WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE:

THE ROLE OF FRIENDSHIPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF

INTIMATE PARTNER CONFLICTS DURING EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Peggy C. Giordano[1]
Jennifer E. Copp[2]
Wendy D. Manning[1]
Monica A. Longmore[1]

[1]Department of Sociology &
Center for Family and Demographic Research
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH

[2]College of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306

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It is well recognized that over time, extra-familial relationships become increasingly important as a basis for socializing, reference and influence (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996). Yet friendships and their impact have been examined primarily in connection with childhood and adolescence, while romantic ties have dominated studies of adult life. Recent trends highlighting an increasing age at first marriage and economic uncertainties for many during the period of emerging adulthood potentially complicate the picture of a seamless transition from a strong emphasis on peer relationships to a life built around a stable partnership (Arnett, 2014). In the current analysis we rely on in-depth qualitative and structured interviews with a large diverse sample of young adults to identify specific ways in which peers and romantic partners are linked and sometimes 'collide.'

Few prior studies have focused explicitly on young adult friendships, the connections between romantic and peer worlds, or potential consequences of these intersections. The focus of the current analysis is consistent with but extends Shulman and Connelly's (2013) recent emphasis on challenges associated with romantic relationships within the contemporary context. We investigate: a) the role of *attitudes and behaviors* of friends as influences on the ways in which young adults conduct their romantic lives, and in turn on levels of intimate partner conflict, b) how socializing with friends may itself emerge as a *source of conflict* with romantic partners during emerging adulthood, and c) the capacity of friends to act as a potential source of *advice and support* in the face of relationship difficulties. We focus primarily on a serious form of conflict (intimate partner violence) that has been shown to peak during the period of early adulthood (Rennison, 2001), but supplemental analyses examine links to verbal disagreements.

Background

Studies relying on the basic tenets of attachment theory have explored the impact of one type of relationship on another, developing the general thesis that early attachment within the family is the foundation of positive social development (Bowlby 1988). Researchers have documented that secure attachment to parents is associated with later peer competence (Parke & Ladd 1992; Groh et al., 2014)

and positive peer bonding is linked to secure attachment within romantic relationships (Dhariwal, Connolly, Paciello, & Caprara, 2009; Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007). Accordingly, the attachment perspective generally focuses on life course continuities in the character of close relationships. This perspective is also compatible with a voluminous literature on social support and health (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1991; Tay, Tan, Diener, & Gonzalez, 2013). Research has consistently shown that individuals who receive instrumental and emotional support from others or believe that it is available tend to be healthier in general and fare better in the face of health crises or other negative life events (Umberson & Montez, 2010). These traditions have clearly established that intimate ties 'matter' for understanding individual well-being, yet they do not in themselves illuminate distinctive aspects of each type of relationship or provide a framework for exploring difficulties that may attend the process of navigating multiple types of relationships simultaneously.

Sullivan (1953), in contrast, focused on the distinctive developmental significance of different types of relationships, in particular highlighting that peers often serve as a somewhat 'tougher audience' for the developing child relative to the more indulgent features of the parent-child bond. Yet as Sullivan noted, the give and take of peer relations provides a basis for making further adjustments to the self. Children clearly benefit from the democratic character of their friendships and enjoy the feelings of similarity that connect to this type of relationship (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). As romantic relationships begin to take on greater importance, individuals must again bridge considerable difference, as they move from the confines of same-gender socializing to the new, less well traveled terrain of romantic ties (Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2006). Most often this involves interacting with a partner who brings as background different experiences associated with same sex peer groups, yet even same gender couples must confront new emotions associated with romantic and sexual feelings and issues of commitment that do not have an exact parallel within the peer context. In connection with developing romantic relationships, the individual may experience feelings of jealousy, asymmetries of interest, and breakups that are also new but keenly felt. Research on adolescence reflects that both worlds are influential during

this phase of the life course (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999), but the ways in which they continue to intersect as respondents navigate the transition to adulthood has not been systematically investigated.

Implications of Changing Demographic and Economic Patterns

Researchers have documented increases in the average age at first marriage and a range of other changes in the expected sequence and likelihood of achieving markers of adult status (e.g., rise in cohabitation and out of wedlock births, higher divorce rates, periods of co-residence with parents) (e.g., Furstenberg, 2010; Lamidi & Manning, 2016; Settersten, Ottusch, & Schneider, 2015; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Shanahan, 2000). Many scholars have linked these changes to economic uncertainties that young people increasingly confront as they mature into adulthood (Furstenburg, 2008; Mortimer, 2012; Silva, 2012; Vuolo, Staff, & Mortimer, 2014). Indeed, the concept of 'emerging adulthood' itself developed as a way to capture the lack of a single, codified definition and point at which adult status is solidified (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz, 2016). Shulman and Connolly (2013) recently argued that these changes have complicated previous depictions of a stage-like progression that culminates in involvement in a committed adult romantic relationship.

In support of this view, recent research has shown that fluidity of relationships and changing partners is common during the period (Halpern-Meeken, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2012). Also indicative of a less than fully settled pattern, other research shows that a majority of respondents report some level of experience with sex outside a traditional romantic context (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2005; Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2006; England & Bearak, 2014). Shulman and Connolly (2013) suggest that challenges associated with developing a clear life plan (in this conceptualization career issues are central) are inextricably linked to these observed instabilities and become potential challenges within the romantic realm. This basic conceptualization fits well with recent studies of conflict in young adult romantic relationships, where issues of commitment and particularly infidelity have been identified as specific contested domains associated with violence risk (Giordano, Copp, Longmore, & Manning, 2015). Other recent research has shown that breakups and relationship churning are linked to verbal conflict as well as IPV (Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore,

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2013). In turn, research on age trends in IPV points to peaks in prevalence in both self-reports and official data during the emerging adult period (Rennison, 2001; Johnson, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2015; Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, & Kupper, 2009). These studies are important as they: 1) shed light on the patterning of serious conflict at different points in the life course and 2) implicate specific dynamics that more general theories of IPV (e.g., those that focus on early exposure within the family, lack of attachment or gendered socialization practices) do not fully illuminate (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012).

The Role of Peers in Emerging Adulthood

These different strands of theorizing and research have made significant contributions in highlighting unique features of the period of emerging adulthood. Yet an underlying premise of the current study is that focusing on the tension between career uncertainties and issues of dyadic commitment does not provide a portrait of the full complement of social relationships that are important during this phase of life. Thus, some of the same dynamics that flow from the changing demographic picture outlined above for many has created an extended period of peer socializing that to date has received relatively little research attention. This pattern of socializing has implications not only for a comprehensive depiction of the social worlds of emerging adults, but potentially for understanding the dynamics within romantic relationships during this phase of the life course.

Peer Attitudes and Behaviors

Within the context of this changing economic and social landscape, we hypothesize that *peer attitudes and behaviors* continue to exert a significant influence on decisions about dating, sexuality, and how individuals handle interpersonal issues and conflicts. Previous research has shown that friends' attitudes about IPV and IPV experience were significantly related to variation in young adult respondents' reports of IPV, even after family history of violence (harsh parenting, parents' IPV) and other factors (SES, union status) had been taken into account (Minter, Longmore, Giordano, & Manning, 2015). This finding is consistent with the basic tenets of social learning theory and prior research on adolescent samples, but underscores that friends' attitudes and behaviors continue to make a difference for understanding

variability in the odds of experiencing IPV within a young adult sample. Like most social learning investigations, the peer attitudes and behaviors assessed were closely linked to the dependent variable itself. Thus, we know that attitudes about IPV are related to respondent IPV—an association that is similar in form, for example, to prior results indicating that friends' attitudes about substance use are related to adolescents' own levels of use (Mason et al., 2014).

