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**CONTESTED DOMAINS, VERBAL ‘AMPLIFIERS,’ AND INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

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Abstract

We draw on structured and qualitative data to examine relationship dynamics associated with intimate partner violence (IPV) that occurs during the young adult period. Relying on a symbolic interactionist perspective, we identify specific contested domains associated with what has been called ‘common couple violence,’ and explore the degree to which certain forms of communication about contested areas (‘verbal amplifiers’) exacerbate the risk of violence. Consistent with this relational focus, measures index respondent as well as partner concerns and use of these negative forms of communication. Results of analyses of interview data from a large, diverse sample of young adults show that net of family background, history of antisocial behavior, and other controls, concerns about the partner’s or individual’s own economic viability, disagreements about time spent with friends, and issues of infidelity are significantly related to IPV perpetration. Yet the analyses indicate that infidelity is particularly central as a source of conflict associated with violence, and the use of verbal amplifiers explained additional variance. Further, while research has highlighted important differences in the meaning and consequences of male and female IPV, findings point to some areas of overlap in the relationship concerns and communication processes associated with variations in self-reports of the use of violence. In-depth “relationship history narratives” elicited from a subset of respondents and a sample of their partners support the quantitative results, but also highlight variations within the sample, the sequencing of these interrelated processes, and ways in which gender may have influenced respondents’ perspectives and behavior.

CONTESTED DOMAINS, VERBAL ‘AMPLIFIERS,’ AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Data from surveys and official sources indicate that intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs with troubling frequency during adolescence and young adulthood, but research on the etiology of this form of violence has not often considered life-course specific influences. Thus, regardless of the age of groups under study, a similar roster of precursors (early exposure to violence within the family, disadvantaged neighborhood) and correlates (antisocial behavior) have been linked to the odds of experiencing IPV (for a recent review of risk factors, see Capaldi et al. 2012). These studies often emphasize social learning processes and the idea of a general propensity for angry expression (Felson and Lane 2010). Feminist perspectives have included more attention to uniquely gendered aspects of male-female relationships, but the theoretical emphasis on the use of violence as a form of control has been consistent, whether the focus is on dating violence among teenagers or the victimization experiences of older married women (Dobash and Dobash 1998).

Anger and control have thus been implicated in prior theorizing about IPV, but there has been limited attention to what it is that partners are attempting to control when they engage in control attempts, or what “contested domains” are linked to angry emotions and responses that escalate to the point of physical violence. Further, focusing exclusively on either background/individual propensity or a general need to dominate one’s partner does not shed light on sources of variation within and across relationships or at different points in the life course (Capaldi, Shortt, and Crosby 2003; Rennison 2001). A final complication is that even though severe forms of IPV are more likely to be perpetrated by men, population-based studies consistently reveal relatively high rates of female perpetration (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, and Caspi 2004; Gomez 2011).

The objective of the current study is to develop a portrait of violent relationships that further contextualizes these observed age and gender patterns. We outline a symbolic interactionist (SI) perspective on intimate partner conflicts and focus specific attention on the period of young adulthood. We identify life course and relationship specific domains (infidelity, socializing with peers, economic

issues) that may become important sites of conflict during this period, recognizing that certain ways of communicating about these areas of disagreement (we will refer to these as verbal amplifiers) may further heighten conflict in specific situations. These verbal amplifiers are likely to be more proximal antecedents of IPV, but often connect back to the contested domains themselves.

In this investigation, we focus primarily on relationship dynamics associated with what has been called “common couple” violence; that is, variations in self-reports of IPV perpetration observed in a large community sample of young adults (Johnson and Leone 2005). While this form of violence is relatively more common than severe forms of “intimate terrorism,” these experiences nevertheless may be associated with relationship instability (Halpern-Meekin et al. 2013), declines in mental health (authors forthcoming), as well as physical injury (Whitaker et al. 2007). Our primary objective is to explore general associations between the presence of specific contested domains (the *content* of conflicts), verbal amplifiers (the *form* of conflictual communications) and odds of IPV perpetration, but analyses also explore ways in which gender influences these relationship processes and in turn self-reports of IPV perpetration.

We rely on a mixed method approach and data derived from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS), a longitudinal investigation of the romantic relationship experiences of a diverse sample of respondents interviewed first as adolescents, and subsequently as they have navigated the transition to adulthood (n = 928). We include traditional predictors of IPV assessed at the initial wave of interviews (including exposure to parents’ use of physical punishment and early antisocial behavior), but focus specific attention on the contested domains and forms of communication (verbal amplifiers) characterizing respondents’ relationships with a current/most recent partner. This assessment of relationship dynamics and reports of IPV perpetration was elicited at the fifth wave of interviews conducted when respondents averaged 25 years of age. At the time of the fifth interview, we also conducted 142 in-depth qualitative interviews (including 102 interviews of core respondents who had reported IPV and an additional 40 interviews with a corresponding partner) that centered on relationship

dynamics associated with discord and violence. These qualitative interviews were useful in the development of our theoretical perspective, and in interpreting the quantitative results.

BACKGROUND

Traditional Violence and Feminist Perspectives

Many investigations of the etiology of IPV have emphasized the key role of early exposure to violence within the family, and research generally documents significant associations between witnessing parental violence, child abuse or other forms of parental coercion, and the later use of violence within a dating or marital relationship (Gomez 2011; Simons, Lin, and Gordon 1998). Foshee and colleagues (2011), in a recent meta-analysis, concluded that child abuse, relative to witnessing marital violence, has a stronger relationship to the individual's own later use of violence in intimate relationships. Yet scholars interested in intergenerational transmission processes have also pointed out that associations, while significant, are often modest, suggesting the need to include attention to the dynamics within specific relationships as a source of further variation in the odds of IPV (see e.g., Stith et al. 2000). A related stream of research focuses on anger, which is generally conceptualized as a learned response tendency or character/personality trait (see e.g., Eckhardt, Samper, and Murphy 2008; Swan et al. 2005). This approach also suggests an overall stability in the resort to violence that is inconsistent with the results of surveys and official statistics on age trends indicating peaks in young adulthood (Rennison 2001) as well as differences across relationships (Capaldi et al. 2003; Walker, Bowen, and Brown 2013; Winstok 2013).

Feminist theories have added significantly to this literature by focusing attention on gender dynamics within the intimate relationship context. Specifically, the feminist perspective centers on the idea that IPV is not as much about anger, as about (male) power and control of female partners (Boonzaier 2008; DeKeseredy 2011). Yet it is not clear from most treatments why attempts to control intimate partners and associated violence may be especially elevated during the young adult phase of the life course. In addition, while research has documented that women are more often the victims of severe acts of intimate partner violence, it has been a challenge to interpret the relatively high scores of women on measures such

as the “conflict tactics scale,” when scores are consistently much lower on other self-report instruments tapping delinquency and other forms of antisocial behavior (Anderson 2013; Cui et al. 2013; Straus 2009; Winstok 2013). Thus, our primary objective is to further contextualize IPV and these age and gender trends by identifying relationship processes associated with this form of violence during young adulthood.

A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Symbolic interaction theories emphasize the degree to which behavior is necessarily situated, that is, responsive to the immediate situation that individuals confront (Reynolds and Herman-Kinney 2003). Thus, interaction and communication within the immediate situation are generally critical to the process of establishing meaning(s), and associated lines of action. In the current context, this suggests that dynamics within intimate relationships are important to an understanding of the specific patterning of IPV, while recognizing that early family experiences and gender socialization are also formative influences.¹

Mead (1934) noted that behaviors that are considered routine or that can be performed relying on previously acquired habits require little thought and occasion little emotion. However, it is in those situations in which actions are ‘blocked’--that is, when the individual cannot move ahead based on these past habits or routines--that thoughts (cognitions) and feelings (emotions) emerge. Recent theorizing about the phase of emerging adulthood emphasizes that this is a period of transition and flux (Arnett 2004; Settersten and Ray 2010). During this time, young people are in the process of shaping their economic/financial futures, moving away from a heavy focus on socializing with friends to an emphasis on romantic involvement, and in some instances solidifying their levels of commitment to a particular partner (Zimmer-Gembeck 2002). Thus, the life course stage of young adulthood is surrounded by

¹ A number of other scholars have relied on interactionist principles to elucidate the dynamics of violent situations (Athens 2005; Felson 2002; Wilkinson and Hamerschlag 2005). The perspective we outline is generally compatible with these approaches, but here we wish to focus greater conceptual attention on the broader relationship history/context as important to an understanding of specific situations in which conflict may escalate. This relational perspective thus contrasts with both the tendency to focus on background or characterological factors (e.g., having an anger problem) or only features of the immediate situation (e.g., whether bystanders are present).

change and uncertainty in relationships, jobs, and schooling, and new responsibilities, including for some, becoming a parent. Partners may not be on the same timetable or hold the same perspective on these critical issues. Confronting the perspective of the other partner thus may lead to the perception of blocked action, and in turn these arenas may become important ‘domains of contestation’ during this period.

