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2020 Working Paper Series

**GENDER, COUPLE-LEVEL DYNAMICS, AND INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD**

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*This research was supported by Award Nos. 2009-IJ-CX-0503 and 2010-MU-MU-0031, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health under Award Numbers (HD036223, HD04206, and HD066087), the Department of Health and Human Services (5APRPA006009) and in part by the Center for Family and Demographic Research, Bowling Green State University, which has core funding from The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (P2CHD050959). The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Department of Justice or National Institutes of Health. Direct correspondence to Peggy C. Giordano, Department of Sociology, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403 pgiorda@bgsu.edu.

GENDER, COUPLE-LEVEL DYNAMICS, AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN YOUNG
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ABSTRACT

Most theories of intimate partner violence (IPV) focus on external influences rather than on couple-level dynamics. ‘Gender neutral’ approaches emphasize background experiences such as earlier violence exposure, while feminist theorists argue that men’s use of violence reproduces broad-based gender inequalities. We use insights from symbolic interaction and feminist post-structural theories to examine more localized gendered relationship concerns and dynamics that we hypothesize are at once common and little explored in prior treatments of IPV. Analyses of structured interview data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study reveal that relative to concerns about women’s actions, disagreements related to the male partner’s actions (e.g., infidelity) were more strongly related to IPV. Analyses of in-depth interviews with a subset of IPV-experienced respondents and their partners further illuminate women’s and men’s distinctive perspectives, and yet point to ways in which couples, via ongoing communication, necessarily create a unique ‘micro-culture’ that may include areas of shared understanding about these bases of conflict, their ‘causes,’ and the meanings of this form of violence. These locally constructed definitions coexist with forces of constraint and control and effects of earlier experiences, and may increase or inhibit the likelihood of using aggression in specific situations. Analyses complicate Mead’s prosocial view of the reciprocity of perspectives, the ‘imported’ emphasis of traditional IPV theories (including essentialist treatments of gender), and the content of many programmatic efforts.

Numerous studies have documented significant negative consequences of intimate partner violence (IPV), including immediate and longer term effects on mental and physical health, as well as on the behavior and well-being of children exposed to these forms of conflict (see Fergusson, Horwood, and Ridder 2005; Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020; Harding et al. 2013). Sociological treatments of IPV have looked beyond the lens of individual pathology to explore the role of broader structural and social influences (Lawson 2012). As research in the area has proliferated, theoretical perspectives have undergone additional development and refinement. Nevertheless, the major sociological frameworks can all be considered theories of ‘importation’ in the sense that they focus primarily on what individuals bring with them into the relationship, rather than on dynamics that unfold within the relationship itself. Feminist theorizing has provided an important general portrait of relationship processes associated with IPV in centering on issues of power and control, but the theoretical emphasis has remained on ways in which broader bases of gender inequality tend to be reproduced at the couple level (Komter 1989; Sweet 2019). Other researchers have focused on early family socialization, conceptualizing IPV in more gender-neutral terms as an outgrowth of learned patterns of behavior (often called ‘family conflict’ or ‘family violence’ approaches—Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1981).

Results of recent analyses, however, suggest that couple-level processes are important to a comprehensive understanding of IPV. For example, researchers have shown that, given the presence of a known predictor such as early exposure to violence within the family, a significant percentage of individuals do not go on to exhibit violence within their own relationships (see Johnson et al. 2015). Further, research on the patterning of IPV across the life course reveals discontinuities across time and different partners (e.g., Shortt et al. 2012; Whitaker, Le, and Niolon 2010). Research that focuses on specific relationship dynamics has shown that high

levels of verbal conflict within a focal relationship are significantly related to IPV (Capaldi et al. 2012; Felson 2002). This is an important piece of the puzzle, but does not tell us much about what is going on in these relationships that raises concerns and fuels disagreements, nor of the conditions under which verbal conflict escalates to more serious levels. Some researchers have begun to examine the sources of disagreement that appear to be significant flashpoints. Thus, studies that have focused on the adolescent and young adult periods have shown that infidelity concerns are a common ‘domain of contestation’ associated with increased odds of reporting IPV within a relationship (Giordano et al. 2015; Miller 2008a; Nemeth et al. 2012).

In this article, our aim is to move toward greater specificity in elucidating the full range of relationship dynamics associated with IPV during the young adult period, and in particular to focus on the role of gender in relation to these processes. Young adulthood is an important time period, as self-report data and official statistics indicate that levels of IPV typically peak during this phase of the life course (Johnson et al. 2015; Halpern et al. 2009; Rennison 2001). Further, regardless of theoretical perspective, there is widespread agreement that women, relative to their similarly situated male counterparts, experience significantly greater fear, injury, and other detriments to emotional and physical health in connection with this form of violence (Ansara and Hindin 2011; Campbell 2002). We draw on basic tenets of symbolic interaction and the insights of post-structural feminist scholars as conceptual background, and subsequently describe results of analyses focused on sources of conflict and couple-level dynamics associated with conflict escalation in a large, heterogeneous community-based sample of young adults. We argue that the basic portrait of these dynamics that developed around early feminist theorizing captures well the experiences of many women victims, but does not adequately convey the complexity and variation in these dynamics as they often unfold within the contemporary context. Thus, we

develop a different view of the play of gender relative to existing theoretical treatments, and illustrate this perspective relying on analyses of structured and qualitative data. Analyses of the content of in-depth interviews elicited from a subset of respondents who had reported violence *and their partners* access women's and men's unique viewpoints and allow an assessment of couple-level concordance (i.e., the extent to which their separate narratives reflect shared understandings as well as areas of mismatch) where the referent is the same relationship.

We argue that certain couple-level dynamics have not been sufficiently highlighted, either through the lens of traditional feminist theorizing or the more gender-neutral stance of family violence approaches. Relying on a mixed-method approach, we thus move beyond the general idea that relationship factors 'matter,' to explore the gendered nature of issues and concerns that arise during the young adult phase of the life course. We consider the degree to which concerns revolve around female or male partner actions (especially but not limited to the experience of infidelity), and the association between these concerns and IPV. This is an important consideration, as the dominant narrative within the field and associated examples widely shared in prevention and intervention materials most often center on men's goals (establishing power within the relationship), as well as their concerns about or dissatisfaction with women's actions. A frequently used example is the young man who hits a partner because of the real or imagined attention she has paid to another man (Pence and Paymar 1993; Sweet 2019). What follows may include acts of violence and other forms of coercive control that serve to isolate partners from friends and family as well as other men.

