scale, any responses of 7 (did not happen in the past year, but happened before) were converted to 0.5, in accordance with Hines and Saudino (2004). This recoding allowed for a continuous scale that approximated how frequently each behavior occurred in the past year, from 0 = never happened to 6 = happened more than 20 times.

We refer to the second component of this scale as the “actual LA aggression” subscale. These dichotomous yes/no questions were asked after the “threatened” items, and assessed whether the participant and/or his partner actually ever engaged in any of the six acts we outlined in the preceding paragraph. We did not conduct factor analyses on these items because the data are dichotomous, but we did conduct reliability analyses. The scale was scored by counting the number of “actual” acts of LA aggression the participant and his partner engaged in, and indicating whether the participant and/or his partner engaged in any of the six acts listed (1 = yes, 0 = no).

## RESULTS

The first series of analyses examined the missing data patterns. Less than 5% of the threatened LA aggression items had missing values, and missing items were replaced according to the instructions for scoring the CTS2: For participants who answered at least half of the items on the scale, their missing data was replaced with the mean of the other items on the scale. If they answered only 0 or 7, the missing value was replaced with a 0. Because the actual LA aggression items were dichotomous yes/no questions, missing values could not be replaced. Nonetheless, less than 5% of the dichotomous items had missing values.

### Construct Validity: Factor Analyses of the Threatened LA Aggression Scale

Our next series of analyses focused on construct validity and consisted of factor analyses to assess whether our threatened LA aggression scale consisted of one or more subscales and whether all the items loaded onto the factor(s). To increase variability in the items and the reliability of the factor analyses, we conducted our initial analyses with both samples combined. In addition, we conducted separate analyses for the victimization and perpetration items. We used principal axis factoring with an oblimin rotation for both scales.

Table II displays the results. For both victimization and perpetration, a one-factor solution fit the data. For victimization, all items loaded strongly on the factor. However, for perpetration, the item “threatened to leave and take the children away” was a weak contributor to the factor, and as evidenced by its communality estimate, did not strongly correlate with the other items on the scale.

To further understand the perpetration of threatened LA aggression, we conducted factor analyses separately by sample type (see Table III). A one-factor solution emerged for the population-based sample, but a two-

**TABLE II. Principal Axis Factor Analysis With Oblimin Rotation for the Six Items on the Threatened Legal and Administrative Aggression Scale ( $n = 2,178$ )**

	Victimization		Perpetration	
	Factor Loading	Communality	Factor Loading	Communality
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities about physical or sexual abuse of partner	.87	.70	.74	.49
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities that partner physically or sexually abuses the children	.74	.56	.60	.43
Threatened to leave and take the children away	.69	.51	.31	.12
Threatened to leave and take all money and possessions	.78	.57	.56	.28
Threatened to ruin partner’s reputation at work	.85	.72	.80	.60
Threatened to ruin partner’s reputation in the community	.85	.72	.74	.61
Eigenvalue	3.83		2.50	
% of Variance explained	63.89		41.74	

**TABLE III. Principal Axis Factor Analysis for the Six Items on the Perpetration of Threatened Legal and Administrative Aggression Scale: Separated by Sample Type**

	Population-Based ( <i>n</i> = 1,579)		Helpseeking <sup>1</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 599)		
	Factor Loadings	Communality	Factor 1 Loadings	Factor 2 Loadings	Communality
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities about physical or sexual abuse of partner	.81	.62		.78	.35
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities that partner physically or sexually abuses the children	.79	.69		.70	.31
Threatened to leave and take the children away	.49	.31	—	—	.01
Threatened to leave and take all money and possessions	.71	.62	—	—	.04
Threatened to ruin partner's reputation at work	.90	.76	.80		.56
Threatened to ruin partner's reputation in the community	.84	.75	.93		.60
Eigenvalue	3.55		1.55	1.13	
% of Variance explained	59.08		25.79	18.75	

<sup>1</sup>At first, we tried a principal axis factoring with an oblimin rotation, which yielded a two-factor solution. However, the two factors were only correlated .14, so an orthogonal (varimax) rotation was used instead. The results presented here are from the varimax rotation.

factor solution emerged for the helpseeking sample. For both samples, “threatening to leave and take the children away” is the weakest contributor. Although it emerges as a moderate contributor (.49) to the factor for the population-based sample, it is not nearly as strong as the next weakest contributor, which has a factor loading of .71. In addition, its communality is quite low, suggesting that it is not adequately correlated with the remaining items. This trend is starker with the helpseeking sample, in which there is no correlation with the remaining items, and it does not emerge in the factor solution as contributing to either factor.

