

8-2021

Attachment and Intimate Partner Violence in Predominantly Hispanic Young Adult Couples

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ATTACHMENT AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN PREDOMINANTLY
HISPANIC YOUNG ADULT COUPLES

A Thesis

by

DEANNA POLLARD

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2021

Major Subject: Experimental Psychology

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HISPANIC YOUNG ADULT COUPLES

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August 2021

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ABSTRACT

Pollard, Deanna, Attachment and Intimate Partner Violence in Predominantly Hispanic Young Adult Couples. Master of Arts (MA), August, 2021, 47 pp., 9 tables, 1 figure, 49 references, 24 titles.

This study aimed to examine the association between attachment and intimate partner violence (IPV) in a sample of predominantly Hispanic couples. Additionally, this study aimed to determine whether predictors of IPV differed depending on whether IPV was measured using self-report or partner-report data. 208 couples completed online questionnaires on attachment and IPV. Results for male IPV revealed that men's attachment scores predicted self-reported, but not partner-reported, male perpetration. Additionally, women's attachment anxiety moderated the association between men's attachment avoidance and self-reported, but not partner-reported, male perpetration. Results for female IPV revealed that women's attachment anxiety, but not attachment avoidance, predicted self-reported and partner-reported female perpetration. However, men's attachment avoidance did not moderate the relationship between women's attachment anxiety and female IPV, regardless of how female IPV was measured. Findings underscore how associations between known risk factors and IPV may differ depending on if self-reports or partner-reports are used.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, boyfriend, and the friends I have met throughout my time at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). I would not have made it this far without the determination and work ethic instilled in me by my parents, the unwavering support I received from my loving boyfriend, Mauricio Yanez, and twin sister, Anna Pollard, and the friends I met along the way who helped make this journey worthwhile.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Arthur Cantos for his mentorship throughout my graduate school career. Between the time I joined your lab and now, I have grown exponentially as a researcher, so thank you for seeing my potential and always pushing me to produce the best work possible. Involvement in your lab provided me my first opportunity to explore my interests in intimate relationships while simultaneously sparking my interest in intimate partner violence and pursuing a career in clinical psychology in general. This fall, I will be entering the next step in my academic career as a clinical psychology doctoral student at the University of Houston—which would not have been possible without your mentorship and encouragement to apply for clinical doctoral programs. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Po-Yi Chen and Dr. Frederick Ernst, as well as Dr. Jason Popan and Dr. Amy Weimer. Dr. Chen, thank you for your guidance in data analysis. I hope to implement the suggestions you have provide me to the research endeavors I pursue as a doctoral student. Dr. Ernst, I am grateful to have had you as one of my faculty mentors as an undergraduate and graduate student at UTRGV. Some of my greatest memories of my undergraduate career include working alongside you and my peers as a student research mentor for the afterschool neuroscience camp for middle school students you directed. Thank you for providing me that opportunity. Dr. Popan, thank you for your guidance as one of my statistics professors, research mentors, and as the graduate program coordinator. Dr. Amy Weimer, thank you for sparking my passion for pursuing research, as well as inadvertently

providing a place where my path crossed several people who have become incredibly near and dear to me over the years. My life changed both professionally and personally, and I am so grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Physical intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to acts of physical aggression directed at a current or former intimate partner, such as a dating partner, spouse, or sexual partner(s) (CDC, 2020). Physical IPV is associated with several adverse consequences to victims, including mental health concerns, physical injury, and death (Cooper & Smith, 2011). Despite traditionally viewed as a gender asymmetrical issue with men viewed as the sole perpetrators and women as the sole victims (Banks et al., 2013; Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000), According to The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS; Smith et al., 2017), U.S state estimates for experiencing physical IPV are 25.4% to 42.1% for women and 17.8% to 36.1% for men, indicating that both women and men could be victims of IPV. Indeed, additional research has found women to report perpetrating IPV at equal or slightly higher rates than men, although male IPV is more likely to result in severe injury (Archer, 2000; Cantos & O'Leary, 2014; Kuijpers et al., 2012; Langhrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012; Sommer et al., 2017). Furthermore, bidirectional IPV (i.e., both partners perpetrate) has been found to be prevalent among community, college, and criminal justice samples (Langhrichesen-Rohling et al., 2012).

Given the prevalence of bidirectional IPV, it is imperative to stray away from viewing IPV from a strict one perpetrator-one victim perspective and explore how both partners' unique characteristics influence the prevalence of male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV in

couples (Bartholomew & Allison, 2006; Sommer et al., 2017)—not to assign blame, but to better understand both partners' characteristics in the context of IPV so that they may be incorporated into interventions (Sommer et al., 2017). One characteristic in both partners that could interact to place couples at risk for escalated conflict is their respective attachment styles (Babcock et al., 2000; Dutton et al., 1994; Fonagy, 1999; Gormley, 2005; Kesner & Kenry, 1998; Lafontaine & Lussier, 2005).

Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) posited that all humans are born with what he referred to as the attachment system. This biopsychological system aims to motivate us to seek proximity with an attachment figure (i.e., a significant other) in the presence of a real or imagined threat (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). For infants and children, the primary attachment figure is a caregiver (Bowlby, 1960, 1973, 1980). If an infant or child is alarmed or has a biological need (e.g., hunger), their behavioral attachment system activates. If the infant or child's attachment figure (e.g., mother) responds adequately to the infant or child's biological or emotional needs, the infant or child's attachment behavioral system deactivates. According to attachment theory, individuals who grew up with attachment figures who were consistently and adequately responsive to their physical and emotional needs develop positive internal working models of themselves and others (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). In other words, these individuals develop a belief that they are worthy of care and support, attachment figures are dependable, and the world is a safe place for them to explore, even when in the presence of uncertainty and when their attachment figures are temporarily unavailable. However, those whose early attachment figures were unresponsive or only occasionally responsive may develop negative internal working models of themselves, others, or both.

