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**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS
ASSOCIATED WITH TEEN DATING VIOLENCE**

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The Characteristics of Adolescent Romantic Relationships Associated with Teen Dating Violence

Abstract

Studies of teen dating violence have focused heavily on family and peer influences, but little research has been conducted on the relationship contexts within which violence occurs. The present study explores specific features of adolescent romantic relationships associated with the perpetration of physical violence. Relying on personal interviews with a sample of 956 adolescents, results indicate that respondents who self-report violent perpetration are significantly more likely than their non-violent counterparts to report higher levels of other problematic relationship dynamics and behaviors such as jealousy, verbal conflict, and cheating. However, we find no significant differences in levels of love, intimate self-disclosure, or perceived partner caring, and violent relationships are, on average, characterized by longer duration, more frequent contact, and higher scores on the provision and receipt of instrumental support. Finally, violence is associated with the perception of a relatively less favorable power balance, particularly among male respondents. These findings complicate traditional views of the dynamics within violent relationships, and may also shed light on why some adolescents remain in physically abusive relationships.

Key words: adolescent romantic relationships; gender; teen dating violence

Adolescent Romantic Relationships and the Experience of Teen Dating Violence

Prior research on teen dating violence (TDV) has documented the scope and seriousness of this public health problem (O’Leary et al., 2008; Zurbriggen, 2009). There is general agreement that violence within the context of intimate relationships is emotionally and physically costly (Silverman et al., 2001), and that such formative experiences during adolescence may be linked to later violence within adult relationships (Halpern et al., 2001; Henton et al., 1983; O’Leary and Slep, 2003). Research has also focused on the demographic patterning of violence within teen relationships (particularly the issue of gender disparities and symmetries (e.g., Halpern et al., 2001; Stets and Pirog-Good, 1987; Whitaker et al., 2007), and precursors (such as witnessing or experiencing violence within the family of origin (see DeMaris, 1990; Foshee et al. 2008; O’Keefe et al., 1986; Wolfe et al. 2001)). Yet even though TDV necessarily occurs within a relationship context, research on the character and dynamics of violent relationships is limited, with an emphasis on directly related phenomena such as controlling behaviors and emotional abuse (O’Keefe, 1997).

Drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective and data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS), we investigate links between a range of qualities/dynamics of adolescent romantic relationships and the odds of self-reported intimate violence. We focus our analyses on reports of violence perpetration, but supplemental analyses examine links to victimization, and to the experience of ‘any violence’ (perpetration or victimization) within adolescent romantic relationships. The multidimensional portrait we develop focuses on both positive (e.g., love) and negative (e.g., jealousy) relationship features, as well as patterns of

interaction and influence (e.g., perceptions of the power balance) that characterize these early teen dating relationships.

Background

Early research on teen dating violence documented that intimate violence was not limited to adult marital relationships, and highlighted the seriousness of this problem (Henton et al., 1983). Yet many studies of dating violence have relied on convenience samples of college students, who are generally outside the age range of the adolescent period, and whose sociodemographic characteristics and levels of academic achievement do not reflect a true cross-section of teens. Indeed, prior research has shown that TDV may be significantly associated with economic disadvantage (Cleveland, Herrera, and Stuewig, 2003; Foshee et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2006; Makepeace, 1986), and low achievement in school (Halpern et al., 2001). Other research has focused on reports from high school students, but the restriction to in-school administrations is somewhat limiting, as this tends to increase refusals due to lack of parental consent (O'Keefe et al., 1986, but see O'Leary et al., 2008), and by definition does not capture youths who are frequently absent, suspended from or no longer attending school (Cornelius and Resseguie, 2007). This is especially problematic because prior work suggests an association between TDV and low academic achievement (i.e., the youths most likely not to be attending school) (Halpern et al., 2001). Another study (O'Keefe et al., 1986) found no association between teen dating violence and demographic characteristics of respondents, but findings were based on students from a single high school in Sacramento.

Analyses based on the Add Health data set, a national probability sample, although school-based, are a useful addition to the research literature, and have aided in providing prevalence estimates across the population. Halpern et al. (2001) recently documented that

approximately 12% of respondents had experienced violence within their romantic relationships. However, a limitation of the Add Health study is that questions were only asked regarding victimization, and only relatively minor forms of abuse (e.g., push/shove or thrown something) were included in the survey.

In addition to documenting the extent of the problem and demographic correlates, research has provided useful information about precursors and correlates of teen dating violence. Conceptually, most research on TDV is based either on social learning or feminist frameworks. A number of studies have shown that parental violence is associated with increased odds that young people report violence within their own dating relationships. In addition, the experience of child abuse has been linked to a greater likelihood of experiencing violence in romantic relationships (DeMaris, 1990; Foshee et al., 2008; O’Keefe et al., 1986). These findings are generally congruent with a social learning framework; that is, the idea that these violent repertoires are observed early within the family context and are later enacted within the context of romantic relationships (McCloskey and Lichter, 2003). Yet a limitation of the social learning perspective as traditionally theorized is that it places all of the emphasis on what is transported *into* dating relationships, rather than including attention to dynamics *within* the relationships themselves.