For the helpseeking sample, two factors emerged with two items each. The first factor encompassed the items regarding making false accusations of abuse, whereas the second encompassed ruining the partner's reputation. However, when alpha reliabilities were conducted, the first factor had a reliability of only .67, while the second was better at .85. In addition for the helpseeking sample, the item “threatened to leave and take all the money and possessions” did not contribute to factor solution, and it was not correlated with the other items.

### **Construct and Concurrent Validity: Factor Analyses of the Controlling Behaviors and Threatened LA Aggression Scales**

Our next analysis focused on further establishing construct validity and on assessing concurrent validity. We tested whether this new scale is a measure of a separate form of IPV or is merely a component of controlling behaviors. To do so, we conducted a principal axis factor analysis with an oblimin rotation on the six items of the threatened LA aggression scale and the nine items of the controlling behaviors scale. To increase variability and the reliability of the analyses, we combined both samples. Table IV presents the results. For

victimization, the factors were as expected, with clear delineation between the controlling and LA aggression items. However, for perpetration, the results were not as clear. Here “preventing partner from getting needed medical care” and “threatening to harm someone close” emerged with the LA aggression items. Again, “threatening to leave and take the children away” did not emerge as a form of LA aggression perpetration, nor did it emerge as a means of controlling perpetration. For both victimization and perpetration, the correlations between the factors ranged from .63 to .70, indicating that although two factors emerged, they are highly correlated, which is expected given that all forms of IPV should be correlated with each other. Thus, for victimization, both construct and concurrent validity are supported. However, for perpetration, the picture is more complicated.

### **Concurrent Validity: Correlations of the Threatened LA Aggression Scale With Other CTS2 Scales**

To further establish the concurrent validity of the threatened LA aggression scale, we conducted a series of correlations to investigate its relationship to the other types of IPV assessed by the CTS2. The correlations were conducted with the “number of types ever” variables to increase the variability in the analyses. Table V presents the results. For the population-based sample, the victimization from threatened LA aggression was significantly correlated with all forms of IPV victimization and with all forms of IPV perpetration. Similarly, the perpetration of threatened LA aggression was significantly correlated with all forms of IPV victimization and with all forms of IPV perpetration. Thus, concurrent validity is supported for the population-based sample.

However, a different picture emerged for the helpseeking sample. Victimization from threatened LA aggression was



**TABLE IV. Principal Axis Factor Analysis With an Oblimin Rotation on the Threatened Legal and Administrative Aggression and Controlling Behaviors Items (*n* = 2,178)**

	Victimization			Perpetration		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Community	Factor 1	Factor 2	Community
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities about physical or sexual abuse of partner		.74	.719	.71		.587
Threatened to make false accusations to authorities that partner physically or sexually abuses the children		.86	.604	.55		.470
Threatened to leave and take the children away		.74	.544	—	—	.163
Threatened to leave and take all money and possessions		.58	.620	.47		.395
Threatened to ruin partner’s reputation at work		.71	.730	.83		.650
Threatened to ruin partner’s reputation in the community		.70	.737	.80		.652
My partner threatened to harm someone close to me	.38		.479	.67		.725
My partner prevented me from knowing about or having access to the family income	.55		.547		.39	.310
My partner prevented me from seeing my friends or family	.66		.648		.74	.590
My partner restricted my use of the car	.70		.436		.64	.459
My partner restricted my use of the telephone	.87		.580		.52	.494
My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts	.60		.555		.57	.291
My partner did not allow me to leave the house	.83		.572		.69	.606
My partner prevented me from getting needed medical care	.58		.403	.80		.796
My partner followed me to check on what I was doing	.56		.457		.56	.265
Eigenvalue	8.04	1.31		6.63	1.42	
% of Variance explained	50.85	5.90		41.15	6.04	