The symbolic interactionist lens and our focus on concrete contested domains add specificity to abstract concepts like anger, control, and power that have been central to previous theorizing about IPV. Thus, while traditional feminist theories have conceptualized violence as arising from a more general desire to dominate and control the partner, here we suggest that control attempts and associated violence often signal either a perceived failure to control the partner, aspects of the relationship, or to move forward in line with an area that has become a domain of contestation. A focus on these concrete arenas also renders more intuitive recent research documenting that men in romantic relationships score higher on “partner control attempts” relative to their female counterparts (authors 2012; see also Stets and Pirog-Good 1987).

Our perspective on IPV thus differs from prior theorizing in three key ways. First, we conceptualize control as frequently linked to concrete contested domains rather than as (necessarily) deriving from a general need to dominate the other partner. Second, we include women’s expressed points of view and their own control attempts as a part of the meaning construction process. And finally, the focus on ‘blocked action’ provides a basis for incorporating emotions (anger) as well as control processes into the relationship dynamics that eventuate in intimate partner violence (since both emotions and control attempts tend to emerge when actions are believed to be blocked). The latter emphasis represents an integration of social learning and feminist frameworks (i.e., in highlighting that IPV is about anger as well as about control), and suggests that emotions and control dynamics unfold from reality as assessed relationally and in concrete situations. This adds to the view of anger as a personal disposition or trait, and to the notion of control as a product of male gender socialization. Below we briefly highlight three potential domains of conflict, as background for the current investigation of the empirical association between dissatisfactions and discord relating to these domains and risk of IPV during young adulthood.

Contested Domains Associated with Conflict during Young Adulthood

During adolescence, young people may select romantic partners based on relatively superficial considerations, but as the transition to adulthood begins to occur, partner choices and romantic ties themselves become more meaningful and potentially consequential. Over time, the romantic partner becomes a reflection on the 'self' in ways that friends and even the family of origin do not. Accordingly, individuals may perceive that they cannot achieve important goals without the partner's cooperation. In line with this changing perspective on their lives and relationships, partners may engage in control attempts designed to affect the other's attitudes and behaviors with respect to important domains on which there is a perceived mismatch. As partners engage in a process of role-taking (i.e., seeing oneself from the other's point of view), they may become aware that some aspects of their role performances are lacking—from the other's point of view (Miller 1981). Similarly, the individual does not relish being the potential change agent/controller, but wants to see the progress occur nevertheless. We briefly review three potential arenas of contestation that may become important sites of conflict during the period, recognizing that this is not an exhaustive roster.

Economic Realities/Concerns about the Future

A key developmental task associated with the transition to adulthood is to gain independence from the resources/supports previously provided by parents (Arnett 2004). As scholars focusing on the period of young adulthood have highlighted, the process of 'making it' (Osgood et al. 2007) may be delayed, circuitous, or out of reach for some who are navigating this transition. Because young people are still in the process of developing their economic and social positions, they may become increasingly preoccupied with their own progress (or lack of it) as well as that of their romantic partners. This contrasts with the teen years, when economic and career concerns were abstract and somewhat at a distance (Edin and Nelson 2013; MacLeod 2008). Concerns about economic issues may become increasingly pressing during this period, as romantic relationships come to include coresidence and the presence of children.

Thus, dissatisfactions regarding the partner's or one's own financial prospects may become a source of personal sensitivity and potential discord.

The Peers-Partner Balance

Research clearly documents a peak in adolescence in peer influence and in the importance of socializing with one's friends. However, in research on adult populations, the emphasis shifts to a consideration of the nature and impact of marital unions (Sampson and Laub 1993). Yet these social network patterns are complicated by demographic trends, including a later age at first marriage in the contemporary context (Silva 2012). The young adult period is thus characterized by relative freedom from parental scrutiny that may be associated with additional opportunities for peer socializing as well as involvement with romantic partners. This suggests possibilities for time with peers to become another potential domain of contestation with particular relevance to this phase of the life course.

Time spent with peers may have meaning beyond the time element, as it may be associated with a lack of attention to career/academic/economic concerns (see above), greater involvement in risky behaviors such as drug or alcohol use, and increased opportunities for infidelity or finding another partner (the third domain of contestation we describe in more detail below). Even more fundamentally, the choice to spend significant amounts of time with peers potentially reflects a lack of full commitment to the romantic relationship itself. Prior theorizing about social networks and IPV has emphasized the tendency of the abusive (male) partner to try and isolate female victims from their friends and family (Pence and Paymar 2006). Although this is an important dynamic, focusing specifically on the young adult period suggests the need to consider that young women may also seek to restrict what they view as excessive socializing on the part of their male partners.

Issues of Fidelity and Commitment

Prior research relying on both adolescent and adult samples has shown an association between jealousy and IPV (Hettrich and O'Leary 2007; Murphy et al. 2005). However, we expect that issues of fidelity and

commitment may represent a particularly important contested domain and source of discord during this phase of the life course. Relationships formed during this time often lack either the ephemeral quality of teen relationships or the legal and social weight of marriage bonds. Research indicates that young adults on average begin to form longer duration relationships relative to their teen counterparts, and consider the romantic partner an increasingly important source of support and influence (authors 2012). At the same time, studies show that breakups, a pattern of relationship churning (i.e., breaking up and getting back together), non-relationship sex ('hook-ups') and infidelity are relatively common experiences (Ford, Sohn, and Lepkowski 2002; Halpern-Meekin et al. 2013; Manning, Giordano, and Longmore 2006), suggesting that fidelity concerns may not always be unwarranted.

Studies find that such experiences are reported by both women and men during this age period, but generally reveal that young men tend to report higher rates of non-relationship sexual experience and concordance (simultaneous involvement in multiple relationships) relative to reports of young women of comparable ages (Lyons et al. 2013). Thus, while the IPV literature has tended to emphasize men's jealousy as a warning sign of an abusive relationship, women's concerns about fidelity and commitment may also be associated with relationship discord. For example, Miller and White (2003), in an important qualitative study, explored young women's experiences within their romantic relationships, and found that issues of jealousy and partner cheating were frequent preoccupations that in some instances were related to the young women's use of violence. Similarly, in a recent analysis of taped conversations between 17 incarcerated men arrested for domestic violence and their partners, Nemeth and colleagues (2012) found that infidelity was a significant theme in discussions about events leading up to their committing offenses. We follow up these qualitative studies with a systematic quantitative assessment of the association between reports about respondent and partner infidelity and the odds of perpetrating IPV.

Communication Processes: The Role of Verbal Amplifiers

The above discussion places emphasis on the *content* of communications between partners, as we identified specific domains of contestation that may be associated with control attempts and negative

emotions during this phase of the life course. Yet even in the presence of disagreements relating to these areas, violence is generally not a routine, everyday occurrence. This suggests the need to consider as well the *form* of communications within the intimate context. Extended disagreement related to these key domains of contestation, especially around issues of fidelity and commitment, may devolve into negative terrain, including name-calling or ridicule, communication tactics that may be more proximal antecedents of the resort to violence (Athens 2005). Prior research has shown that verbal conflict is a robust predictor of IPV, but here we focus on communication tactics that are perceived as heightening feelings of disrespect or humiliation (Felson 2002).

The use of these “verbal amplifiers” may be occasioned either by an accumulation of perceived disappointments/concerns or by an ‘outsized’ incident (e.g., discovery of a partner’s infidelity) that places particular contested domains in bold relief. Family background experiences or personality differences may be related to the use of such verbal tactics, but here we wish to emphasize that such provocative communications may derive from relationship-specific dynamics--perceived failure to control the partner’s actions in relation to these key contested areas, negative reactions to control attempts, and eventually to the negative appraisals explicit in names that are called and the ridicule that is communicated. Thus, violence occurs not only because of disappointments with partners in these areas (i.e., the notion of blame as ‘externalized’), but as a last ditch effort to refute these (incoming) negative attributions.