Feminist perspectives offer a more complex view in stressing multiple ways in which cultural and peer group socialization practices influence male-female relationships and in turn create the potential for gendered patterns of intimate violence. Some research within this tradition focuses on the influence of micro-level interaction patterns within the peer group. For example, Eder et al. (1995), in a study of middle school students, showed that boys and girls are socialized quite differently within their same-gender peer groups. Boys receive positive

reinforcement for a competitive, one-up style of discourse and behavior, and for communications that objectify and denigrate young women. Consistent with this, those who display caring or other softer emotions are negatively sanctioned by male peers. Eder et al. (1995) argued that this style of socialization not only influences the nature of developing male-female relationships, but increases girls' risk for violent victimization (see also Anderson, 2005; Wight, 1994).

Maccoby (1990) also stressed that boys and girls are socialized in two different (peer) worlds, arguing that when the two sexes begin to interact, the transition is more easily accomplished for boys, who tend to transport their dominant interaction style into the new relationship. Although research and theorizing in this tradition thus provides a general framework for understanding gendered inequalities of power and female victimization, this perspective does not fully illuminate specific sources of variation in male behavior within a given sample, or factors that influence girls' participation in violent acts.

The Relationship Context of Teen Dating Violence

Feminist perspectives have focused theoretical attention on the dynamics of power and control in adolescent and adult relationships as influences on intimate partner violence. However, few studies have explored these power dynamics directly, and many other relationship qualities/dynamics distinct from power have not been systematically examined. The absence of research on relationship characteristics is an ironic omission since dating violence, unlike other problem youth outcomes (e.g., dropping out of school, smoking marijuana), is inherently relational. The symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934) highlights that behaviors and their meanings are necessarily 'situated,' that is, emerge within and derive their meaning(s) within specific social contexts. This basic notion highlights that behavior within the romantic realm may be influenced by but is never fully fashioned on the basis of other, more distal social

processes (e.g., peer group norms; family of origin experiences). While building on insights from social learning and feminist theories, the symbolic interactionist framework is especially useful because this perspective focuses central attention on the relationship context itself.

Prior research that has explicitly explored aspects of dating context is limited in scope and attention to subjectively experienced aspects of these relationships. For example, the nature of the relationship has been defined as number of dates, which has been linked (positively) to a greater likelihood of violence (Henton et al., 1983; O’Keefe and Treister, 1998). Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) included a more complex measure of “involvement,” but this index is a simple function of the length of time dating and number of dates. While research has shown that length of time, whether defined in terms of duration or number of dates, is associated with heightened risk, this does not provide a comprehensive portrait of the relationship characteristics, qualities, and dynamics associated with dating violence.

Some researchers have attempted to measure intensity of the relationship, but these studies are also limited in scope. For example, Roberts et al. (2006), using Add Health found that involvement in a ‘special romantic relationship’ was associated with heightened risk of abuse. However, about 90% of the dating sample answered affirmatively to this item, suggesting that this is not an ideal measure of variations in the character of these dating relationships. Another study (Stets and Strauss, 1989) defined commitment in terms of variations in living arrangements, finding an effect of cohabitation on risk of relationship violence (see also Brown and Bulanda, 2008; Sigelman, Berry, and Wiles, 1984; but see Kenney and McLanahan, 2006). Nevertheless cohabitation is not a common relationship form during the adolescent period, suggesting the need to explore other dimensions.

Where more specific qualities of the relationship have been assessed, there has been an almost exclusive focus on negative dynamics. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) indirectly assessed the experience of jealousy by examining whether the respondent reported involvement in a serious relationship, but the partner was still dating others (i.e., non-exclusivity was measured, rather than the subjective experience of jealousy). The authors found that being jealous predicted female, but not male, use or experience of violence. Another theme related to power is the notion of coercive control. Both the adult and teen intimate violence literatures have focused on controlling behaviors that often accompany physical violence and the relationships between these various forms of abuse (O’Leary and Slep, 2003). The focus on negative dynamics (jealousy, controlling behaviors) is intuitive, fits with prior research and programmatic emphases, and will be a focus of our analyses. However, while it is critical to study these negative dynamics and their relationship to teen dating violence, it is important to recognize the potential for positive features of relationships to coexist with the more troubling dynamics that have been emphasized in prior research and programming. This focus on negative dynamics may be related to what Cohen (1955) early on described as the “evil causes evil” fallacy—that is the tendency of researchers to concentrate only on negative causes as influences on negative outcomes.