*Note.* Used pattern matrix for the factor loadings because of its ease of interpretation. For victimization, Factor 1, controlling behaviors; Factor 2, legal and administrative aggression. For perpetration, Factor 1, legal and administrative aggression; Factor 2, controlling behaviors. Correlations between factors: victimization: *r* = .70, perpetration: *r* = .63.

correlated with only the victimization from other forms of IPV, and perpetration of threatened LA aggression was correlated with only the perpetration of other forms of IPV. Thus, there is some evidence of concurrent validity in that the victimization items were correlated with other forms of IPV victimization and the perpetration items were correlated with other forms of IPV perpetration.

Because victimization and perpetration are highly correlated for other forms of IPV, we next analyzed the overlap between the victimization and perpetration of the LA aggression scales to further establish concurrent validity. Table VI presents the correlations between victimization and perpetration for both samples. For the population-based sample, the results consistently showed

**TABLE V. Correlations Between the Number of Types of Threatened Legal and Administrative Aggression and the Number of Types of Other Forms of IPV**

	Population-Based Sample ( <i>n</i> = 1,601)		Helpseeking Sample ( <i>n</i> = 611)	
	Perpetration of LA Aggression	Victimization from LA Aggression	Perpetration of LA Aggression	Victimization from LA Aggression
<b>Perpetration</b>				
Severe psychological aggression	.54***	.56***	.30***	.06
Controlling behaviors	.74***	.68***	.25***	.06
Physical aggression	.68***	.64***	.19***	-.02
Sexual aggression	.62***	.54***	.19***	-.02
Injuries	.75***	.63***	.18***	.00
<b>Victimization</b>				
Severe psychological aggression	.48***	.60***	.05	.41***
Controlling behaviors	.64***	.73***	.10*	.39***
Physical aggression	.60***	.67***	.05	.30***
Sexual aggression	.65***	.57***	.02	.05
Injuries	.72***	.65***	.07	.23***

\**P* < .05.  
 \*\**P* < .01.  
 \*\*\**P* < .001.

**TABLE VI. Correlations Between Victimization and Perpetration of Legal and Administrative Aggression**

	Population-Based	Helpseeking
Threatened aggression		
Ever happened	.41***	.11**
# of Types that ever happened	.71***	.06
Happened in past year	.26***	.27***
Frequency in past year	.81***	.15***
Actual aggression		
Prevalence	.38***	.10*
# of Types	.45***	.06

\* $P < .05$ .\*\* $P < .01$ .\*\*\* $P < .001$ .

that perpetration and victimization of LA aggression were significantly and at least moderately correlated. However, for the helpseeking sample, victimization and perpetration were not always significantly correlated.

### Criterion Validity: Comparisons Between the Samples on the LA Aggression Scale Items

We compared the population-based sample with the helpseeking sample on all items (see Table VII); criterion validity would be supported if the sample with expected higher severity of victimization on LA aggression (i.e., helpseeking sample) indeed had higher severity. As expected, victimization rates for all items were high for the helpseeking sample, and were significantly higher than men in the population-based sample. Specifically, while 91.4% of helpseeking men reported victimization on at least one of the threatened LA aggression items, 12.9% of the population-based sample of men did. Men in the helpseeking sample experienced on average about two different forms of threatened LA aggression ever, compared to less than one form experienced by men in the population-based sample. The past-year frequency of victimization was vastly different, with helpseeking men experiencing threatened LA aggression almost 32 times on average, in comparison to just over 4.5 times for the population-based sample of men. Moreover, while 78.9% of the helpseeking men reported that their partners engaged in at least one of the “actual” forms of LA aggression items, only 3.9% of the population-based sample of men did. Helpseeking men experienced more than 2.5 forms of actual LA aggression on average, whereas men in the population-based sample experienced on average, close to zero forms.