Current Study

Due to the relatively broad and abstract nature of constructs such as anger and control, our objective in the current analysis is to further localize intimate partner conflicts as we consider specific contested domains associated with IPV during the young adult period. Recognizing the fundamentally dyadic character of intimate relationships, we include conceptual and measurement attention to women’s as well as men’s concerns related to these domains. We focus on a current or most recent relationship, and respondents’ reports about their own and partner concerns relating to the domains of career/finances, time

spent with peers, and infidelity, and also consider the use of verbal amplifiers (their own and partner use) as factors associated with variations in self-reports of IPV perpetration. Models include controls for traditional predictors (coercive parenting, juvenile delinquency), sociodemographic characteristics, adult status markers (e.g., presence of children, marital and employment status), and more basic features of the romantic relationship (e.g., its duration). Next we assess the degree to which respondent gender influences the association between these contested domains, communication dynamics, and self-reports about IPV perpetration. Subsequently we consider how our focus variables combine (e.g., high levels of contested domains along with the use of verbal amplifiers) as influences on variations in self-reported IPV. Finally, we draw on in-depth “relationship history narratives” elicited from a subset of the respondents to illustrate the role of contested domains and verbal amplifiers in specific conflict situations that escalated to the point of violence.

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 on structured interviews conducted at the first (2001) and fifth (2011) interviews. A majority of responses were entered directly by respondents on preloaded laptops. Wave 1 also included the administration of a questionnaire to a parent/guardian (typically the mother), and these responses were used to assess sociodemographic information described in more detail below. The sampling frame of the TARS study encompassed 62 schools across seven school districts. The initial sample was drawn from enrollment records for 7th, 9th, and 11th grades, but school attendance was not a requirement for inclusion in the study. Most interviews took place in respondents’ homes. The stratified, random sample was devised by the National Opinion Research Center and 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% of wave 1.²

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 (n = 70).³ The final analytic sample thus consists of 928 respondents (422 males and 506 females), of which 412 were dating, 300 were cohabiting, and 216 were married. The qualitative sample includes 102 core respondents who reported violence either at wave 4 or wave 5. An additional 40 partners of these respondents were also interviewed, which resulted in a sample of 80 interviews that permitted a couple-level perspective.

Measures

Supplemental files include a table (Supplementary Table 2A) presenting descriptive statistics for all study variables for the total sample and by IPV status (whether or not the respondent self-reported IPV perpetration).

Dependent Variables

Relationship violence perpetration 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 et al. 1996), 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,” and

² Attrition analyses indicate that subjects retained did not differ significantly on most dimensions (e.g., wave 1 IPV report, parental coercion, and delinquency), but were somewhat more likely to be female, 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.

³ Respondents who reported about a same-gender relationship were included in the analyses, with the exception of models described in supplemental files, which focused specifically on male and female partner concerns and use of verbal amplifiers. The relatively small n precludes a separate analysis, but we also estimated models shown in Tables 1 and 2 restricting the sample to heterosexual couples, and results do not differ.

“hit,” in reference to experiences with the current/most recent partner ($\alpha = .91$).⁴ We also estimated models relying on a weighted scale that took into account frequency and severity, and results are similar.

The analyses to follow focus on variations in reported perpetration rather than victimization, as our interest is in the ways in which individuals’ feelings of dissatisfaction and understandings about particular domain of contestation may be associated with their own behavior within the relationship. Nevertheless, prior research has shown that victimization and perpetration are highly correlated. Thus, variations on the perpetration scale will necessarily capture significant numbers of respondents with victimization experience. We also estimated models relying on a dependent variable that indexed the presence of “any violence” within the relationship (including perpetration and/or victimization), and results are similar.

Key Independent Variables

Contested Domains. *Partner’s poor financial prospects* is measured using four items ($\alpha = .72$) asking respondents how much they agree with the following statements: (1) “X’s financial future is bright” (reverse coded), (2) “X doesn’t know what he/she wants as far as his/her job/future,” (3) “I wish X had a better job,” and (4) “I like the way that X handles money” (reverse coded) ($\alpha = .72$). Parallel items assess *respondent’s poor financial prospects* ($\alpha = .55$). We use two measures tapping the *peer-partner balance*: Partner has admonished respondent about time with peers (“Does X tell you not to spend so much time with your friends?”) and an item focused on respondent’s concerns about the partner (“X puts his/her friends before me”). *Partner infidelity* is based on five items asking about infidelity in general and as a source of disagreement: “He/she cheated on me” and “I thought he/she might cheat on

⁴ The indices of contested domains and verbal amplifiers were also assessed at wave 5 in order to ensure that the relationship described is the same as that referenced in the IPV reports. Due to the relative fluidity of these young adult relationships, it would not be feasible to examine wave 4 relationship dynamics and wave 5 IPV, as partners often shifted across waves of interviews. In addition, consistent with our theoretical perspective, many of these couples would have already experienced the outcome of interest at wave 4. Restricting the sample to couples reporting an intact relationship across the two waves, but no wave 4 violence would clearly establish causal order, but results would be of limited value due to our reliance on this highly select subgroup. The cross-sectional examination is thus consistent with our goal of further contextualizing IPV, but limits our ability to make inferences about temporal order or causation. The qualitative data we also collected are thus a useful adjunct to the analyses of the structured data, as they provide more information about the sequencing of these interrelated processes, albeit from the respondents’ own points of view.

me,” “threatened to have an affair with someone else,” “has seen another girl/guy,” and “has gotten physically involved with other girls/guys” (alpha = .86). *Respondent infidelity* contains similarly worded items (alpha = .78).

Partner and respondent use of verbal ‘amplifiers’ (alpha = .78, alpha = .78) were based on items assessing whether the following had ever occurred in their relationship with X: “He/she was disrespectful to me,” “He/she mocked me,” “I got upset that he/she was talking about our problems in front of people,” “He/she called me rude names during an argument,” and “He/she didn’t let me finish saying what I have to say.” Parallel items index respondent use.

Sociodemographic Variables, Adult Status Characteristics and Basic Relationship Indices

We include a series of sociodemographic indicators: *gender* and *age*, measured in years using a continuous variable reported from respondent’s age at wave 5, as well as three dummy variables to measure *race/ethnicity* including non-Hispanic white (contrast category), non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic. *Coercive parenting* is measured using a six-item scale (alpha = .82) from the wave 1 parent questionnaire asking parents to indicate, during the past month, how often they have: “gotten angry at their child,” “criticized their child,” “shouted or yelled at their child,” “argued with their child,” “threatened to physically hurt their child,” and “pushed, grabbed, slapped, or hit their child” (responses range from “never” to “very often”).

Family structure (wave 1) includes the following categories: two biological parents (contrast category), step-family, single-parent family, and any “other” family type. To control for *socioeconomic status*, we use the highest level of education reported in the wave 1 parent questionnaire. Because the parental sample consists primarily of women, this measure is referred to as “mother’s education” and is represented by the following indicators: less than high school, high school (contrast category), some college, and college or more. *Respondent delinquency* is measured at wave 1 (alpha = .81) using a ten-item version of Elliott and Ageton’s (1980) self-report instrument. 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 by asking how long respondents have/had been with their current or most recent partners. The range is from less than a week (1) to a year or more (8).

Results

Supplementary Table 2A presents descriptive statistics for the sample as a whole and by IPV status. Approximately 16 percent of the sample reports IPV perpetration. Table 1 presents results of a logistic regression analysis examining the association between specific contested domains, the use of verbal amplifiers, and odds of reporting IPV perpetration in the current/most recent romantic relationship. As results indicate, at the zero order, all of the indices of contested domains (dissatisfaction with partner's financial prospects, respondents' own poor financial prospects, admonishment from partner to spend less time with friends, the view that partner 'puts friends first,' as well as partner and respondent infidelity) are associated with significantly higher odds of IPV perpetration. Further, reports of the use of what we have labeled verbal amplifiers by both respondent and partner are associated with elevated odds. Several of the factors introduced as controls also share a significant relationship to IPV. Gender (female) is positively related to self-reports of perpetration, as is minority status (black, Hispanic) and respondent delinquency. Non-traditional family forms (single parent or 'other') and mother's education were significant predictors, and both part-time and full-time employment are associated with reduced odds of IPV. Conversely, parenthood is associated with greater odds, as is involvement in a cohabiting relationship. Finally, duration of the relationship is positively linked to IPV reports.

Models 2, 3, and 4 examine each pair of contested domains (referencing partner and respondent concerns) along with controls for sociodemographics and family background, early antisocial behavior, adult status and relationship characteristics. Results show that net of this set of covariates, concerns with

financial future (both indices) and both infidelity measures are significant. As indicated in Model 3, of the two measures of concerns about involvement with friends, only the individual's report of partner admonishments to spend less time with friends remains a significant predictor of IPV perpetration.⁵

Model 5 introduces the two measures of the use of "verbal amplifiers" of conflict, and results show that net of covariates, higher levels of both partner and respondent use of these amplifiers are significantly associated with violence.