A limited number of findings within prior research studies suggest that a more multifaceted approach is warranted. For example, Arias et al. (1987) found that ‘loving’ the partner was uncorrelated with using/sustaining violence. However the authors noted a gender difference -- lower levels of liking and less positive feelings were associated with higher female but not male reports of violence. In the same vein, Vivian and O’Leary (1987) used audio tapes to analyze affect within communications of aggressive and non-aggressive couples. They found

that the aggressive and non-aggressive couples did not differ in positive and neutral content and affect, but observed more negative content and affect within the aggressive couples' ten minute interactions. More recently, Gallety and Zimmer-Gembeck (2008) explored psychological maltreatment using the diary method over a seven day period, and analyzed respondents' perceptions of daily uplifts, hassles, and affect. Those who had experienced maltreatment reported a similar number of overall uplifts connected to their romantic partners as those who had not experienced maltreatment, and also reported similar levels of happiness associated with those uplifts. However, those within the maltreated group did report more hassles related to their romantic relationships, and more stress and depression associated with these hassles. This generally supports the idea of a more complex set of relationship experiences (see also Larson and Richards, 1994).

The current analysis will assess a broader spectrum of subjective relationship dynamics, with the objective of understanding the total package of positive, negative, and conceptually more neutral dynamics that link to violent expression within dating relationships. Developing this comprehensive portrait should be useful, as young people may not identify with or believe that their own relationship experiences, feelings, and situations 'fit' with the predominantly negative themes stressed within some studies and program emphases.

Power dynamics within teen relationships also require more systematic research scrutiny, since, as suggested above, issues of power and control have been central to discussions of violence within male-female relationships, but have not often been studied directly. The logic of prior theorizing is that gendered inequalities of power tend to be reproduced at the couple level (Komter, 1989); violence thus has meaning as an instrument of control/domination of the partner. Prevention efforts have also highlighted the connections between violence and control

within teen relationships (e.g., Cornelius and Resseguie, 2007). Dutton and Goodman (2005) elaborated a more complex but compatible conceptualization of power that takes into account issues of dependence: “when emotional dependence in the relationship is extreme and unbalanced, the individual who is less dependent has greater power. Emotional dependency can then be exploited by the partner who is less attached to the relationship.” This depicts much violence as a form of purposive power assertion, and suggests that boys in violent relationships are less attached than their female counterparts. Such individuals “create an emotional imbalance in the relationship by facilitating emotional dependency [in order] to exploit it.”

Gender and Relationship Dynamics

In analyzing early romantic relationships, like Maccoby (1990) and Eder et al. (1995), Giordano et al. (2006) used early peer interactions as the point of departure theoretically, but highlighted some different dynamics that may follow from these distinct peer interaction styles. Because girls have more experience with intimacy by virtue of their early friendship experiences (e.g., opportunities for self-disclosure, the experience of conflict and its repair), boys may be less prepared and adept at intimate ways of relating within the romantic context. Consistent with this hypothesis, Giordano et al. (2006) found that boys reported greater feelings of communication awkwardness, and less confidence navigating various aspects of romantic relationships. Further, because girls typically have female friends who provide support and numerous chances for intimacy (Call and Mortimer, 2003), the researchers argued that in some respects may be considered more ‘dependent’ on girlfriends, who represent a relatively unique relationship forum within which to explore newly developing feelings and emotions, as well as the experience of sexual intimacy. In line with these considerations, no significant differences by gender were observed in scores on a passionate love scale, and in-depth narratives underscored that boys

frequently accorded much meaning and significance to their romantic relationships (Giordano et al., 2006). Boys also scored lower on perceived power in their relationships, while scoring higher on partner influence attempts and actual influence. A number of recent studies, often relying on ethnographic methods, have similarly documented boys' feelings of vulnerability and interest in intimacy (Korobov and Thorne, 2006; Tolman et al., 2004; Way and Chu, 2004), and other recent work has explored the notion that cohort shifts have generally amplified girls' freedom and efficacy within the heterosexual realm (Risman and Schwartz, 2002). Such findings thus present a picture of adolescent dating relationships that complicates themes of male dominance and female dependence that have been developed in the adolescence literature in general, and the dating violence literature in particular. Nevertheless, previous analyses have not examined links to physical violence within the relationship. Thus it is possible that more traditionally gendered asymmetries of power and dependence will be observed within those relationships that include physical violence, even though these patterns were not observed across the sample as a whole.

The Current Study

Our objective is to document the association between qualities and dynamics of adolescent romantic relationships and the experience of teen dating violence. While family of origin influences and peer norms are important influences on behaviors that occur within the romantic relationship, the specific nature of these relationships may increase/decrease the likelihood that violence will be observed. This is consistent with a symbolic interactionist perspective that focuses on the situated nature of meanings and behavior.

Based on the results of prior research, we expect that physically violent relationships will include more troubling features. Thus, verbal conflicts, jealousy, cheating, as well as a perceived

lack of identity support will be assessed. However, our multidimensional portrait will also consider more general patterns of interaction and influence (duration of the relationship, time spent together, whether the relationship is sexually intimate, perceived partner influence and power balance within the relationship). In addition, a measure of time spent with friends is included, based on the notion that violent relationships may be associated with greater isolation from friends (Tolman, 1989). We also assess positive features of the relationship, including feelings of love, caring, and level of intimate self-disclosure. Finally, we measure the receipt and provision of instrumental support, recognizing that dating may be associated with tangible as well as ‘intrinsic’ rewards. We evaluate whether these processes are gendered by examining gender by relationship quality interactions, and include results of separate models estimated for girls and boys as well as across the sample as a whole. For example, greater partner power and influence may be associated with girls’ but not boys’ reports of violence, and girls in violent relationships may report less time spent with their friends.

