

THESIS

USING POWER IMBALANCES TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN FORMS OF FAMILY
VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

USING POWER IMBALANCES TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN FORMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Forms of family violence can be characterized by differences in power between the parties involved. According to interdependence theory, power is the inverse of dependence, so the less powerful person in a relationship is dependent on the more powerful one. It was predicted that participants who were trained on these power dynamics would be able to better label situations involving family violence according to interdependence theory and recognize the power imbalances. Results indicate that training did not help participants in labelling forms of family violence using the terminology from interdependence theory. However, participants were able to recognize the power imbalances among situations of family violence in predicted directions. It is important that family violence is assessed accurately so that interventions are implemented appropriately and that interventions that are used do not cause further harm to families.

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USING POWER IMBALANCES TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN FORMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Court systems that handle family conflicts must frequently intervene when there are allegations of family violence. There are many forms of family violence that have been identified by scientists and clinicians working with families, which can make assessment and intervention a challenge. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a broad term that encompasses several different forms of violence, such as physical and coercive controlling violence (formerly known as intimate terrorism) and situational couple violence (Elizabeth, 2015; Johnson, 2008). Coercively controlling violence involves one partner engaging in abusive behaviors to exert power and control over the other (Johnson 1995; 2008). It is important to note that coercive controlling violence involves a pattern of behaviors leaving victims in an ongoing state of fear using physical and verbal assaults, threats, intimidation, isolation, or emotional, sexual, or economic abuse (Hester, Jones, Williamson, Fahmy, & Feder, 2017). For the purposes of this study, relationships involving coercive controlling behaviors will be referred to as CCB. Due to the number of terms and acronyms that will be described in this paper, CCB and other terms are presented in Appendix E for ease of reference. In comparison to CCB, situational couple violence is less severe and consists of both partners using aggressive behaviors when engaged in conflict (Hines & Douglas, 2018; Johnson, 1995; Johnson, 2008). With situational couple violence, the parties involved have more balanced levels of power and a similar ability to influence the outcomes of the situation. Both forms of IPV are abusive, however they vary in the reciprocity of and motives for the abusive behaviors.

Child affected by parental relationship distress (CARPD), is a relatively new condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, where children may suffer behavioral, cognitive, affective, and physical symptoms when exposed to intimate partner distress or violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Bernet, Wamboldt, & Narrow, 2016). Children are clearly affected negatively when exposed to persistent and significant conflict between their parents (Camisasca, Miragoli, & Di Blasio, 2019; Hughes, 1988; Klosinski, 1993; Vahedi, Krug, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, & Westrupp, 2019), and these effects can last through adolescence (Zinzow, Ruggiero, Hanson, Smith, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2009) and into adulthood (Davies, DiLillo, & Martinez, 2004). CAPRD provides evidence as to why it is important that we can accurately assess and intervene in these situations where there is high conflict family violence (Bernet, 2015).

Aside from witnessing IPV, CAPRD can be caused by parents involving the child in their conflict. One way that parents involve children is when both parents attempt to influence their child to be on their “side,” and/or use the child to influence the other parent. This situation is called a “a loyalty conflict” and it results in the child feeling caught in the middle. Loyalty conflict children attempt to maintain affection for both parents simultaneously while in the middle of parental triangulation (Bernet et al., 2016; Parmiani, Iafrate, & Giuliani, 2012). To alleviate the pressure being placed on them, children dealing with a loyalty conflict typically either keep an emotional distance from both parents, or they could choose to form an alliance with just one. A child dealing with a loyalty conflict between their parents is subject to a great deal of stress and negative developmental outcomes (Amato & Afifi, 2006).

For the purposes of the study, parental relationships where both parents are acting badly, such as seen with loyalty conflicts, will be categorized as dysfunctional coparenting (DC). These

situations involve parties who are reacting to each other in a reciprocal manner to gain a desirable outcome, but neither of them necessarily holds more power in the situation. In contrast, other separated parents inevitably run into disagreements about their children yet can resolve these disagreements amicably. For the purposes of this study, these kinds of parental relationships will be referred to as healthy coparenting conflict (HCC). Like DC parents, HCC parents have similar levels of power and do not attempt to gain power or control over the other, however there are greater levels of conflict between the parents that involve the children.

Another way that children become involved in their parents' conflict is when a parent engages in parental alienating behaviors (PABs) to undermine and destroy the child's relationship with the alienated parent (Baker & Darnall, 2006; Harman & Matthewson, 2020). Parental alienation (PA) is used to describe a mental condition that is primarily caused by these parental alienating behaviors. In PA, the child aligns with one parent, and actively rejects the other parent without any legitimate reason (Harman, Kruk, & Hines, 2018; Bernet & Lorandos, 2020). Over time, the child may adopt the negative beliefs of the alienating parent and actively participate in behaviors to further reject the targeted parent (Warshak, 2003). Parental alienating behaviors and CCBs are similar in that one party is dependent on the party that yields more power to get the outcomes that they desire. The difference between PA and CCB is that PA has the addition of the child to the dynamic. These parental relationships can be quite damaging to the adult and child victims.

Hundreds of parental alienating behaviors have been identified in the research literature (Baker et al., 2006) and they generally fall into several categories, including the derogation of the alienated parent to the child and others, interference of contact and communication between the child and the alienated parent, the use of legal and administrative aggression (e.g., making false

reports of abuse to police or CPS; Harman & Matthewson, 2020; Harman et al., 2018; Hines, Douglas, & Berger, 2015; Kruk 1993, 2011), and enhancing loyalty to the alienating parent. Parents that alienate use these tactics to gain control or power (Baker, 2007; Garber, 2011; Harman & Matthewson, 2020), and often take advantage of the legal system to gain a custody advantage (Arendell, 1995; Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Hardesty & Ganong, 2006; Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008; Ptacek, 1997). Regardless of severity, parental alienating behaviors result in the psychological maltreatment of the child, the alienated parent, and other family members, making them a form of family violence that includes not only child abuse, but also IPV (Johnston, 2003; Harman et al., 2018; Dijkstra, 2019). For the purposes of this study, these parental alienation families will be labelled PA, and they differ from DC and HCC families due to there being more of a power imbalance between the parents. CCB is different from PA, DC, and HCC, in that there are not children involved in the dynamic. Consequently, the more power parent engaged in more proactive aggression, while the alienated parent reacts.

The dynamics of power and control are important to understand in the context of family violence (Emery, Thapa, & Wu, 2017; Wagers, 2015) because different forms of violence are characterized by differences in power between partners. Situational couple violence involves partners with more equal power while coercively controlling violence involves one partner who has significantly more power and control over the other (Hester et al., 2017). Parental alienation has been characterized as an outcome of a relationship in which there are unequal power dynamics between the alienating parent and the targeted parent (Warshak, 2003). Balanced and imbalanced power dynamics in families where the parents of children have separated or divorced are also reflected in loyalty conflicts and parental alienation respectively (Harman, Leder-Elder, & Biringen, 2019; Hester et al., 2017). It is important to note that the aggressor in situations

involving CCB (Hardesty, Crossman, Haselschwerdt, Raffaelli, Ogolsky, & Johnson, 2015) and PA repeatedly and intentionally acts upon their goal of asserting power and control over the other party over time; the aggressive behaviors are not isolated incidents.

Assessment Problems

When families experience high conflict, they often require legal assistance to remedy their issues (Cashmore, & Parkinson, 2011). Consequently, family courts often utilize professionals and experts to assess the interpersonal dynamics of the family to diagnose and/or make recommendations for intervention. Not all third-party evaluators (e.g., custody evaluators) utilize assessment tools for family violence (Bow, 2006; Emery, Otto, & O'Donohue, 2005; Patel & Choate, 2014), and many assessment tools have only been validated for use among intact couples. Although power is essential to understand when evaluating families where there has been violence, there are currently no valid assessment tools that directly examine power dynamics that can be used in this context. For example, both the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) and the Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale, (Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, & Pasley, 2008) are designed only to assess IPV among intimate partners who are still (or recently have been) in a relationship with each other. In addition, none of the current IPV assessment tools, such as the Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI; Shepard & Campbell, 1992), the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS; Hegarty, Sheehan, & Schonfeld, 1999), the Measure of Wife Abuse (Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993), the Partner Abuse Scale—Physical (PASPH; Attala et al., 1994), the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), the Index of Psychological Abuse (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999), or the Women's Experiences with Battering (WEB; Smith, Earp, & DeVellis, 1995), have focused on the interpersonal power dynamics between the parties involved (Thompson, 2006).