In the current study, we widen the lens to consider the role of more general views about dating and sexuality. For example, in a study of a Midwestern middle school, Eder and colleagues (1995) found that peer interactions fostered the idea that one must always "be in love," but particularly among the young women she studied, communications also telegraphed that dating more than one person at a time was inappropriate. This is not a universally accepted norm, however, and thus is a potential source of variability in peer normative climates that may be linked to intimate partner conflict (see e.g., Hall et al., 2014). Similarly, variability in peers' views about the acceptability of engaging in casual sex or cheating on a partner are somewhat removed from the dependent variable of IPV (relative to peer attitudes about IPV) but could nevertheless affect the dynamics within intimate relationships and consequently influence the odds of violence. Examining a range of these dating and relational issues is potentially useful, as prior research has shown that active endorsement of the idea of using aggression against an intimate partner tends to be quite low (Copp, Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2016; Simon et al., 2001).

Peers as a Source of Conflict

It is also important to consider that socializing with peers may itself become a significant *source of conflict* in young adult romantic relationships. We argue that involvement with peers may become a significant source of contention for at least three reasons:

   Infidelity concerns. First, time away from home and in the company of peers presents opportunities for finding another partner (casual or otherwise), which thus connects peer socializing to infidelity and infidelity concerns. Although actual infidelity is a source of conflict, infidelity *concerns* are even more common, and socializing outside the purview of the partner can thus heighten feelings of relationship vulnerability and increase tension within the relationship (Giordano et al., 2015). The emphasis on such

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concerns differs in some respects from early research on jealousy and IPV, as earlier discussions often focused on a controlling, jealous male partner and essentially apocryphal concerns (Gayford, 1979; Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Although this is an important dynamic associated with violence, especially with regard to women's victimization, recent research suggests that male partner infidelity is not only more common (see e.g., Ford, Sohn, & Lepkowski, 2002), but a significant source of conflict within many young adult relationships that include violence (Giordano et al., 2015; see also Nemeth, Bonomi, Lee, & Ludwin, 2012).

Lack of investment in the relationship. Infidelity is thus a major issue likely related to concerns that partners are spending excessive time with friends. Yet additional considerations may be in play. A significant body of research and theorizing has documented that friendships are in themselves satisfying, pleasurable relationships (Greco, Holmes, & McKenzie, 2015). Scholars such as Youniss and Smollar (1985) who have focused heavily on the adolescent period emphasize that the relatively egalitarian, homophilic features of friendship often create safe havens during a period of significant changes. The activities and communications that occur within the confines of friendship are enjoyable—friends tend to be excellent company. Although adolescence is generally considered the heyday of friendship relations, the uncertainties of emerging adulthood, including the delay in marriage age, potentially extend the period of significant reliance on and enjoyment of these relationships. Friends may also be important as they are a reflection on one's identity, and a shared history may be involved that predates and may outlast a particular romantic partnership. These factors may foster an expectation that such relationships should not be discarded even though a romantic relationship has developed. Conversely, individuals in romantic relationships may view the time partners spend with friends in zero-sum terms, and if it is significant and recurring, associate peer socializing with a lack of investment in and commitment to the relationship. These feelings undoubtedly occur and may emerge as a source of conflict during the adolescent period. Yet relationships in emerging adulthood on average have increased in duration and overall salience (Sullivan 1953; Giordano, Manning, Longmore, & Flanigan, 2012) and a significant percentage include some marriage-like features (i.e. cohabitation becomes increasingly common). Thus, time with peers may

gain meaning as a negative reflection on the relationship and its potential—aside from specific concerns about infidelity. These are conceptually distinct but obviously not mutually exclusive concerns.

   Link to problem behaviors. A third area of potential concern and conflict is that peer socializing is generally understood as a pathway to behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, and for some young adults, involvement in illegal activities. Investigations of the adolescent period have demonstrated that unstructured socializing with friends and friends' antisocial behaviors are risk factors for delinquency involvement as well as the use of alcohol and drugs (Osgood & Anderson, 2004; Hoeben, Meldrum, Walker, & Young, 2016). Thus even as individuals mature into adulthood, partners recognize that going out to bars, clubs, or a friend's apartment may increase the odds of getting into trouble. Further, as an emerging adult, these problem behaviors often have more deleterious consequences. Accordingly, peer socializing and related behaviors may be viewed in light of a negative impact on responsibilities such as getting to work or helping with child care or because they create the possibility of sanctions that have a lasting impact (loss of job, acquiring an arrest record, incarceration). More fundamentally, but related to these issues, excessive peer socializing may be positioned as childish and immature, and evidence that the partner is not living up to his or her potential—attributions that challenge claims to adult status. Such characterizations may be experienced as humiliating or at least uncomfortable: they contain the kernel of truth, even as the individual wishes to pursue actions and relationships that are viewed as pleasurable, backstage, or recreational. Thus, the individual may perceive the need for a break from the very adult responsibilities that are generally understood as important to pursue. In turn, partner communications about these concerns may be linked to violent reactions, as prior research has shown that experiencing disrespect or the feeling of being 'put down' may, under some conditions (prior socialization/exposure to violence) be a precursor to violence (Katz, 1988, Anderson, 1990).

   The criminological literature has often investigated the role of peers as a source of negative influence. In a study relying on data collected in the early 1980's, Warr (1998) found that entry into marriage was associated with reductions in the amount of time spent with peers and in particular, socializing with delinquent peers. The findings of the study thus demonstrated that at least some of the 'good marriage'

effect on delinquency and crime described by scholars such as Sampson and Laub (1993) may be due to the influence of the partner and involvement in a stable relationship in curtailing peer socializing and in the process of "knifing off" bad companions. Yet as recent demographic analyses have shown, many young adults are postponing marriage, even as they continue to develop romantic relationships. And results are mixed regarding whether cohabitation and dating relationships, lacking the clearer expectations of marriage, reliably confer these prosocial benefits (Forrest, 2014; Lonardo, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2010). Thus, heavy peer involvement, particularly if it is believed to connect to problematic behaviors, could prove a source of interpersonal conflict.

Peers as a Source of Advice and Support in the Face of Relationship Conflict

The current focus on links between peers and romantic relationships during emerging adulthood also has potential implications for understanding control and isolation processes that have been discussed frequently within the IPV literature. Early studies, based primarily on data collected from married women, observed that perpetrators of IPV often used various forms of intrusive control to isolate partners from friends and family (Pence & Paymar, 1990). More recently, this dynamic has been highlighted in studies of adolescents, and isolation from peers is generally included as a warning sign in prevention and intervention materials targeting a range of age groups (Murphy & Smith, 2010). These treatments of control and isolation have appropriately focused primarily on women's victimization and the idea of "intimate terrorism" (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Yet some studies have shown that IPV risk is associated with women's as well as men's control attempts (Stets, 1992; Giordano, Copp, Longmore, & Manning, 2016). Although these studies do not tap gender differences in the character and impact of men and women's use of intrusive control (i.e. men's control attempts may be experienced as more intimidating/threatening), they do fit well with the above discussion and previous research. For example, men, on average, are more likely to report infidelity and casual sex, higher levels of drug use, and a greater likelihood of associating with delinquent peers. Thus, it is intuitive to expect that some women will attempt to dissuade their partners from associating with peers they believe are a bad influence and to

caution about the negative consequences that may flow from the partner's participation in these behaviors.