Although these concerns and this type of coercive control are key dynamics associated with IPV, we argue that issues related to men's actions: a) coexist with these concerns, b) are more common as sources of disagreement, and c) within the context of a community sample, are likely

to be more strongly related to IPV. A finding that many intimate partner conflicts revolve around issues relating to men's actions would also support the need to consider women's thoughts, feelings, communications, and behaviors, including the use of aggressive "conflict tactics" against their partners. These are dynamics that have generally been bracketed off in studies of IPV. Studies that have examined women's perspectives usually focus on women's reactions to the use of violence itself and relationship to other forms of coercive control men have relied upon. For example, studies have examined women's feelings of isolation, or explored what goes into stay/leave decisions after violence has occurred (Copp et al. 2015; Farris and Fenaughty 2002). Our approach of considering the broader relationship context in which violence unfolds is, however, consistent with the symbolic interactionist view of meanings as necessarily 'situated,' and feminist post-structural scholars' recognition that power is socially reproduced, but also multilayered, continually shifting, and subject to transformation within the framework of particular contexts (Blumer 1962; Cannon, Lauve-Moon, and Buttell 2015; Weedon 1987)

BACKGROUND

The family violence perspective. Scholars whose work is linked to the family conflict or family violence tradition view IPV as an outgrowth of exposure to various forms of violence within the family (Straus et al. 1981). Numerous studies have shown that the experience of parental IPV and/or child abuse victimization are associated with increased risk of experiencing IPV in one's own intimate relationships (e.g., Fritz, Slep, and O'Leary 2012; Straus and Gelles 1986). The perspective is closely aligned with survey methods and reliance on the "conflict tactics scale" (CTS) that measures whether respondents have perpetrated a variety of aggressive actions or been the victim of perpetration of the same behaviors by the partner (Straus, Hamby, Boney-

McCoy, and Sugarman 1996). This line of research is compatible with the broader tradition of social learning theories, and does not center heavily on the role of gender or unique aspects of the intimate relationship context. A controversial set of findings that emerged from studies relying on the CTS, however, is that rates of female perpetration are generally similar to or exceed the levels reported by men (Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020; Nowinsky and Bowen 2012). Johnson (1995) attempted to address this issue by describing two types of IPV--common couple or 'situational couple' violence, a less serious form that includes mutual violence and is most often encountered in community surveys, and one-sided violence, 'intimate terrorism,' that is highly gendered, includes the elements of coercive control, and is most often captured in samples of women located through victim-serving agencies or criminal justice-based samples.

Feminist perspectives. Feminist activists and researchers have focused most attention on this more serious end of the spectrum, and have worked to affect change in criminal justice responses, increase services for women victims, and heighten public awareness of the problem of men's violence against women. The theoretical framework has guided research and programmatic efforts that have focused centrally on the gendered aspects of this form of violence (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Pence and Paymar 1993). The feminist perspective emphasizes that the persistence of inequalities at the societal level connects to power and control dynamics, and ultimately women's subordinate positions within the intimate dyadic context (Komter 1989). A key example is that disparities relating to the economic realm are likely to influence micro-level processes: to the degree that women are dependent on their male partners financially, they are less likely to develop an equal footing in the relationship or to be in a position to leave problematic and/or violent situations (Bornstein 2006; Brush 2011).

Owing in large part to feminist activists' and scholars' work in this area, public opinion about

IPV has changed significantly in recent decades. For example, scales measuring the acceptability of men hitting partners typically receive relatively low levels of endorsement (Copp et al. 2019; McCarthy, Mehta, and Haberland 2018). Yet other broad-based changes such as women's increased labor force participation have not eliminated the problem of IPV, and levels of prevalence reported among adolescent daters (who are most often not economically dependent on their partners) underscore the need to consider multiple ways in which relationship dynamics and issues of gender remain linked to conflict and conflict escalation. A further complication is that while patriarchal attitudes are an important general backdrop for understanding the phenomenon of IPV, research has shown that when measured at the individual level, variability in traditional masculine or patriarchal attitudes has not been shown to be a consistent predictor of IPV perpetration (Sugarman and Frankel 1996).

Finally, as noted above, the levels of self-reported use of various 'conflict tactics' (the CTS scale; Straus et al. 1996) by women, as reported in community samples, remain undertheorized from a traditional feminist vantage point. Initially, scholars argued that when women hit partners, this is most often in self-defense (Dobash and Dobash 1979). More recently, recognizing that this is not uniformly the case, researchers have emphasized that scales such as the CTS do not capture differences in the meaning and seriousness of male and female acts of perpetration (Cercone, Beach, and Arias 2005; Hamby 2016). These basic distinctions have been critical to highlight. Nevertheless, recognizing that women's and men's acts of perpetration are understood and experienced differently, and that consequences are, on average, significantly greater for women victims, does not render women's own actions as lacking in meaning within the context of their intimate relationships. Next we briefly review basic tenets of symbolic interaction and post-structural feminist frameworks, as these traditions provide a useful

conceptual background for exploring how women and men understand the use of violence within their relationships. These lines of theorizing also provide a basis for a relationship-based analysis that will establish links to gendered aspects of commonly occurring sources of disagreement, and for exploring ways in which ‘causes’ of conflict escalation are understood and socially constructed or challenged within the framework of particular relationships.

Symbolic interaction and poststructural feminist perspectives. Symbolic interaction (SI) theories emphasize that individuals act on the basis of meanings, and focus on the ways in which these meanings are necessarily emergent; that is, continually responsive to the unique contingencies of particular situations (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). Our own use of this framework differs somewhat from prior treatments of IPV that have drawn on this tradition, as most of this research has conceptualized ‘the situation’ in terms of the immediate precipitants of violent acts (e.g., whether alcohol was involved, or bystanders were present) (see Wilkinson and Hamerschlag 2005). In contrast, our focus and exploration of “definitions” encompasses the full range of experiences associated with involvement in a given relationship (Mullins and Miller 2008). For example, an event that occurred early on in a relationship (e.g., infidelity) may nevertheless inform current relationship concerns.