Given that imbalances in power are a distinguishing feature of the two different forms of IPV (i.e. coercively controlling and situational couple violence; [Johnson 1995; Johnson, 2008]), these IPV assessment tools have limited utility.

Screening tools used to assess IPV and family violence also have numerous psychometric problems. For example, the Hurt, Insult, Threaten, and Scream screening tool (HITS; Sherin, Sinacore, Li, Zitter, & Shakil, 1998), the Woman Abuse Screening Tool (WAST; Brown et al., 1996), the Partner Violence Screen (PVS; Feldhaus et al., 1997), and the Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS; Soeken et al., 1998), do not include well established psychometric properties to support test validity and reliability (Thompson, 2006; Rabin, Jennings, Campbell, & Bair-Merritt, 2009). In addition, these tools vary widely in sensitivity, with as low as 35% of victims being accurately assessed. Many of these tools were also developed specifically for women, have not been validated, and at least one study has found that HITS and PVS do not accurately assess IPV with male victims (Mills, Avegno, & Haydel, 2006). Unreliable and invalid screening tools can lead to false positives and negatives in the assessment of family violence, which can result in some individuals being falsely blamed for abuse, and others having their victimization overlooked. Due to these limitations, there are many individuals and families whose family violence has been misdiagnosed, which can result in the loss of contact between victims and support services, increased psychological distress, and the escalation of the abuse (U.S Preventative Services, 2004). Likewise, accuracy in assessment also matters because some individuals make claims of abuse as a strategy to gain a custody advantage--poor and unreliable methods may lead to the misuse of administrative systems (e.g., Child Protective Services, CPS) or to harm innocent individuals (Bala, Mitnick, Trocmé, & Houston, 2007; Saini, Laajasalo, & Platt, 2020; Trocmé & Bala, 2005). With effective tools to accurately assess interpersonal power

dynamics, general practitioners, clinicians, and investigators can make a significant impact on victims of PA and CCB (Hegarty, 2011; Hansen, 1991; Stanley, Miller, Richardson, Foster, & Thomson, 2010).

Interdependence Theory and Power

The Atlas of Interpersonal Situations (Kelley et al., 2003) contains 21 conceptual descriptions of interpersonal situations that vary in the amount of influence on outcomes each party has, whether the outcomes of the parties are joint or individual, as well as the amount of information available and responses of the other partner using interdependence theory. These 21 situations and examples of them appear in Appendix A. According to interdependence theory, power is the inverse of dependence, wherein the more power someone has, the less dependent they are on others to achieve the outcomes they desire (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The focus of the current study is on three of the most commonly described situations by alienated parents: Asymmetric dependence and chicken, and disjunctive problems (Harman, Maniotes, & Grubb, 2021). These situations are described in greater detail below.

Asymmetric Dependence

In these situations, there is a large power imbalance between the two parties in that one person has nearly all control and power over the outcomes of the other person and is not dependent on the other person at all for their own outcomes (Kelley, Holmes, Kerr & Reis, 2003). The power between the parties is asymmetrical, hence the name. The distinguishing feature of this situation is that the dependent person is completely at the mercy of the other for the outcomes they desire. For example, a child is very dependent on a parent for outcomes. If the child wants a toy, the parent may choose to buy it or not- doing so does not affect the parent much at all; the child is dependent on the parent for their beneficence.

Asymmetric dependence is reflected in parental gatekeeping practices, which limit or prevent contact between a child and a parent (e.g., not facilitating communication, preventing parenting time; Austin, Pruett, Kirkpatrick, Flens, & Gould, 2013). In couples with children, the primary custodial parent can often control the amount of contact the child has with the other parent when they are not in their care. Similarly, in relationships characterized by coercively controlling behaviors (CCBs), the more powerful partner can control or limit contact between the target of their behavior and outside parties to socially isolate them and maintain power in the relationship.

Chicken

This situation is created by one party to gain power over the other (Kelley, et al., 2003). Chicken is best described as a direct confrontation initiated by one party to force an outcome that is a no-win situation for the other party. The person who is being confronted has no choice but to act - they can either attempt to defend themselves (verbally or physically) or walk away. A situation is created where each person must choose between a safe choice resulting in middling outcomes, and a risky choice with extreme (good or bad) outcomes, depending on the choice of the other person. The safer choice is to back off, but then the person that does this is at risk of being called a “chicken”. For example, a parent may start an argument at a parenting time exchange in front of the children. The targeted parent can either respond and defend themselves or leave the situation. The situation was created by the parent to force only one of two behavioral responses—the former making the target look just as responsible for the conflict or as abusive (when it was in defence) and the latter to make the target look like a “chicken.” Both responses give advantage to the challenger, who may or may not have had greater power in the relationship prior to the confrontation. Individuals who engage in frequent acts of chicken often have a

personality disorder driving them to control others (Wang et al., 2017), and this pathology is also useful in distinguishing between situational couple violence and CCB (Johnson, 2008). It has been found that at least 50% of male perpetrators in domestic violence intervention programs have some sort of disordered personality, such as narcissism, aggression, being antisocial, and borderline and paranoid personality disorders (Gibbons, Collins, & Reid, 2011). However, response bias may cause the actual prevalence of this to be underrepresented.

Disjunctive Problems

In these situations, both people have similar levels of power, and both people can take actions that will benefit everyone (Kelley et al., 2003). The partners may opt to take actions that would benefit both partners, without needing to coordinate with the other person, or they can make decisions that only benefit themselves. Disjunctive problems are ones where the parties disagree about what they want the outcome to be and there is only one solution that can be made, making only one “winner” (Kelley et al., 2003). For example, both parents could either work together to host a birthday party for their child where everyone benefits, or just one parent could do all the planning and set up and everyone will still receive the same benefits. With parents who are separated, they may need court involvement to come to a custody agreement because they cannot do so on their own and they hope for a favourable outcome that would only benefit themselves rather than the other parent. In couples without children, they may end up going to court to divide up their belongings after separating for the same reason.

Power and control are important dynamics to understand when assessing family violence. In some relationships, people have similar levels of influence, or power over each other, or may have more control than the other over certain types of decisions. An imbalance in power does not always indicate a negative relationship--it is possible for the more powerful person to care very

much about the less powerful person's outcomes (Kelley et al., 2003). Sometimes this authority is "given" or "allowed" by the partner, and other times it is afforded to them by some outside source (Harman, Stewart, Keneski, & Agnew, 2019), such as if a court gives a divorced parent certain types of decision-making authority over a child. Even if one parent has full custody, they can choose to encourage a continued relationship between their child/ren and the other parent. One partner may have all financial control, have more family and friends, and more job opportunities, but still choose to act in ways that benefit the other partner. However, if the more powerful person is not considerate of the other person's outcomes, the relationship will not function in a healthy manner. In cases where relationships experience conflict or abuse, partners may misuse or abuse power to obtain their own desired outcomes or to make the outcomes worse for the other person (Harman et al., 2019). Imbalances in power can create dependencies in relationships when people need each other for an outcome that they want or need. Interdependence theory provides a framework for understanding the specifics of the situation (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Vanderdrift, Ioerger, & Arriaga, 2019; Myhill, 2015), such as abuse of the legal system, gatekeeping, and/or coalitions with other family members to maintain power and control over the other person.