The finding of relatively high rates of female partner control attempts complicates the more traditional focus within the IPV literature on men's controlling behaviors. In the current study, we introduce an additional complication, as we explore the hypothesis that, on average, such control efforts are unlikely to be fully successful. First, it would be difficult to enforce a situation characterized by a complete distancing from peers. As we argued above, within the contemporary context, women and men often continue to value their same-gender relationships, and likely have developed a level of independence through work, school attendance, and involvement in other activities. Second, if this issue were completely settled, conflict about the appropriate balance between time with peers and romantic partners would not have emerged as a significant source of discord in violent relationships (i.e., the partner's control would be complete—see Giordano et al., 2015). To the degree that individuals in violent relationships and their non-violent counterparts, on average, report similar levels of ongoing contact and interaction with peers, this not only complicates the existing literature on partner isolation, but opens up the possibility that friends may be important to emerging adults as they provide advice and support about ongoing relationship problems. Thus, in addition to the idea that friends are an important general influence on attitudes and behaviors, for example, friends' negative appraisals of the partner may be part of the decision-making process when individuals decide whether or not to break up with a specific partner (Copp, Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2015). Further, when various difficulties/conflicts occur, friends may be called upon to provide emotional and tangible support, operating as a kind of cavalry in the face of relationship problems.

The Current Study

We rely on data from structured and in-depth interviews collected in connection with the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS), a longitudinal investigation of the social relationships of a large diverse sample of teens originally interviewed in 2001, and followed up four additional times as they have navigated the transition to adulthood. TARS is a useful dataset for this investigation, as multiple

questions were elicited about friendships and romantic relationships, including questions about friends' dating/sexual attitudes and behaviors, IPV, delinquency involvement and approval/disapproval of the respondent's romantic partner. In addition, at most waves a subset of respondents (n=100) participated in in-depth qualitative interviews. These lengthy narratives: a) provide additional corroboration of results based on quantitative analyses, b) establish specific underpinnings of conflicts related to peers, c) identify subgroups not evident from the aggregate results, and d) shed light on the dynamic features of these relationship processes. The current analyses rely primarily on responses to wave 5 structured interview questions and wave 5 in-depth interviews when respondents' ages ranged from 25 to 29. However, an analysis of within-individual change uses information from all five waves of structured interviews (12-29).

We consider several interrelated research questions. First, we assess whether friends' attitudes and behaviors relating to dating and sexuality (labeled friends' liberal peer attitudes/behaviors) are associated with the odds of experiencing IPV, once traditional covariates and a measure of friends' IPV have been taken into account. We focus on any IPV in the current/most recent romantic relationship, but supplemental models assess perpetration and victimization separately as well as an index of verbal conflict. Second, as analyses relying on the TARS structured data previously showed that conflict about time spent with peers was significantly related to IPV (authors), the current study presents results of analyses of the in-depth interviews conducted with a subset of wave 5 respondents with violence experience. These analyses explore respondents' own perspectives on links between peer involvement and conflict within their romantic relationships. However, as this qualitative analysis provided evidence to suggest that socializing with delinquent peers was a significant factor in many such conflicts, we rely on the structured data to examine the linkages between delinquent peer involvement and IPV more systematically. We estimate growth curve models examining reports about friends' delinquency/criminal involvement and IPV across the full study period (spanning 5 data collection points and 13 years). This analysis provides an assessment of within-individual change in IPV reports as influenced by the time-varying index of involvement with delinquent peers.

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Next, we examine reports about time spent with peers to determine whether those involved in violent relationships appear to be more isolated from friends relative to their counterparts in non-violent relationships. Subsequently, we determine whether negative attributions about the partner provided by friends are linked to odds of breaking up with a specific partner under varying conditions (violence/no violence). Finally, relying on respondents' in-depth discussions of friendships and romantic relationships during this phase of the life course, we explore the role of peers in the advice and support role, particularly in the face of relationship difficulties.

Data and Methods

This research draws on data from the TARS, which is based on a stratified random sample of 1,321 adolescents and their parents/guardians. The TARS data were collected in the years 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2011. The analyses rely primarily on structured interviews conducted in connection with the fifth wave of interviews (2011), but a parent questionnaire administered at the first interview provided information about sociodemographic characteristics. In addition, growth curve models rely on all five waves of interview data. The sampling frame of the TARS study encompassed 62 schools across seven school districts but school attendance was not a requirement for inclusion in the study. Most interviews took place in respondents' homes, although some were completed in public locations such as a library. At waves 4 and 5, an online version was available, which was useful in the goal of retaining respondents who had moved or those who were reluctant to complete a personal interview. At wave 5, 28% completed the online version. The stratified, random sample includes over-samples of black and Hispanic adolescents. The initial sample included 1,321 respondents and wave 5 retained 1,021 valid respondents, or 77 percent of wave 1. Attrition analyses indicated that subjects retained did not differ significantly on most dimensions, but were somewhat more likely to be female (52% at wave 1, 55% at wave 5), and to report a non-traditional (step-parent, single parent, and 'other') family structure. Additionally, black respondents and those reporting low levels of parental education (less than high school) were less likely to be retained.

The analytic sample includes all those who participated in the wave 5 interview, but individuals who were not identified as black, white, or Hispanic were excluded (n = 23), as were those respondents who

did not report about a current or most recent relationship (i.e., those reporting no dating or relationship experience) (n = 70). The final analytic sample thus consists of 928 respondents (421 males and 507 females). The qualitative sample includes 102 core respondents interviewed at wave 5 who were selected because they had reported exposure to violence within a current/most recent relationship in connection with either the wave 4 or wave 5 structured interviews. The analytic sample for the growth curve analysis was derived from the wave 5 analytic sample described above, but drew on 4 additional waves of structured interviews (waves 1-4). The final analytic sample (n = 3,739 observations) for this portion of the analyses represented a 13-year accelerated cohort design with three overlapping cohorts (ages 12-29 years).

Measures

   Dependent variables*. Relationship violence* is measured at the time of the fifth interview and is based on responses to twelve items from the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) (alpha = .91), including whether the respondent had "thrown something at," "twisted arm or hair," "used a knife or gun," "punched or hit with something that could hurt," "choked," "slammed against a wall," "beat up," "burned or scalded on purpose," "kicked," "pushed, shoved or grabbed," "slapped in the face or head with an open hand," or "hit" in reference to experiences with the current or most recent partner. An identical set of questions were asked about the respondent's victimization experiences. We used a dichotomous measure of relationship violence, distinguishing between those who reported any violent behaviors (perpetration, victimization, and mutual) and those who reported no violence (1 = IPV, 0 = no IPV). Supplemental analyses focused on the perpetration and victimization subscales separately as well as an index of verbal conflict (based on two items assessing how often the respondent and his/her partner "have disagreements or arguments" and "yell or shout at each other"). In addition, the growth curve analyses assessed relationship violence across all five waves of data using a four item version of the CTS2, which included "thrown something at," "pushed, shoved or grabbed," "slapped in the face or head with an open hand," and "hit". *Breaking up with a partner* was determined by whether the respondent provided a report about a current vs. a "most

recent" partner.

The qualitative interview guide. The in-depth interviews were structured around eight broad questions designed to elicit respondents' own views about their romantic relationships and the dynamics within them. The interview began with a request for the respondent to 'walk' the interviewer through the various romantic relationships in which they had been involved. Probes subsequently elicited more detailed information about qualities and dynamics within each relationship, including conflicts but also positive features of each relationship. As the focus was upon these relationships, the guide did not specifically query respondents about peers, except as it related to situational details surrounding conflict/violence within these relationships. For example, respondents were asked whether they told anyone about the violence, without specifying peers, family, or others. Thus, it is notable that respondents included so many unsolicited references to peers within their narratives, even absent interviewer questions designed to establish peer-romantic partner linkages for this age group. Analyses of the qualitative data began with discussion of emerging themes at weekly meetings, as interviews were completed, transcribed and abstracted. This was followed by an extensive period of memo writing and open coding, relying on Atlas.ti software. Two authors developed the initial coding scheme implemented by five coders relying on basic content codes (e.g., sources of conflict) and eventually developed more refined conceptual categories (e.g., shift in views about peer socializing) that were added to the final coding scheme used to code all 102 of the narratives. The average interview length was 85 minutes, and transcribed pages ranged from 21 to 90.