While dynamics reflecting domination and control bear the most intuitive connection to acts of violence (Athens 2005), we argue that other dynamics and relationship sequences are also continuously in play. In view of the recurrent interaction and communication that is generally characteristic of intimate relationships, a ‘micro-culture’ is necessarily created that includes areas of shared meaning. These areas will include positive experiences and features of the relationship, but also understandings about sources of conflict and for some couples, about the dynamics associated with conflict escalation. A further assertion is that the micro-culture should

be viewed as only partly constituted based on factors such as traditionally gendered expectations and earlier family experiences (i.e., the imported elements). Instead, such understandings remain relevant throughout, but are necessarily transformed in light of the unique terrain of particular romantic contexts, and the realities of new concerns that arise within the relationship. The resulting micro-culture is consequential and yet constantly evolving. Thus, dynamics relating to constraint and control are in evidence where there is the prospect or reality of violence, as feminist theorists have long emphasized (Dobash and Dobash 1979). Yet we argue that coexisting with these processes, the reciprocity of perspectives characteristic of all social life is also present to varying degrees (Mead 1934) even within the realm of interpersonal conflict, and somewhat paradoxically, even when the source of disagreement involves a lack of trust.

Contemporary feminist scholars have worked to avoid essentialism and binary conceptualizations in analyses of gender dynamics, and one outcome is an increased emphasis on the ways in which other positions (e.g., based on race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and their unique intersections) complicate women's challenges and adaptations (Ferraro 2006; Miller 2008b; Miller and Mullins 2006). At an even more basic level, as Cannon, Lauve-Moon and Buttell (2015, pp. 671-672) recently argued, traditional viewpoints risk "overlooking women as material subjects with their own histories and their own motivations for and experiences of violence" (see Kruttschnitt and Carbone-Lopez 2006). Also moving in the direction of greater complexity, post-structural feminist perspectives, like SI theories, focus centrally on the role of language and communication in the social reproduction process. Thus, gendered understandings and actions are affected by broader structural influences, but these are necessarily constituted at the local level (St. Pierre 2000). These insights suggest the need to include attention to women's own histories and motivations, as well as the ways that other status positions are linked with

gender and uniquely influence perspectives and experiences. More fundamentally, these insights accord with our general notion that communications within the developing micro-culture may reproduce traditional patterns, but also present openings for human agency and possibilities for change (e.g., Deutsch's (2007) focus on 'undoing gender' or Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) interest in complicating the notion of hegemonic masculinity). Nevertheless, recognizing that the intimate relationship is an ever evolving process, traditionally gendered hierarchies and coercive processes may be introduced or reintroduced at any time, interrupting the shared features and apparent reciprocity that characterized the developing micro-culture.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Prior research on family violence has documented that early exposure to aggressive acts is a risk factor for both women's and men's violence. Yet as noted above, recent research has shown that the presence of specific contested domains such as infidelity and spending too much time with peers are relationship specific concerns that increase the odds of self-reported IPV, after taking into account these background factors (authors). The current study contributes beyond prior work by directly examining gendered aspects of these relationship-based dynamics that we argue to date have garnered insufficient research attention. First, we rely on the full TARS sample and structured scales that tap the degree to which disagreements revolve around concerns related to male partner actions and concerns about female partner actions. Questions center on the extent of disagreements relating to self and partner, subsequently recoded to reflect male or female partner-based disagreements. Next, we assess associations between these gender specific concerns and IPV, net of early family history (parents' IPV) and other relevant controls. Supplemental analyses examine moderation effects, including whether prior exposure via witnessing parents' IPV increases the impact of these male and female-centered disagreements.

We focus on specific contested areas that prior work has indicated are likely to be sources of conflict during this phase of the life course. Our previous qualitative research provides a preliminary basis for hypothesizing not only that such disagreements are common issues of contention during this time, but that: a) disagreements will be more likely to revolve around men's relative to women's actions, and that b) high levels of these concerns will be more strongly related to IPV. The current study moves beyond prior work in four specific ways: First, the gendered aspects of the dynamics we focus on here have not been systematically investigated relying on a large sample, structured scales, and adequate controls. Support for the above hypotheses would provide a contrast to much prior theorizing and the content/emphases of most programmatic efforts. The hypotheses do, however, fit well with studies across multiple substantive areas that have shown that young adult men (like their adolescent counterparts), when compared to similarly situated young women, on average do more things that are generally considered problematic. Robust findings from research on topics ranging from delinquency/criminal involvement and substance use to auto accidents, and as foregrounded in the current investigation--peer socializing and infidelity-- consistently show higher rates of men's involvement (Ford, Sohn, and Lepkowski 2002; Moffitt et al. 2001). It is thus reasonable to expect that as relationships grow in meaning and significance during young adulthood, women may react negatively to and express dissatisfaction about issues related to male partner involvement in these problem areas. The issue of infidelity is likely to be a particularly critical arena, however, as this is a type of concern that goes to the heart of romantic involvement. This specific concern thus has special meaning with its potential to reframe the past, engender negative emotions in the present, and render uncertain the future of the relationship.

Second, the in-depth couple-based interviews add an important dimension to the study, as it

is difficult to examine these relationship dynamics comprehensively, and to explore the nature and extent of gendered vantage points, when only one member of the couple has been interviewed. Accordingly, we selected 50 respondents who had self-reported IPV within their current relationships, and secured an additional set of 50 interviews with their partners. These in-depth interviews thus not only provide another lens on women's and men's perspectives, but, in contrast to prior work, allow access where the referent is the same relationship context. A first step in the qualitative analysis was to examine areas of conflict as reported across the full set of in-depth interviews, and then to assess couple level concordance about primary bases of disagreement. This provides a way of triangulating the quantitative results, while potentially revealing more nuanced differences in women's and men's perspectives. Moving beyond the focus on unique perspectives and 'importation' arguments, however, and based on additional analyses of the couple interviews, a third objective is to describe the evolution of areas of shared understandings (our notion of a micro-culture) that we argue are also integral to the meaning and impact of particular 'couple contexts.' In the process, we develop the more general idea that the reciprocity of perspectives integral to SI theories need not lead inexorably to positive outcomes.