In summary, current assessment tools for family violence do not directly examine these power dynamics in families and many are not reliable or valid for use with different populations (e.g., males as victims; Thompson, 2006; Mills, Avegno, & Haydel, 2006; Rabin, Jennings, Campbell, & Bair-Merritt, 2009). Mental health providers who make child custody recommendations need reliable and valid assessment tools so that they can conduct investigations thoroughly and efficiently (Patel, & Choate, 2014; Emery et al., 2005; Bow, 2006). For the current study, interdependence theory is applied as a framework with which to

understand power dynamics in family violence. Understanding the power dynamics between two people is essential when trying to understand interpersonal conflict.

The Current Study

Given that power dynamics can differentiate between different forms of family violence, assessing these dynamics can potentially increase the accuracy of assessments. Interpersonal power dynamics are not necessarily intuitive to assess, and individuals may need some specific training before they are fully understood and applied in custody evaluations. A brief training could potentially help to differentiate power holders from others in interpersonal conflict and allow for more accurate assessments of the family dynamics. The purpose of this study is to examine whether lay people perceive there to be different power dynamics in descriptions of families or couples that vary in the type of violence depicted, and whether they can correctly classify the type of situations that vary based on the interdependence of the parties (asymmetric dependence, chicken, and disjunctive problems).

This thesis empirically tests whether the asymmetrical power dynamics in parental alienation cases are like those where there has been CCB, and whether these are differentiated from cases where there are more balanced power dynamics (e.g., loyalty conflicts). A codebook was developed for this study based on 3 of the most commonly identified entries from the total 21 detailed in the book *An Atlas of Interpersonal Situations* (Kelley et al., 2003) that was used to aid participants in assessing the power and control dynamics involved in interpersonal situations. The codebook can also be used for third parties to make more accurate power assessments of parties involved in the situations. In this study, I tested three pre-registered hypotheses (<https://osf.io/na32u>):

1) Participants who receive training on how to differentiate between different situations of interdependence (chicken, asymmetric dependence, and disjunctive problems) will be able to label the situations correctly compared to participants who do not receive training.

2) Participants will be able to distinguish power imbalances in the situations where power is not equal (chicken and asymmetric dependence) compared to situations where power is more equal (disjunctive problems); and

3) Situations with PA and CCB will have greater power imbalance ratings than situations of DC and HCC.

METHOD

Participants

The study included a total of 238 undergraduate students at Colorado State University who are currently enrolled in a psychology course. A total of 331 responses were initially collected and participants who only consented and then did not answer any questions were excluded.

Procedure

The study employed the use of a 2 (training versus no training) x 3 (power dynamic type) x 4 (type of family violence) between and within-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to condition where they received training on identifying power dynamics, or just received a brief written description of the different types of power that were used when evaluating narratives (see below). All participants then rated narrative descriptions of relationship/family dynamics that varied by power dynamic type and type of family violence that they were describing. Brief written descriptions of the three power dynamic types were provided for all participants to reference while evaluating the narratives. All data were collected using an on-line survey administered with the Qualtrics software program. Twelve narrative descriptions were presented one at a time in random order. After completing two questions for all the situations, participants were directed to a debriefing page and the end of the survey.

Materials

Training Video

A training video was created to inform half of the randomly assigned participants of the definition and importance of assessing power dynamics in the context of conflict or abuse (IPV

and family violence; see Appendix C). The video was 10 minutes long and participants viewed it as a Youtube video that was embedded into the Qualtrics survey. Factors that contribute to an imbalance in power dynamics were explained as being situational and not general (i.e. gender, race, etc.). Then, asymmetric dependence, chicken, and disjunctive problems were explained. Detailed examples of each situation were also given. The training video was pilot tested with a group of graduate students to ensure clarity before it was used in the survey.

Narrative Descriptions Presented to Participants

Twelve narrative descriptions were presented to participants. The narratives reflected four types of family violence: PA, CCB, DC and HCC, and within each type were narratives that illustrated asymmetric dependence, disjunctive problems, and chicken. PA narratives were selected from another study where participants rated power imbalances across several hypothetical situations where parental alienation had occurred (Grubb, Saunders, Harman, 2019). These cases were generated based on expert knowledge and examples from interviews of mothers and fathers who had been victims of parental alienation (Harman, et al., under review). Parental alienation describes an outcome in situations where one parent has exhibited PABs over time to damage the relationship between their child/ren and the alienated parent. The parent who is being alienated is the one who has less power over the quality of the relationship with their child.

Coercive controlling behavior (CCB) examples were pulled from The National Domestic Violence Hotline's website of survivor stories. Names in the stories had already been changed and they were shortened to keep the length consistent across situations for this study. Cases of CCB describe a relationship where one person has more power than the other and is attempting to use it to control the less powerful person—it is essentially the same relationship dynamic,

without the child directly being involved in the conflict. Cases of PA have similar asymmetrical power dynamics as CCB cases (Harman et al., under review), with patterns of coercive controlling behavior, such as harassment, threats, stalking, and intimidation (Harman & Matthewson, 2020).

Healthy coparenting conflict and DCC situations were anonymized examples from a mental health provider and legal mediator who work with a variety of families referred to them by family court to resolve their conflicts. To create these narrative descriptions, situations based on the different family dynamics were described to the providers who then sent detailed notes on comparable real cases they have worked with. These notes were then shortened to keep the length and type of situation consistent with the other narratives. Healthy coparenting conflict describes situations where co-parents may not fully agree on something, such as which school to send their child/ren to. In these situations, neither parent is necessarily attempting to gain power or control the other person or exhibits abusive behaviors. Dysfunctional coparenting describes situations where parents are not acting appropriately, and both may be exhibiting abusive behaviors, but neither of them are trying to damage the relationship between their child and the other parent or to gain any long term power advantage over the other party. The final situations presented to participants were designed to reflect asymmetric dependence, chicken, and disjunctive problems, and all were adjusted to be similar in length and content (see Appendix B).

Measures

Labels

After reading each narrative, participants were presented with the description of the three situations (asymmetric dependence, chicken, and disjunctive problems; see Appendix D) and asked to select the situation that was best depicted in the narrative. A dummy code was created

by indicating whether participants were able to label the situations correctly or not (0=incorrect, 1=correct)

Power Ratings

Participants were then presented with a sliding bar that had one name at each end. These names were of the two people having a conflict in the corresponding narrative descriptions. Participants were asked to drag the bar on the screen towards the name that they believed held more power in the narrative description. A variable ranging from -100 to 100 indicated the power imbalances in the corresponding questions, with a value closer to either end indicating a greater imbalance in power.

A dummy coded variable was created to indicate whether a participant received training or not (0= control, 1= training). A dummy coded variable was also created for each question to indicate the type of family type (1= PA, 2= CCB, 3= DC, 4= HCC), as was a variable to indicate the type of situation depicted in the narrative (1= asymmetric dependence, 2= chicken, 3= disjunctive problems).

RESULTS

The hypotheses, analysis plan, and method for this study were embargoed on OSF (<https://osf.io/na32u>) prior to cleaning data and conducting the statistical analyses.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that participants who received training on how to differentiate between different situations of interdependence (chicken, asymmetric dependence, and disjunctive problems) would be able to label the situations more accurately than participants who did not receive training. The training group answered an average of 55% of the questions accurately ($n = 567$, $M(SD) = 6.60 (0.49)$), and the control group answered an average of 54% of the questions accurately ($n = 944$, $M(SD) = 6.50(0.49)$). A Chi-square statistic was used to test differences between the training group ($n = 87$) and control group ($n = 151$) for the narratives based on the power dynamics that were described. Results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between the training and control groups for asymmetric dependence ($\chi^2(1, N = 239) = .41, p > .05$), chicken ($\chi^2(1, N = 239) = .72, p > .05$), or disjunctive problems ($\chi^2(1, N = 239) = 1.79, p > .05$). Therefore, I did not find support for the first hypothesis: participants performed at chance level in their application of the power dynamics to the narratives, regardless of whether they received the training or not.