Although Bowlby's work focused on the attachment bond between mother and child, researchers have expanded this theory by applying it to research on adult attachment bonds where the primary attachment figure is one's romantic partner (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). According to adult romantic attachment theory, there are two dimensions of attachment: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). Attachment anxiety reflects the extent to which one ruminates over their attachment figures abandoning or rejecting them, whereas attachment avoidance reflects how one is uncomfortable with closeness and emotional intimacy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2011). Individuals who grew up having positive interactions with attachment figures develop a sense of attachment security in their adult romantic relationships and exhibit little attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Securely attached individuals are comfortable depending on romantic attachment figures in times of need and being independent. They acknowledge their emotions—even if unpleasant—and address them with attachment figures in a constructive manner to alleviate conflict and facilitate closeness (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). However, individuals who have developed a sense of insecure attachment have a lot of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, or both in their adult relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Insecurely attached individuals utilize what is referred to in the literature as defensive secondary strategies—namely, hyperactivation and deactivation of the attachment system—to alleviate negative emotions about their attachment relationships (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). Insecurely attached individuals with a lot of attachment anxiety utilize hyperactivation. Hyperactivating strategies consist of intensifying negative emotions, hypersensitivity to cues of rejection and abandonment, clinginess, jealousy, controlling and coercive behaviors, and a strong

desire to become "one" with the attachment figure (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002, 2007).

Anxiously attached individuals hyperactivate their attachment system to attain proximity to an attachment figure who is perceived to be insufficiently physically or emotionally available or irresponsive to one's requests for care and support. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals with a lot of attachment avoidance deactivate their attachment system to defend against negative emotions associated with their attachment relationships (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). The attachment system's deactivation includes suppression of and refusal to acknowledge negative emotions, determination to handle situations alone, dismissing inclinations to seek proximity with one's attachment figure, and discomfort with closeness (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). Insecurely attached individuals with a lot of attachment anxiety and avoidance utilize a combination of hyperactivating and deactivating strategies (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

From an attachment perspective, anger directed at one's intimate partner is the result of frustrated attachment needs (Dutton, 2011). When one perceives their needs for proximity or distance as not being met, they may engage in protest behavior directed at the attachment figure to notify them of their unmet needs. If manifested in a safe, constructive way, interpersonal anger is beneficial to the couple as it serves the function of alerting one's partner of an issue so that it can be resolved. However, if manifested in violent ways, it becomes detrimental. Pistole (1994) posited that frustrated attachment needs might be an ongoing relational issue for partners with different attachment styles. For example, if one partner has a lot of attachment anxiety and the other partner has a lot of attachment avoidance, the anxiously-attached partner's way of responding to perceived relational threats may inadvertently trigger the avoidantly-attached partner's attachment system and vice versa, resulting in the escalation of conflict (Pistole, 1994).

Therefore, couples may be more at risk for IPV if partners have conflicting insecure attachment styles due to their susceptibility for experiencing escalated conflict.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Consistent with Pistole (1994), most studies including attachment and IPV data from both partners found an avoidant-anxious partner attachment pattern—specifically, attachment avoidance in men and attachment anxiety in women—to be a predictor of male and female-perpetrated IPV in couples (Allison & Bartholomew, 2006; Bond & Bond, 2004; Doumas et al., 2008; Roberts & Noller, 1998). For example, in a sample of 41 therapy-seeking couples, Bond and Bond (2004) found that anxious attachment in women and a dismissing attachment style in men predicted IPV victimization. Similarly, in a sample of 70 community couples, Doumas et al. (2008) found an interaction effect between high attachment anxiety in women and high attachment avoidance in men on male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV.

Although the studies mentioned above provide support for the notion that insecure attachment in both partners relates to physical IPV in couples, they are not without their limitations. First, Bond and Bond (2004) and Doumas et al. (2008) both recruited small samples of couples ($N = 41$ couples and $N = 70$ couples, respectively). Second, Bond and Bond (2004) assessed attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance using an assessment that measures attachment continuously (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), but converted participants' scores into three groups: secure, dismissing, and anxious. Not only has this approach been criticized for being an unstandardized way of measuring attachment (Doumas et al., 2008), but

taxometric analyses has demonstrated that adult attachment—both globally and across various relationship contexts (i.e., attachment towards romantic partners, attachment toward mother/father, attachment toward platonic close friends)—is better understood through a dimensional framework (Fraley et al., 2015). Thus, to best understand the relationship between attachment and IPV, researchers should opt for assessing attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety continuously. In contrast to Bond and Bond (2004), Doumas et al. (2008) were interested in how attachment dimensions (as opposed to categories) related to IPV. However, instead of using a more reliable measure that assesses the two attachment dimensions directly, such as the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) or its revised version (Brennan et al., 1998; Fraley et al., 2000), they used a categorical measure of attachment (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and converted participants' categorical scores into scores reflecting the attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance dimensions.

Third, to mitigate the influence of underreporting violence, several studies combined men and women's perpetration and victimization reports together to create their male and female IPV variables (Doumas et al., 2008; Roberts & Noller, 1998). Although altering partners' perpetration and victimization reports as a way to lessen the influence of underreporting violence is a common practice in studies including data from both partners (Doumas et al., 2008; Lafontaine & Lussier, 2005; Miga et al., 2010), and underreporting of perpetration does occur (Scott & Straus, 2007), several IPV concordance studies have found intimate partners to also disagree on the occurrence of male and female IPV in their relationships because men (Caetano et al., 2002; Schnurr et al., 2010) or women (Perry & Fromuth, 2005; Schafer et al., 1998; Kuijpers, 2020) overreported their own perpetration in comparison to their partners' victimization reports. Thus, it may be preferable to instead include two male and female IPV

measures, one based on self-reports and the other on partner-reports, when working with dyadic data (Goncy & van Dulmen, 2016). However, no study examining the relationship between partners' attachment dimensions and physical IPV has measured male and female IPV this way. Lastly, the majority of research on IPV—let alone attachment and IPV—conducted in the United States has been conducted on predominantly White samples. No study to date has examined the relationships between partners' attachment styles and IPV on adult Hispanic U.S samples. Because the U.S Hispanic population is rapidly increasing (Colby & Ortman, 2017), it is imperative to understand what differences exist in IPV risk factors among Hispanic couples versus couples of other ethnic groups to address this issue in these populations better.