When comparing the population-based and the helpseeking sample on perpetration, we see that, overall, the helpseeking sample (11.2%) was significantly more likely to threaten at least one of the forms of LA aggression than the population-based sample was (5.3%). However, there were no differences between the samples

on the number of types of threatened LA aggression they engaged in or in the past-year frequency of LA aggression. Moreover, on the item level, we see very few differences in threatened LA aggression. The only item-level difference is in threats to leave and take the children away (Helpseeking: 5.8%, Population-based: 2.0%). This difference stays the same and remains significant when only men with children are considered (Helpseeking: 8.7%, Population-based: 4.9%,  $\chi^2 = 6.16$ ,  $P = .013$ ). On the other hand, men in the helpseeking sample were significantly more likely to have actually perpetrated all of the forms of LA aggression, except for ruining their partner’s reputation at work. Overall, 9.7% of helpseeking men engaged in at least one form of actual LA aggression—on average 0.13 types, whereas 1.1% of the population-based sample of men did—on average 0.02 types.

The differences between victimization and perpetration within samples are illustrative for criterion validity purposes as well. As expected given the nature of the sample, helpseeking men were victimized by significantly more threatened and actual LA aggression than they perpetrated. This was true when looking at prevalence, number of types, and past-year frequency, and when looking at every item of the scales. The same pattern emerged for the population-based sample, although the differences between victimization and perpetration were smaller and there were a few exceptions. Men in the population-based sample were significantly more likely to have been victimized by (than having perpetrated) all forms of threatened LA aggression, with the exception of threats to make false accusations to authorities that the partner physically or sexually abuses the children. They were victimized by more types of threatened LA aggression than they perpetrated, and in comparison to the frequency with which they perpetrated, they were victimized more frequently in the past year. For actual forms of LA aggression, they experienced aggression more than they perpetrated it for all forms, except threats of false accusations to authorities.

### Reliability Analyses

We first computed Cronbach’s alpha for the threatened LA aggression scales. When both samples were combined, both the perpetration ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and victimization ( $\alpha = .91$ ) scales achieved acceptable levels of reliability. Item analyses showed that the alpha for the perpetration scale increased to .81 if the item “threatened to leave and take the children away” was removed. Moreover, when we computed the Cronbach’s alpha separately by sample type, we found that reliability was equally good for the population-based sample ( $\alpha = .89$  for both victimization and perpetration), but not for the helpseeking sample, where it was excellent for

TABLE VII. Descriptive Information on Each Item of the Legal and Administrative Aggression Scale by Sample Type

	Population-Based <i>n</i> = 1,601				Helpseeking <i>n</i> = 611				Differences Between Population-Based and Helpseeking Samples	
	Differences Between Victimization and Perpetration		Differences Between Victimization and Perpetration		Differences Between Victimization and Perpetration		Differences Between Victimization and Perpetration		$\chi^2$ for Victimization	$\chi^2$ for Perpetration
	% Victimization	% Perpetration	McNemar's Test <i>P</i> -value	% Victimization	% Perpetration	McNemar's Test <i>P</i> -value				
Threatened aggression items	2.7	1.3	<.001	73.3	1.2	<.001	1261.75***	0.08		
Ever threatened to make false accusations to authorities about physical or sexual abuse of partner	0.8	0.6	.219	40.3	0.8	<.001	659.52***	0.49		
Ever threatened to make false accusations to authorities that partner physically or sexually abuses the children	6.6	2.0	<.001	57.9	5.8	<.001	696.18***	21.41***		
Ever threatened to leave and take the children away	7.4	4.0	<.001	63.3	3.2	<.001	774.67***	0.75		
Ever threatened to leave and take all money and possessions	3.0	1.3	<.001	62.8	2.5	<.001	1000.44***	3.80		
Ever threatened to ruin partner's reputation at work	3.2	1.3	<.001	66.1	1.5	<.001	1064.21***	0.11		
Ever threatened to ruin partner's reputation in the community	12.9	5.3	<.001	91.4	11.2	<.001	1191.87***	13.55***		
Any of the threatened types of legal and administrative aggression ever	7.3	2.6	<.001	45.0	5.8	<.001	424.22***	13.55***		
Any of the threatened types of legal and administrative aggression in the past year	0.8	0.5	.359	55.7	3.5	<.001	985.45***	30.08***		
Actual aggression items	0.3	0.0	.125	25.9	1.5	<.001	424.95***	24.58***		
Did make false accusations to authorities about physical or sexual abuse of partner	1.5	0.1	<.001	44.4	2.9	<.001	696.96**	37.80***		
Did make false accusations to authorities that partner physically or sexually abuses the children	1.5	0.6	.004	44.8	2.7	<.001	701.65***	17.22***		
Did leave and take the kids and possessions	0.8	0.3	.039	40.6	0.8	<.001	671.76***	3.63		
Did ruin partner's reputation at work	1.4	0.2	<.001	52.1	1.7	<.001	866.31***	16.41***		
Did ruin partner's reputation in the community	3.9	1.1	<.001	78.9	9.7	<.001	1337.99***	95.81***		
Did do any of the actual types of legal and administrative aggression	<i>M</i> (SD) 0.78 (0.02)	<i>M</i> (SD) 0.10 (0.58)	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> ) 9.54 (<.001)	<i>M</i> (SD) 1.92 (0.08)	<i>M</i> (SD) 0.15 (0.47)	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> ) 43.81 (<.001)	<i>t</i> 42.27***	1.91		
# of types of threatened aggression ever	4.61 (0.12)	2.56 (0.06)	4.78 (<.001)	31.93 (1.30)	3.24 (0.13)	11.60 (<.001)	11.32***	1.56		
Past year frequency of threatened aggression	0.06 (0.36)	0.02 (0.17)	5.64 (<.001)	2.56 (1.93)	0.13 (0.43)	30.78 (<.001)	31.77***	6.19***		
# of types of actual aggression										