For the second and third hypotheses, a linear multilevel model was used to account for repeated measures of participants, the between-level of participants (training vs control), and the within-level of the effects of family type and power type on the power imbalances participants assessed within the two narrative descriptions. Table 1 and Figure 1 show descriptive statistics of power imbalance ratings for the relevant combinations of training, family type, and power type.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was that participants would be able to distinguish power imbalances in the narrative descriptions where power is not equal (chicken and asymmetric dependence) compared to situations where power is more equal (disjunctive problems). Table 2 presents the results of the multilevel model predicting the outcome variable indicating participants' perception of the imbalance in power for each situation. Results from the ANOVA model indicate that there was a significant interaction for the family conflict type and power type, $F(6, 239) = 160.80, p < .0001$, and a significant main effect of power type $F(2, 239) = 79.80, p < .0001$. The interaction effect is described below, as that was a test for the third hypothesis. There was not a main effect of training, $F(1, 239) = 2.01, p > .05$. A post hoc partial eta-squared analysis indicated a small effect size for the main effect of power type ($\eta p^2 = .23$).

As predicted, narrative descriptions involving asymmetric dependence had a greater imbalance in power than those involving disjunctive problems ($\beta = 31.67, t = 12.85, p < .0001$). However, contrary to what was expected, narrative descriptions involving asymmetric dependence were rated as having a greater imbalance in power than those involving chicken ($\beta = 34.06, t = 13.83, p < .0001$) and chicken and disjunctive problems did not differ significantly from each other ($\beta = -2.39, t = -0.97, p > .05$). Therefore, I found partial support for the second hypothesis, in that asymmetric dependence was rated as having a greater imbalance in power than disjunctive problems and chicken, indicating that chicken may involve more equal power dynamics, similar to disjunctive problems.

Hypothesis 3

The third and last hypothesis was that narrative descriptions with family type PA and CCB would be rated as having greater power imbalances than DC and HCC. I found partial

support for this hypothesis. Narrative descriptions with PA ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 7.80$, 95% CI = 0.18, 8.14) had a smaller imbalance in power than CCB ($M = 30.93$, $SD = 7.86$, 95% CI = 26.94, 34.92; $\beta = -26.77$, $t = -9.42$, $p < .0001$), which was not predicted. However, PA scenarios were rated as having a greater imbalance in power than HCC ($M = -7.66$, 95% , $SD = 7.84$, CI = -11.64, -3.67; $\beta = 11.82$, $t = 4.17$, $p = 0.0002$), and DC scenarios ($M = -3.93$, $SD = 7.83$, 95% CI = -7.93, 0.08); $\beta = 8.09$, $t = 2.84$, $p = 0.02$). In addition, narrative descriptions involving CCB had a greater imbalance in power than those involving DC ($\beta = 34.86$, $t = 12.83$, $p < 0.0001$) and HCC ($\beta = 38.59$, $t = 13.58$, $p < 0.0001$). A post hoc partial eta-squared analysis indicated a small effect size for the main effect of family type ($\eta p^2 = .22$).

In summary, there was not support for hypothesis 1 in that participants would benefit from the training video and be able to label more narrative descriptions than participants who did not watch the training video. There was partial support for hypothesis 2 in that asymmetric dependence situations were rated as having a greater imbalance in power than chicken or disjunctive problems. However, chicken and disjunctive problems did not differ significantly from each other in ratings of power between the parties. Hypothesis 3 was mostly supported in that PA was rated as having a lower imbalance in power than CCB, and PA and CCB had greater imbalances in power than DC and HCC.

DISCUSSION

One goal of this study was to examine whether a training video on interpersonal power dynamics was able to improve participants' perceptions of power between parties when assessing family conflicts, such that it was predicted participants' abilities to identify power imbalances in narrative descriptions that differed by theoretically predicted features described by interdependence theory would be improved. Regardless of the training, it was also expected that participants would be able to recognize greater power imbalances between parties described in situations of asymmetric dependence and chicken compared to disjunctive problems. Lastly, with or without the training video, it was also expected that participants would be able to recognize greater power imbalances among family conflict types of PA and CCB compared to DC and HCC.

Overall, respondents were not very accurate in their classification of asymmetric dependence, chicken, and disjunctive problems, and the training video did not improve accuracy. However, participants did rate power dynamics across hypothetical situations that varied on the theoretical factors associated with power in predicted directions (see below). Therefore, although the categorization of the narrative descriptions using the labels described in the research literature was not intuitive, participants were sensitive to the differences in power dynamics that varied in theoretically predicted directions. Participants completed the survey on-line, so it is also possible that participants were not motivated to pay close attention to the training video before answering

The second hypothesis that participants would be able to notice greater power imbalances in narrative descriptions with power types of asymmetric dependence and chicken compared to

disjunctive problems was partially supported. Asymmetric dependence was found to have a greater imbalance in power than chicken and disjunctive problems, while the latter two did not differ from each other. As indicated in the name, asymmetric dependence is the most imbalanced power type while chicken and disjunctive problems can have features indicating more equal power dynamics. The important difference in these situations is that when chicken occurs, there is one person trying to gain power over another. Perhaps this feature was not indicative of someone having more power than the other. There may be a noticeable conceptual difference between an individual attempting to gain power and them already having it.

Among the narrative descriptions involving asymmetric dependence, differences in power imbalances were recognized for all interactions. In other words, no matter the family type (e.g., parental alienation), situations of asymmetric dependence involved the largest imbalances in power between the two parties involved. Among chicken, differences in power imbalances were seen among all interactions except for the family types involving coercive controlling behaviors (CCB) and healthy coparenting conflict (HCC), indicating that these were perceived to have similar power imbalances to each other. This could mean that high and low conflict relationships in situations involving chicken are both perceived as two parties who have similar levels of power. Among disjunctive problems, participants rated there being power imbalances in interactions involving parental alienation (PA), but not the other family conflicts. The power type of disjunctive problems was created in this study to be a more neutral comparison, or to have a smaller imbalance in power, so it is interesting that narrative descriptions involving PA were still seen to have a significant power imbalance compared to all others. The power dynamics of PA may be so imbalanced that even situations designed to be more balanced in power are not perceived as so.

The third hypothesis that narrative descriptions with PA and CCB will have greater power imbalance ratings than situations of DC and HCC was also partially supported. Coercive controlling behaviors were rated as having a greater imbalance in power than PA, DC, and HCC. Parental alienation had a greater imbalance in power than HCC, and greater imbalance than DC. However, the difference between PA and DC was not as significant as the other effects. It was expected that PA would have a larger difference from DC, but they do have one common feature – both involve families with children. Perhaps when children are involved, this impacts the way a situation is perceived, as there may be greater nuance to the interpersonal conflict that make it difficult to distinguish power imbalances. This finding highlights the difficulties that legal professionals may have when trying to differentiate families where there has been dysfunctional coparenting or parental alienation. It is important that these two situations are not confused because one requires a very different remedy than the other.

Overall, the PA situations were perceived as having a higher imbalance in power than all other situation types. Coercive controlling behaviors was rated as having a higher imbalance in power than HCC or DC only among situations of asymmetric dependence, and not for chicken or disjunctive problems. It is possible that the PA situations were worded strongly enough to show power imbalances even in more neutral situations, and that the CCB situations in this study were perceived by participants to be not as extreme as PA. Although PA and CCB are thought of as having similar characteristics in the research literature, the addition of using a child as a means to exert power and control may have made it more obvious to participants that the people in the situations did not hold equal levels of power.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that because parental alienation (PA) describes an outcome in the child/ren involved, we were only depicting parental alienating behaviors (PABs) in the narrative descriptions from parents who were alienating to different degrees. The outcome in the child and their behaviors were not described. This may have impacted the way that the situations were perceived by participants. However, even when narrative descriptions of PA varied regarding the levels of power each party holds according to interdependence theory, they were still perceived as having a greater imbalance in power. These findings are in line with previous research literature that has found that parents who alienate use it to gain power and control (Baker, 2007; Garber, 2011; Harman & Matthewson, 2020), and that PA is an outcome of relationship where this is an imbalance in power between parties (Warshak, 2003). Future research is needed on perceptions of both PABs and PA, as it is important to determine if the preceding behaviors are perceived similarly to the outcome at interest, so that appropriate interventions can be implemented as early as possible.