Model 6 examines all of the contested domains simultaneously. In this model, respondent's receiving admonishments from the partner to spend less time with friends, and both indices of infidelity remain significant correlates. A final model (Model 7) adds the verbal amplification measures. In this model the two forms of infidelity are significant, and both respondent and partner's use of verbal amplifiers are also significantly associated with perpetration. The model also shows that when all of the other factors are taken into account, "partner puts friends first" is associated with lower odds of IPV perpetration.⁶ In this full model, of the other covariates, gender (female), respondent delinquency, and employment status remain significant correlates.

Supplemental models estimate interactions of each of the contested domains, the two indices of verbal amplification and gender. None of these interactions are significant, indicating a generally similar influence across gender in the patterning of reports about these areas of disagreement, the use of verbal amplifiers, and variations in the odds of reporting IPV perpetration. This does not suggest gender symmetry in the experience of IPV, but does indicate some areas of overlap in relationship and communication dynamics associated with variations in male and female self-reports of perpetration.

As an additional step in exploring issues of gender, we recoded the variables to reflect male and female-focused contested domains and male/female use of verbal amplifiers.⁷ These results should be

⁵ In a model that does not include the other peer index, the measure of partner "putting friends first" remains significantly associated with IPV, however.

⁶ Recall that at the zero order this variable is significant in the expected direction, and this apparent suppression may simply be a function of the limits of the use of a single item indicator that is itself not as straightforward in meaning as the corollary measure referencing the respondent (partner has told me not to spend so much time with friends).

⁷ We restrict this model to male-female relationships.

interpreted cautiously, as they combine reports (i.e., reports about women consist of reports provided by female respondents as well as men's reports referencing their female partners). These results are shown in supplemental files, and are generally similar to the respondent-based analyses. For example, results in a corresponding model 6 show that net of covariates, both male and female infidelity are associated with higher odds of IPV. In this model, however, concerns about male partner's financial prospects is also significant. In addition, in the full model that includes verbal amplifiers, only male infidelity and female partner use of amplifiers are significant.

One of the challenges of examining relationship dynamics of this type is that these negative features tend to be related and to cluster. Thus, while only women's use of verbal amplifiers is significant in the above model, male and female verbal amplification scales are highly correlated (.89), suggesting that these are often reciprocal and intimately related processes.⁸ As an illustration of the effect of clusters of relationship dynamics, results in Table 2 show combinations reflecting varying levels of contested domains (high/low) and high/low use of verbal amplifiers. As the results in Table 2 suggest, the presence of high levels of contested domains along with the use of high levels of verbal amplifiers by respondent and partner is associated with a very high odds (2207%) of reporting violence within the relationship, net of traditional covariates. However, other combinations are also associated with elevated odds of IPV. That is, high scores on contested domains without the use of verbal amplifiers (304%), and the use of verbal amplifiers itself (818%), even absent high scores on the contested areas we assessed are also associated with elevated odds (relative to the low/low condition).

A Qualitative Lens on Contested Domains and Verbal Amplifiers

We focus the discussion below around processes described above that have not figured prominently in many prior theoretical discussions and programmatic efforts. Yet it is important to underscore that many of the dynamics emphasized in classic treatments (e.g., the presence of male jealousy and controlling

⁸ In short, the traditional regression procedures tend to somewhat artificially pit each relationship variable against the other in an attempt to gauge relative salience of what are frequently interrelated phenomena.

behaviors; severe consequences stemming from male violence) also receive ample support within these narrative accounts. For example, a 24 year old respondent, Jill, described a terrifying incident in which her partner confronted her about another man's attentions after a party, and refused to allow her to leave the room. The incident that unfolded included throwing Jill across the room, and dragging her back inside when she attempted to escape. Similarly, Kaitlyn, age 27, told the interviewer that a former partner who was extremely jealous gave her a black eye because she was "12 minutes instead of 10 minutes going to pick up pizza for everybody."

Another respondent's narrative also focused on fidelity concerns, but in this instance Lori indicated that violence occurred after her suspicions about her partner Jeremy had been confirmed. Here we see evidence of a role for actual (male partner) infidelity and verbal 'amplification' immediately prior to the violent incident:

And I think he was just so, so upset that he was caught in every single lie. I was just tellin' him how much of a liar he was and how could you do this to somebody that you've been with for so long, just calling him sorry and you know, and I told him, "You'll never be your dad." Because his mom is a deadbeat mom [who] ran out on him and his brothers and his dad raised him. And I just told him, you, you're your mom. You know? Like that, that's who you are. And you know, you, you're nothing. But he was upset about it because he despises his mother...I think he hit me first. And then after that I just kinda blanked out and I just started swinging, pickin up stuff, hittin' him. And it was just kinda like you know I felt relief because I was hurtin' him, but then I felt bad because my kids were there... [Lori, 26]

As elaborated in our theoretical discussion, emotions emerge from the perception of blocked action. Lori's anger appears to be related to her inability to control her partner Jeremy's cheating, and in turn the character of a relationship that had developed over 'so long' a period of time. Consistent with our notion of verbal amplification, Lori declares that Jeremy is 'a liar,' 'sorry,' and 'nothing,' and further offers that he is 'his mom.' In context, this involves an even more negative attribution, as Jeremy's mother early on had left the family, and is someone he "despises."

This example also shows that while Lori is the partner who may be considered 'righteously' indignant (Katz 1988), Jeremy nevertheless lashed out first. His actions (carrying on an affair with impunity) have also been blocked, and in the moment he is unable to stop the flow of negative "reflected appraisals" that Lori has provided him. Thus, Jeremy's use of aggression appears to occur in direct response to being

presented with this negative portrait, rather than being based on a more general desire to control Lori's whereabouts and movements (as suggested in many theoretical treatments, and as exemplified by Jill and Kaitlyn's narratives, as quoted above). Jeremy's actions can also be considered an attempt to control, but here the interest is immediate, and apparently focused on the flow of these negative attributions. Further, Lori's aggressive acts occurred after Jeremy first hit her, but her own account suggests that motivations are not limited to concerns about self-protection (I felt relief because I was hurtin' him...), as traditional treatments of women's perpetration have often emphasized (e.g., Dobash and Dobash 1998).

A similar pattern is evident in 27 year old Amanda's description of a tumultuous relationship with David, which was characterized by his frequent infidelity. In this incident, Amanda struck her partner first:

He don't want to face all the stuff that he did, he would leave. You're not about to leave and leave me wondering like why you did this...and yea I went down to his house and we really fought... He was calling me out my name and I'm calling him out his name. I think I hit him in his face or something. I kind of feel bad...And that's what I think made him mad because I hit him in his face and he swung on me back and after I hit him he tried to hit me [he knocked her to the ground], I tried to go for him again and that's when his sister jumped in the middle.

We note also that while the couple level interviews we conducted revealed that each partner necessarily held a unique perspective, there appeared to be relatively high levels of agreement regarding the specific domains that were being contested. As an example, Jeff, a 28 year old core respondent, suggested that "every time I leave [she thinks] I'm cheating on her or something," and admitted to the interviewer that eventually he did go on to cheat. This is similar to his 32 year old partner Allison's own description elicited during an interview that took place some six weeks later: "the conflict was him and his little ho's as I like to call them."⁹

The examples above show a significant role for infidelity as a key domain of contestation, and the presence of communications that in concrete situations may increase anger and escalate the conflict. Yet results shown in Table 2 also indicate that cheating may be linked to violence even absent the use of these

⁹ Some differences in male and female narratives emerged, but this often revolved around more subtle issues relative to the concrete nature of fidelity concerns. For example, Mallory told the interviewer that she appreciated her partner Jake's close relationship with her son, but Jake spoke at length about the difficulty of living with a young child. Yet both concurred that Mallory's continued interactions with her 'ex' were a significant source of discord.

types of verbal amplifiers. Thus, consistent with these results, a number of respondents indicated that they or partners moved relatively quickly between beliefs or discoveries about cheating to an act of perpetration without apparent escalation due to these verbal insults:

I was in the shower and she was going through my phone, so I hop out the shower and I think the woman called and she's like, "who is this woman" and smacked, and just swung at me. Smacked me right here in the face. Like whack, like that! [Thomas, 26]

She thought I was cheatin on her...cooked me a nice meal, then we go to sleep and, boom, she's like, "Get up, get up mother fucker!" She smacks me, "Get up!" I wake up and you know I'm looking at a pistol...Pfft, I just begged her. [Will, 27]

Male jealousy also figures into these conflict and violence narratives, as previous research has emphasized. However, some narratives show that while the violence is misguided and harmful, the partner's concerns may not be completely apocryphal. Again, it is reasonable to expect that some women involved in what have evolved as unhealthy, conflictual relationships may eventually begin to seek an alternative to the current partner. This observation is consistent with a supplemental analysis in which we relied only on female respondents' reports about their own infidelity within the context of the current/most recent relationship. These reports should be less biased than male reports about the partner, and less subjective than items indexing cheating concerns or threats to cheat. Results of this more straightforward analysis indicate that women's reports about their own infidelity are significantly related to IPV risk (results shown in supplemental files).