Related to this idea, we suggest that women's feelings about men's actions and expressions of anger (including the use of various "conflict tactics") become meaningful not as evidence of 'gender symmetry,' but because they may be part of consequential interactive sequences. Such communications may be interpreted as negative 'reflected appraisals' that potentially challenge men's positive self-views, and more broadly their views about male privilege, freedom of movement, and for some, the viability of using sexual conquests as a measure of masculinity (Anderson 2000; Kreager and Staff 2009; Miller 2008b; Sullivan 1953). Thus, such heated interactions may trace a circuitous path back to men's coercive acts and the mismatched violence

long emphasized in feminist treatments. Nevertheless, this represents a different--and we argue common--set of dynamics relative to traditional discussions, which more often revolve exclusively around what men want, think, and do (e.g., desire to consolidate power, make all the decisions, isolate their partners—see e.g., Pence and Paymar's (1993) power and control wheel).

Largely bracketed off, then, have been discussions of what women want, think, and do, or of couple level dynamics, especially those that revolve around men's actions. Our focus thus accords fully with the most basic objectives of the feminist perspective, and the goal of developing more well-rounded portraits of women's complex lives (Ferraro 2006). The initial focus on men's motivations and aggressive acts has been critical to the process of ensuring that men begin to take responsibility for their own behavior. In addition, the attention to other forms of coercion and control have pointed to a wider constellation of behaviors that may accompany the use of violence. Yet our view is that the resulting depictions do not provide a comprehensive portrait, as they fail to capture the processual and interactive aspects of IPV, focus on later-in-the-process dynamics, and foster a binary, somewhat static presentation of gender dynamics associated with escalating conflicts. Conversely, completely gender-neutral theories and associated programs (i.e., he/she wants to make all of the decisions...) downplay the continuing impact of gender on the character of actions and reactions as they unfold at the couple level.

Our primary focus in the current analysis is on relationship processes that precede the use of violence; yet the couple-based narratives also allow us to shed additional light on ways in which couple communications serve to construct areas of shared meaning about the violence that does occur. Thus a fourth objective and potential contribution of the analysis is to document ways in which the couple's developing micro-culture may support views about the inevitability or malleability of these patterns, their 'causes,' and the seriousness of women's and men's use of

various ‘conflict tactics.’ We focus special attention on attributions related to women’s actions, as these have been less thoroughly investigated relative to research on causes and consequences of men’s use of aggression against a female partner (Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020).

Data and Sample

In the current study, we use data collected from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS). The TARS, a longitudinal study that began in 2001, is based on a stratified random sample of 7th, 9th, and 11th graders. The sampling frame relied on school registration data from 62 schools across seven school districts in Lucas County, Ohio.¹ School attendance was not required to be included in the sampling frame. Most interviews took place within respondents’ homes with preloaded questionnaires on laptop computers to ensure privacy. The TARS oversampled Black and Hispanic students. Data were collected in five waves in the following years: 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2011. The initial sample size at the first interview was 1,321, with the fifth interview retaining 77% of those respondents with a sample size of 1,021.

The analytic sample consists of all respondents who participated in the wave 5 interview. We excluded respondents who did not report a current or most recent romantic partner from analysis ($n = 71$). Additionally, we dropped respondents who did not identify as Black, White, or Hispanic from the analyses due to the small sample size ($n = 22$). Further, also due to small sample size, we excluded respondents who reported on same-gender relationships ($n = 24$). The final analytic sample includes 904 respondents. The analytic sample is composed of 493 women and 411 men between the ages of 22 and 29 years old. The qualitative sample included 50 respondents and their current or most recent partners ($n = 100$). We selected these individuals for in-depth interviews because they reported relationship violence on the structured survey. We excluded four couples from the analysis, as the respondent was not with the partner who was

interviewed at the time of the respondent's interview (i.e., the respondent became involved with a new partner after his/her interview and the new partner was interviewed). Additionally, we excluded one couple from the analyses as neither partner discussed relationship conflict in their interview. The final sample for the qualitative interviews is 45 couples and 90 total interviews. (See online supplement for a more detailed overview of the sample, procedures, and approach to analysis of the qualitative data.)

Measures

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for the current study is *any IPV* (either perpetration or victimization) that occurred in the respondent's current or most recent relationship at the fifth interview. This is measured using eight questions based on the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Straus et al. 1996) ($\alpha = .91$). Items were similarly worded to measure victimization (e.g., during this relationship, how often has (partner) hit you?). We created a dichotomous variable to indicate whether the respondent reported any violence in the relationship (0 = no IPV, 1 = any IPV). In supplemental analyses, we separate outcomes by perpetration and victimization, and also estimate models relying on an expanded 12-item CTS scale (see online supplement). Results do not differ substantively when analyses were based on the 12-item index.²

Independent variables

Our key focal variables tap *concerns about women's actions* and *concerns about men's actions*. We focus on infidelity, as prior work has found this domain to be related to greater odds of reporting IPV, but has not assessed: a) respondents' own understandings about these issues as a source of disagreements or b) the gendered nature of these concerns. In addition, we index the extent of disagreements revolving around spending too much time with friends. Prior analyses

have shown that spending too much time with friends may be a risk factor as it privileges the friends over the partner, connects to lifestyle concerns such as partying/substance use, and provides opportunities to meet alternative partners, thus connecting back to issues of infidelity. Questions included on the survey centered around both the actions of the respondent and their partner (e.g., “I cheated on him/her” and “he/she cheated on me”). (For a more detailed description of the focal independent variables, see online supplement). We assessed concerns about women’s actions using a mean score of the five items for female respondents reporting conflict surrounding their own actions and male respondents reporting conflict revolving around their partners’ actions. In the same way, we assessed concerns about men’s actions using a mean score of the five items for male respondents reporting conflict about their own actions and female respondents reporting conflict about their male partners’ actions.³