Key independent variables. *Friends' liberal attitudes/behaviors* was measured using a standardized scale based on the following three items: "My friends think it's okay to date more than one person at a time"; "My friends think it's okay to have sex with someone you are not actually dating" (responses ranged from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree"); and "How many of your friends have cheated on their boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse?" (responses ranged from 1 "none" to 6 "all of them"). *Peer IPV* was taken from a four-item version of the CTS2. Respondents were asked how often their friends and

their romantic partners did the following: "throw something at each other"; "push, shove, or grab each other"; "slap each other in the face or head with an open hand"; and "hit each other" (responses ranged from 1 "never" to 5 "very often). Based on responses to these four items we created a dichotomous variable indicating whether their friends ever engaged in any of these behaviors (1 = peer IPV, 0 = no peer IPV). *Time spent with peers* was based on the following single item, "During the past week, how many times did you just hang out with your friends?" (responses ranged from 1 "not at all" to 4 "5 or more times"). *Negative attributions about partner* was based on responses to the following statement, "My friends approve of my relationship with X." Responses ranged from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree," and responses were reverse-coded such that higher scores indicate greater peer disapproval of partners.

Sociodemographic variables, adult status characteristics and basic relationship indices. We include a series of sociodemographic indicators: *gender*, *age, race/ethnicity* including non-Hispanic white (contrast category), non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic, *family structure* including two biological parents (contrast category), step-family, single-parent family, and any "other" family type, and *socioeconomic status* as measured by the highest level of education reported in the wave 1 parent questionnaire. *Coercive parenting* is measured using a six-item scale (alpha = .82) similar to the CTS2, but referencing the parent's behavior toward the child.

Adult status characteristics include dummy indicators of employment at wave 5 (*full-time, part-time,* and *unemployed* (contrast category))*,* and status as a *parent* is determined by a question asking whether the respondent has any children.

We include a series of basic relationship variables in the models. Three dummy indicators distinguish whether the relationship of interest is *dating* (contrast category), *cohabiting*, or *married*. Additionally, a dummy variable is used to denote whether responses reference a *current relationship* or their most recent romantic relationship (1 = current). Relationship *duration* is measured in years by asking how long respondents have/had been with their current or most recent partners. The range is from about a month (.08) to 14 years.

Results

Friends' Attitudes and Behaviors

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all study variables. Table 2 presents the zero order associations between focal and control variables and the odds of experiencing IPV in a current/most recent relationship. As shown, the respondent's report of friends' attitudes and behaviors related to dating/sexuality is associated with increased odds of experiencing IPV in a current or most recent romantic relationship. As expected, friends' IPV is also linked to higher odds of self-reported IPV, as is minority status, family structure other than two-parent biological (single parent and other), and relationship duration. Parent's use of coercive discipline is not significant (we note that this association is significant in analyses based on earlier waves (see e.g., authors) and also in results of growth curve analyses (shown in Table 3). At the zero order, mother's education (college education) and employment (full or part time), as well as cohabitation, are associated with lower odds. Model 2 includes all study variables, and the full model indicates that both friends' IPV and reports of friends' liberal attitudes/behaviors are positively associated with IPV net of the roster of controls. In supplemental analyses, the full model was estimated with and without the friends' attitudes/behavior index to determine whether its inclusion improved the overall model fit. Results of a nested F-test showed that the addition of the index of friends' liberal attitudes/behaviors contributes to the explained variance of the model ($F_{(1, 907)} = 8.49$; $p < .01$). Net of the other covariates, minority status (Hispanic), family structure (single parent, other), employment, and duration are significantly associated with respondents' self-reported odds of relationship violence. Furthermore, after accounting for other study variables, the association between cohabitation and IPV becomes significant and positive. We also estimated a model that included a gender x liberal attitudes of friends interaction, and this was not significant. This indicates a similar effect across gender in the relationship between having friends with more liberal attitudes about dating and sexuality and the odds of reporting violence. Similarly, an interaction of gender and friends' IPV was not significant, suggesting that the association between friends' IPV and relationship violence is similar for young men and women. Finally, we estimated models focusing first on verbal conflicts as the dependent

variable, and subsequently the perpetration and victimization subscales (not shown), and results are similar to those shown here.[1]

These results are congruent with previous research on the adolescent period that has linked peer attitudes and behaviors to a range of outcomes, but extend them in two ways. First, findings suggest that friends' attitudes and behaviors make a difference for understanding variability in IPV reported during the emerging adult period. In addition, results highlight that while friends' IPV behaviors are important features of what constitutes social climate, it is also potentially useful to move beyond the confines of the dependent variable itself (here, IPV) to consider the role of a broader range of attitudes about dating and sexuality that may be transmitted within friendship contexts.

Involvement with Friends as a Source of Conflict

The above findings indicate that friends' views on dating and behavioral scripts are linked to increased odds of respondents reporting IPV in a current/most recent relationship. Such findings place in broader social context results of an earlier analysis of contested domains associated with IPV. The latter analysis revealed the importance of respondent and partner infidelity concerns as risk factors for IPV, and findings also indicated that disagreement about time spent with friends was associated with IPV reports (authors). As we argued at the outset, these do not appear to be unrelated issues. Time spent with friends outside the other's purview provides opportunities that, in the partner's view, could lead to infidelity or finding another partner--particularly when the partner's friends express liberal attitudes about dating, engage in casual sex, or have been unfaithful to their own partners. The in-depth interviews we conducted with a subset of the respondents with violence experience provide additional corroboration that for many young adults interviewed, these are key, interrelated issues.

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[1] Due to the cross-sectional nature of these associations, it is not possible to establish causal order, and as such, it is possible that findings reflect that individuals choose to affiliate with friends who are similar in their attitude/behavior profiles or perceive and overstate similarity in these areas. Although the liberal attitudes/behavior items were not asked across all waves of the study, we also estimated growth curve models relying on waves 3, 4, and 5 when items were included and observed significant within-individual effects of variability in reports about friends' attitudes/behaviors on the odds of reporting IPV across these study years.

Infidelity. Respondents often forged explicit links between the partner's time with friends, infidelity concerns, conflict, and even violence within the relationship:

> If I tried to hang out with my friends or something then she would flip out and accuse me of cheating and we would just argue about that…and like one of my best friends was in the marines. He's actually home right now. I barely ever get to see him. He came back from Iraq, and I was like I'm gonna go over his house and you can come with me if you want. No f this f that, you're going out to cheat on me…and like we would just start an argument. [Drew]

> I'd went, hung out with some friends and hung out all night till the next morning and I came home she was mad, she hit me. And she thought I was out with another woman. [Jake]

> Why can't we go have a drink, I'm 21, this is my 21st birthday and she wouldn't let me--she was accusing me of cheating--and I couldn't have friends over from work…..These two girls gave me a ride home from work and she swore I was cheating on her. [Justin]

> Like me and my friends… every weekend we get together and have a girl's day and sometimes that gets in the way of me and Jake's relationship. Because he doesn't really care so much for my friends. He say that "they're hoes, they gonna turn you into a ho." Janelle, I mean she's been around the block a couple of times but like I tell him, what she does, doesn't mean I'm gonna do. You can't put us in the same category. [Sarah]

The above excerpts offer supporting evidence that time with friends may be associated with its infidelity potential and in turn relationship discord. Sarah's narrative in particular connects well with results shown in Table 2, as her partner focused explicitly on her friends' sexual behaviors as a source of his reservations about them. However, the qualitative data are also useful as they highlight the evolving or processual aspects of navigating peer and romantic relationships during this phase of the life course. Garrett's comments below emphasize a gradual shift in his views about time with peers, and suggest that he considers these changes part of a developmental process:

> I kind of emotionally I don't think I was…you know, I would leave, I was kind of young minded at the time. I would end up going to my friends all the time. And she'd be sad. Maybe even sometimes she would cry. And I didn't really know all that and I didn't take it in as much as I should have back then. I don't know, I was immature basically. [Garrett]

From his current vantage point, Garrett has reframed his earlier socializing pattern as immature and to a degree self-centered, and indicates that his partner's emotional responses to these issues gradually led to greater feelings of empathy and a change in his behavior. Other narratives describe the peer-partner

balance as more a 'work in progress,' as respondents actively struggle to accommodate partners, while

retaining some level of involvement with their friends:

> I let her go through my phone and like try to show her that I'm not doin' nothing. But stuff that I do, like going out, some stuff does not work. Like I'm always, wanna go out with my friend, so that mean she always think I'm cheating. So I guess I gotta just try to min, either minimize it or go out with her. [James]

Jackie and her partner Joe, quoted below, at first glance would appear to be farther along in the process,

as Joe no longer goes out very much with friends. After Joe's infidelity was discovered, Jackie said that

she will only allow Joe to socialize with friends if they do so at their home. Yet as her account makes

clear, this attempt to control the negative consequences of peer contact does not appear to be an ideal,

stabilizing solution to the problem. Further, the new strategy has had the unintended consequence of

restricting her own freedom to socialize with friends:

> Like I feel really bad …like he used to go out with his buddy Jake to like the pool hall and play pool... he has not yet done that. We have a pool table in the garage that he can go to with his buddies. And there's times when I go out there to check and make sure what they're doing… and his buddies will pick on him, like ooh you know, you're on the ball and chain like she has you on lockdown. And I guess in a way he is. [Lately] it started being a damper on me going out, because now …I don't want you to go out….He's trying to put the same restrictions on me. Which I think is outright unfair and starts a lot of arguments about that. [Jackie]

Marc's interview provides a contrast, as this respondent told the interviewer that he and his girlfriend

have moved past earlier feelings of jealousy and suspicion. In addition, Marc stressed that they have

replaced the earlier social pattern (separate nights out with friends) with a different and what he views as

a more 'mature' style of socializing:

> We don't never like call our friends to go out. We talk to each other, then we call them to see if they just want to join in with us. So, plus all my friends, we all grown up now. They all got their relationships so they bring their girls so then we all just couples out, stuff like that. [Marc]

Ian, quoted below, also said that he had experienced a change in attitude, and recognized the need to

move away from his earlier pattern of socializing frequently with peers. Yet his narrative underscores

that achieving the more settled, committed type of lifestyle is ultimately a couple-level accomplishment:

> At a later point in time, I quit hanging out with my friends so much. I realized that I should be home and I should be working. And she was working at [X] and the roles kind of reversed, she wanted to go out with her friends all the time and this and that. So maybe I had started that

situation and eventually she started seeing the guy… telling me she was with her friends. I'd wake up in the middle of the night sometimes and she wouldn't be there. She'd leave me a note saying that she went to her friends and really she was going to the guy's house. [Ian]

Evidence of a lack of commitment. The above quotes offer concrete illustrations of the frequently intertwined nature of concerns about peer socializing and infidelity issues during this phase of the life course, and accounts such as that of Ian and Jackie underscore that these concerns may not always be misguided. Yet while infidelity issues appeared often as a central preoccupation, this was not the only basis for disparaging a partner's level of involvement with peers. For some respondents, too much time with friends was seen as simply diminishing the partner's and relationship's importance. The zero-sum notion is highlighted in the following narrative accounts:

When I plan things out for me to do with my friends he acts like I've ditched him in some way, shape or form, which I don't see how a plan with someone is ditching someone else. [Jessica]

I have a lot of friends and they always text and he thinks when we're together it should be our time [Claire]

We supposed to be doing something it was around my birthday we had already had everything planned and then her friend Mandi called, and it's like everything she say she do it. Mandi proposed it's going to be us girls dada da. So we've been in the relationship a few years, talking about marriage, marriage, marriage, so I'm like so you going to leave me on my birthday – because Mandi said go. I'm like how the hell we gonna get married, how we going to be a complete family if your friends come up and say "do this right now." And you'll say forget you, forget everything, because my friend said let's do this. [Devon]

Although these perceived slights may not, on average, engender the intensity of feeling that tends to be reflected in discussions of infidelity concerns, this area of mismatch can nevertheless lead to conflict within the relationship. Some partners appear to view the other partner's peer time as showing less regard for the relationship or a lack of sufficient commitment; the other partner continues to value time spent socializing with friends as well as the romantic partner. As Shulman and Connelly (2013) noted, emerging adulthood involves making headway on one's unfolding life plan. But while individuals generally develop their own career aspirations and take steps to achieve them based on preferences and a personally constructed timetable, the contours of romantic relationships necessarily take shape only with the partner's cooperation. For example, Devon and his partner agreed in broad outline about the future

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they wanted, but differed considerably in their views about the social ramifications of this form of serious involvement.

Links to substance use or other problem behaviors. In addition to raising issues about the partner's commitment to the relationship or heightening the risk of infidelity, time with peers may be a concern because of its link to alcohol and drug use and other criminal behavior. Although some research has shown that peer pressure peaks in adolescence, nevertheless many problem behaviors have a social component—'partying' often involves peers, and crimes are frequently committed with co-offenders (Schaefer, Rodriguez, & Decker, 2014). There is mixed evidence regarding whether the robust association between delinquent peers and delinquency involves 'selection' or an active influence process (Scalco, Trucco, & Hops, 2015). However, it is reasonable to expect that from the point of view of the partner, excessive time with friends may at least connect to various forms of "trouble." Jeff's description of a recent arrest for theft mentions an individual-level motivation, but also highlights the social component:

> Not saying I'm easily peer pressured but I'm a nice guy and…my friend talked me into going into [X] and taking a cd player. I kept telling him no, I'm not gonna do it. I'm not saying he was a tough guy, but he made it out to be you're a pussy for not doing this…bottom line came down to… you gotta do it you gotta do it, and I thought man it would be nice to have the money. [Jeff]

The quote from Jill, reproduced below, accesses the less frequently emphasized partner vantage point:

> The problem with Derek is not so much that he wants to hang out with his friends but the fact that they all deal drugs. Just driving around with them, or I'll ask when we get into the car with them, "You have anything with you?" Things like that. We're out to eat we'll be out and his phone is constantly ringing. He's trying to rush back ….he's rushing to get back to whoever. [Jill]

Prior research has shown that even within the context of adult samples, affiliation with delinquent/criminal peers is associated with higher levels of self-reported crime and risk of arrest (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Holland, 2003) and substance use of friends is a risk factor for continued use (Andrews, Tildesley, Hyman, & Fuzhong, 2002). Results described in Table 3 add to prior work in this tradition in documenting effects of these affiliations on serious intimate partner conflicts. In a model examining within-individual variability in IPV reports across the full study period, results shown in Table

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3 reveal that friends' delinquent/criminal behavior is a significant predictor of IPV, net of other relevant controls. This suggests that, net of respondents' own delinquency, friends' delinquent involvement corresponded to greater odds of respondent-reported IPV over time. Interactions of gender and the friends' behavior index were not significant, indicating a similar effect for male and female respondents of friends' delinquent behavior on variability in IPV reports. Results focusing on variations in levels of verbal conflict were similar (results not shown). As the results of these growth curve analyses focus on within-individual variations, this provides evidence of an effect of friends' delinquency/crime on reported partner conflicts that does not appear to be due exclusively to any underlying propensity for antisocial behavior.