Two other considerations should be highlighted. First, in this investigation, findings are based on a cross-sectional analysis. Thus, we cannot conclude from results that particular features of these relationships caused the outcome of interest, violence, but only whether a particular dynamic/relationship quality is a significant correlate, net of other factors found in prior research to be predictors of teen dating violence. Thus, for example, if an inverse relationship between feelings of love and violence is observed, it could be that violence itself influenced these decreased feelings of love, rather than the situation in which a lack of emotional intimacy actually fostered the violent outcome. Although this is a limitation, these data allow us to draw on a broad range of indicators with the objective of building a more comprehensive descriptive portrait of violent and non-violent relationships. A key issue is that adolescent

romantic relationships are typically of relatively short duration (Carver, Joyner, and Udry, 2003); thus a longitudinal design would often not capture sufficient subjects for whom reports of violence and reports of relationship qualities reference the same focal relationship. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents inferences about the direction of causality.

A second consideration is our choice to focus on respondents' reports of perpetration of violence rather than their experiences of victimization. As prior research on both adolescent and adult populations shows, there are strong links between perpetration and victimization (most violence includes some level of mutual participation, although the idea of sexual symmetry in violent relationships remains controversial (see Makepeace, 1986; Cleveland et al., 2003). We estimated a series of models that explored whether variations in findings resulted when we focused on victimization, perpetration, or the experience of any violence (whether as victim or perpetrator), and only minor differences emerged (i.e., similar patterns of significance were obtained). Thus, we prefer to concentrate on the adolescent's own use of violence, since our measurement of relationship qualities largely concentrates on the respondent's perspectives and feelings about this relationship. In short, it is somewhat more intuitive to connect respondents' own feelings to their own actions. However, we have included some measures that tap the partner's feelings and behaviors (e.g., whether the partner is jealous, partner cheating, partner's receipt of support from the respondent), albeit from the respondent's perspective, and these are also included in our assessments.

Methods

Sample

The sample used in the current study is the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS). The sample was drawn from the year 2000 enrollment records of all youths registered for the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades in Lucas County, Ohio, a largely urban metropolitan environment that includes the city of Toledo (n = 1,321). The sample universe encompassed records elicited from 62 schools across seven school districts. The stratified, random sample was devised by the National Opinion Research Center and includes over-samples of black and Hispanic adolescents. School attendance was not a requirement for inclusion in the sample, and most interviews were conducted in the respondent's home using preloaded laptops to administer the interview. This method is particularly important when studying relationship violence because the respondent is guaranteed privacy in responses to questions about violence. Unlike other data sources such as Add Health, this survey includes multiple measures of relationship qualities and dynamics, as well as measures of violence perpetration as well as victimization.

From the total sample of 1,321, we focus the present analysis on the 956 respondents who reported either that they were currently dating or having recently dated during the previous year. Our analytic sample is 49% male, and the average age is approximately fifteen years. The racial/ethnic distribution is: 69% white, 24% black, and 7% Hispanic. The distribution of the independent variables is presented in Table 1 and dependent variables in Table 2.

Measures

Dependent Variable: Relationship Violence Perpetration. We relied on items from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus and Gelles, 1990), including “thrown something at,” “pushed, shoved, or grabbed,” “slapped in the face or head with an open hand,” and “hit” at each wave, focusing on the current/most recent partner. These items are asked about the respondent

as the target ($\alpha = .91$), and subsequently as the perpetrator ($\alpha = .89$) and reference the current or most recent partner.

Relationship Qualities

Problematic Features. *Verbal conflict* was measured separately from physical violence. This concept was measured by a three-item scale which asks respondents to indicate how often (responses ranging from “Never” to “Very Often”) the following situations occur: “You have disagreements with X,” “You give each other the silent treatment,” and “You yell and shout at each other” ($\alpha = .83$). To measure *partner’s jealousy*, we use a single item asking respondents how strongly they agree with the statement “When I am around other [girls/boys], X gets jealous.” To measure *respondent’s jealousy* we use a mirror-version of the above item. To measure a *lack of identity support*, we use a 2-item scale ($\alpha = .63$). Respondents are asked how much they agree with the following statements: “X is often disappointed in me” and “X seems to wish I were a different type of person”. We also include a measure indicating how often the *teen cheated* on their partner; the item asks how often the respondent “[saw/has seen] another person while with X”. We use a similar measure to indicate how often the *partner cheated* on the respondent.