In line with this quantitative result, 25 year old Dan describes an incident in which he went over to his girlfriend Crystal's house and saw her on the couch with another man. The two began to argue, but almost immediately he began to engage in actions that were aggressive. Dan eventually restrained Crystal by putting her in a headlock, but attempted to mitigate the seriousness of his response by referring to it as a "calm down, you in the wrong, you swinging at me and you the one that got somebody over here" headlock:

Sit and listen. Like, don't get up. Like we sit here we talk about this. You know what I mean? Like I just walked in and you got some fool just laying on the couch. She sit there talking about "this is my house" and "don't be putting your hands on me..." The third time (he pushed her back onto the couch) she got up swinging. That's when, you know, she bust my nose...

It is also important to note that in spite of his indignation about his partner's behavior, this respondent had self-reported cheating on partners across all five waves of the structured interviews.

The Role of Other Contested Domains: Economic Issues and Time Spent with Friends

While infidelity is thus a “bottom line” concern and source of discord for many of these young adult respondents, domains of contestation such as economic issues or time spent with friends play a supporting role that may come to the foreground in specific situations. For example, Felicia, age 28, had recently been fired from her job at a convenience store, and recounted conflicts that related to a lack of economic and practical contributions on the part of her partner Darrell (“you don't do nothing here, you don't pay no bills, you don't help me do nothing, you don't take care of the kids”). Yet after additional follow-up questions Felicia indicated that most heated arguments related to his cheating (“Most of the time it was him taking off and being sneaky with females”). Further complicating the portrait, Felicia admitted that at times she introduced the idea of seeing other men (“Well don't talk to me... Don't ask me where I'm going. Don't ask who I'm talking to. It's none of your business... And then he'd get mad at me and we'd get into an argument over that.”)

The idea that the domains we investigated often cluster is well illustrated by 27 year old James' account, which succinctly describes discord related to all three contested domains examined in the quantitative analyses. Again, however, his comments make clear that infidelity concerns are a central preoccupation:

Me going out with my friends. Me not calling her like as much I should. Uh, money...stuff like that. Yea, like she wanted me to check-in or something. Like, I'm not, I don't have to check in with you. Wanted to know like every move that I made... Oh, the insecurities are kind of my fault because I did cheat on her when we first started dating, but she also cheated on me too, so...and then she didn't believe that I could be faithful after we resolved our issues in the beginning.

Concerns about time with peers is also a frequent topic in the narratives of many respondents, and appeared for some to be an ongoing source of disagreements. Yet the specific accounts of these concerns further reinforce the notion that these attempts to control the partner's time and whereabouts often connect back to relationship insecurities and fidelity concerns:

Like she wants to control everything. She don't want me to go hang with my friends, my boys or whatever. She wants me to sit at home and be with her all the time and I can't ever go nowhere by myself. When I say that I need some me time, she'll be like, "What do you need me time for?" She don't want me to talk to nobody... and when I'm asleep she's going through my phone and through my pockets and you know all that type of stuff. [Ben].

As suggested at the outset, the transition from a style of socializing that involves peers to a more predominant focus on one's romantic partner and a more settled lifestyle may be less than seamless.

Based on prior research on gender differences in parental supervision during the adolescent period, it is also possible that the scrutiny of female partners presents an unwanted contrast with the relative freedom that characterized young men's teen years. As one young man told the interviewer, "my momma don't even ask me questions like that." References within several women's narratives suggest that this attempt to control partners' actions and whereabouts is a dynamic they recognize: As Jen put it, "I control my relationships...to a t. I literally control everything he does. I'm a real heavy control freak in my relationships. I watch everything he does. I go everywhere with him. I don't, I don't let him go alone."¹⁰

A further complication is that the in-depth interviews make clear that the partner's control attempts do not inevitably connect to violence. Thus, some young men's accounts include gratitude that a partner has steered them away from negative influences, resulting in better lifestyle choices (Laub and Sampson 2003). However, when an individual is not ready to make those relationship or lifestyle changes, such control efforts can develop as a source of discord. And to the degree that partners believe that time with friends may be associated with infidelity and acts of defiance occur, conflict may escalate, as suggested in the example below:

Because he left, he dropped me off and took off. It wasn't just that he left with his friends, but there were also girls in the car. There was a bunch of girls and all kinds of stuff in the car. I'm just like, why would you have left and left me at home? That upsetted the crap outta me. When he got home, I met him out there and we were arguing back and forth and he just wanted to be left alone and I kept on--that's bullshit, screamin' at him. And he pushed me and I was like oh hell no. [Beth, 23]

Verbal Amplification as a Stand-Alone Precipitant

¹⁰ The above quotes from Ben and Jen were drawn from the wave 4 interviews, which were central to the development of our view of control processes and the need to explore ways in which control attempts often connect to specific contested domains (see Supplement 1).

The quantitative and qualitative data support our emphasis on specific contested domains likely to be associated with discord and in some instances violence during the young adult period. In the above examples, infidelity, time with friends and economic issues may be key domains of contestation, and incidents often feature an element of verbal amplification. Yet another subgroup of respondents described violent incidents where the negative communication processes themselves appeared central (see also Table 2), and the contested domains were only obliquely referenced. For example, the individuals quoted below detail denigrating or belittling comments from a partner that they link directly to a violent response:

I would be like, we need to do this for our relationship and he would just like mock me and just be like, ehnnahnahnah, like that, and it would just annoy me so bad that I... I felt like I couldn't do anything but, but hit him to get my point across. [Chelsea, 24]

I was gonna go over my friend's house. She took like the pictures she had of us on the wall, threw those all on the ground, threw those everywhere, which I was like 'you're stupid' because those are your frames [laughs]...She did smack me, like twice. [Kyle, 23]

I was basically telling her that she was psychotic and I don't think she liked that very much. I mean it escalated really really quickly and I was really taken aback by her reaction. [Tom, 27]

Yea... I broke his jaw... he had to go to the hospital... and he's like "you're fuckin stupid, you're a stupid bitch, why don't you let your sister defend her fuckin self... you and your sister are ho's..." I think the reason he was talkin about my sister is because he wanted her... he cheated on me with my own cousin... [Kelly, 26]

These excerpts are face-valid as provocative communications that would likely increase the recipient's feelings of anger. Here the contested domains play a background role within the narrative account (e.g., "I was gonna go over my friend's house...", "he wanted my sister") and the element of contestation is the strong reaction against the negative attribution that has just been offered. A provisional hypothesis in this regard is that some attributions respondents describe may be perceived as particularly aversive to the degree that they center on demeaning gender stereotypes (you're a stupid bitch, you're psychotic). We note, however, that the quantitative results do not reveal a gender difference in reports of the use of verbal amplifiers. Accordingly, some examples within the narratives suggest that young men appeared to be particularly sensitive to negative statements that reflected on their lack of progress in succeeding along traditional economic lines. Thus, verbal amplifiers may connect back to the contested domains we

centered on, as when Jamie called his partner a ‘ho’ or these respondents focus on their partner’s lack of economic viability:

I call him a freaking bum...you have nothing. You’re a nobody. [Allison, 27]

Now she want to call me a deadbeat, and say I ain’t this and I ain’t that. [Mark, 28]

I told him [the young man she had slept with] had a bigger ___ and a better job. [Lisa, 25]

These negative reflected appraisals contain references to the partner’s lack of economic progress, but in many instances events that precipitated the name calling and negative emotions often centered on fidelity and commitment concerns. Such verbal amplifiers are age and life-course-specific attributions that are likely to have greater felt impact as individuals have matured into adulthood (i.e., most 14 year olds are not yet in a position to be considered a deadbeat). Similarly, while even teens may experience anger when a partner has denigrated their relationship concerns (“we need to do this for our relationship...”) young adults may have invested more heavily and for a longer period of time in particular relationships, may share biological children, and also have accumulated prior failure experiences that they do not wish to repeat in the current relationship. These complex biographies within and across relationships thus are part of what each individual carries forward into a particular conflict situation. In short, during young adulthood, these issues are often not completely settled, and the stakes are believed to be higher.