CHAPTER III

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The present study aimed to examine the relationships between partners' attachment dimensions and male and female physical IPV. This study aimed to expand the current literature by (1) assessing male and female physical IPV using self-report and partner-report data (2) assessing attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance with a continuous attachment questionnaire that measures these two dimensions directly, and (3) recruiting a larger sample ($N = 208$) than those included in previous research examining partners' opposing attachment dimensions and physical IPV. Additionally, the present study examines whether findings regarding the associations between partners' insecure attachment and IPV in predominantly White samples replicate on a sample of predominantly Hispanic (Mexican American) couples. Thus, the present study contributes to the limited research examining known IPV risk factors in understudied U.S. subpopulations.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Because previous research has found attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance to predict IPV perpetration for both men and women (Spencer et al., 2020), it was hypothesized that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance would significantly predict male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV.

Hypothesis 2

Second, because previous research has found the interaction of high attachment avoidance in men and high attachment anxiety in women to predict male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV (Bond & Bond, 2004; Doumas et al., 2008; Roberts & Noller, 1998), it was hypothesized that there will be an interaction effect between men's attachment avoidance and women's attachment anxiety on male and female-perpetrated physical IPV.

Hypothesis 3

Since previous research has found IPV concordance between partners to be poor, it is hypothesized that predictors will differ depending on whether male and female IPV are measured using self-reports or partner-reports. However, since there is no previous study examining the associations between partners' attachment dimensions and physical IPV using self-report and partner-report measures of male and female IPV, it is unclear how predictors will differ.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

Participants

Two hundred forty-three couples were recruited through (1) an undergraduate psychology research pool at a large Hispanic-serving university (i.e., SONA), (2) flyers posted throughout the university, or (3) flyers posted on Facebook. Eligible participants had to be at least 18 years of age, involved in a monogamous (i.e., not an open relationship) romantic relationship, and both partners must have been willing to participate. Of the 243 couples recruited, two couples were excluded for reporting involvement in an open relationship, and 18 were removed because partners disagreed substantially on relationship demographics such as relationship status, relationship length, and whether they are cohabiting. Same-sex couples were excluded due to their only being 15 of them. Therefore, only 208 heterosexual couples were included in the analyses.

Of the 208 couples included in the analyses, 85.1% ($n = 177$) of couples consisted of two partners who identified as Hispanic, 12% ($n = 25$) of couples consisted of one partner who identified as Hispanic, and 2.9% ($n = 6$) of couples were not Hispanic. The mean age for men was 21.68 ($SD = 4.04$), and the mean age for women was 20.74 ($SD = 3.51$). 72.1% ($n = 150$) of men and 86.5% ($n = 180$) of women were college students. The majority of couples were involved in a committed dating relationship (89.4%, $n = 186$) and did not live with each other

(78.8%, $n = 164$). 43.8% of couples have been together for more than two years ($n = 91$), 22.1% have been together for one to two years ($n = 46$), 13.9% ($n = 29$) have been together for six months to one year, 18.3% have been together for one to six months ($n = 38$), and 1.9% ($n = 4$) have been together for less than one month.

Measures

Demographics

Participants completed a demographic survey comprised of questions inquiring on participants': age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, employment status, college student status, highest education level, socioeconomic status, relationship status, relationship length, and cohabitation status.

Romantic Attachment

The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) was used to assess romantic attachment. The ECR-R is the revised version of The Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), a continuous adult romantic attachment measure. The ECR-R is a 36-item questionnaire that asks the respondent to indicate, on a 7-point Likert scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree*), the extent to which they believe each item reflects how they experience intimate relationships. Two 18-item subscales make up the ECR-R. One subscale assesses the extent to which one endorses exhibiting attachment anxiety with romantic partners, and the other subscale assesses the extent to which one exhibits attachment avoidance with romantic partners. Higher scores on the Attachment Anxiety subscale indicate higher attachment anxiety in romantic relationships, whereas higher scores on the Attachment Avoidance subscale indicate higher attachment avoidance in romantic relationships. The Attachment Anxiety and Attachment

Avoidance subscales of the ECR-R demonstrated strong test-retest reliability over six weeks (Sibley & Liu, 2004) and strong convergent and discriminant validity (Sibley & Liu, 2005). Internal consistencies reported for the two ECR-R subscales are typically over .90 (Fraley, 2012). In the current study, the internal consistency coefficients for men was .90 and .90 for Attachment Anxiety and Attachment Avoidance, respectively. For women, internal consistency coefficients were .90 and .87 for Attachment Anxiety and Attachment Avoidance, respectively, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency.

IPV

Physical IPV was assessed using the Physical Assault Scale of the CTS2 (Straus et al., 1996). The CTS2 is the revised version of the original CTS (Straus, 1979). It is a 7-point Likert-type instrument asking participants to rate each item on a scale of 0-6, with 0 indicating *This never happened* and six indicating *More than 20 times in the past year*. The Physical Assault scale of the CTS2 consists of 12 items measuring the frequency participants and their partners engaged in various acts of physical IPV. The CTS2 presents all items in the form of pairs (e.g., item 7 is "I threw something at my partner that could hurt," and item 8 is "My partner did this to me") so that each participant provides responses reflecting their own and their partner's behavior. Straus et al. (1996) reported an internal consistency coefficient for the Physical Assault Scale of .86. In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient for men was .80, and for women was .79, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency.

As recommended by Straus (2004), since the present study consisted of mostly college students and their partners, continuous CTS2 Physical Assault scores were dichotomized (1 = perpetrated, 0 = did not perpetrate; 1= victim, 0 = not a victim), as the prevalence of couples reporting violence in the sample was likely to be low. Male and female physical assault

perpetration scores were used to assess self-reported male IPV perpetration and self-reported female IPV perpetration, respectively. Likewise, male and female physical assault victimization prevalence scores were used to assess partner-reported female IPV perpetration and partner-reported male IPV perpetration, respectively.