Rewards of the Relationship. To measure *intimate self-disclosure* we rely on a revised version of West and Zingle’s (1969) self-disclosure scale. This five-item index asks respondents to report about how often (from 1 (never) to 5 (very often)) they communicate with the partner about a range of topics, for example, “something really great that happened, something really bad that happened, your private thoughts and feelings” ($\alpha = .87$). To measure the respondent’s level of *sexual attraction and love* we use four items drawn from Hatfield and Sprecher’s (1986) passionate love scale, including “I would rather be with X than anyone else,”

“I am very attracted to X,” “the sight of X turns me on,” and “X always seems to be on my mind” (alpha = .85). *Caring* is measured with a single item asking the respondent how much s/he agrees with the statement “X cares about me.” To measure *instrumental support from the partner*, we use a scale specifically designed for the TARS study. This scale includes four items asking how often X “lets you borrow something,” “loan or give you money,” “give you a present,” and “pitch in and help you do things.” Responses consist of a five-category Likert scale and range from “Never” to “Very Often” (alpha = .86). Similarly, *instrumental support from the teen* respondent is measured using a four-item scale with identical items as the scale described above (alpha = .87).

Patterns of Interaction and Influence. *Relationship duration* is a single item, in which the respondent indicates how long they and their partner have been together at the time of the interview (the question was not asked of those who had already broken up; instead, the mean was imputed). Responses could range from “less than a week” to “more than a year”. We use a two-item scale indicating how much *time the respondent spends with his/her partner*. Items include how often in the typical week the respondent goes to their partner’s house, or meets after school to go somewhere or “hang out” (alpha = .65). We also use a single measure of how much *time the respondent spends with friends*. We use a simple dummy variable based on a single item indicating whether or not the respondent has had *sex with their partner* (1 = yes).

Our measure of the *partner’s influence* on the respondent is a scaled consisting of six items (alpha = .71). Items include: “X often influences what I do,” “I sometimes do things because X is doing them,” and “I sometimes do things because I don’t want to lose X’s respect.” It should be noted that this measure does not reflect the amount of influence relative to the respondent, but indicates how much influence the respondent perceives from their partner. We

modeled our measure of *power* on Blood and Wolfe's (1960) decision power index revised for use with this younger sample. The scale includes an overall assessment ("If the two of you disagree, who usually gets their way?") and also includes items that reference specific situations: "what you want to do together," "how much time you spend together," and "how far to go sexually." Responses include "X more than me," "X and me about the same," and "me more than X." Higher scores indicate that the respondent feels that they have more power, relative to the partner ($\alpha = .77$).

Traditional Violence Predictors. *Parental Monitoring* is measured by a six item scale completed by the parent that includes items such as: "When my child is away from home, s/he is supposed to let me know where s/he is," "I call to check if my child is where s/he said," "My child has to be home at a specific time on the weekends" ($\alpha = .73$). *Parental conflict* is a single item taken from the parental questionnaire asking how often the parent (most often the mother) argues with their current romantic partner. We also employ a scale measuring *parent-to-teen violent behavior* ($\alpha = .80$). The items are identical to those in the relationship violence scale. *Friends' violence* is a single item, indicating how often the respondent's friends have attacked someone with the intention of seriously hurting them. *Academic performance* was measured by asking the question, "What grades did you get in school this year?" The item was recoded to reflect GPAs ranging from 0.0 to 4.0. We also include a simple dummy variable indicating whether the relationship in question is a *current relationship* or their most recent romantic relationship (1 = current).

Sociodemographic Variables. To control for *socioeconomic status*, we use the highest level of education reported by the parent filling out our parental questionnaire. Because the parental sample is overwhelmingly female, we simply refer to this as "mother's education." We

use a dummy variable (male), to control for *gender*. Females constitute the contrast category. *Age* is measured in years. We use three dummy variables to indicate *race/ethnicity*: Non-Hispanic white (contrast category), Non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic. To measure the *household structure* of the respondent, we use four dummy variables: two biological parents (contrast category), step-family, single-parent family, and any “other” family type.

Analytic Strategy

We first present basic prevalence information regarding the experience of violence within the TARS sample, including reports of perpetration, but also victimization, and include distributions by gender. Subsequently we focus on variations in the odds of self-reported perpetration. We present bivariate models that document observed relationships between each relationship quality or characteristic and odds of perpetration. Next we estimate logistic regression models that include controls for traditional violence predictors and basic sociodemographic characteristics. This will allow us to determine whether significant associations are found, once these covariates have been introduced, and whether any of these traditional predictors mediate observed associations with the relationship quality variables. We chose to focus on each relationship dimension in a separate model, because prior research has not considered these multiple facets of teen relationships. Thus, our intent in this initial investigation is to provide a more comprehensive portrait of the character of relationships that include violence, rather than to pit relationship variables against others to determine relative impact. Finally, we test for gender and relationship quality interactions, to determine whether there are distinctively gendered patterns of association between these relationship qualities and self-reported perpetration.

Results

Table 2 presents the prevalence and distribution of dating violence within the TARS sample. These results show that a majority of respondents do not report any relationship violence (74% overall; 69% of males, and 78% of females). However, a sizeable minority do report some type of violence, with 26% of the sample reporting victimization, perpetration, or both (31% of males and 22% of females).