CONCLUSION

Prior research has documented that anger and control are related to IPV, yet surprisingly few studies have investigated specific contested domains associated with angry emotions or what it is that individuals may be attempting to control about their relationship or their partner. Drawing on a symbolic interactionist framework, our objective has been to further situate IPV within the period of young adulthood, and identify concrete contested domains associated with intimate partner conflict during this phase of the life course. We identified three potential areas of conflict: economic issues, dissatisfaction regarding time spent with friends, and infidelity concerns. Such domains are not inherently linked to the young adult period, but likely reflect that the transition from adolescence to adulthood brings increased pressure to

reorganize one's characteristic patterns of socializing, achieve economic independence, and solidify one's relationship with a single romantic partner.

Consistent with the interactionist perspective we outlined, measures indexed respondent as well as partner concerns, and models further highlight a role for communication processes--our notion of verbal amplification. Although we found support for considering each of these domains, concerns about infidelity or the potential for the partner to find someone else appeared to be particularly salient, as both respondent and partner infidelity were significantly associated with IPV, net of other contested domains and a roster of sociodemographic and other covariates. Infidelity also emerged as a key theme in the respondents' narrative accounts of the conflicts they had experienced, generally corroborating these results. Findings suggested further that engaging in forms of verbal amplification contributed additional variance to IPV risk, and that the use of these negative verbal tactics was often, but not inevitably, associated with issues of infidelity. Finally, supplemental analyses showed that the combination of high levels of contested domains and frequent use of verbal amplifiers was strongly linked to reported IPV perpetration.

The current examination of relationship dynamics is consistent with the view that IPV has an interpersonal or dyadic component (see e.g., McHugh and Frieze 2006; Winstok 2013), however, this does not lead us to conclude that young women's perspectives are identical to those of their male counterparts nor that consequences of male and female violence are similar (i.e., the notion of sexual symmetry). Thus, a gendered lens remains important to developing a comprehensive portrait of the character of these intimate partner conflicts. For example, young men's gender socialization may be tied to feelings of resentment about the partner's control attempts, as well as fostering a controlling attitude with respect to the partner's actions. Similarly, while some verbal amplifiers may well be universally offensive (e.g., being called a liar), other negative attributions may be gender-specific forms of verbal amplification, as the examples quoted above illustrate. Finally, recognizing that young men and women may have some overlapping concerns (i.e., worries about infidelity, actual infidelity) could serve to increase receptivity to other messages that clearly identify the gendered nature of outcomes such as fear,

intimidation, and injury associated with men relative to women's acts of IPV perpetration.

Additional research is needed on the sequencing of these and other relationship and communication processes as they unfold across the life of a given relationship. While both male and female partners may engage in control processes within their relationships, over time men who perceive a lack of control over female partners, and/or, resent female partners' attempts to control them, may draw on violence as a control strategy, as previous scholars have suggested. As Cairns (1979) noted, "violence works," if only in a precarious and temporary fashion (see also Felson 2002). Accordingly, men's size and more extensive socialization in the use of violence may combine to quickly upend what may have been an earlier pattern that included women's control efforts, use of verbal amplifiers, and willingness to contest what they believe are key issues within their relationships. This may result in shifts in relationship dynamics in the direction of a pattern that has been labeled "intimate terrorism." This idea of temporal shifts is somewhat different from the view that common couple violence and intimate terrorism are in essence two distinct forms of violence with different etiologies and characteristics (Johnson and Leone 2005). Longitudinal analyses, particularly those that include more frequent assessments (e.g., diary methods), will be useful in documenting whether a typological or processual approach is more consistent with observed patterns. It is also important to explore how factors emphasized by social learning theorists influence the presence of and reactions to particular contested domains. For example, an early pattern of delinquency involvement may not only influence IPV risk directly (as emphasized in previous research), but indirectly through a greater likelihood of involvement in concurrent relationships, frequent socializing with peers, limited economic prospects, and willingness to resort to negative forms of communication with one's intimate partners.

Limitations of the current study include the regional nature of the sample, and our reliance on respondents' reports about the partner's actions. Yet symbolic interactionist theories stress the importance of the actor's own perspective and subjective understandings (Thomas 1924). Thus, if a respondent is not aware of a partner's infidelity, this could negatively affect the relationship, but is not likely to be the source of specific conflicts. Further, the couple level interviews we conducted suggested

that while differing in viewpoints, both members of the couple tended to reference the same generally contested areas, particularly when infidelity had been an issue. Nevertheless, additional quantitative studies incorporating couple-level data could contribute to an understanding of distinct ways in which men and women understand and react to various areas of mismatch and potential conflict. Another limitation of the study is that the design does not include oversamples of select groups (women in housing for victims of violence, men arrested and/or incarcerated for IPV). Accordingly, our results may not generalize to the most serious IPV cases. Additional studies that include common measurement across such samples and population-based surveys could, along with longitudinal approaches, provide additional insight about variabilities in the character of relationship dynamics associated with IPV.

Even if additional research supports the existence of two distinct subgroups and in turn substantially different patterns of relationship dynamics, the findings of the current study have significant implications. Because ‘common couple violence’ occurs at a relatively high rate of prevalence, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood, it is likely that broad-based prevention efforts will reach individuals whose relationship circumstances accord with some of the dynamics described in the current investigation. It thus may be useful to include attention to specific contested domains associated with intimate partner conflicts, as this could make more tangible messages that have tended to be organized around larger, more abstract concepts (Pence and Paymar 2006). Focusing only on male control attempts also results in a less than complete portrait, as the findings reported here suggest that women’s control attempts and feelings of anger around key contested domains may also be associated with conflict escalation. Finally, it is important to address the form as well as the content of concerns that partners express to one another about these key issues, as the use of certain verbal amplifiers appeared to significantly exacerbate the risk of IPV exposure. Interrupting these negative relationship dynamics before they become chronic/firmly entrenched should be a high priority. Even within the context of community samples, IPV has been linked to a range of negative outcomes which, along with IPV itself, compromise individual well-being, the stability of families, and have the potential for detrimental effects on the next generation of children growing up in such conflictual family circumstances.

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Table 1. The Association between Contested Domains, Verbal Amplifiers, and Reports of IPV ‘Perpetration’ (n = 928)

	Zero Order	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
<i>Contested Domains</i>							
Financial/Economic Concerns							
R’s poor financial prospects	1.155***	1.105*				1.081	1.067
Partner’s poor prospects	1.152***	1.127***				1.044	1.023
Peer-Partner Balance							
Partner admonishes r re peers	1.590***		1.461***			1.251*	1.112
Partner puts friends first	1.320***		1.183			0.830	0.767*
Infidelity Concerns							
R’s infidelity/concerns	2.643***			1.894***		1.768***	1.502*
Partner’s infidelity/concerns	2.696***			2.043***		2.045***	1.793***
<i>Verbal Amplifiers</i>							
R’s use of verbal amplifiers	2.043***				1.454**		1.438*
Partner’s use of verbal amplifiers	2.058***				1.551**		1.370*
<i>Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>							
Gender							
(Male)							
Female	1.638**	1.644*	1.979**	1.632*	1.822*	2.025**	1.997*
Age	0.966	0.937	0.943	0.934	0.904	0.938	0.905
Race							
(White)							
Black	2.186***	1.276	1.183	0.829	1.207	0.893	0.871
Hispanic	1.915*	1.079	0.966	1.167	0.879	1.224	1.055
<i>Family Factors</i>							
Parental coercion	1.025	1.022	1.030	1.036	1.005	1.034	1.010
Family structure							
(Two biological parents)							
Single parent	2.833***	2.001**	1.979**	1.614	1.785*	1.522	1.393
Step-parent	1.683	1.056	1.117	0.840	0.844	0.742	0.569
Other	2.867***	1.540	1.599	1.843	1.714	1.707	1.606
Mother’s education							
Less than HS	1.807*	1.218	1.052	0.928	1.736	0.969	1.564
(HS)							
Some college	1.013	0.985	0.980	0.878	1.105	0.861	0.994
College or more	0.465**	0.645	0.675	0.646	0.760	0.692	0.809
<i>Delinquency</i>							
Respondent delinquency	1.512**	1.582**	1.666**	1.598**	1.700**	1.565**	1.587**
<i>Adult Status Characteristics</i>							
Employment Status							
Part-time	0.519**	0.579	0.592	0.482*	0.418**	0.472*	0.357**
Full-time	0.297***	0.395***	0.396***	0.338***	0.328***	0.372***	0.330***
(Unemployed)							
Parent							
(No)							
Yes	1.521***	1.197	1.197	1.089	1.141	1.063	1.043
<i>Relationship Characteristics</i>							
Relationship status							
(Dating)							
Married	1.306	1.161	1.194	1.339	0.648	1.381	0.858
Cohabiting	1.848**	1.494	1.557	1.618	1.191	1.558	1.301
Current relationship	0.993	0.992	0.971	1.274	0.792	1.434	1.155
(Most recent relationship)							
Duration	1.388***	1.471**	1.397**	1.383*	1.086	1.394*	1.121
Model χ^2		136.28***	129.66***	198.80***	247.10***	210.97***	287.59***