Models also incorporate indices tapping past experiences and future expectations about the relationship. We measure *family history of IPV* retrospectively at the fifth interview using a mean score of four items indicating how often respondent’s parents engaged in physical partner violence ($\alpha = .95$). We measure *respondent prior IPV* using respondent’s reports of perpetration and victimization at the first and second interview.⁴ These questions are also derived from the revised CTS2 (Straus et al. 1996) and coded dichotomously to indicate whether the respondent reported IPV in previous interviews (0 = no IPV, 1 = any IPV).⁵ We measured *partner’s prior IPV* by asking respondents to report whether their partner has ever experienced a violent incident in a previous relationship (0=no, 1=yes). We measure *traditional gender role attitudes* with the item, “In most relationships the guy should be in charge.” Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Finally, SI theorizing recognizes that action in the present is responsive not only to the current situation and selective aspects of past experiences, but to

considerations relating to the future as well (Maines, Sugure, and Katovich 1983; Mead 1934). Thus, we include a measure of *uncertainty about the future of the relationship* using a mean score of three items: “I feel (felt) uncertain about our prospects to make this relationship work for a lifetime,” “I often have (had) second thoughts about this relationship,” and “I may (did) not want to be with him/her a few years from now (long-term).” Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) ($\alpha = .87$).

We control for a number of sociodemographic variables including respondent’s *gender*, *age*, *race/ethnicity* (White, Black, or Hispanic), and *mother’s education*, a proxy for social class background (less than high school, high school (reference), some college, and college or more). Further, models control for several adult status characteristics including *full-time work*, *parenthood status*, and *union type*. We use binary measures to indicate whether the respondent is employed full time and whether the respondent is a parent. We measure *union type* using three variables indicating whether the union was dating (reference), cohabiting, or married.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive results for the sample as a whole and by gender of the respondent. As shown in the table, about 22% of the sample report any IPV (as indexed by items in the revised conflict tactics scale) in their current or most recent relationship, and about the same percentage of male and female respondents report some form of IPV. Recognizing that these scales do not capture differences in elements of severity, supplemental analyses nevertheless show that women in the sample are more likely to report perpetration, and rates of reported victimization do not differ according to gender. With respect to sources of conflict within their relationships, an important basic finding is that both men and women report higher levels of conflict due to concerns about male actions.

Table 2 shows the relationship between the focal ‘sources of conflict’ variables indexing current relationship circumstances, measures tapping past experiences and the measure of certainty about the future of the relationship, as well as respondents’ background characteristics, and the odds of experiencing IPV. At the zero-order, both the scale indexing concerns about male partner actions and the measure of concerns revolving around female partner actions are associated with self-reports of any IPV within the relationship. In a two-variable model without additional controls (not shown), disagreements related to male actions are more strongly related to IPV relative to female concerns, but both significantly increase odds of IPV. Other zero-order results show that the indices reflecting past attitudes and experiences and future considerations are all significant. That is, family history (parents’ IPV), the respondent’s own prior IPV, partner’s prior IPV, and traditional gender role orientation, are all significantly related to the odds of reporting IPV. Suggesting that unsettled relationships are likely to be associated with higher levels of conflict, reports of greater uncertainty about the relationship’s future are also positively related to IPV. Of the demographic characteristics, racialized minorities (Black, Hispanic), cohabitators, unemployed respondents, and individuals whose backgrounds include mothers with low education levels (less than high school) have higher odds of IPV.

The first multivariate model in Table 2 indicates that all of the past behavior indices continue to be significantly associated with IPV when the demographic characteristics are included in the model (SES, race/ethnicity and adult status characteristics). Subsequent models introduce relationship-specific indices. Model 2 introduces the relationship uncertainty index, which is significantly associated with IPV when controlling for other covariates. Model 3 adds the first ‘present concerns’ indicator (the index tapping disagreements related to women’s actions), and it is significantly associated with IPV, net of the controls. Parent history of IPV, respondent

history of IPV, and relationship uncertainty continue to be significant in this model. Model 4 adds the second index of present concerns (disagreements related to male partner actions), and consistent with expectations, both sources of conflict are significantly related to odds of reporting IPV. Yet concerns about men's actions are associated with 219% greater odds of IPV, whereas higher levels of concerns about female partner actions are associated with a 76% increase in odds of IPV. Thus, we find that concerns about men's actions has a significantly stronger association with IPV relative to concerns related to women's actions. This result highlights that variability in reports about these specific concerns, particularly those that revolve around the male partner's actions, are strongly linked to the odds of experiencing IPV within a particular relationship, even after traditional predictors of IPV have been taken into account.⁶ In the full model, family history continues to be significant, while respondent's own prior history and the 'future' index are no longer significant, indicating that these effects may be explained by the presence of concerns about men's actions. However, working full time as well as cohabitation and marriage are still significant. We note also that upon introduction of these relationship-specific indices, the associations of demographic characteristics are no longer significant.

Interaction terms of gender of respondent and the two types of concerns were included and not significant, indicating a similar effect of the male and female concerns on the odds of experiencing IPV, regardless of gender of the respondent reporting about these issues. Additional models also examined the potential interaction of the various past and future indices and the presence of the two types of concerns on the odds of reporting IPV (results not shown). The majority of these interactions were not significant. However, a significant association exists between past family history and reports about male concerns on odds of reporting any violence

(see online supplement). This finding reveals that concerns about men's actions are associated with IPV regardless of parental history of IPV, but that the association is amplified when respondents' backgrounds included parental IPV. This finding thus forges a connection between dynamics emphasized by social learning theorists and our focus here on relationship-specific factors. We also ran additional models estimating associations separately for scales tapping physical IPV perpetration and victimization, and the pattern of results is substantially similar.⁷

COUPLE-LEVEL NARRATIVES OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Concordance on Reasons for Conflict: The salience of concerns about men's actions

The individuals who participated in the qualitative component of the study brought up a range of issues during the lengthy interviews, but their narratives were nevertheless generally consistent with the quantitative results in more frequent emphasis on conflicts related to male partner actions. Of the various concerns, lack of trust and infidelity emerged as key themes. To provide an estimate of the distributions, a more systematic tabulation indicated that over 75% of the open-ended interviews (n = 90) focused more attention on concerns about male actions. Further, the interviews with partners allowed us to assess the degree to which partners agreed or disagreed about the primary sources of conflict. These analyses highlight a significant level of concordance on the bases of conflict.⁸ Specifically, 71% of the couples agreed about the primary sources of conflict, and across 84% of these concordant couples, both partners emphasized male actions as the primary driver of conflict within the relationship. Third, consistent with these observations, and recognizing that male partners would be unlikely to voice concerns about their own actions, the narratives of women and men indicate that female partners often communicated negative reactions to these relationship developments.