Another limitation of this study is that participants were not legal or child custody professionals, which are the people that evaluate and are familiar with intimate partner and family violence. Therefore, the results of this study can only be generalized to laypeople who are not familiar with forms of family violence, or interdependence theory. This could explain why participants performed at chance level when labelling the different power types based on interdependence theory. It is possible that participants who are more educated on these topics would have an easier time picking up on the nuances of interdependence theory after some training. Future research is needed with the population of people who deal with child custody evaluations and recommendations, as these are the individuals who are most likely to have the

prior education and experiences necessary to evaluate these narrative descriptions and they would likely be more motivated to learn and understand the material conveyed in the training.

The results from this study suggest that the participants in this particular sample needed more than a short training video to learn the information to the degree that is necessary to make evaluations. In addition, results suggest that power imbalances are intuitive to laypeople and may not be as sensitive to training. The video was designed so that participants could not fast forward or advance ahead without watching the training in its entirety, but it would be useful in future studies to administer an attention or manipulation check in the study design to determine whether this issue is a potential explanation for failure to find support for the first hypothesis. Lastly, power dynamics may be too complicated to learn from a short training video, and more training and/or prior education may be needed to understand them. Future research is needed to test how much training is needed, what the appropriate prior education level is, and what format the information should be distributed in.

Clinical Implications

Services such as divorce education programs, therapeutic family interventions, post-divorce family therapy, support groups, and parental coordination and coaching services are vital in supporting families where high conflict occurs (Harman & Kruk, 2021). If professionals are not appropriately trained, the efficacy of these services has the potential to drop drastically and they may end up doing further damage to those involved. High conflict cases involving CCB require different interventions when abuse is clearly occurring (Babcock, Armenti, & Warford, 2017). In high conflict cases, equal power amongst parties indicates that there is a conflict that can potentially be resolved between the parties, and unequal power means there is greater potential for abuse to occur (Babcock et al., 2017). In cases of high conflict, mediation is often

recommended because it helps all parties learn to find a solution without the direct involvement from the court.

However, mediation has been shown to work best in cases without claims of parental unfitness or domestic violence (IPV, family violence), cases with low conflict, and when the parents had been married at some point (Peeples, 2008). In cases where these features are not present, litigation may be necessary, such as when there has been an accusation of violence, abuse, or the parents were never married. It has been shown to be harmful to the victims involved to use mediation or therapy when IPV and family violence, or an imbalance in power, occurs (DeBoer, Rowe, Frousakis, Dimidjian & Christensen, 2012). It is necessary to assess power imbalances to decide what interventions are the most appropriate to deal with various forms of family violence. For example, mediation or family therapy would not be appropriate when CCB is occurring. In cases of CCB, couples counseling is not recommended because it can cause further psychological harm to the victim while giving the abuser a way to explain their behavior (The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2014).

It is necessary for professionals involved in cases where allegations of abuse have been made to conduct appropriate evaluations because the parent with more parenting time and decision-making has primary control over when the other parent has access to their child (Saini, Drozd, & Oleson, 2017). Court ordered custody evaluators will often unknowingly side with the abuser because victims can appear to be unfit parents due to presenting as unstable, uncooperative, and hostile because of their victimization (Hardesty, Hans, Haselschwerdt, Khaw, & Crossman, 2015; Mante, 2016). Often, there are large gaps in time between violations of court orders and judicial responses, and the family conflict may not be assessed properly so inappropriate interventions are ordered (Harman et al., 2018). In addition, like false claims of

abuse, there are also false claims of parental alienation (Harman & Lorandos, 2020). It is possible that some parents do not understand what count as parental alienating behaviors (Warshak, 2020). There are also many mental health and legal professionals who are unaware of the differences displayed by children who have been alienated and those who have been abused in other ways. Despite these issues, professionals are motivated to make accurate recommendations, and they need research to provide them evidence of the best practices. Advancements in evidence to support family violence training and assessment tools are necessary so that professionals can be adequately trained, and false allegations can be dealt with accordingly.

In addition, with a better understanding of the parallels between PA and child abuse, legal statutes and administrative policies can be developed to protect children from abusive behaviors perpetuated by a parent (Harman & Kruk, 2021). For example, depending on whether it is a case of mild or severe parental alienation, different protections could be put in place for the child (Warshak, 2020). With mild cases, family preservation programs where children get contact with both parents and support from family service workers is productive. In more severe cases, children may need to be supervised around the parent that is alienating to ensure that they are safe (Harman & Kruk, 2021). Family violence is often hidden by the victim and perpetrator, with some estimates putting only 5% of families who have made a report on the receiving end of further assessment or intervention (Hegarty, 2011; Stanley, Miller, Richardson, Foster, & Thomson, 2010). In cases where allegations of violence are made, and interventions are implemented, joint sessions between the perpetrator and the victim are held more than 40% of the time (Hirst, 2002). It can be quite damaging to victims of PA and CCB and their families to be forced to go through mediation or therapy when one person is using alienating or abusive

behaviors. It seems that a more intensive training session than what was presented in this study is needed for recommendations to become more efficient and allow for the proper resources to be allocated to the appropriate families. With training in power dynamics, mediation resources can avoid being wasted on families with high power imbalances, and instead be used productively on the individuals who may benefit from them the most.

Conclusions

Family violence can be categorized based on the levels of power between parties, and can lead to negative outcomes for victims, especially children. The most abusive situations, parental alienation and coercive controlling behaviors can be described as relationships where there is a major imbalance in power (Harman et al., 2018; Warshak, 2003). When families end up needing court involvement, it is important that legal professionals are familiar with recognizing power imbalances to make accurate assessments (Hansen, 1991; Hegarty, 2011; Stanley, Miller, Richardson, Foster, & Thomson, 2010). The purpose of this study was to evaluate participants' perceptions of narrative descriptions involving different types of family conflict that vary in the level of power among the parties involved according to interdependence theory, and to test the effects of a training video on the topic. The training video was not effective in improving participants' evaluations of the narrative descriptions. The results of this study show that situations involving parental alienation and coercive controlling behaviors were perceived as having larger imbalances in power, as well as situations involving the power type of asymmetric dependence. It is important to note that narrative descriptions involving parental alienation were perceived as having imbalanced power dynamics across all interactions, which is in line with previous research literature.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Power Ratings

Interpersonal Conflict Type	Training						Control					
	Asymmetric Dependence		Chicken		Disjunctive Problems		Asymmetric Dependence		Chicken		Disjunctive Problems	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Parental Alienation (PA)	100	0	54.96	6.3	27.67	6.24	100	0	54.52	4.65	37.86	4.61
Coercive Controlling Behaviors (CCB)	67.02	4.91	28.71	6.96	14.34	4.84	57.39	4.58	13.57	4.93	4.56	4.21
Dysfunctional Coparenting (DC)	9.01	4.40	58.42	6.09	-4.36	3.23	4.12	3.62	12.30	4.52	-2.90	2.61
Healthy Coparenting Conflict (HCC)	58.42	6.09	21.77	6.79	10.2	5.11	56.84	4.34	24.61	4.68	12.76	4.06