Procedures

Couples recruited before the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic met with either the author of this study or a research assistant in a reserved computer lab on campus. The individual proctoring the session went over the informed consent forms with each couple and assigned them an ID that included the proctor's initials, a number, and an A or B (E.g., DP1A), depending on the gender of the participant. Each partner in a given couple had the same ID with the exception that one partner was given an "A" at the end and the other a "B" (e.g., DP1A and DP1B was one couple and DP2A and DP2B was another couple), with "As" representing women and "Bs" representing men. Once consent was obtained, the proctor instructed each couple to sit on opposite ends of the room as allowed by computer availability. For the researchers to link partners' data together, the first item on the online survey asked participants to type in their assigned ID number into a text box. Subsequently, the participants completed the ECR-R, the CTS2, and the demographic questions.

Couples recruited during the COVID-19 pandemic participated in this study exclusively online. Couples accessed the survey via SONA or a Facebook post with the study's flyer. For these couples, consent was obtained online. After clicking on the survey link, these couples were presented with an online consent form, followed with a question asking participants if they consented to participate in the study. Participants who clicked "yes" were then presented with screening questions designed to ensure that all participants were over 18 years of age, were

currently involved in a romantic relationship, and were aware of the study's requirement that their partner also participates in the research. Following those screening questions, participants were presented with a page that included a link to the survey so they can send the link to their partner if they have not done so. After that, participants were asked to provide the first letter of their first name, the first letter of their last name, their date of birth (DOB), the first letter of their partner's first name, the first letter of their partner's last name, and their partner's DOB. The purpose of these questions was to match partners' data together without needing their full names. After that, participants were administered the ECR-R, the CTS2, and the demographic questions.

Given differences in the procedures used before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, a dichotomous variable named "COVID" was created where couples who participated before the pandemic were coded with a zero, and couples who participated during the pandemic were coded with a one. Chi-square results revealed no significant differences in self-reported ($\chi^2(1, N = 208) = 0.07, p = .94$) and partner-reported male IPV ($\chi^2(1, N = 208) = 0.11, p = .75$), nor in self-reported ($\chi^2(1, N = 208) = 1.34, p = .25$), and partner-reported female IPV ($\chi^2(1, N = 208) = 0.07, p = .79$) between couples who participated before or during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, differences in pre-COVID and during-COVID study procedures may not have impacted CTS2 responses in the present sample enough to warrant including COVID as a control variable in analyses testing hypotheses.

Data Analysis

The IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was used to conduct all analyses. As Kenny et al. (2006) recommended, for every couple, male and female partners' data was entered in a single SPSS case so that the dyad—instead of each participant—

can be treated as the unit of analysis. First, descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, frequency percentages) were conducted for study and demographic variables. Second, bivariate correlations were conducted to examine correlations among ordinal and continuous demographic variables (i.e., relationship length and male and women's age), attachment variables, and self-reported and partner-reported male and female IPV. After that, chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine correlations between IPV variables and differences in IPV perpetration between cohabiting and non-cohabiting couples. Lastly, to address study aims on the relationships between attachment variables and IPV, a series of hierarchical logistic regressions were conducted. All significant interactions were probed by conducting a simple slopes analysis via Andrew Hayes' PROCESS macro v34.1 SPSS extension to determine their direction.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for study variables and demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1 in Appendix A.

Results of Bivariate Correlations

Pearson bivariate correlations between attachment dimensions for men and women, continuous demographic variables (relationship length and age), and self-reported and partner-reported male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 in Appendix A. Bivariate correlations results revealed that all attachment variables for men and women were significantly correlated with one another (i.e., $p < .01$). Additionally, relationship length negatively correlated with attachment avoidance in women ($r = -.15, p < .05$) but not with attachment avoidance in men ($r = -.13, p = .054$). Both partners' ages were negatively correlated with attachment anxiety in women ($r = -.17, p < .05$ for women's age and $r = -.15, p < .05$ for men's age, respectively) but not with attachment anxiety in men nor any of the other attachment variables.

Regarding male-perpetrated IPV, bivariate correlations revealed that self-reported male-perpetrated IPV significantly correlated with attachment anxiety in men ($r = .20, p < .01$), attachment avoidance in men ($r = .17, p < .05$), attachment anxiety in women ($r = .23, p < .01$),

but not attachment avoidance in women ($r = .05, p = .49$). In contrast to self-reported male-perpetrated IPV, partner-reported male-perpetrated IPV only significantly correlated with attachment anxiety in women ($r = .15, p < .05$). However, age and relationship length did not significantly correlate with self-reported or partner-reported male-perpetrated IPV (i.e., $p > .05$). Regarding female-perpetrated IPV, bivariate correlations revealed that self-reported and partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV significantly correlated with attachment anxiety in women ($r = .23, p < .01$ and $r = .15, p < .05$, respectively) but not attachment avoidance in women ($r = .10, p = .14$ and $r = .08, p = .89$, respectively) or any of the attachment dimensions in men. Both self-reported and partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV were not significantly correlated with age or relationship length.

Results of Chi-Square Tests of Independence

In the present sample, 20.2% of men and 29.8% of women reported perpetrating past-year physical IPV whereas 26% of men and 25% of women reported being a victim. Chi-squares tests of independence revealed that all IPV variables were significantly associated with one another (see Table 6 in Appendix A).

Results from a chi-square test of independence examining the relationships between IPV variables and involvement in a cohabiting relationship revealed that significantly more men who reported living with a partner reported being a perpetrator and victim of physical IPV. However, there were no significant differences in women's reports of perpetration and victimization between couples who reported living together and those who did not (Table 7 in Appendix A). Therefore, involvement in a cohabiting relationship was included as a covariate in analyses where self-reported male-perpetrated IPV and partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV were the

outcome variables but not those where self-reported female-perpetrated IPV or partner-reported male-perpetrated IPV were the outcome variables.

Binary Logistic Regression Results

Male Perpetration

The first hypothesis regarding male-perpetrated IPV was to determine whether attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety in men would be significantly associated with male-perpetrated IPV (Table 8 in Appendix A). Because attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in men were not correlated with partner-reported male-perpetrated IPV, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in men were only examined as predictors of self-reported male IPV. While controlling for involvement in a cohabiting relationship, results revealed that attachment avoidance in men ($B = 0.89, p < .05$) and attachment anxiety in men ($B = 0.45, p < .01$) significantly predicted self-reported male-perpetrated IPV. The model including attachment avoidance in men accounted for 8% percent of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .08$), whereas the model including attachment anxiety in men accounted for 10% percent of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .10$) in self-reported male IPV perpetration. Thus, hypothesis one for male-perpetrated IPV was only partly supported as both attachment dimensions in men only predicted male-perpetrated IPV when it was measured using men's self-reports.