As described in more detail in the online supplement, we had initially viewed the relatively

high levels of concordance observed across the male and female partner interviews as a somewhat disappointing result (i.e., why go to all the trouble to find and interview all of these partners, if what emerges is a substantial level of agreement across their separate interviews?). However, these more detailed descriptions gave us additional confidence in the quantitative findings, and made more concrete specific issues and relationship dynamics connected to them that have been little explored in previous research. The couple-based narratives (elicited separately) also revealed some subtle but potentially important gender differences, and led us to consider further the the importance of shared as well as gender-specific aspects of the emerging ‘couple context’ (i.e., our notion of a micro-culture). We contrast the traditional focus on gendered processes such as those stemming from male jealousy and desire to control the female partner’s actions, and dynamics that we found often coexist with or or emerge as central preoccupations within these narrative accounts.

Kevin and Nicole agreed that many of the conflicts they had had over the course of their relationship related to Kevin’s continued contacts with his ‘ex’ Dana. Although these interviews were conducted several weeks apart, both of these respondents centered on this concern:

Kevin: I think she might’ve slapped me on the body a few times.
Interviewer: Playfully, or cause she’s mad?
Kevin: Mad.
Interviewer: What would make her get so mad that she would’ve hit you?
Kevin: I think it was probably talking to my ex.
Interviewer: Was she like jealous or something?
Kevin: Insecure, more worried I would go back to her. [age 25]

Within the context of her interview, Nicole’s narrative was consistent with Kevin’s assessment, as this respondent described multiple instances when conflicts had escalated around the issue. For example, she noted, “I had issues with him talking to Dana like secretly even while I was pregnant.” Nicole also brought up that these had been long-standing concerns within their

relationship. To illustrate, even before they were formally a couple (the two now have a child together), Kevin's communications with Dana emerged as a significant concern:

It was me, back when we weren't dating yet. Pestering him about his ex girlfriend and why they still talk and all that. I think I seen something on his phone when I wasn't supposed to. I kind of like you know, made it seem like I didn't know anything. Then finally I came out with it and said I know what you are doing. I'm not stupid...He got mad, yelled at me. Said it was none of my business. Which was true, it's not [the two were not yet dating seriously when this incident occurred]. [Nicole, 26]

Our focus in this analysis on conflicts centered on men's actions allows us to better interpret previous findings indicating that men in community-based samples on average report higher levels of control attempts on the part of their female partners, and the robust finding that verbal conflict is a reliable predictor of IPV. It is important to link these observed patterns of concern back to prior research that has shown that in general men are more likely to self-report infidelity (Ford et al. 2001). These basic findings support the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, which were themselves consistent across methods. Kevin's narrative also revealed an understanding of Nicole's point of view ("She said, "I don't talk to my first love no more. I dropped him completely out of my life and his family...you should do the same thing." Well I was like "I'm not you."). This excerpt thus supports a more fundamental point, namely that the interpenetration of perspectives, as described by Mead (1934), need not lead inevitably to shared goals or positive outcomes.

Bonnie's and Jake's narratives are similar in content, and also forge the link to aggressive actions. Bonnie (age 26), described a conflict that had escalated: "I was going onto my laptop and I found a letter to some woman called Kinky Kate, saying that I am married, but I do want to have casual sex." After this discovery, Bonnie threw the laptop across the room and slapped Jake in the face. Separately, Jake described the disagreement, and included a reference to his own aggressive action:

It was, she found some emails, I was just talking to this chick online, and she found them and then she got all irate and we were arguing back and forth. And then I think I said, “Fuck you.” And she whacked me across my face. So I pushed her up against the door. [Jake, 27]

Minimization of women’s concerns

While many other couple-level narratives reflected concordance on key reasons for conflicts, additional analyses revealed some potentially important gendered communication dynamics surrounding the expression of these concerns. Thus Kevin’s and Jake’s responses are consistent with the tendency of some male partners to minimize, belittle, or otherwise attempt to negate women’s expressions of their concerns (i.e., Kevin tells the interviewer that Nicole’s concerns are simply a reflection of “insecurity” on her part, and Jake’s response of “Fuck you” was even more clear as a verbal act of negation).

To a degree, this dynamic is similar to Sweet’s (2019) recent focus on the process of ‘gaslighting,’ in which men belittle their partners and engage in other tactics that create a surreal, crazy-making, and distressing environment for women victims. Yet recognizing that all of the women in that study appeared to be victims of the more serious type of “intimate terrorism” dynamic, it is nevertheless of interest that none of the examples described reference conflicts stemming from concerns about men’s actions. However, the author does describe a common pattern in which abusive partners refer to the partner as “[a] crazy bitch.” Such an epithet not only maps onto gender stereotypes, as the author argued, but would be more straightforward to interpret if such attributions at times followed female partners’ expressions of their concerns--particularly in connection with some of the male-centered actions described in this analysis.