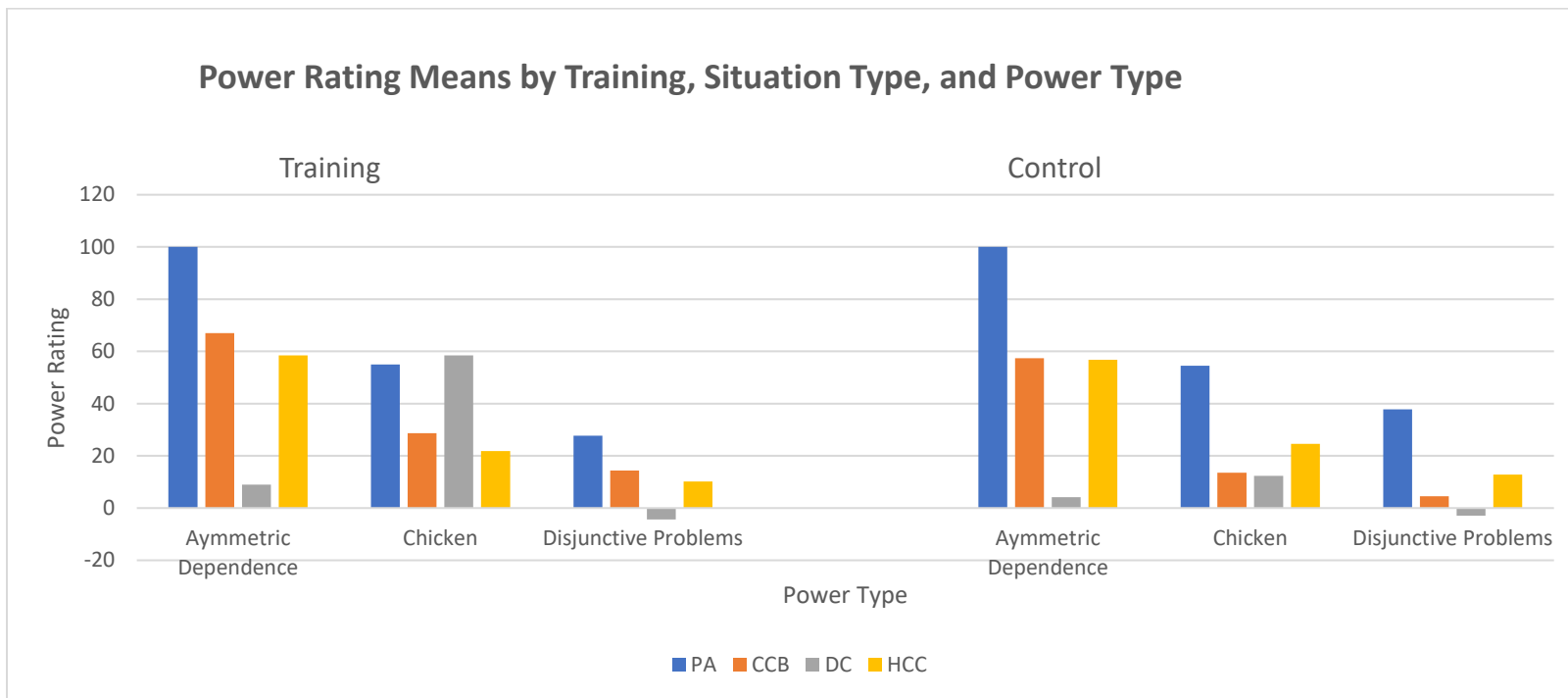


Figure 1. Means for Power Ratings

Note. PA = parental alienation, CCB = coercive controlling behaviors, DC = dysfunctional coparenting without parental alienation, and HCC = healthy coparenting conflict.

Table 2. Estimates for Multilevel Model

Situation Type	Training						Control					
	Asymmetric Dependence		Chicken		Disjunctive Problems		Asymmetric Dependence		Chicken		Disjunctive Problems	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
PA & DC	91.02*	7.86	-37.91*	7.85	-23.33*	7.81	95.90*	6.02	-42.22*	5.96	-34.95*	5.94
PA & HCC	158.42*	7.73	-76.76*	7.83	-37.89*	7.88	156.88*	5.96	-79.14*	5.95	-50.60*	5.94
CCB & DC	58.04*	7.92	45.79*	7.83	18.66	7.78	53.27*	6.02	25.89*	5.96	7.48	6.00
CCB & HCC	125.44*	7.81	6.95	7.80	4.10	7.85	114.25*	5.97	-11.02	5.95	-8.17	6.00

*p < .0001

Note. PA = parental alienation, CCB = coercive controlling behaviors, DC = dysfunctional coparenting without parental alienation, and HCC = healthy coparenting conflict.

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APPENDIX A

Codebook

Codebook of situations described in An Atlas of Interpersonal Situations (Kelley et al., 2003)

Entry #	Description	Examples
1. Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A situation where neither parent cares about the other's possible behaviors, and neither has any impact one way or another on each other's outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Split parental decision-making in different domains● Parental rules across homes accommodated by the child and not played off either parent● Financial independence of parents from each other, or firm uncontested agreements
2. Mutual Partner Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A situation where each parent's preferences and aversions affect each other such that people can be of benefit to each other or not. The outcome for each parent is entirely in the hands of the other and offers no immediate cost or benefit to the person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A parent packs appropriate clothes for a child to bring with them to their parenting time with the other parent, expecting them to be returned.● A parent makes threats towards the other parent or promises benefits as a way to exert dominance over their outcomes.
3. Corresponding Mutual Joint Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A situation where the parents are not concerned about their own or the other parent's actions, but only the combination of the two's joint actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Both parents decide to avoid certain children's events to avoid conflict in front of the child● Joint decision-making where both parents coordinate actions to care for the child.

4. Conflicting Mutual Joint Control

- A situation where the actions of both parents affects their joint outcome but they both have different preferences for what should occur. One parent benefits more than the other, or the other sacrifices
- One parent wants shared parenting while the other wants sole custody
- One parent may withhold information to force the other to communicate with them or trap them
- A parent may fail to mediate or cooperate with the other, believing that they will “win” in court and get their desired outcome

5. Prisoner’s Dilemma

- A situation in which each parent has a choice between self- or joint-benefit; if both parents cooperate, they both benefit, but if one cooperates and the other doesn’t, the cooperator loses, and if both fail to cooperate, both parents lose. A parent may offer conditional cooperation (e.g., if you do X, I won’t cooperate) and the other needs to decide whether to cooperate or not
- The parents verbally agree not to talk badly about each other to their children; if one does it while the other doesn’t, the child aligns with the derogating parent and the cooperator loses
- A parent needs to decide whether to agree to a parenting time change, not knowing whether the other parent will fulfill their promise.

6. Threat

- A situation where one parent has control over how outcomes are divided from both of their joint activities. When the less powerful parent senses unfairness, they feel less loyalty to the relationship and may threaten to leave. The more powerful parent cares about the less powerful parent's loyalty because their outcomes are still jointly held
- The children prefer one parent, and this parent encourages their loyalty and preference, which puts the other parent in a less powerful position. The less powerful parent states that the children will be worse off without a healthy relationship with both parents and threatens to seek court intervention unless a relationship with them is supported with the children.
- One parent has primary custody of the children and enjoys continuing to engage in conflict with the other parent. The less powerful parent threatens to stop all contact or get a lawyer if the conflict does not stop, so the more powerful parent stops temporarily, only to begin when the conflict has settled down.

7. Chicken

- A situation where each parent has a choice between a safe choice resulting in middling outcomes, and a risky choice with extreme (good or bad) outcomes, depending on choice of the other parent. The parent who backs off loses, or both parents lose if they select the risky choice
- Divorce proceedings go to trial due to not reaching agreement over property and/or custody of children, resulting in large lawyer fees for both parents.
- One parent files false claims of abuse that the other parent has to answer to or face fines/prison time/loss of custody or parenting time

8. Hero
- A situation where both parents want the same outcome but want to accomplish it differently. One parent makes a large sacrifice to benefit both parents, and both parents need to recognize the benefit of the sacrifice for the relationship. The motive of the parent to sacrifice is not for the self but for the joint outcome (e.g., children)
 - A parent is injured and unable to drive the children to parenting time exchanges. The other parent offers to handle all transportation for an extended period of time, which the injured parent is thankful for.
9. Conjunctive Problems
- A situation where both parents must make some cooperative choice to get a positive joint outcome, and if one fails to uphold their end or promise, they all suffer.
 - One parent does not supervise the completion of homework when the children are with them, making the child's success in school suffer, and all the burden is placed on the other parent.
 - A parent tries to reframe the other parent's negative behaviors in a positive way to help their child cope with the parent's deficiencies (e.g., substance abuse problems, mental illness).
10. Disjunctive Problems
- A situation where one parent can do the work for both, or their decisions and actions are enough to create a desired outcome for both parents. The costs for the parent(s) who take action may or may not be equal, and this situation assumes both parents have equal ability to take action that benefits all and may take turns over time.
 - One parent has primary custody and is willing to share extra parenting time with the other parent because they see the benefit for all.
 - Child expenses could be paid for by anyone, but one chooses to do it, no strings attached, other the parents rotate who is responsible for payments.