Friends as a Source of Advice and Support

Friends contribute to the individual's 'normative climate' and the time carved out for friends may, under some conditions, engender negative emotions and lead to serious partner disagreements. Yet it is important to consider as well the potential role of friends across the full career of these romantic relationships. Friends' views about the partner and the relationship may be a useful mirror for decision-making about the state of one's relationship, and friends may also be called upon as a source of support and concrete assistance in the face of relationship conflicts. As noted at the outset, this view of peers as playing a significant advice and support role complicates the traditional focus on isolation of victims of IPV that has predominated in the literature.

In addition to the many references to involvement with friends cited above, we first examined a straightforward structured item about time spent with friends (how often do you hang out with friends during a week), and found that on average, those in violent relationships do not report spending less time with their friends relative to those who do not report violence. Male respondents, however, report spending more time out with friends relative to female respondents.[2] As the isolation theme developed

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[2] Average levels of time spent with friends among those in violent relationship was 2.30, as compared to 2.28 among those in nonviolent relationships. Male respondents report significantly greater time spent with friends (2.41) than their female counterparts (2.18; $p < .001$). Among male respondents, men who report violence indicate slightly greater time spent with peers (2.55) relative to those who do not report violence (2.36; $p < .10$). Among female

primarily in describing the situations of female victims, we also examined rates within gender for those reporting or not reporting violence. Results indicate that young women who report violence do not differ from those who do not in average time spent, and this pattern was also found when we examined reports on the victimization scale only—women who report victimization do not on average indicate that they spend less time with friends relative to non-victimized women. These results suggest that the presence of IPV does not in itself signal that individuals are completely disengaged or cut off from friends.

The apparent difference between the themes of isolation previously emphasized and these basic results may relate to the following considerations. First, it appears that distressing levels of isolation from friends occurs for a subset of respondents, although this was not evident across the sample as a whole. For example, the respondents below describe negative relationships characterized by isolation and distancing from friends, and the comments forge the link specifically to partner control attempts:

> One of the biggest problems that we had was that he was really jealous of me hanging out with my friends. He kinda put a limit on that, he kinda gave me an ultimatum like you're gonna hang out with me or not even an ultimatum I guess just kinda told me what to do. Made me feel bad about the fact that I wanted to spend time with my friends and told me that I was a follower when I tried to hang out with my friends. [Erin]

> I didn't have a lot of friends when I dated Dan. The jealousy kind of drove away a lot of friends I had because I was spending all my time with him, which now I know that is another deal breaker that I have. I have to have my own life and I will have my own friends and if you don't like it you can get bent cuz [laughs] I've got stuff to do, so I won't go down that road again. [Abby]

A second consideration is that feelings of isolation may be experienced as disturbing, even if respondents in violent relationships' absolute levels of time with friends do not differ significantly from those of their counterparts not experiencing such violence or control attempts. Third, life stage, and/or cohort differences may be implicated, as many studies focusing on lack of social support and IPV have been based on earlier studies of married women. The results of the qualitative interviews in particular depict adults within this contemporary sample as continuing to value their friendships, and often engaging with partners about the issue--even if this becomes a source of contention within the relationship. For

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respondents, those who do and do not report violence indicate similar levels of time spent with peers (2.07 and 2.21, respectively). Similarly, young women who report victimization indicate a similar amount of time spent with peers relative to their peers who do not report victimization (2.06 and 2.20, respectively).

example, both Erin and Abby's narratives suggest that they found the situation untenable, ended their relationships, and potentially experienced 'a learning curve' about the need to avoid this type of controlling partner in the future. The processual aspects of these friend-partner dynamics are also illustrated in Eva's narrative. This respondent had undergone changes relating to the peer-partner balance issue without breaking up with her current partner:

> It got to a point… he was kinda disrespecting her and she felt like I was sticking up for him all the time…and we kinda came to a resolution eventually you know by me standing up and realizing that I was basically wrong. And it took a long time but eventually you know now we're friends again, but it basically took me showing her that she's more important than him basically. [Eva]

Views of the romantic partner. If we accept the notion that emerging adults on average maintain a degree of involvement with friends as well as their romantic partners, it is reasonable to expect that these friends may express attitudes and opinions specifically about the partner and the relationship. To illustrate this more concretely, results of analyses described in in Table 4 indicate that the perception of friends' disapproval of the respondent's partner was significantly associated with the odds of breaking up with a focal partner, net of a roster of controls. Further, an interaction of gender and peer disapproval was not significant, indicating a generally similar effect of friends' attributions on breakup odds.[3]

While the quantitative results indicate that breaking up was significantly associated with peer disapproval, we note that over 66% of those in a relationship marked by peer disapproval had not broken up with their partner (67% of those in violent relationships, 65% of those in non-violent but 'disapproved-of' relationships). The qualitative interviews add further to these findings in illustrating that friends' attitudes are likely just one element that individuals draw on as they navigate various aspects of their relationships, including serious conflicts. These qualitative interviews generally suggest a keen awareness of friends' views, but also reveal that decision-making was not a simple function of the friends' opinions:

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[3]It is also likely that this result reflects that individuals who have broken up with a partner may perceive views of friends in a more negative way, in effect responding in alignment with the current status of the relationship.

Everybody was telling me leave him alone. Like one of my friends actually seen him out one day talking to a girl or something and she came back and told me. So I confronted him about it and me and him got into it. [Ariane]

 My friend said, "he's white and he hurt you. Frank's black and he doesn't. So as long as you're with a great guy, it doesn't matter what his skin color is. It should never be about that." [Jody]

I talked to my friends a lot they all didn't really like him that much. I mean, he's not a bad guy, but just nobody thought he was the guy for me I guess. [Claudia]

And then we kept telling her, you can't keep putting up with it. Well eventually he cheated on her and that is what broke it off. Because she's a little 90 pound twig versus someone who was probably 220. I'm like this isn't, this is not right, you can't keep putting up with that. [Emma]

These narratives make references to conversations and advice across multiple occasions (we kept telling her, I talked to my friends a lot, everyone was telling me), suggesting the possibility of a gradual or cumulative effect. Further, while some expressed negative attitudes specifically about the partner's use of violence, the positive or negative attributions often reflected on other behaviors such as cheating as well. This broader set of issues discussed among friends connects to the findings described in Table 2, as both general norms and these specific attributions may extend beyond the realm of attitudes toward violence.

   Active support/assistance. In addition to offering positive or negative evaluations of the partner**,** the narratives reference situations in which friends suggest or themselves take concrete action at the point of serious conflict:

They all said call the cops and stuff like that. I'd probably still be with him [if friends had not intervened]. [Really?] I might. [Malisa]

And I had went over to an old friend of mine that I was friends with like forever, and I hadn't talked to or seen her forever and I just went to her house like just in tears like I just need a friend I need somebody right now. I need help. And I just cried and she opened her door and she like talked to me like she wanted me to stay here. [Claire]

Other individuals described an even more active role in conflict situations:

I've done it maybe two or three times. I tell them like it's not right. How you going to do to somebody that's the opposite sex of you… what makes you better about doing that? Or do you think you're macho because you're hitting on a female that really can't defend herself? How would you like it if somebody was doing it to you? I guess it makes me upset. Like their dads would hit them and stuff or they would make excuses up. [Wade]

My friends they just bricked his car. Like recently too. [Kandace]

>At that point in time if I felt like any threatening things happen….I'd told him somebody specific and said that he [the friend] had a safe full of guns and they know how to use them. Easily can take care of him. I think that that's what kind of just made him back off. [Hannah]

>My friend, we were dating people in the same family. And he knew that Devon was putting his hands on me, so he like fought Devon. He would stand up for me and things like that. [Anna]