\*\*\* *P* < .001.

victimization ( $\alpha = .89$ ), but unacceptable for perpetration ( $\alpha = .47$ ).

Cronbach's alpha reliability was also calculated for the actual LA aggression items for both samples combined, and then separately by sample type. The reliability for the victimization items was excellent for the combined samples ( $\alpha = .88$ ), acceptable for the helpseeking sample ( $\alpha = .75$ ), and adequate for the population-based sample ( $\alpha = .67$ ). Alpha reliabilities for perpetration were consistently poor for the population-based (.52), helpseeking (.44), and combined (.48) samples.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to test the construct validity and reliability of a new scale to measure LA aggression within the context of intimate relationships. This scale's format was based on the CTS2 and is intended as an add-on to that scale. It focuses specifically on LA aggressive tactics within an ongoing intimate relationship or shortly after it ends. It was developed using the experiences of male IPV victims, but both victimization and perpetration scales were tested on two samples of men: male IPV victims who sought help and a population-based sample. We found initial support for both the validity and reliability of this scale.

### Victimization Scale

We found evidence to support both the construct validity and reliability of the victimization scale across both samples and within each sample of men. We found strong alpha reliabilities, a one-factor solution that is separate from, but correlated with a controlling behaviors scale, significant correlations with other forms of IPV victimization, and much higher rates among the helpseeking men than among the population-based sample of men.

The only possible exception to the strong psychometric properties of this scale was that there was little overlap between victimization and perpetration of LA aggression in the helpseeking sample. Similarly, there was little overlap between the victimization of LA aggression and the perpetration of other forms of IPV within the helpseeking sample. However, these findings may not be evidence of a lack of validity. Instead, they may reflect something unique about the helpseeking sample. Although there is evidence for an overlap between victimization and perpetration for other forms of IPV (e.g., Hines & Saudino, 2003; Straus, 2008; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007), little research has been conducted to assess whether this applies to helpseeking samples. We also do not know whether this should apply to this particular type of IPV among helpseeking samples.

Within the current study, we saw that for both the population-based and helpseeking samples, victimization was more common than perpetration. This finding with the population-based sample may suggest that LA aggression is perpetrated more by women than by men, although there are other potential explanations. For example, the psychometric properties of the perpetration scale were not that strong, and therefore, we might not be adequately measuring men's perpetration of LA aggression. If a different measure were developed that was more robust, we may not see any differences between perpetration and victimization in the population-based sample.