11. Asymmetric Dependence
- A situation where one parent can influence the outcomes of the other parent, who little or no influence on the outcomes of the influencer.
 - The more powerful parent often does not care about a joint outcome, which gives them more power.
 - The less powerful parent only has a positive relationship with their child if the more powerful parent is generous.
 - The powerful parent controls the child and uses them against the other parent. The child is also completely dependent on the powerful parent for outcomes and must comply with them.
 - The powerful parent continuously undermines all control of the less powerful parent so that they have no options and are completely dependent on them for a relationship with their child
12. Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma
- A Prisoner's Dilemma but occurring over time and can spiral into negative interaction cycles when there are errors of perception influenced by past interactions.
 - A cooperative parent withdraws from interactions or court intervention if they know that the other parent will always compete.
13. Investment
- A situation where each parent makes an investment to reach a mutual goal, and both parents need to be contributing to make this happen. Investment does not require equal contribution of the parents, but mutual contributions.
 - Parents must both make payments for a child's activity expenses or the child will not be able to participate in the activity
 - One parent may stay in an unhealthy relationship to avoid loss of investment (e.g., children)

15. Delay of Gratification

- A situation where a parent needs to complete a series of steps before a desired goal is reached, and is dependent on the cooperation of the other parent to deliver on their promise of gratification.
- A parent may agree to an unequal temporary custody arrangement in the hopes that “justice” will prevail and they will eventually get a more equal parenting time arrangement.
- A parent tolerates the other’s bad behavior in the hopes that it will get better later
- A parent tells the child they need to reject the other parent (short term goal) for their own safety (long term goal)

14. Negotiation

- The parents have a set of outcomes that can be selected by mutual agreement, there are outcomes that can occur if they do not agree, they disagree on certain factors but have some common interests, the parents can communicate with each other, and they each know their own outcomes for decisions, but not about the same outcomes for the other parent.
- The parents have preferences to use different health care providers for the children, and their differences are not about the child themselves so they resolve this through mediation.
- Holiday breaks may be valued differently due to religious differences between parents, and they need to assess the value of each to negotiate parenting time.

17. Encounters with Strangers
- A situation where both parents are dependent on a stranger for an outcome.
 - A child custody evaluator is assigned to the family by the court to make a recommendation about parenting time.
18. Joint Decisions Under Uncertainty
- A situation where parents may choose to make a joint decision that affects both of them and the outcomes are uncertain and irreversible.
 - A parent may blame the other parent for a joint decision that had a bad outcome, such as moving a child to a new school district
 - Parents may not agree on a child related issue and so they ask a court appointed decision maker to make the decision for them, which could make the outcome worse for all.
16. Twists of Fate
- A situation where a parent or both parents find themselves in a position of extreme unilateral dependence on the other for costly help. There is uncertainty around whether the favor would be reciprocated in the future.
 - A parent loses a job and needs to take another job requiring a lot of travel. The parent is completely at the mercy of the other to have parenting time with the children as a consequence.
 - A parent is unable to pay for a child's activities due to some unforeseen expenses and asks the other parent to cover them. The other parent needs to decide whether to pay for the expense.

19. Third Parties
- A situation where a third party can influence the features of any of the above situations
 - A parent forms a coalition with their sister to turn the children against the other parent.
 - A therapist works with the family to address family conflict.
20. N-person Prisoner's Dilemma
- A Prisoner's Dilemma but at the group level
 - Two step-families need to make a joint decision that can be beneficial for all, or costly to their own family.

APPENDIX B

Situations Presented to Participants.

Coercive Controlling Behaviors

David was a single dad with children when he was remarried to Alyssa. His second marriage fell apart within a year because Alyssa would blame him consistently for anything that went wrong. She would constantly belittle him and hit him out of anger. David felt he couldn't leave because that would mean leaving his children. Others blamed David for making Alyssa behave the way she did, and he was blamed for the breakup when she eventually left him years later. Alyssa made sure he was isolated from everyone in his life by degrading his name every chance she got. David could do nothing to change what Alyssa was making others believe because they had all taken her side in the conflict. (Asymmetric Dependence)

Jenna's life seemed to revolve around making her partner, Charles, happy. Charles would threaten, criticize, intimidate, and demand that Jenna do whatever he wanted. Jenna would lash out at Charles if he refused to agree with her when making decisions and would often break his things to get back at him. Jenna would disappear for days at a time and come back refusing to say where she'd been, and Charles would avoid being in the same room as her until she told him. Charles and Jenna went to court when they broke up because they could not agree on how to split up their shared property and had many disagreements. (Disjunctive problems)

Julie's boyfriend, Chris, started out as overly affectionate, but quickly became jealous and controlling. Chris would constantly blame her for cheating and would stop by

to make sure her car was at work when she said she was. When she tried to break up with Chris, they began to fight over who should get the car they both were making payments on. During the fight Jenna tried to leave, and Chris told her to get in the car or else she would never see it again. Jenna had to choose whether to put herself at risk by getting in the car or risk losing the car altogether if she leaves. (Chicken)

Healthy Coparenting

Derek had a daughter from a previous marriage with Melissa, and they make family decisions together with everyone involved. Melissa and Derek are able to afford taking care of their daughter alone, but they can provide even better opportunities when they both contribute. Their daughter was accepted to an elite university and both parents are able to support her education alone. However, Melissa insists that they both make equal contributions as to avoid making it look like one parent provides more than the other. Derek does not agree and says that Melissa can support her education in other ways. Melissa got the court involved so that payment arrangements can be made by both of them, so that Derek does not look like the better parent. (Disjunctive Problems)

Mary and Dylan separated when their daughter was 4 years old. While Mary wanted to distance herself from Dylan, she was still supportive of her daughter spending time with him and his new wife. Dylan ended up having to choose between moving to a new state with his new wife for a job, or to stay where he lives now with his daughter. He chose to move and start over, which made it so he had to rely on Mary for all communications and visitations between him and his young daughter. Mary was very open to this and even set up a device just for her Dylan and their daughter to be able to communicate whenever. Mary has all decision-making authority on education and

medical treatment for their daughter. Although she can make decisions without him, she still asks for his input and considers it regularly. (Asymmetric dependence)

Larry and Marie divorced after having a daughter and are both now remarried. They set up a room with clothes at both houses so their daughter is able to freely move between the two. Larry and Marie were faced with the decision to send their daughter to an elite and expensive summer science program or to a sports camp of the same merit. Marie prefers the sports camp while Larry sees more potential in the science camp. Both parents must contribute in order to afford either camp. If both parents decide to hold their money, then their daughter will not go to any summer camp. Marie waited until the day before the deadline and confronted Larry about this in front of their daughter asking Larry why “he ignores her and her daughter’s needs and picks the camp that only he likes”. This forced him to respond in front of their daughter before Marie would agree with him to send their daughter to science camp. (Chicken)

Parental Alienation

Anna and Megan are divorced parents from a same-sex relationship. Anna has full custody of their two children and wants them to attend a private school near where she lives. Although Megan is supposed to have parenting time with the children every other weekend, she only sees them whenever Anna allows it. Megan would prefer the children continue going to their public school to save money. Anna encourages the children to tell Megan that they want to go to the private school. Megan does not have decision-making authority regarding the children's education, and feels her opinion is not being considered. (Asymmetric dependence)

Alicia and Jeremy are separated and have one daughter together who really wants to be a dancer. Alicia has primary custody of their daughter. Jeremy has parenting time with this daughter every other weekend. Alicia emailed Jeremy to inform him that she had enrolled their daughter into dance classes during his parenting time, so he would not have as much time for a few months. Jeremy decided to call the studio and cancel his daughter's dance lessons so that he still got his time. Alicia then took Jeremy to court in order to make him let her daughter go to dance lessons during his time. Jeremy wants Alicia to choose an activity that occurs during her parenting time. (Disjunctive problems)

Scott and Kimberly are divorced and share the custody of their two young children. Scott is very bitter about the divorce and has been upset that Kimberly has started to date someone else. They are now in the middle of a custody dispute which has involved lengthy litigation. One day, Scott came to pick the children up for his parenting time and parked his car behind Kimberly's in her driveway, making it impossible to leave. Scott then read a recent court document to the, telling the children that they had to listen to the things their mother was doing. Kimberly ran inside to avoid an argument in front of the kids, and she heard Scott yelling, "See kids, it is all true! Your mother is ashamed of what she has done and doesn't care about how this affects you and me!".