Table 3 illustrates the various subtypes of violence these respondents reported experiencing. Clearly mutual violence (defined as both victimization and perpetration over the course of the relationship) is the most common type reported, with 49% of respondents in violent relationships reporting this type of violence. Rates of mutual violence are very similar for both males (47%) and females (52%). Among those respondents who report experiencing either perpetration or victimization, gender differences do appear: only 6% of males in violent relationships report only perpetration, compared to 35% of females; similarly, about 13% of females in violent relationships report victimization only, compared to 47% of males. Thus, it appears that while mutually violent relationships appear to be the most common form of violent relationship for all respondents, females are more likely to report being the perpetrator of violence, while males are more likely to report being the sole target of violence. The remaining analyses focus on violence perpetration, and the association between relationship qualities/dynamics and odds of reporting violence perpetration within the focal relationship. Our analyses predict who perpetrated violence (18% total; 19% female, 15% male).

Table 4 presents bivariate and multivariate models that include sociodemographic and other control variables often associated with teen dating violence. We begin with zero-order regressions, examining each relationship factor with no other controls in the model. As shown in the model, all of the problematic features measured (verbal conflict, jealousy of respondent and

partner, less identity support from partner, and more infidelity on the part of the respondent and partner) are associated with higher odds of perpetration. These findings are consistent with the emphases of prior research studies, which have often focused on these troubling aspects of violent relationships. However, the results add to our knowledge in assessing subjectively experienced aspects such as jealousy directly. The finding that respondents who report violence perpetration score higher on the cheating indices (both respondent and partner) also suggests a basis for elevated levels of jealousy within these relationship contexts and may contribute to levels of verbal conflict also observed.

Although a comprehensive treatment of relationship dynamics will thus necessarily include attention to the negative features of these relationships, results also reported in model 1 of Table 4 suggest a somewhat more complex picture. The results of our examination of rewards of these relationships indicate that levels of partner caring, love, and intimate self-disclosure are similar in relationships with and without perpetration. In addition, respondents reporting greater provision and receipt of instrumental benefits associated with their dating relationships have higher odds of perpetration.

Turning to more basic contours of these relationships (i.e., patterns of interaction and influence), relationships of longer duration are associated with greater odds of relationship violence. Results also indicate that greater time spent with the partner is associated with increased odds of perpetration, consistent with the idea of enmeshment in the relationship. However, it is also interesting to note that time spent with friends is not systematically linked with violence reports. As Table 4 indicates, having had sex with partner has a large effect, with significantly higher odds of violence perpetration among those who describe their relationships as sexually intimate. In contrast, perceptions of the partner's influence are not related to

violence reported within the relationship. Finally, perceptions of the power balance within the relationship are negatively associated with reports of violence—those who report a less favorable power balance have greater odds of violence.

The next set of models (Model 2) in Table 4 include socio-demographic controls (mother's education, gender, age, race/ethnicity, and household structure) and control variables generally associated with violence perpetration (parental monitoring, parental conflict, parent-to-teen violence, friends' violent behavior, GPA, and a dummy indicating whether or not the relationship is a current or "most recent" one). All of the significant relationship factor effects remain in the multivariate model, with the exception of cheating. The effect of teen fidelity is mediated by friends' violence and GPA. It should be noted that teen fidelity remains marginally significant ($p = .06$) even after the addition of these controls. We do find, however, that a majority of the effects are diminished in the multivariate models, indicating that these basic controls are important to consider in analyses of perpetration.

Given the importance of gender to discussions of relationship violence, we next included a series of gender by relationship quality interaction terms in the above models (results not shown). Most interactions are not statistically significant, suggesting generally similar patterns of association for males and females. However, we find two exceptions, and Tables 5 and 6 present separate analyses for male and female respondents. As shown, greater partner influence and partner infidelity are associated with increased odds of perpetration for females but not for males. This idea is consistent with the notion that male partners within violent relationships tend to be controlling, and that male cheating in particular is a source of discord and in some instances violence (Miller and White, 2003). However, we note also that while female perpetrators report greater partner influence relative to their non-violent female counterparts, in general males

(whether violent or non-violent) score higher than female respondents on this scale. In addition, the zero order results reported in Table 6 show that cheating on the part of female respondents is significantly related to greater odds of their own violent perpetration. Additional analyses (not shown) indicate that the effect in the female model is mediated by the introduction of controls for friends' violence and race. Another gender difference observed further complicates this portrait: lower scores on the power balance index are associated with increased odds of perpetration for males, but there is no significant effect for females. Examining the means of the four subgroups, we find that male perpetrators have the lowest average score on perceived power. This finding fits generally with Stets' (1991) view of violence as a form of power assertion, but is potentially important in demonstrating that these young male respondents do not themselves perceive that they hold an advantageous power balance within these relationships.

As a final step in the analyses, we estimated models identical to those described above, in which the dependent variable was respondent reports of violent victimization within the focal relationship, or the presence of "any violence" (whether in response to the questions about perpetration or victimization)(results not shown). In these analyses, the pattern of association with relationship qualities and dynamics was quite similar. These findings are not particularly surprising given the strong links between victimization and perpetration observed within the TARS data (see Table 2) and other studies; yet they suggest that results reported are not uniquely influenced by our focus here on variations in perpetration.