There was also little overlap between the victimization of LA aggression and the perpetration of other forms of IPV for men in the helpseeking sample. Because we are adequately measuring victimization from LA aggression and the perpetration of other forms of IPV, this lack of association cannot be due to poor reliability. This finding is important, however, because it would suggest that men in the helpseeking sample were unlikely to be perpetrators who "got what they deserved" in the legal system. They were recipients of another type of IPV, LA aggression. However, because the findings are based solely on self-reports, multiple informants are needed in future research to confirm this conclusion.

### Perpetration Scale

The psychometric properties of the perpetration scale are more complicated. For both samples, the item "threatened to leave and take the children away" is not an item that emerges as a contributor to this scale, nor does it emerge as a contributor to the controlling behaviors scale. Thus, although a small minority of men used this tactic against their female partners, we found that it is not something that is used within the context of other forms of LA aggression or controlling behaviors. Perhaps men are more likely to believe that the other parent should be involved in their children's lives, and do not use this behavior to control or punish their partner. Future research should strive to understand why this particular behavior of men does not correlate with other types of LA aggression or controlling behaviors.

We also found different factor structures for the two samples, neither of which were completely unique from the controlling behaviors scale. We found two factors for the LA items for the helpseeking sample, but just one for the population-based sample. Moreover, the alpha reliabilities were—for the most part—unacceptable for both samples. Thus, there is little evidence that this is a valid or reliable scale for men as perpetrators, and work needs to be done to further analyze and revise this scale for assessing perpetration before it can be used in empirical studies.

This finding parallels research on psychological IPV. For example, McHugh et al. (2013) point out that the PMWI (Tolman, 1995) was developed using a sample of battered women, and therefore, many of its behaviors cannot be applied to male victims simply by changing the pronouns. In fact, men and women seem to use different forms of psychological IPV (Follingstad & Rogers, 2013; McHugh et al., 2013). Thus, scales developed to measure a construct among female IPV victims are often inadequate to measure that same construct among male IPV victims (McHugh et al., 2013). Given that we developed this LA aggression scale with male IPV victims' experiences, it is unlikely that the scale would apply to men as perpetrators just by changing the pronouns.

Thus, an important area of future research would be to develop a LA aggression scale using female IPV victims' experiences. We know from the current study that men report using all of the forms of LA aggression we assessed; however, they did not form a unifying construct as they did for victimization. We also know from previous studies that female IPV victims report experiencing various form of abuse that are related to legal issues—for example, falsely accusing them of abusing the children, falsely accusing them of having a mental illness or substance abuse problems: thus, it is important to develop a similar scale using female victims' experiences.

On the other hand, the weak psychometric properties of the perpetration scale may be due to a lack of variability in the items assessed and the skewness of the data. Lack of variability can degrade the factor solution (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013), while skewed data reduces alpha reliability estimates (Ryan, 2013). Thus, both the factor analyses and the alpha reliability estimates may be inaccurate measures of whether this is a good measure. It is possible that our perpetration measure is a good measure of men's use of LA aggression; it just needs to be tested on samples with greater variability in experiences.

### Limitations and Future Research

In addition to the issues discussed previously, the current study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research on LA aggression. For example, because we intended this scale to be an add-on to the CTS2, we limited the number of items. Thus, the scale might not be comprehensive enough, and important forms of LA aggression may be missing. Future research should test additional potential items. Such items should go beyond measuring threats and various forms of false allegations. Similarly, our scale focused on LA aggression that occurs within the context of an ongoing relationship or shortly after it ends. However, research shows that for both male (e.g., Cook, 2009; Hines et al., 2007; Hines & Douglas, 2010a) and female (e.g., Watson & Ancis, 2013) IPV victims, LA aggression can continue to occur

throughout and long after a divorce or relationship disruption and child custody procedures are completed. Thus, assessing this form of IPV among couples who are ending or have ended an intimate relationship is necessary, and additional items would need to be considered. Such items could include preventing the non-custodial parent from seeing or having access to the children, failing to pay child support even when the perpetrator has sufficient assets to do so, filing frivolous lawsuits and claims, and alienating the non-custodial parent from the child's affection.