The second hypothesis pertaining to male perpetration was to assess whether attachment anxiety in women moderated the association between attachment avoidance in men and male-perpetrated IPV (Table 8 in Appendix A). Results for self-reported male IPV revealed that while controlling for involvement in a cohabiting relationship, attachment anxiety in women moderated the association between attachment avoidance in men and self-reported male-perpetrated IPV, ($B = 0.33, p < .05$), with the model explaining 16% of the variance in self-reported male IPV

(Nagelkerke $R^2 = .16$). Results of the simple slopes analysis revealed that at high levels of attachment anxiety in women (i.e., above the mean), high levels of attachment avoidance in men were significantly associated with increased odds that they reported perpetrating IPV ($B = .49, p < .05$). However, high levels of attachment avoidance were not significantly associated with increases in odds in reporting perpetration for those whose female partners scored at the mean or below the mean on attachment anxiety, $B = 0.11, p = .62$ and $B = -0.27, p = .42$, respectively. The interaction effect is graphed on figure 1 in Appendix B. In contrast to self-reported male IPV, the Male Attachment Avoidance X Female Attachment Anxiety interaction term was not significantly associated with partner-reported male IPV, $B = -0.09, p = .51$. Only attachment anxiety in women was significantly associated with partner-reported male IPV ($B = 0.30, p < .05$). However, the model only explained 3% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .03$). Thus, hypothesis two for male-perpetrated IPV was only partly supported as the interaction between attachment avoidance in men and attachment anxiety in women only predicted male-perpetrated IPV when it was measured using men's self-reports.

Female Perpetration

The first hypothesis regarding female perpetration was to determine whether attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety in women would be significantly associated with female physical IPV perpetration (Table 9 in Appendix A). Because attachment avoidance in women was not correlated with self-reported or partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV, attachment avoidance in women was not examined as a predictor in the regression analyses.

Binary logistic regression results revealed that attachment anxiety in women predicted self-reported female IPV ($B = 0.42, p < .01$) and explained 7% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .07$). While controlling for involvement in a cohabiting relationship, attachment anxiety in

women also predicted partner-reported female IPV ($B = 0.40, p < .01$), with the model explaining 10% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .10$). Thus, hypothesis one for female-perpetrated IPV was partly supported since attachment anxiety in women was associated with self-reported and partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV, but attachment avoidance in women was not.

The second hypothesis regarding female perpetration was to determine whether attachment avoidance in men moderated the association between attachment anxiety in women and female IPV perpetration. Results revealed that for self-reported and partner-reported female-perpetrated IPV, attachment avoidance in men did not moderate the association between attachment anxiety in women and IPV perpetration ($B = -0.18, p = .20$ and $B = 0.22, p = .15$ for self-reported female IPV and partner-reported female IPV, respectively). The models accounted for 8% (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .08$) and 11% (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .11$) of the variance in self-reported and partner-reported female perpetration, respectively. Thus, the second hypothesis for female-perpetrated IPV was not supported.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether the findings of previous research on attachment and IPV (e.g., Doumas et al., 2008) generalized to a sample primarily comprised of heterosexual Hispanic college students and their romantic partners. Unlike previous studies that included couple-level data (e.g., Doumas et al., 2008; Sommer et al., 2017; Roberts & Noller, 1998), male and female IPV were measured using self-report and partner-report data. Because romantic partners disagree on the prevalence of IPV due to both underreporting and overreporting perpetration (e.g., Kuijpers, 2020), it is difficult to determine whose reports are more reliable. Additionally, there is currently a lack of research highlighting how results between frequently examined IPV risk factors— such as insecure attachment—and male and female-perpetrated IPV differ depending on whether self-reported or partner-reported data are used.

In the present study, 20.2% and 26% of men and 29.8% and 25% of women reported past-year physical IPV perpetration and victimization, respectively, which are similar to the U.S state estimates for physical IPV reported by the NISVS (25.4%- 42.1% for women's victimization and 17.8%-36.1% for men's victimization; Smith et al., 2017). Concerning associations between attachment and IPV, results overall revealed a significant association between insecure attachment and IPV for men and women. However, hypothesis three was

supported in that results differed depending on whether IPV was measured using self-report or partner-report data.

When assessing the associations between attachment and male IPV, results revealed that when male IPV was measured using self-report data, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in men were associated with IPV perpetration. This finding suggests that men may be more likely to perpetrate if they have a lot of attachment anxiety and/or a lot of attachment avoidance in their relationship. Additionally, attachment anxiety in women moderated the association between attachment avoidance in men and self-reported male IPV. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted on predominantly White couples that have found couples comprised of an avoidantly-attached male and an anxiously-attachment female to be at greater risk of experiencing male IPV perpetration (Bond & Bond, 2004; Doumas et al., 2008). This finding suggests that similar to their non-Hispanic counterparts, Hispanic men with an avoidant attachment to their partner are also more likely to perpetrate violence if they are romantically involved with an anxiously attached partner. Interestingly, however, when male-perpetrated IPV was measured using partner reports, only attachment anxiety in women was associated with male perpetration. This finding is unusual because research has repeatedly found insecure attachment in men to be a risk factor for IPV perpetration (Cantos & O'Leary, 2014; Babcock et al., 2000; Sommer et al., 2017, Spencer et al., 2020). Given the high association between self-reported female IPV and partner-reported male IPV ($\chi^2 = 92.68, p < .001$), it is possible that there was a priming effect on females' reports of perpetration and victimization which resulted in the lack of associations between men's attachment variables and partner-reported male IPV. However, future research is needed to interpret this finding better.