Further, in the scenarios described by many of the TARS respondents, the male partners’ responses and attempts to minimize the problems had potential to increase women’s feelings of anger, as their concerns were often supported by objective evidence:

Being so smothering and going through my phone and all that crap... you see I'm living with you, I ain't never moved out... I take care of your kid. I feel like she should've gave me more trust, let me go out, feel free to do what I want to do... Always acting insecure, don't want me to do nothing, go nowhere, can't interact with people. [Aaron, 24]

He was outside with these dudes chatting it up, phone went off... it was a girl saying something so inappropriate. [later] For once, I felt like I had to see it with my own eyes... I showed up at the apartment and I caught him laying in bed with another girl. [Joy, 26]

All narratives are to a degree 'self-serving' (Fivush and Haden 2003; Goffman 1959), and the excerpt from Aaron's interview reflects this respondent's desire to focus on his positive contributions to the relationship (e.g., he has stayed in it a long time, helped with child care), rather than the incidents Joy outlined. Yet describing the problem area as due to his partner's insecurity may have added to the negative emotions Joy experienced when communicating concerns to this partner. Aaron's descriptions of Joy's attempts to monitor his whereabouts as "smothering" are also likely to be aversive from her point of view. Thus, Joy's negative reactions are integral to an understanding of dynamics within the relationship that were associated with heated conflicts. However, Aaron's resentment about any attempts to control his ability to "feel free to do what I want to do" ultimately connects back to men's greater freedom of movement and independence as experienced from an early age (e.g., levels of parental monitoring are reliably lower for male compared with female adolescents (Seedall and Anthony 2015)). Such responses thus provide a circuitous relationship-specific path back to notions of male privilege that have long been emphasized in traditional feminist treatments of IPV.

The content of these narrative accounts and results of quantitative analyses add an important layer of complication, however, as the idea that many conflicts revolve around men's actions, particularly infidelity, has not been the focus of traditional treatments. Similarly, women's views and actions have not been included in most discussions of relationship dynamics associated with IPV. Focusing on women's concerns and in effect 'push-back' about their concerns adds to an

understanding of the relationship-based dynamics that may be associated with conflict escalation. For example, Joy took action in connection with specific instances that challenge Aaron's description of her issues as reflecting only a personal shortcoming (insecurity) on her part. Thus, minimization of concerns and perhaps even some 'gaslighting' attempts may not only be unsuccessful, but in context add to the negative emotions women experience and may express.

Alyssa's and Jeff's narrative accounts focus on a similar relationship dynamic. As Alyssa (age 32) put it succinctly, "when we first got together, the conflict was him and his little ho's as I like to call them. He was wanting to date and still talk to people. They was out of town girls." In his own interview, Jeff admitted to the interviewer that he had sex with some of the 'out of town girls,' and further described instances of infidelity that had occurred throughout their relationship. Nevertheless, this respondent derided his partner for these frequent expressions of concern and in effect blamed Alyssa for his infidelity:

Other stresses with her because she just insecure, she think every time I leave I'm cheating on her... You going to keep on accusing me of it and I'm not doing—now I'm gonna go and do it. I can't get mad now because you accused me of something I did. I mean, it's not even jealousy, it's insecurity to me and if you're insecure then you have a problem. I'm not insecure. I know where you're at, what you're doing, who you come home to every night. You could leave and stay gone all day, I wouldn't care. [Jeff, 30]

Jeff's expression of indignation reflects that he is undoubtedly not cheating "every time" he goes out. Yet Alyssa's experience of the relationship incorporates knowledge of the early instances of infidelity, and perhaps suspicions that connect to more recent incidents Jeff discussed freely with the interviewer. It is also of interest that Jeff developed the contrast between his own and Alyssa's approach to partner monitoring ("you could leave and stay gone all day"). Yet an important distinction is that based on the structured responses and her open-ended interview, Alyssa had apparently been faithful since the start of the relationship. Here Jeff's "you could leave and stay gone all day" perspective, while perhaps overstated for emphasis, highlights

variability in the predominant portrait of men's preoccupation with controlling women's actions. These expressed reactions and frustrations are consistent with the feminist post-structural view that power is "fluid and relational (Cannon et al. 2015)," and is thus subject to continual negotiation. Further, such reactions accord well with Mead's (1934) notion that emotions arise in connection with 'blocked action.' The men's previously enjoyed freedoms and positive sense of self have been challenged or 'interrupted.' In turn, male actions such as infidelity directly impede (block) young women's capacities to enjoy the type of close, committed relationship and long-term future that they may have envisioned.⁹

To illustrate more concretely this connection to future considerations, at the time of the interview, another respondent John, had cohabited with his partner Emily for over two years. Nevertheless, he had been unfaithful numerous times with his ex-girlfriend Janelle and other women during the course of their relationship. John's and Emily's narratives thus converge when discussing the conflict area (John's infidelity), but reveal different conceptions of their future together. Emily indicated that she had made up her mind to trust John, in spite of these difficulties, and would like to make it work as a long-term relationship. However, John, while agreeing on the immediate sources of conflict, described different relationship goals as well as traditionally gendered notions that connected to his current actions. Thus, John's conceptions of the relationship's future appear to connect not only to his immediate choices but to the odds that this relationship will continue on a stable, free-of-conflict footing:

The more monogamous I am, the less monogamous I want to be. That's why I don't really want to settle down till I'm probably 32, 35, and then I'll find me some young hot chick and call it a day... that's why I said I probably won't be with this individual in 10 years...because its great now, but my chase is not over with yet. [John, 28]

In addition to envisioning an unknown 'young hot chick' who might become his future mate, at one point in the interview this respondent mused about potentially getting back with Janelle,

even though both John and Emily describe that relationship as extremely volatile (e.g., John had at one point taken out a restraining order after Janelle hit him in the back of the head with a stiletto heeled shoe, a conflict that appeared related to his infidelity with this prior partner).

Other sources of conflict: time with friends and lifestyle concerns

As the above examples illustrate, concerns about infidelity and other violations of trust are ‘bottom line’ issues for many individuals in this conflict-experienced subsample, but disagreements related to other concerns were also raised by some of these respondents. For example, spending time with friends and privileging that time was another source of discord.