The quotes above indicate a range of responses of friends--from traditional support such as offering a place to stay to assistance that is not entirely prosocial (bricking the partner's car, beating up the offending partner; veiled threats). It is also useful to juxtapose these statements about assistance against results highlighted in Table 2, which showed that friends' IPV behavior was associated with respondents' own self-reports. While this would appear to represent a contradiction (i.e., how can friends who had experienced IPV themselves offer negative evaluations of another friend's partner who has engaged in this behavior?), research shows that in spite of its prevalence, IPV is nevertheless widely understood as a negative development within relationships (Copp et al., 2016). This raises the possibility that friends may warn about or take action against behaviors with which they have some personal experience. Further complicating the dynamics surrounding friend effects, however, the perceived prevalence of these experiences in particular social networks may in some instances serve to normalize it. For example, Julie struggled directly with this idea of normalizing what she knew to be bad behavior:

>They're just all, they all got boyfriends that are just piece of shits. They don't do nothing for them. Not good for nothing…don't help with nothing, leave them just dry. That's how they all are. I guess I thought it was common, I don't ever think that was normal and that should be going on. It happened to all of us. Like I don't know I guess it was common, I can say that. But then again I blame all that on where we grew up. The neighborhoods… [Julie]

Chad's recent discussion on a road trip with friends also suggests this possibility of normalizing the behavior:

>I was in the car recently with three of my best friends, and we were on our way to Detroit and we took stock of the fact that each of us in the car had been uh physically abused by the women that we most cared about, all four of us. As much as you think you might be above that kind of a relationship it's more common for stuff to hit the fan like that I suppose from time to time. Part of it I ascribe to alcohol to be honest, every time that we had an instance like that any sort of viol- you know not even just physically but like you know violent emotionally I can trace to alcohol or other substance abuses. [Chad]

This respondent does not develop the argument that being hit by female partners is a trivial or humorous matter, as some accounts have emphasized (Anderson, 2013; Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002). At the same time, recognizing that these conflict situations are common or reinforcing a theory that alcohol use is often to blame does not constitute a strong sanction against or offer potential solutions to these relationship difficulties. Other male respondents' referenced even less openness about either seeking advice or offering assistance in the face of relationship difficulties. For example, Fred had serious problems in his relationship with Marge, but noted simply, "they [friends] don't never know," while Jack told the interviewer, "Like my friends, they don't, we don't really talk about our relationships like that." The latter accounts are consistent with the lower levels of intimate self-disclosure within men's friendships shown in prior work, but Chad's narrative points to variability in this regard (see e.g., Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Conclusion

Peer relationships are considered critical to an understanding of the adolescent period, but few studies have examined the nature and impact of friendship ties during emerging adulthood. Researchers have noted that delays in the average age at marriage, a longer education phase for many, and challenges in establishing a firm economic foothold are undoubtedly influences on the lengthening of the period as well as its specific character. Yet these societal shifts also have implications for understanding the unique mix of social ties that coexist during this phase of the life course. A working premise of this study has been that friends continue to play an important role in the lives of many emerging adults, even as romantic partners loom larger as companions, reference others and sources of support. Thus, while the specific goal of these analyses has been to explore difficulties that may arise from this nexus of affiliations, a more general objective has been to highlight the continuing significance of peers as young people navigate the adolescent to adult transition.

We relied on quantitative and qualitative data from a large, contemporary sample of emerging adults to examine the association between peer attitudes and behaviors related to dating and sexuality and intimate partner conflicts. Results of quantitative analyses indicate that, consistent with prior work, friends' IPV

was significantly associated with respondents' own odds of IPV, even after taking into account other relevant background and sociodemographic controls. However, an index tapping variability in friends' views and behavior concerning other aspects of romantic and sexual behaviors (e.g., ok to date more than one at a time, involvement in casual sex, infidelity) explained additional variance in reported conflict, whether the dependent variable was IPV or, as revealed in supplemental models, 'verbal conflict' or perpetration/victimization assessed as separate indicators. These results have implications for the content of prevention and intervention programs, as most efforts focus on the goal of increasing the negatives specifically surrounding the use of violence against an intimate partner. While such messages have been critical to shifts in general beliefs about the unacceptability of these behaviors, levels of self-reported IPV and official arrests continue to reveal troubling rates of prevalence, particularly during the young adult period. Findings reported above suggest that it may prove useful to: a) expand discussion to a range of dynamics associated with conflict in romantic relationships, and b) explore how involvement in social networks may foster or deter behaviors such as infidelity that have been shown to increase the odds of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Although issues relating to jealousy and infidelity have been associated with IPV in studies focusing on a variety of age groups, the emerging adult period has some distinct features as a life course stage. This phase of life occurs on the heels of adolescence, a period in which peers have been a key part of socializing and exploring the world and one's place within it. At the same time, while marriage age is often delayed, individuals begin to invest more in their romantic relationships (e.g., average durations increase, cohabitation is increasingly common, and life-long commitment becomes a real possibility). Yet these relationship changes occur absent a clearly codified set of rules about how an individual at this stage of life 'does' romance, adult socializing with friends, cohabitation—or even marriage at a time when many similarly aged others have not yet made this transition. These are individual and dyadic decisions, but here we have suggested and shown empirically that the broader social climate concerning what is desirable, tolerable or to be derided also figures into relationship dynamics, including serious conflicts.

This study built upon recent findings relying on the TARS structured data that showed an association between disagreements about peer socializing and self-reports of IPV (authors). The current analysis drew on qualitative interviews elicited from a subset of respondents with a background of IPV to explore in greater depth the bases of such partner conflicts. Analyses of these interviews revealed that disagreements about time with peers often revolved around one or a combination of three themes: a) infidelity, b) lack of commitment to the relationship, and c) increased odds of engaging in problem behaviors such as alcohol or drug use or other criminal activity. The qualitative data were also useful in highlighting the processual aspects of these areas of couple conflict, as individuals described how they had worked within relationships to modify their social lives or discarded partners who had attempted to limit their involvement with friends. Additionally, relying on growth curve models, analyses drew on the five waves of interview data to provide a more systematic assessment of the theme developed in some narratives that socializing with friends was a source of conflict due to its association with substance use or other forms of 'trouble.' Prior research has demonstrated an association between delinquent friends and delinquency involvement, yet the current analyses showed that having delinquent friends was a significant predictor of within-individual variations in the odds of reporting IPV. Such findings demonstrating a link to social network ties provide a level of caution to the idea that behaviors such as IPV derive primarily from individually held beliefs (e.g., traditional gender role attitudes) or stable personality traits (e.g., anger). Although such individual differences are important correlates, they do not provide a comprehensive framework for understanding variability in rates of IPV across the life course. Thus, when individuals socialize with delinquent friends or themselves engage in these behaviors, various types of consequences (arrest, erratic employment, financial losses, inattention to the relationship) may reverberate at the couple level, as well as for the individual involved.

Although we emphasized some of the ways in which the worlds of friendship and romance become problematic or 'collide' during the period, the analyses also illustrate that the presence of friends has potential as a source of advice and support. Results showed that those who had experienced IPV did not report spending fewer nights out with friends per week relative to those who did not report violence.

Such findings to an extent complicate themes of isolation that have predominated in the existing IPV literature, although the qualitative interviews provided a more nuanced picture. For example, isolation emerged as a significant theme for a subset of these respondents, and others described pressure to reduce peer contacts, even though the absolute number of nights out did not differ significantly for the violence compared to the no violence subgroup. Consistent with the idea of a continuing presence of friends, then, results showed that friends' disapproval of particular partners was associated with the odds of breaking up with a focal partner, whether the referent was a violent or non-violent relationship. The qualitative data were again useful in highlighting the processual aspects, however, as clearly advice from a friend was not the only consideration related to breakup decisions, and respondents often referenced many entreaties from friends rather than a single point of intervention. These findings support the emphasis of contemporary programmatic efforts that have a peer component, although these have largely focused on adolescent groups (Oudekerk, Blachman-Demner, & Mulford, 2014). Results also suggest the need for additional discussion of constructive ways to provide concrete support, as some of the strategies described in the narratives (e.g. friends 'bricking' a partner's car) do not appear to offer prosocial or long-term solutions to relationship problems.