Kimberly did not know how to respond to Scott in this moment.(Chicken)

Dysfunctional Coparenting Without Alienation

Rick and Dee had been married thirteen years and divorced four years ago. They have shared custody of their two children who are 14 and 15 years old. In the past two years, the couple has been back to court many times and have had a very rough separation. Dee allowed their children to attend a summer music festival with one other

friend and no adult. When Rick found out about this, he confronted Dee in front of the children and forced her to explain why she put the kids at risk by sending them with no adult supervision. (Chicken)

Jake and Anna have a 4 year old child with shared custody and have never been married. Anna married another man about a year after with whom she has another child. The court ordered that both parents take turns each year getting the first choice of summer and holiday vacation time. Jake goes first and picks a week when Anna wants to take the children to her sister's wedding in order to get back at her for the divorce. Since it is his year, Anna has no say in changing this. Anna then chooses the weekend of Father's Day to take the children camping the next year in order to get back at Jake knowing that he can do nothing to stop her. (Asymmetric Dependence)

Alyssa and Sean have an 8 year old and have been in the process of divorce for 3 years with many reconciliations. There have been numerous incidents by both parents in the past few years of taking the child out of the area and cutting off contact with the other parent for as long as three weeks. Alyssa and Sean are now in a custody dispute because both parents think they should be the one with full custody. Both parents have similar income and resources and would be fine, but they could also choose to agree to a shared custody arrangement so that their child gets to spend time with both parents. Their child has expressed that they want to be able to spend time with both parents, but the court needs at least one of them to agree to shared custody. (Disjunctive problems)

APPENDIX C

Text of Audio in the Video Presented to Participants and Video Link

Please pay close attention to the following video. You will be provided with a brief guide after the video to help you answer questions. It is important to understand power dynamics in order to be able to judge interpersonal interactions, particularly when it comes to close relationships. Sometimes, one person uses abusive behaviors to exert power and control over another. An imbalance in power means that one person is more dependent on the other to achieve a desirable outcome. The more powerful person is free to do what they want while the less powerful person is left to hope for the best. So, when it comes to relationships, the person who has more power does not have to depend on the person with less power in order to benefit in any given situation. Power allows for more behavioral options that achieve desired outcomes, so options would also become asymmetrical with an imbalance in power. It is important to note that power is in relation to proximal and situational circumstances (family, the legal system, custody, etc.) rather than broad contexts such as gender, race, or social class. When custodial arrangements are imbalanced, the parent with more parenting time and decision-making gains all control over when the other parent has access to their children. In this training video, you will learn about three different types of interpersonal situations that are based on the power levels in relationships.

The first type of situation is called Chicken. Yes, this is based on the deadly game where two cars race towards each other to see which driver veers off course first to avoid a collision. This occurs in situations where each person has to choose between a safe choice resulting in middling outcomes, and a risky choice with extreme (good or bad) outcomes, depending on the

choice of the other person. The person who backs off loses, or they both lose if they select the risky choice. An example of this is when divorce proceedings go to trial due to not being able to reach an agreement over child custody, or other arguments regarding children. Or, one parent may file false claims of abuse by the other parent who then has to defend themselves in order to avoid legal consequences. Chicken occurs whenever the person who is trying to gain more power (and who may already be more powerful) confronts someone else in front of others or with false claims that they then have to choose whether to defend themselves or run away. Let's talk about a couple of examples. Our first example involves Sean and Luis. Sean and Luis are working on a project together for a class and deciding how to split up the work. They both want to do the introduction because it is easier. Sean tells Luis if he doesn't get to do the introduction he will do nothing and let their grade suffer. Luis can decide to give him the introduction and have a complete project, or take it for himself and get a poor grade. The next example is of Lili and Loren who are in a relationship and live together. Lili wants to go on a solo trip to a different country, but Loren tells her that if she does that their relationship will be over and all of her belongings will be destroyed. Lili then has to choose whether to stay and protect her belongings or to go and put herself at risk.

The second type of situation is called Disjunctive Problems. This occurs in situations where one person can do the work for both, or their decisions and actions are enough to create a desired outcome for both. There is a cost for the person who decides to take action and/or give in to the other person involved. This situation assumes both people have equal ability to take action that benefits all and may take turns over time. Disjunctive problems commonly occur where there are joint obligations such as responding to customers at a job, or paying bills in a marriage. Our first example is of Mary and Carl who are in the process of divorce and own multiple

properties together. They end up going to court to make a decision because neither of them is willing to make a compromise. Either person could give in and continue the divorce proceedings without the court. Another example of this is when with Kara, who is a single parent with primary custody, and Ty who is the other parent. Kara insists that she pay in full for their child's medical expenses. Ty insists that he makes contributions as well and has to take Kara to court in order to settle the matter.

The third and final type of situation is called Asymmetric Dependence. This occurs in situations where one person can influence the outcomes of the other person, who in turn has little or no influence on outcomes. Sometimes the more powerful person does not care about a joint outcome, which gives them more power. The distinguishing feature here is that one person does not have the ability to act freely. An example is when the less powerful parent only has a positive relationship with their child if the more powerful parent is generous enough to let them. Or, the more powerful parent may continuously undermine the less powerful parent so that they are completely dependent on them for time with their child. Also, one partner could rely on the other financially and not have any control in everyday decision making. Our first example is of Kyra and Chandler who have a child together. Kyra has full custody and decision making and Chandler has to rely on her to be able to visit, call, and interact with their child. Kyra can choose to allow Chandler to get as much time with their child as she feels. Our next example is of Angie and Mike who are married. Angie stays at home to take care of the children while Mike provides their only income. Mike gets to decide what they buy with the money he makes, and Angie has to rely on him to listen to what she wants to buy as well.

You will now read about hypothetical scenarios and be asked to choose one of the three labels you just learned about. There will be a short reminder guide to reference throughout. The

situations are: chicken(a situation where one person confronts another in order to gain more power), disjunctive problems(a situation where one person can do the work for both, or they can choose to work together to get what they want), and asymmetric dependence(a situation where one person holds almost all of the power over the other person).

<https://youtu.be/cnpoSwapkM0>

APPENDIX D

Brief Guide Available to Participants Throughout the Survey

Chicken

- a situation where one person confronts another in order to gain more power.

Disjunctive Problems

- a situation where one person can do the work for both, or they can choose to work together to get what they want.

Asymmetric Dependence

- a situation where one person holds almost all of the power over the other person.

APPENDIX E

Glossary

Term	Definition
Family Violence	Encompasses several forms of violence including physical violence, loyalty conflicts, and parental alienation.
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	Encompasses several forms of violence including physical violence, situational couple violence, and coercive controlling violence.
Situational Couple Violence	Both parties in a relationship using aggressive behaviors when engaged in conflict.
Coercive Controlling Behaviors (CCB)	Formerly known as intimate terrorism, involves a pattern of behaviors leaving victims in an ongoing state of fear using physical and verbal assaults, threats, intimidation, isolation, or emotional, sexual, or economic abuse.
Healthy Coparenting Conflict (HCC)	Disagreements among parents who are separated and they are able to find a solution amicably.
Dysfunctional Coparenting without alienation (DCC)	Parental relationships where both parents are trying power, or the allegiance of their child, as seen in loyalty conflicts.
Parental Alienation (PA)	An outcome where the child aligns with one parent and rejects the other without a legitimate reason.
Parental Alienating Behaviors (PABs).	One parent engaging in behaviors to undermine and destroy the child's relationship with the alienated parent.