Future studies should also assess additional forms of validity to further establish the psychometric properties of this scale. For example, discriminant validity ought to be established with constructs that should be conceptually distinct from LA aggression. In addition, convergent validity should be established through the associations of this scale with similar constructs. Although the high correlation between our LA aggression measure and controlling behaviors provides initial support for convergent validity, LA aggression's correlations with other similar constructs, such as romantic relational aggression, should also be tested (Carroll et al., 2010; Murray-Close et al., 2010). Such research could also investigate whether LA aggression is a separate construct from romantic relational aggression. Because romantic relational aggression involves similar techniques to sully one's partner's reputation, it should be correlated with LA aggression. On the other hand, romantic relational aggression and LA should be distinct concepts because with romantic relational aggression, the perpetrator uses their partner's peer groups, but with LA aggression, the perpetrator uses people in positions of power to exact potentially devastating consequences on their victim, such as the loss of the victim's children, job, home, and financial stability.

We were unable to address this issue in the current study because of the overarching goal of the grant under which this study was supported. This goal was to investigate the physical and mental health problems of male victims of PV and their children. Thus, our measures were carefully chosen to address this goal, and we were unable to include a measure of romantic relational aggression in the current study due to concerns about participant burden.

Another important issue is to assess how this form of IPV should be operationalized among LGBTQ couples. Our LA aggression scale may not apply to their experiences because the legal system in many states is not structured to consider their unique family circumstances, and thus, a perpetrator may be able to use tactics that are not common among heterosexual couples. As an example, if one member of a lesbian couple were to have a baby and the other member was not legally allowed to

adopt that child by the state, custody could be fully denied to the non-biological parent upon relationship disruption by the biological parent. Moreover, some of the items developed for our scale (e.g., ruining reputation) may encompass different tactics (e.g., outing a partner who is not out to family, workplace) than what is found among heterosexual couples.

Finally, like most measures of IPV, this scale is limited because it is a self-report measure. Research shows that the typical pattern is under-reporting of one's own use of undesirable behavior, but not of one's partner's undesirable behavior (Woodin et al., 2013). There could also be a potential for over-reporting of one's partner's aggressive behaviors (e.g., due to wanting people to see them in a negative light; revenge; needing to feel superior). However, under-reporting is typically more common, as victims tend to feel embarrassed or humiliated by being abused, and the tendency to embellish is likely more related to one's own personality traits (Follingstad & Rogers, 2013). Moreover, as with psychological IPV, the subjective nature of some of the items assessed in a LA aggression scale contribute to the difficulty of fully establishing the validity of the scale. We do not know the context in which these threats took place or the temporal sequence of events, particularly when a participant reported both perpetration and victimization. We also do not know if the participant is misinterpreting events. Thus, more multidimensional and context-specific measures of this construct need to be developed. This scale represents a first step towards that end.

### Implications

More work needs to be conducted on further developing and testing our LA aggression scale, but our work has important implications for the legal system because it is within this institution where many of these tactics play out. Previous research shows that IPV victims may be especially vulnerable to LA aggression; because of the psychological trauma of being abused, the victim is vulnerable to acquiescing to the abuser's threats or staying in an abusive relationship (Watson & Ancis, 2013).

The findings of our research suggest that legal system personnel (e.g., judges, attorneys, custody evaluators) should be informed of these types of abuse tactics and that they can be utilized by both male and female perpetrators to gain advantages within a relationship and in divorce, relationship disruption and child custody cases. Clinical and social service practitioners will likely benefit from knowing that the legal system can be an arena for an abuser to further her or his abuse against a victim, and thus, they could prepare their clients for potentially experiencing such abuse (Watson & Ancis, 2013). Furthermore, some suggest that judges

should punish offenders who file false and frivolous claims (Miller & Smolter, 2011) to send a clear message that this type of behavior will not be tolerated.

Another potential implication is that this form of IPV can potentially keep victims in unhealthy relationships; thus, we need to identify the nuances of how this form of IPV functions in both marital, custody and non-marital relationships. By understanding this form of IPV in more detail, it could have implications for mental health practitioners being able to more readily identify this form of IPV, how it works in relationships, how it is perpetrated, how it relates to other forms of IPV, and to help victims identify it and remove themselves from unhealthy relationships.

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