This study is limited by the regional nature of the sample, and some associations described are cross-sectional. Thus, as we noted, it is likely that individuals select friends with similar attitudes and behavior profiles as well as being influenced by their friends, as prior research on peer dynamics attests. Further, due to the lack of prior research in this area, our goals have been to explore basic connections between peer and romantic relationship processes during emerging adulthood. Yet the impact of gender on friendships, romantic relationship dynamics and IPV deserves greater research scrutiny. For example, while interactions of gender and key focal variables were not significant in these analyses, nevertheless women on average score higher on intimate self-disclosure with friends, men are more likely to have delinquent friends, and the consequences of IPV fall more heavily on women relative to male victims. The experiences associated with other sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., SES, race/ethnicity) may also significantly influence the mix of affiliations at this phase of the life course, as well as their impact

on IPV and other outcomes of interest. Finally, the findings describe associations and sources of variability in conflict found within a community sample, rather than providing a window on the lives of those experiencing the most serious levels of IPV.

In spite of these study limitations, the quantitative and qualitative data converge in demonstrating the continuing significance of friends during this phase of the life course. Emerging adulthood is generally considered a healthy phase of life, but behaviors such as relationship violence or substance use are troubling caveats to this generally positive health picture. Within the health literature, the presence of significant others is generally considered a reliable health advantage or factor that mitigates risk. The results of this study suggest the need to continue to refine our understanding of the role of social ties, including how life course stage complicates these basic understandings. For example, a measure of total support from romantic partner and friends would not capture some of the difficulties and areas of mismatch associated with involvement in both types of relationships during this period. Further, and consistent with the basic tenets of social learning theories, attention to significant others' perspectives and behaviors as well as to levels of support will result in a more comprehensive treatment of network effects on various forms of well-being.

Table 1. Means/Percentages and Standard Deviations for Study Variables, by Gender (n = 928)

Dependent Variables	Full Sample (n = 928)			Males (n = 421)		Females (n = 507)
	Mean/Percentage	SD	Range			
Verbal Conflict	2.44	0.93	1 - 5	2.42		2.45
Intimate partner violence	23.28%			24.23%		22.49%
Independent Variables						
Peer Factors						
Friends' liberal attitudes/behaviors	0.00	0.75	-1.58 – 2.06	0.20	***	-0.16
Friends' IPV	45.58%			46.08%		45.17%
Family Violence						
Coercive parenting	10.79	3.28	3 – 27	10.81		10.78
Sociodemographic Characteristics						
Female	54.63%					
Age	25.42	1.83	22 – 29	25.46		25.39
Race						
White	67.35%			67.22%		67.46%
Black	21.34%			21.38%		21.30%
Hispanic	11.31%			11.40%		11.24%
Family structure						
Two biological parents	53.45%			57.72%	*	49.90%
Single parent	21.01%			20.19%		21.70%
Step-parent	13.58%			12.35%		14.60%
Other	11.96%			9.74%		13.81%
Mother's education						
Less than HS	10.78%			9.74%		11.64%
High school	32.44%			32.78%		32.15%
Some college	33.41%			33.25%		33.53%
College or more	23.38%			24.23%		22.68%
Adult Status Characteristics						
Respondent's employment						
Unemployed	24.89%			21.85%		27.42%
Part-time	19.18%			15.20%	**	22.49%
Full-time	55.93%			62.95%	***	50.10%
Parent	41.16%			35.87%	**	45.56%
Relationship Characteristics						
Union status						
Dating	44.40%			46.32%		42.80%
Cohabiting	32.33%			34.92%		30.18%
Married	23.28%			18.76%	**	27.02%
Current relationship	79.96%			75.77%	**	83.43%
Duration	3.42	2.88	0.083 - 14	3.15	**	3.65

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001
Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Table 2. Odds Ratios for the Association between Friends'
Attitudes/Behaviors and Relationship Violence (n = 928)

	Zero Order	Model 2
	OR	OR
Peer Factors		
Friends' liberal attitudes/behaviors	1.845***	1.462**
Friends' IPV	3.758***	2.844***
Family Violence		
Coercive parenting	1.020	1.032
Sociodemographic Characteristics		
Female	0.907	0.915
Age	0.983	0.956
Race		
(White)		
Black	2.167***	1.043
Hispanic	2.314***	1.629
Family structure		
(Two biological parents)		
Single parent	2.743***	1.989**
Step-parent	1.532	1.028
Other	2.667***	2.015
Mother's education		
Less than HS	1.423	0.821
(High school)		
Some college	0.851	0.885
College or more	0.426***	0.635
Adult Status Characteristics		
Respondent's employment		
(Unemployed)		
Part-time	0.507**	0.563*
Full-time	0.377***	0.444***
Parent	0.715***	1.119
Relationship Characteristics		
Union status		
(Dating)		
Cohabiting	0.687***	1.945**
Married	0.276	1.650
Current relationship	0.872	0.728
Duration	1.085**	1.098**
χ^2		157.62***

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model for Relationship Violence (n = 3739 observations)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Unconditional Growth Model	Linear Effect of Time and Within-Subject Factors	Linear Effect of Time, Within- and Between Subjects Factors
Fixed Effects, Composite Model			
Within-subjects			
Initial status	-8.548***	-7.014***	-7.896***
Age	0.764***	0.565***	0.608***
Age-squared	-0.019***	-0.015***	-0.016***
Antisocial Behavior			
Respondent Delinquency/Crime		0.136***	0.146***
Friends' Delinquency/Crime		0.162***	0.152***
Relationship Status			
(Dating)			
Cohabiting		0.600***	0.590***
Married		0.682**	0.772**
Parent		0.532***	0.234
Between-subjects			
Family Violence			
Coercive parenting			0.034*
Sociodemographic Characteristics			
Female			-0.246*
Race			
White			
Black			0.662***
Hispanic			0.257
Family structure			
Two biological parents			
Single parent			0.229
Step-parent			0.159
Other			0.391*
Mother's education			
Less than HS			0.435**
High school			
Some college			-0.166
College or more			-0.513***
Variance component, Intercept			
τ	0.945	0.739	0.637

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4. Odds Ratios for the Association between Negative Attributions about Partner and 'Breaking Up'
(n = 928)

	Zero Order	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	OR	OR	OR	OR
Peer Factors				
Negative attribution re partner	1.890***	1.917***	1.630***	1.749***
Relationship Violence	1.146	1.019	1.009	0.406
Family Violence				
Coercive parenting	1.020	0.980	0.981	0.982
Sociodemographic Characteristics				
Female	0.621**	0.637*	0.311*	0.625*
Age	0.862**	0.965	0.963	0.962
Race				
(White)				
Black	1.547*	1.271	1.276	1.276
Hispanic	0.839	1.127	1.107	1.120
Family structure				
(Two biological parents)				
Single parent	1.164	0.995	1.010	1.009
Step-parent	0.588†	0.738	0.725	0.748
Other	0.778	0.929	0.954	0.918
Mother's education				
Less than HS	0.806	0.674	0.693	0.662
(High school)				
Some college	0.886	0.689	0.691	0.652
College or more	1.209	0.939	0.927	0.904
Adult Status Characteristics				
Respondent's employment				
(Unemployed)				
Part-time	1.023	0.855	0.853	0.853
Full-time	0.791	0.994	0.994	1.004
Parent	0.516***	0.864	0.844	0.838
Relationship Characteristics				
Union status				
(Dating)				
Cohabiting	0.267***	0.328***	0.334***	0.322***
Married	0.026***	0.052***	0.053***	0.049***
Duration	0.721***	0.866**	0.861**	0.866**
Negative attributions re partner X Gender			1.344	
Negative attributions re partner X Relationship violence				1.390
		213.34***	216.06***	215.81***

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

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