Discussion

These analyses support and reinforce previous research, in that those respondents who self-report violent perpetration are significantly more likely than their non-violent counterparts to indicate higher levels of other negative or problematic relationship dynamics and behaviors.

Verbal conflict, jealousy, cheating, and a lack of identity support were linked to violent expression within adolescent dating relationships, and associations were significant even when controls for traditional violence predictors were introduced. This highlights the importance of continuing to explore the specific dynamics within romantic relationships that are linked to increased risk for violence, since predictors such as family exposure or peer norms do not fully mediate these associations.

The current study contributes further to the portrait of these relationships in demonstrating that some positive dynamics are also reported by young people who have experienced violence within their relationships. In this analysis, we find no statistically significant differences between non-violent and violent relationships in levels of love, intimate self-disclosure and perceived partner caring, revealing elements of complexity to the developing adolescent's feelings about a particular partner. Such findings are intuitive, since the adolescent who defines a particular relationship as containing only negative features would likely find it an easier matter to break up with such a partner, particular when physical violence has also occurred. Thus, even though adolescent relationships do not typically involve the issues of economic dependence or concerns about child well-being that may influence adult women's stay/leave decisions (Anderson, 2007), they may nevertheless contain elements of intimacy and perceived importance that makes it difficult to withdraw easily from them. The higher scores on the provision and receipt of instrumental support, longer average durations, and frequent contact reported contribute to this portrait. And the strong association between sexual intercourse and odds of perpetration develops further the notion of 'enmeshment,' suggesting an amplifying role for the heightened emotionality that often accompanies sexual intimacy.

Finally, the results indicated that boys who reported perpetration perceived a relatively less favorable power balance when compared with their male counterparts who do not. These results should be viewed against the backdrop of previous findings indicating that male respondents in general reported a less favorable power balance relative to young women who participated in the TARS study. Prior research and programming has often focused on issues of control, isolation and violence, but it is of interest that these male respondents did not consider themselves dominant or particularly powerful within their relationships. Similarly, teens whose relationships contain a number of positive elements may not relate fully to programming that emphasizes only negative dynamics.

A limitation of this analysis is that the interview data were collected within one metropolitan area. Future research on relationship qualities and dynamics and their association with dating violence will also benefit from adding a temporal dimension (Capaldi and Kim, 2007). Studies focused on a cross-section of adolescents will by definition capture romantic relationships representing a range of stages, and the short average durations of teen relationships poses a further complication. Longitudinal designs that include shorter periods between assessments and the use of timelines or relationship history calendars could be useful strategies for disentangling causal order, and determining the sequence of relationship dynamics that are associated with the greatest levels of risk for the occurrence of violence. More research on the gendered aspects of violent expression should also be a high priority. In the current analysis, many relationship dimensions were similarly associated with male and female reports of perpetration, but it is likely that additional qualitative and quantitative analyses will uncover more distinctive patterns. Specifically, couple level analyses may provide key insights into how relationships that contain violence unfold, including gendered perspectives on the meanings and

consequences of these behaviors (see e.g., White, 2009; Winstok, 2007). It is important to assess levels of fear and extent of psychological and physical injury, and to include attention to the effect of violence on relationship dynamics as well as the qualities that initially foster violent expression. Additional research on relationship dimensions can potentially inform the design of more successful interventions in this area, since more distal factors such as family of origin experiences are potentially less malleable and subject to redirection.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Relationship Quality Variables, Traditional Violence Predictors, and Sociodemographic Controls^a

	Male	Female	Total Sample
<i>Relationship Qualities/Dynamics</i>			
Problematic Features			
Verbal conflict	1.93	2.02	1.97
Partner jealous of teen	2.93*	3.10	3.02
Teen jealous of partner	2.54**	2.73	2.63
Teen cheated on partner	1.65*	1.53	1.59
Partner cheated on teen	1.50	1.51	1.51
Lack of identity support	1.98***	1.69	1.84
Intrinsic Rewards			
Intimate self-disclosure	3.08***	3.41	3.25
Passionate love	3.48	3.59	3.53
Partner cares	4.05***	4.23	4.14
Instrumental support from partner	2.01***	2.60	2.31
Instrumental support from teen	2.45***	2.09	2.27
Patterns of Influence and Interaction			
Relationship duration	4.62*	4.95	4.79
Time spent with partner	2.41	2.28	2.34
Time spent with friends	3.25**	3.07	3.16
Had sex with partner	29.6%	26.9%	28.2%
Partner-on-teen influence	2.72***	2.59	2.65
Teen power in relationship	2.20***	2.49	2.35
<i>Traditional Violence Predictors</i>			
Parental monitoring	1.91	1.87	1.90
Parental arguing	2.39	2.46	2.48
Parent-to-teen violence	1.85	1.84	1.85

Friends' violence	1.56	1.41	1.60
GPA	2.46***	2.84	2.58
Current relationship	50.3%	66.6%	58.5%
<i>Sociodemographics</i>			
Male	-	-	48.9%
Female	-	-	50.2%
Age	15.44	15.54	15.49
SES	4.21	4.19	4.12
White	66.1%	71.9%	69.0%
Black	21.7%	18.0%	19.8%
Hispanic	12.2%	10.1%	11.2%
Two biological parents	54.9%	50.4%	52.6%
Step-parent	16.6%	13.9%	15.3%
Single-parent	19.1%	22.0%	20.6%
Other family type	9.4%	13.7%	11.6%
N	469	487	956

^aExcept where noted, figures represent mean scores. Significant differences between males and females are indicated by asterisks.