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

Table 2. The Association between Specific Combinations of Contested Domains and Verbal Amplifiers and Reports of IPV Perpetration (n = 928)^a

Contested domains (high); use of verbal amplifiers (high)	23.071***
Contested domains (high); use of verbal amplifiers (low)	4.041***
Contested domains (low); use of verbal amplifiers (high)	9.179***
Model χ^2	229.69***

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

^aModel includes controls for sociodemographic characteristics, family factors, delinquency, adult status characteristics, and relationship characteristics

Supplement 1

Eliciting and Analyzing the Qualitative Data

The qualitative data we collected from a subset of the TARS respondents provided support for the quantitative results and a window on the meanings of particular contested domains and communication processes as understood by respondents themselves. These interviews also offered a more nuanced view of ways in which such dynamics tended to coalesce and sequence, pointed to distinct patterns (see e.g., Table 2), and sensitized us to new concepts (i.e., the notion of verbal amplifiers). Finally, the qualitative data provided additional context for interpreting gendered processes, particularly women's perspectives and actions—a frequent criticism of the use of the conflict tactics scale (Anderson 2013).

Procedures

Individuals were chosen for this aspect of the study if they reported IPV at wave 5 ($n = 72$), wave 4 ($n = 21$), or in a small number of cases ($n = 7$) violence at an earlier wave of the study. This strategy was based on study goals of examining patterns of continuity and change in IPV, as well as the relationship factors emphasized in the current analysis. We relied on a targeted sampling approach, as a random sample would have incorporated a relatively large number of respondents with no IPV experience. Due to the fluidity of these young adult relationships as well as our sampling strategy, narratives about violence we elicited and quoted in the paper may in some instances reference a past rather than a current partner. Obtaining information about the full range of the respondent's intimate relationship experiences was useful, as these complete histories make clear that individuals often display or experience violence in one relationship but not another. This compare and contrast element is also an intuitive and relatively comfortable way for respondents themselves to discuss their relationship experiences. In the process, the respondents and our analyses centered on dynamics associated with conflict and conflict escalation within specific relationship circumstances.

As an additional step in the analysis, we selected for interview a sample of 40 partners of the 102 core respondents, with the goal of further exploring men's and women's perspectives and the couple level

view where the referent is the same relationship context. These interviews were conducted with a current partner, and included written consent from the partner and individual to conduct the interview.

As with the structured interview, qualitative interviews were generally conducted in the respondents' homes. However, to ensure privacy for this component of the study, some interviews took place in other locations such as relatives' homes, in restaurants, in the interviewer's car, in a closed tattoo parlor, in prison, and in one instance in a women's shelter. Further, the interview with a partner always took place a minimum of three weeks from the time of the interview with the focal respondent, to minimize questioning or possible conflict relating to the interview process itself. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol consisted of six to eight broad questions beginning with the request for the respondents to "walk" the interviewer through the various romantic partners with whom they had been involved. Probes subsequently elicited more detailed information about qualities and dynamics within each relationship, including positive and negative features of the relationship, and how particular relationships differed from one another. Violence narratives were thus a part of a longer account of specific relationships and the dynamics within them. This provided a window on where and how the violence fit in relation to other more basic relationship processes. Probes specifically focusing on conflict and violence included an assessment of relationship and other life course circumstances at the time of the IPV incident, who initiated the violence, perceived motivations, immediate and longer term consequences, and changes over time in the character of the violence.

Partner interviews followed the same procedure, with greater emphasis on the current relationship. The same interviewer conducted all of the qualitative interviews, and thus was often familiar with some issues and dynamics within a particular relationship based on the previous interview with a core respondent. However, the interviewer avoided specific mention of any issues raised by this respondent, in order to protect confidentiality/safety and to avoid biasing the partner's narrative. This provided a check

against structuring the conversation around particular contested domains or other topics as developed within the context of the initial interview with the individual's partner.

Characteristics of the qualitative sample

The mean age of core respondents who participated in the qualitative interview was 25, which is similar to the age of respondents across the full TARS sample. This sample is diverse (47% white, 35% African-American, 7% Hispanic, 3% other), and the interviews were relatively equally divided by gender (50 male, 52 female). Partners averaged 27 years of age and ranged from 19 to 42. For the couple level interviews, in most instances we selected for interview the female partner of a male core respondent. We followed this procedure primarily for reasons of safety—as the male core respondents were very familiar with the TARS study, we felt that they may not have been as likely to be suspicious of our motives or the purpose of the study relative to unfamiliar male partners.

Analyses of the qualitative data

The theoretical perspective we outlined can be considered a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), as it developed through an iterative process involving multiple stages of analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. A strength of the TARS design is that preliminary insights or hunches from initial study of the qualitative materials could be systematically evaluated across the larger sample, and in some instances this resulted in our developing additional structured questions/items to be included in a later structured interview. For example, analysis of qualitative data elicited at waves 1 (n = 94), 3 (n = 92) and particularly at wave 4 (n = 97) suggested the importance of including attention to contested domains such as infidelity and time with peers (a substantive focus in the current analyses). This led to inclusion of additional items tapping these contested domains in connection with the wave 5 structured interviews.

Graduate students transcribed all of the wave 5 qualitative interviews, and subsequently developed 2 - 3 page abstracts that contained summaries and quotes about key themes, particularly around violence escalation, and these abstracts also contain information gleaned from the structured interview. The

average interview length was 85 minutes, and transcribed pages ranged from 21 to 90. Recently transcribed cases were discussed at weekly meetings, which provided provisional insights that could be explored more systematically within the qualitative and quantitative data sets. Atlas ti facilitated the handling and sorting of the qualitative data around emerging themes. Themes and codes developed for the partner interviews were similar, except that text segments were flagged to indicate areas of concordance or dissimilarity across the core and partner interviews.

The first author independently analyzed the qualitative data, concentrating on a constant comparison method (e.g., male vs. female respondents' narratives, same respondent's narrative of different relationships). The latter type of comparison was particularly useful, as it involved the respondents' own views of factors associated with their or partner use of violence in one relationship but not in another, recognizing that background risk factors (e.g., parents' use of violence) did not change. This set of analyses also led to refinements of initial codes that had been developed. In addition, the authors conducted several supplemental analyses that involved counts within the qualitative materials. Such counts are not included in the paper, but provided an additional level of confidence regarding the direction of our argument and emphasis. For example, the relatively high percentage of reported female perpetration on the CTS has led some researchers to describe women's actions as being either based in self-defense or as relatively playful/non-serious. To explore overall patterns in the qualitative data where more contextual information has been included, we coded specific violence episodes described by respondents as reflecting a traditional scenario characterized principally by male perpetration (as a percentage of the total incidents described), and found that approximately 92% did not easily fit the traditional narrative. However, consistent with prior research documenting a tendency for men to minimize their own role in IPV (see e.g., Anderson and Umberson 2001), men were less likely to narrate a traditional male perpetration incident (3.8% vs. 11.3% of female respondents). Even relying on a more liberal coding scheme (e.g., coding as male-only violence a relationship that shifted over time from some mutual violence to instances of male-only IPV) approximately 18% of women's and 11.5% of men's accounts fit this more liberal definition. These 'counting tasks' supported our use of specific examples to

illustrate concepts and dynamic processes, but such figures should be viewed with caution. The qualitative sample was not randomly selected, and these narrations also represent viewpoints that may be different from the perspective of more neutral observers.