In contrast to the results for male perpetration, the results between attachment and self-reported and partner-reported female IPV were more consistent with one another. Irrespective of how female-perpetrated IPV was measured, attachment anxiety in women, but not attachment avoidance in women, was associated with female-perpetrated IPV. These results suggest that women may be more likely to perpetrate if they have a lot of attachment anxiety, but not if they have a lot of attachment avoidance. These results are consistent with research conducted on predominantly non-Hispanic samples suggesting attachment anxiety in females to be a risk factor for female perpetration (Spencer et al., 2020), but not with research suggesting attachment avoidance in females (Kuijpers et al., 2012; Sommer et al., 2017; Spencer et al., 2020) also to be a risk factor for female perpetration. Although it could be that the association between avoidant attachment and IPV differs in the present sample due to differences in ethnicity; however, more research examining the relationship between attachment avoidance and female IPV perpetration in U.S. Hispanic subpopulations is needed before making that conclusion. Additionally, in contrast to what was expected, attachment avoidance in men did not moderate the association between attachment anxiety in women and female-perpetrated IPV, regardless of how female-perpetrated IPV was measured. This is inconsistent with previous research conducted on predominantly White couples that found men's avoidant attachment to interact with women's anxious attachment to predict female perpetration (Bond & Bond, 2004; Dumas et al., 2008; Roberts & Noller, 1998).

The difference in results regarding the interaction between men's attachment avoidance and women's attachment anxiety on female perpetration (self-report or partner-report) could be indicative of a true difference in how attachment issues impact female IPV in the present sample, particularly since there is some evidence suggesting attachment dimensions relate to adverse

outcomes differently depending on one's ethnic/racial background (Wei et al., 2004). However, it is important to consider other methodological differences between the present study and previous ones. First, the present sample consisted of primarily undergraduate students and their partners. In contrast, other studies used older clinical (Bond & Bond, 2004) and community (Doumas et al., 2008; Sommer et al., 2017; Roberts & Noller, 1998) couples. Second, most of the research suggesting that the attachment avoidance-attachment anxiety couple attachment interaction predicts IPV were conducted on small sample sizes (Bond & Bond, 2004; Doumas et al., 2008), so results may not have been stable enough to be replicated in larger samples. Third, the attachment measure used in the current study differed from those utilized in previous studies, as this was the first study to assess attachment using the ECR-R. Lastly, this study included self-report and partner-report measures of physical IPV, which may have resulted in the differences between this study's findings and those from previous research. Future research should compare differences in predictors depending on whether IPV is measured using self-report, partner-report, or combined-report data to elucidate whether these differences could be attributed to differences in how male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV were measured.

Clinical Implications

Both men and women who have developed difficulties with attachment—likely due to childhood adversity, exposure to IPV, and unreliable early attachment figures—are at risk of perpetrating violence in their adult intimate relationships. The ability to have attachment needs met is essential for high-quality relationship functioning. The present study's results suggest that individuals who experience attachment-related difficulties are at risk for experiencing unsatisfying and dysfunctional relationships. These deficits are present in young adults and suggest that prevention programs geared toward adolescents, or even as early as elementary

school, should address attachment-related concerns to reduce the probability that these individuals will perpetrate IPV in their adult intimate relationships. In addition, the results of the present study highlight the need for treatment programs for IPV perpetrators to address attachment-related issues. This could include incorporating discussions on how perpetrators' childhood relationships with their parents may be shaping how the perpetrator experiences their adult relationships. Furthermore, couples therapy addressing how conflicting attachment needs may be beneficial for some couples experiencing IPV. Although the idea of including both partners in treatment for IPV is controversial, there is some evidence suggesting that, as long as couples are screened to determine whether involvement in treatment does not pose a greater risk of victimization, couples' therapy can be an effective IPV treatment for some couples (Bennett et al., 2020; Letchtenberg et al., 2015).

Limitations

Although the present study added to the current literature on attachment and IPV in heterosexual couples, a few limitations are worth mentioning. The present study was conducted on a sample primarily recruited from a large Hispanic-serving institution in The Rio Grande Valley (RGV), a region in the U.S. state of Texas that is over 90% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This is both a strength and limitation of the study. It is a strength in that it is the first study to examine the relationships between heterosexual partners' attachment dimensions and IPV in Hispanic couples, but a limitation because the findings of this study cannot be generalized to clinical or community Hispanic couples in the RGV or other regions of the United States. Additionally, because the current study mainly was conducted on college students and their partners and most couples did not report violence, participants' CTS2 physical perpetration and victimization scores were dichotomized. Although dichotomized IPV variables provide

meaningful information regarding the prevalence of and risk factors for perpetrating IPV at least once, dichotomized scores leave out other meaningful information such as how frequently one engages in violence and what factors are associated with the frequency or severity of violence.

Additional limitations of the current research were its cross-sectional design and use of questionnaires (both self-report and partner-report questionnaire data are subject to bias).

Furthermore, although partners who participated before the pandemic were seated apart, there is no way of knowing whether partners who participated during the pandemic were close to one another while completing their surveys. However, since chi-square results revealed no significant differences in IPV reports between couples who participated before or during the pandemic, this may not have had much of an impact on the way participants responded to the survey items.

Future studies should address these limitations by replicating this research on predominantly Hispanic clinical or relationally distressed community couples and examine male and female IPV dichotomously and continuously. Previous research screening community couples for moderate to high relationship distress have found most couples to report IPV occurrences (e.g., Babcock et al., 2019). Thus, assessing male and female IPV as continuous variables may be appropriate in future research examining attachment and IPV in Hispanic community couples if couples are screened using similar methods to those employed by Babcock et al. (2019). Additionally, future research should expand on the current study by examining the relationships between partners' attachment dimensions and other forms of IPV, such as sexual coercion and psychological abuse, by measuring them using self-reports and partner-reports of male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Despite this study's limitations, the present study adds to the current literature on heterosexual partners' attachment and IPV by examining these associations in a predominantly Hispanic sample, including self-report and partner-report data, using an attachment assessment that directly measures attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, and recruiting a larger sample than those recruited in some previous studies. Although hypotheses were only partially supported, the results demonstrate that attachment appears to be a relevant factor worth addressing in treatment when working with Hispanic individuals and couples affected by IPV. Additionally, the results of this study underscore how the way perpetration is measured can impact the results obtained. Given self-report questionnaires, such as the CTS2 and its original version, are the most commonly used tools for measuring IPV, they must yield valid information regarding the prevalence, frequency, and risk factors for IPV. Thus, future research should move beyond just examining IPV concordance rates and examine how known risk factors for IPV, such as insecure attachment, personality disorders, and alcohol dependency, relate to male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated IPV depending on which partners' reports are considered.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Study and Demographic Variables*