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Table 2. Distribution of Reported Involvement in Teen Dating

Violence

	Males	Females	Total
No	69.1%	78.2%	73.7%
Yes	30.9%	21.8%	26.3%
N	469	487	956

Table 3. Types of Violence Among Those in Violent Relationships

	Males	Females	Total
Mutually Violent	46.9%	51.9%	49.0%
Perpetrator Only	6.2%	34.9%	18.3%
Target Only	46.9%	13.2%	32.7%
N	145	106	251

Table 4. Logistic Regressions on Respondent Perpetration

Predictor	Combined Sample			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	b	exp(b)	b	exp(b)
<i>Relationship Qualities/Dynamics</i>				
Problematic Features				
Verbal conflict	1.07***	2.91	.95***	2.60
Partner jealous of teen	.44***	1.56	.39***	1.47
Teen jealous of partner	.37***	1.44	.37***	1.45
Teen cheated on partner	.33***	1.38	.16†	1.18
Partner cheated on teen	.35***	1.42	.27**	1.30
Lack of identity support	.46***	1.58	.42***	1.52
Intrinsic Rewards				
Intimate self-disclosure	.09	1.10	.09	1.09
Passionate love	.13	1.14	.12	1.13
Partner cares	.05	1.05	-.03	.97
Instrumental support from partner	.43***	1.53	.39***	1.48
Instrumental support from teen	.25**	1.28	.23*	1.25
Patterns of Influence and Interaction				
Relationship duration	.22***	1.25	.19***	1.21
Time spent with partner	.20***	1.22	.19***	1.21
Time spent with friends	-.05	.95	.02	1.02
Had sex with partner	1.13***	3.10	.93***	2.53
Partner-on-teen influence	.22	1.25	.36	1.43
Teen power in relationship	-.33*	.97	-.49**	.61

N = 956

† p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Table 5. Logistic Regressions on Respondent Perpetration

Predictor	Male Sample			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	b	exp(b)	b	exp(b)
<i>Relationship Qualities/Dynamics</i>				
Problematic Features				
Verbal conflict	.12***	1.13	.16***	1.18
Partner jealous of teen	.04**	1.04	.07***	1.07
Teen jealous of partner	.04**	1.05	.06**	1.06
Teen cheated on partner	.04**	1.04	.11*	1.11
Partner cheated on teen	.03	1.03	.05	1.05
Lack of identity support	.06**	1.06	.10***	1.10
Intrinsic Rewards				
Intimate self-disclosure	.01	1.01	.03	1.03
Passionate love	.00	1.00	.02	1.02
Partner cares	.05	1.05	-.06	.94
Instrumental support from partner	.08***	1.08	.12***	1.13
Instrumental support from teen	.05**	1.05	.08***	1.08
Patterns of Influence and Interaction				
Relationship duration	.02*	1.02	.04***	1.04
Time spent with partner	.02*	1.02	.06***	1.06
Time spent with friends	.00	1.00	.02	1.02
Had sex with partner	.21***	1.23	.27***	1.31
Partner-on-teen influence	.03	1.03	.08	1.08
Teen power in relationship	-.06*	.94	-.09**	.91

N = 469

† p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Table 6. Logistic Regressions on Respondent Perpetration

Predictor	Female Sample			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	b	exp(b)	b	exp(b)
<i>Relationship Qualities/Dynamics</i>				
Problematic Features				
Verbal conflict	.21***	1.23	.19***	1.21
Partner jealous of teen	.10***	1.10	.09***	1.09
Teen jealous of partner	.07***	1.08	.07***	1.08
Teen cheated on partner	.08***	1.08	.08	1.09
Partner cheated on teen	.09***	1.09	.11*	1.11
Lack of identity support	.11***	1.12	.10***	1.10
Intrinsic Rewards				
Intimate self-disclosure	.01	1.01	.02	1.02
Passionate love	.03	1.03	.02	1.02
Partner cares	-.01	.99	-.06	.94
Instrumental support from partner	.07***	1.07	.07***	1.07
Instrumental support from teen	.05*	1.05	.05**	1.05
Patterns of Influence and Interaction				
Relationship duration	.04***	1.04	.04***	1.04
Time spent with partner	.04***	1.04	.04***	1.04
Time spent with friends	.00	1.00	.02	1.02
Had sex with partner	.16***	1.18	.12*	1.12
Partner-on-teen influence	.09	1.09	.10*	1.10
Teen power in relationship	-.05	.95	-.05	.95

N = 487

† p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study