Even though the wave 5 qualitative interviews retained a similar broad-based protocol as used in prior waves of qualitative interviews, analyses revealed that themes such as infidelity were especially prominent in this set of interviews that included (because of the selection criteria) significantly more respondents involved in relationships that included violence. Our analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, eventually led us to the view that it is limiting to focus only on the idea that the partner in conflictual relationships is often “controlling.” This is an accurate depiction, but our analyses highlighted the need to direct the focus from the partner’s use of control as an end in itself (essentially a dominance motive) to the idea that controlling actions are often intimately linked to specific contested domains, such as the partner’s involvement with peers and particularly concerns about fidelity and commitment. Adding a layer of complexity to our focus on these contested domains, however, respondents’ narrations of sequences of conflict escalation also frequently included mention of specific ‘verbal amplifiers’ that often connected to these contested domains, but that appeared to take the conflict to a new level. This led us to systematically evaluate the role of verbal amplifiers in Models 1 and 2 of the analyses presented. The availability of qualitative data thus sensitized us to additional steps in the process of violence escalation, and the quantitative analyses provided a hedge against an overemphasis on specific qualitative narratives that were compelling in language and content, but may not have fully captured aggregate trends.

Another feature of this study of conflict and violence narratives is that it is nested within a more general longitudinal study of the character and changing nature of adolescent and young adult relationships. Thus, for example, whether relying on the quantitative or qualitative lens, a majority of adolescents and young adults do not describe a power balance within their relationships that favors the male partner, and male respondents, on average, have consistently reported higher levels of partner control attempts across all five waves of the study (authors 2012). References to female partner control are also very common within the longer narratives. This basic pattern is also evident in the responses of

male and female respondents in violent relationships, although scores on male and female control attempts are significantly higher in the latter. Thus, in our view, the concerns and relationship processes that unfold in violent relationships are not likely to be completely divorced from these more basic interpersonal dynamics observed across the sample as a whole, and often served as a useful background to this more focused investigation of IPV experiences.

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Supplement 2

Supplementary Table 2A: Descriptive Statistics, by IPV Status (n = 928)

Dependent Variable	Means/Percentages	SD	Range	Perpetration (n = 144)		No Perpetration (n = 784)
Perpetration	15.52%			--		--
Independent Variables						
<i>Contested Domains</i>						
Financial/Economic Concerns						
R's poor financial prospects	10.60	2.81	4-20	11.52	***	10.43
Partner's poor prospects	10.24	3.50	4-20	11.73	***	9.96
Peer-Partner Balance						
Partner admonishes r re peers	1.87	1.00	1-5	2.32	***	1.79
Partner puts friends first	2.06	1.03	1-5	2.33	***	2.01
Infidelity Concerns						
R's infidelity/concerns	0.00	0.80	-0.54-4.76	0.71	***	-0.13
Partner's infidelity/concerns	-0.00	0.72	-0.54-3.63	0.55	***	-0.10
<i>Verbal Amplifiers</i>						
R's use of verbal amplifiers	1.99	1.76	0-5	3.65	***	1.68
Partner's use of verbal amplifiers	1.99	1.75	0-5	3.64	***	1.68
<i>Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>						
Gender						
(Male)	(45.47%)			(35.42%)		(47.32%)
Female	54.53%			64.58%	**	52.68%
Age	25.42	1.83	22-29	25.33		25.44
Race						
(White)	(67.35%)			(52.78%)		(70.02%)
Black	21.34%			31.94%	***	19.39%
Hispanic	11.31%			15.28%	*	10.59%
<i>Family Factors</i>						
Parental Coercion	10.89	3.24	6-30	11.11		10.85
Family structure						
(Two biological parents)	(53.45%)			(34.72%)		(56.89%)
Single parent	21.01%			32.64%	***	18.88%
Step-parent	13.58%			13.89%		13.52%
Other	11.96%			18.75%	***	10.71%
Mother's education						
Less than HS	10.78%			18.06%	*	9.44%
(HS)	(32.43%)			(34.02%)		(32.14%)
Some college	33.41%			35.42%		33.04%
College or more	23.38%			12.50%	**	25.38%
<i>Delinquency</i>						
Respondent delinquency	0.29	0.57	0-7	0.36	***	0.22
<i>Adult Status Characteristics</i>						
Employment Status						
Part-time	19.18%			20.14%	**	19.01%
Full-time	55.93%			36.11%	***	59.57%
(Unemployed)	(24.89%)			(43.75%)		(21.42%)
Children	0.72	1.06	0-6	1.20	***	0.63
<i>Relationship Characteristics</i>						
Relationship status						
(Dating)	(44.39%)			(34.72%)		(46.18%)
Married	23.28%			22.92%		23.34%
Cohabiting	32.33%			42.36%	**	30.48%
Current relationship	79.96%			79.86%		79.97%
(Most recent relationship)	(20.04%)			(20.14%)		(20.03%)
Duration	7.15	1.30	1-8	7.50	***	7.08

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

Supplementary Table 2B: The Association between Contested Domains, Verbal Amplifiers, and Reports of ‘Perpetration,’ by Gender (n = 904)

	Zero Order	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
<i>Contested Domains</i>							
Financial/Economic Concerns							
Male’s poor financial prospects	1.190***	1.143***				1.603	1.034
Female’s poor financial prospects	1.117***	1.085*				1.040	1.037
Peers-Partner Balance							
Concern re male peer time	1.439***		1.230*			0.920	0.852
Concern re female peer time	1.477***		1.403**			1.132	1.003
Infidelity Concerns							
Male’s infidelity/concerns	2.747***			2.206***		2.129***	1.901***
Female’s infidelity/concerns	2.840***			1.779***		1.655**	1.360
<i>Verbal Amplifiers</i>							
Male’s use of verbal amplifiers	2.068***				1.428*		1.279
Female’s use of verbal amplifiers	2.053***				1.588**		1.552**
<i>Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>							
Gender							
(Male)							
Female	1.571*	1.620*	1.793**	1.656*	1.770*	1.734*	1.742*
Age	0.965	0.932	0.930	0.932	0.898	0.936	0.901
Race							
(White)							
Black	2.113***	1.276	1.170	0.824	1.233	0.858	0.846
Hispanic	1.973*	1.116	0.947	1.157	0.887	1.163	1.007
<i>Family Factors</i>							
Parental coercion	1.014	1.015	1.021	1.030	0.999	1.022	0.999
Family structure							
(Two biological parents)							
Single parent	2.856***	2.062**	2.132**	1.646	1.853*	1.651	1.526
Step-parent	1.638	1.041	1.158	0.895	0.832	0.855	0.626
Other	2.781***	1.503	1.592	1.836	1.668	1.736	1.601
Mother’s education							
Less than HS	1.750*	1.208	1.038	0.912	1.662	0.885	1.369
(HS)							
Some college	0.964	0.950	0.950	0.826	1.080	0.823	0.942
College or more	0.468**	0.664	0.676	0.644	0.747	0.673	0.737
<i>Delinquency</i>							
Respondent delinquency	1.528**	1.557**	0.655**	1.576**	1.675**	1.524**	1.591**
<i>Adult Status Characteristics</i>							
Employment Status							
Part-time	0.554*	0.598	0.634	0.526*	0.423**	0.534*	0.380**
Full-time	0.305***	0.403***	0.399***	0.342***	0.321***	0.364***	0.308***
(Unemployed)							
Parent							
(No)							
Yes	1.508***	1.182	1.197	1.056	1.124	1.050	1.032
<i>Relationship Characteristics</i>							
Relationship status							
(Dating)							
Married	1.354	1.195	1.247	1.357	0.646	1.407	0.854
Cohabiting	1.976**	1.562	1.663*	1.666	1.226	1.689	1.364
Current relationship	0.993	1.017	0.970	1.310	0.803	1.458	1.188
(Most recent relationship)							
Duration	1.388***	1.453**	1.410**	1.398*	1.085	1.406*	1.118
Model χ^2		131.52***	123.30***	196.03***	241.14***	202.12***	278.70***

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

Supplementary Table 2C: The Association Between Women's Self-reports of Infidelity and IPV Perpetration (n = 506)

	Zero Order	Model 2
Respondent infidelity	2.580**	2.725**
<i>Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>		
Age		0.898
Race		
(White)		
Black		1.182
Hispanic		1.156
<i>Family Factors</i>		
Parental coercion		1.028
Family structure		
(Two biological parents)		
Single parent		2.062*
Step-parent		1.076
Other		1.869
Mother's education		
Less than HS		1.023
(HS)		
Some college		1.072
College or more		0.552
<i>Delinquency</i>		
Respondent delinquency		2.103*
<i>Adult Status Characteristics</i>		
Employment Status		
Part-time		0.649
Full-time		0.401**
(Unemployed)		
Parent		
(No)		
Yes		1.372**
<i>Relationship Characteristics</i>		
Relationship status		
(Dating)		
Married		1.200
Cohabiting		1.813
Current relationship		0.561
(Most recent relationship)		
Duration		1.615**
Model χ^2	11.20***	84.13***

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