Variables	<i>M</i> or <i>N</i> (SD or %)
Attachment Anxiety ^a	
Men	2.73 (1.15)
Women	2.98 (1.17)
Attachment Avoidance ^a	
Men	2.33 (0.96)
Women	2.17 (0.85)
Male-Perpetrated Physical IPV ^b	
According to Men	42 (20.2%)
According to Women	52 (25%)
Female-Perpetrated Physical IPV ^b	
According to Men	54 (26%)
According to Women	62 (29.8%)
Age ^a	
Men	21.68 (4.04)
Women	20.74 (3.51)
College Students ^b	
Men	150 (72.1%)
Women	180 (86.5%)
Hispanic Couples ^b	
Both partners Hispanic	177 (85.1%)
One partner Hispanic	25 (12%)
Both partners are not Hispanic	6 (2.9%)
Cohabiting Couples ^b	
Yes	44 (21.2%)
No	164 (78.8%)

Relationship status ^b .		
Dating Relationship		186 (89.4%)
Engaged		6 (2.9%)
Married		16 (7.7%)
Relationship length ^b .		
More than 2 years		91 (43.8%)
Between 12-24 months		46 (22.1%)
Between 6-12 months		29 (13.9%)
Between 1-6 months		38 (18.3%)
Less than 1 month		4 (1.9%)

^N = 208 couples. ^a means and standard deviations were displayed. ^b sample sizes and percentages were displayed.

Table 2 *Bivariate Correlations Among Self-Reported Male Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Relationship Length, Age, and Attachment*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Male Self-Reported IPV								
2. Relationship Length	.11	--						
3. Male Age	.05	.13	--					
4. Female Age	-.01	.20**	.78**	--				
5. Male Attach. Anxiety	.20**	-.01	.06	.00	--			
6. Male Attach. Avoidance	.17*	-.13	.11	.07	.56**	--		
7. Female Attach. Anxiety	.23**	-.07	-.15*	-.17*	.39**	.36**	--	
8. Female Attach. Avoidance	.05	-.15*	-.03	-.05	.25**	.29**	.47**	--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. M = mean. SD = standard deviation.

Table 3 *Bivariate Correlations Among Partner-Reported Male IPV, Relationship Length, Age, and Attachment*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Male Partner-Reported IPV	--							
2. Relationship Length	.08	--						
3. Male Age	-.01	.13	--					
4. Female Age	-.04	.20**	.78**	--				
5. Male Attach. Anxiety	.10	-.01	.06	.00	--			
6. Male Attach. Avoidance	.11	-.13	.11	.07	.56**	--		
7. Female Attach. Anxiety	.15*	-.07	-.15*	-.17*	.39**	.36**	--	
8. Female Attach. Avoidance	.08	-.15*	-.03	-.05	.25**	.29**	.47**	--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. M = mean. SD = standard deviation.

Table 4 *Bivariate Correlations Among Self-Reported Female IPV, Relationship Length, Age, and Attachment*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Self-Report Female IPV	--							
2. Relationship Length	.12	--						
3. Male Age	-.01	.13	--					
4. Female Age	-.02	.20**	.78**	--				
5. Male Attach. Anxiety	.13	-.01	.06	.00	--			
6. Male Attach. Avoidance	.10	-.13	.11	.07	.56**	--		
7. Female Attach. Anxiety	.23**	-.07	-.15*	-.17*	.39**	.36**	--	
8. Female Attach. Avoidance	.10	-.15*	-.03	-.05	.25**	.29**	.47**	--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. M = mean. SD = standard deviation.

Table 5 *Bivariate Correlations Among Partner-Reported Female IPV, Relationship Length, Age, and Attachment*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Partner-Report Female IPV	--							
2. Relationship Length	.12	--						
3. Male Age	.09	.13	--					
4. Female Age	.03	.20**	.78**	--				
5. Male Attach. Anxiety	.10	-.01	.06	.00	--			
6. Male Attach. Avoidance	.09	-.13	.11	.07	.56**	--		
7. Female Attach. Anxiety	.18**	-.07	-.15*	-.17*	.39**	.36**	--	
8. Female Attach. Avoidance	-.01	-.15*	-.03	-.05	.25**	.29**	.47**	--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. M = mean. SD = standard deviation.

Table 6. *Chi-Square Tests of Independence Results for IPV Variables*

Variables	χ^2
SR Male IPV and SR Female IPV	10.26***
PR Male IPV and PR Female IPV	17.64***
SR Female IPV and PR Male IPV	92.68***
SR Male IPV and PR Female IPV	69.10***
SR Male IPV and PR Male IPV	33.45***
SR Female IPV and PR Female IPV	14.21***

Note. SR = self-reported. PR = partner-reported. ** $p < .01$.
*** $p \leq .001$

Table 7. Proportions of Self-Reported and Partner Reported Male and Female IPV Perpetration Across Cohabiting and Non-Cohabiting Couples

	Cohabiting	Not Cohabiting	χ^2
	% (n)	% (n)	
Self-reported male IPV	31.8 (14)	17.1 (28)	4.68*
Partner-reported male IPV	34.1 (15)	22.6 (37)	2.46
Self-reported female IPV	40.9 (18)	26.8 (44)	3.29
Partner-reported female IPV	40.9 (18)	22 (36)	6.49*

N = 208 couples. **p* < .05.

Table 8. Binary Logistic Regression Models: Attachment and Self-Reported and Partner-Reported Male IPV

Variables	Nagelkerke R^2	B (SE)	OR	95% CI for OR
Self-Reported IPV				
Block 1	.03			
Cohabiting Relationship		0.82 (0.38)	2.27*	[1.07, 4.82]
Block 2	.10			
Cohabiting Relationship		0.96 (0.40)	2.60*	[1.18, 5.71]
Male Attachment Anxiety		0.44 (0.15)	1.56**	[1.17, 2.08]
Block 2	.08			
Cohabiting Relationship		0.89 (0.40)	2.44*	[1.13, 5.30]
Male Attachment Avoidance		0.45 (0.18)	1.57*	[1.11, 2.23]
Block 3	.14			
Cohabiting Relationship		1.02 (0.41)	2.78*	[1.24, 6.22]
Male Attachment Avoidance		0.26 (0.19)	1.30	[0.89, 1.90]
Female Attachment Anxiety		0.45 (0.16)	1.57**	[1.14, 2.17]
Block 4	.16			
Cohabiting Relationship		0.87 (0.42)	2.39*	[1.05, 5.47]
Male Attachment Avoidance		0.11 (0.22)	1.12	[0.73, 1.71]
Female Attachment Anxiety		0.44 (0.17)	1.55*	[1.11, 2.18]
Male Avoid X Female Anxiety		0.33 (0.17)	1.39*	[1.00, 1.92]
Partner-Reported IPV				
Block 1	.03			
Female Attachment Anxiety		0.30 (0.14)	1.35*	[1.03, 1.76]

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. SE = standard error. OR = odds ratio. CI = confidence interval.

Table 9. *Binary Logistic Regression Models: Attachment and Self-Reported and Partner-Reported Female IPV*

Variables	Nagelkerke R^2	B (SE)	OR	95% CI for OR
Self-Reported IPV				
Block 1	.07			
Female Attach. Anxiety		0.42 (0.13)	1.53**	[1.17, 1.99]
Partner-Reported IPV				
Block 1	.02			
Cohabiting Relationship		0.57 (0.37)	1.78	[0.86, 3.66]
Block 2	.10			
Cohabiting Relationship		1.06 (0.38)	2.88**	[1.38, 6.02]
Female Attach. Anxiety		0.40 (0.14)	1.49**	[1.14, 1.97]

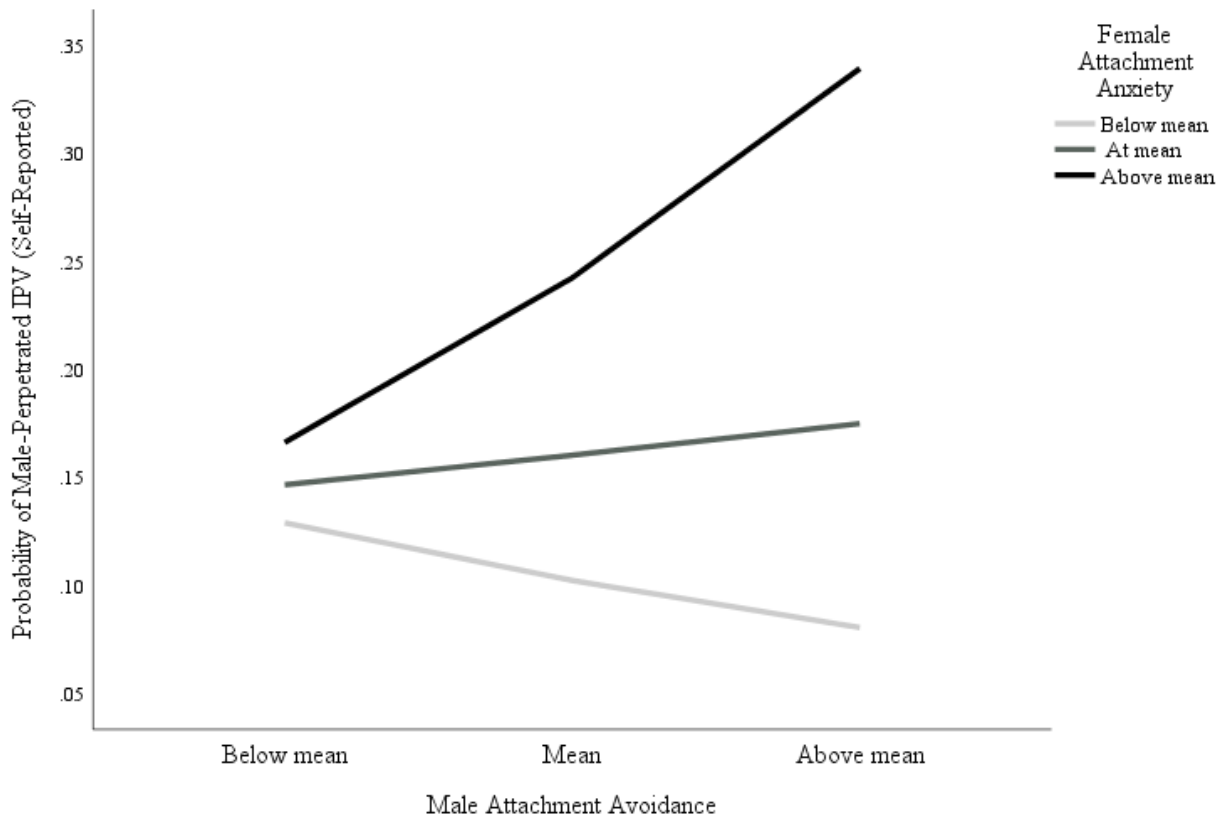
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. SE = standard error. OR = odds ratio. CI = confidence interval.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

FIGURE

Figure 1. *Interaction Effect Between Male Attachment Avoidance and Female Attachment Anxiety on Self-Reported Male IPV*



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Deanna Pollard was born in Dallas, Texas and moved to the Rio Grande Valley when she was five years old. She began her undergraduate career at The University of Texas Pan-American in 2013 and graduated magna cum laude from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and a minor in English in 2018. During her undergraduate career, Ms. Pollard was an active member of UTPA's/UTRGV's Psychology Club and served as Historian for UTRGV's Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology chapter for one academic year. Additionally, Ms. Pollard was an undergraduate research assistant for several faculty in the Department of Psychological Science. As a graduate student, Ms. Pollard was a graduate research assistant in Dr. Arthur Cantos' Family Violence Lab and a co-founding member and vice-president of the Psychology Student Alliance for Research (PSAR). In August 2021, Deanna Pollard graduated with a Master of Arts degree in Experimental Psychology. She is now pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology at The University of Houston.

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