Ryan and Jill both reflected on Ryan’s time away from her as a source of disagreements:

Some conflicts are when he goes golfing. It irritates me when he’s golfing from like 9 in the morning till 9 o’clock at night. And then, he’ll call me and say that he’s going to have a couple drinks with uh, his buddies at the bar. And so I don’t see him until 9 in the morning to probably 2:30 in the morning... I mean like I’m like, “Are you serious?” [Jill, 25]

Ryan’s narrative also centered on the conflicts related to golf. Yet it is notable that this respondent, aged 33, clearly recognized the larger import and Jill’s perspective on the issue (“I think it’s just more that she feels like just sometimes I put her off for my friends”). Another respondent Stephanie (age 29) highlighted problems related to her partner Ian’s drinking. Ian agreed that this had been a source of contention, but nevertheless continued to argue that he deserved time out with his friends:

But when I’m out and drinking we don’t start drinking until, after, after the bar closed down, and so I’ll be out til maybe two or three and that’s what she don’t like. And I know that. But I figure if I have my own day, why can’t I stay out a little later? [Ian, 27]

In an analysis of IPV patterns, Fagan (1989) focused on an early finding that men who went out to bars frequently (three or more times a week) were more likely to abuse their wives, while decreasing these activities was associated with desistance from IPV (Bowker 1983). Fagan theorized that communications within such all-male groups reinforced norms about male

dominance and at least implicitly about the abuse itself. Clearly, peer normative climates are important to consider. Yet based on our own analyses of common sequences, this type of ‘importation’ argument is somewhat limited, as it fails to incorporate women’s own perspectives or couple-level dynamics that may stem from intimate involvement with a partner who often stays out “til’ two or three,” or frequents bars multiple times a week.

Young adulthood is a phase of the life course in which individuals experience pressures to settle down in a variety of ways (Massoglia and Uggen 2010). However, one partner may develop ideas sooner about the need to discard features of a previous lifestyle (e.g., partying and involvement in other risky behaviors) that may have been shared at an earlier point in the relationship. Again, based on what is known about rates of prevalence of risk behaviors by gender, it is reasonable to expect that the female partner is more likely to be the one to develop this point of view. Jessica (age 24) talked about a previous partner who was “selling some serious stuff.” Although Jessica indicated that she initially liked that “we didn’t’ worry about anything...we had money...”, eventually she “couldn’t deal with it” anymore, noting the negative impact on her life, and the heated conflicts that accompanied her change in perspective (“you can’t have these junkies throughout my house!”). In this narrative, it is clear that Jessica’s views and the nature of the couple’s disagreements cannot be understood fully without considering the unique confluence of gender, economic marginality, and age-related concerns, consistent with an intersectional lens.

The in-depth interview conducted with Lisa, shown below, not only highlights this respondent’s strong negative reactions to her partner Mark’s ongoing substance use issues, but points to the specific elements that over time have amplified the conflicts between them. In particular, Lisa resented Mark’s previous attempts to hide the extent of his opioid abuse:

Just lies, which is basically the same as cheating. Um, lies, lies, lies, lies, I hate liars you know? I haeeeeeete liars, like that's the stupidest thing to me. If you lie to me, I mean, you might as well be cheating. [Lisa, 24]

Mark's own description shows how intimate communication refines understandings of the other partner's viewpoint and meanings of "the problem," which has the potential to continue or exacerbate these patterns or alternatively, to serve as a framework for enacting changes. It is in this sense that a 'micro-culture' is created within the couple context. These shared spaces extend to areas of conflict as well as perhaps more intuitively, to positive relationship experiences. Note that although we conducted Mark's interview several weeks apart from Lisa's interview, the content is strikingly similar:

That's the thing. When you lie to someone about something and then you're doing something behind, I mean it might as well have been cheating. Might as well have, you know I mean I'm still lying. I'm going to do something behind your back. [Mark, 27]¹⁰

Women's resort to aggressive 'conflict tactics' as a part of the sequence

In a recent study, Jamarillo-Sierra et al. (2017) found that a majority of women in their sample distanced themselves from the experience of anger or 'kept it in.' Yet as shown in the narratives above, women and men in this conflict-experienced sample often incorporated references to women's anger and in some instances behaviors included in traditional "conflict tactics" scales. The accounts are thus consistent with levels of female perpetration found in most survey studies based on community samples, and the results shown in Table 1. Yet as other researchers have noted, our understanding of the meaning of these relatively high rates remains quite limited (Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020). Previous researchers have highlighted that typical conflict tactics scales do not pick up clear differences in the nature, severity, and consequences of women's and men's actions (Hamby 2016). Nevertheless, continuing to highlight these important gender differences does not in itself clarify the meanings of women's behaviors either

from the point of view of women themselves or that of their male partners. Thus, the current focus on conflicts revolving around male partners' actions provides an initial basis for further contextualizing meaning(s) within the context of these young adult relationships.

The contemporary normative climate surrounding women's use of violence is less clear-cut relative to men's use of violence against a female partner. These understandings and our focus on concerns related to male actions (e.g., discovery of men's infidelity) are likely related to women's willingness to resort to aggressive actions, report it on CTS scales, and talk about it freely within the context of these accounts. And indeed, both partners appeared more comfortable introducing the issue of women's anger and even their aggressive responses.

Nevertheless, this was generally described as a significant negative relationship development:

I definitely throw things... at him. Yup. And I do hit him. He just gets me to such a boiling point that I tell him that it just, I just snap. He knows I'm pissed... we fight all the time. I mean, we do. But, I guess it's part of us... it's what we do. [Does he hit you?] No, he just yells at me. He's like, "Why do you always gotta be so fucking violent?" It's like, "Because you piss me off so much"... it's like, the beyond boiling point. [Maria, 24]

This account further illustrates our notion that a micro-culture is created within the intimate context, one that includes understandings not only about the bases of discord, but about the way each partner and the couple are likely to display and react to the other's experiences of anger. This includes whether aggressive acts are considered unthinkable, possible, in the past, or a routine feature of the relationship. Maria not only does not distance herself from these actions (e.g., suggesting that it was an accident, or will never occur again), but instead uses the present tense, referring to the conflict as "a part of us," and "what we do." Other accounts forge a direct link between concerns about male actions (particularly infidelity) and women's aggressive acts that followed the experience of negative emotions connected directly to these issues:

What the hell is she [another woman] doing here: And oh she's just my friend. And I said just your friend and I slapped the shit out of him. He grabbed me by my arms and then I

just got one arm loose and I just slapped him, and then he slapped me back. I got one kick in on him, right before he kicked me out the door. Mad as hell. I wanted to go back there and bust out his windows and was just mad, I wanted to slap her. [Jessica, 25]

Marissa and Will, quoted previously, both refer to the same incident in which Marissa called some of the girls whose numbers she had found on Will's phone:

So I'm in the bed and I felt somebody slapping my face, like Pap! Wake up! I look up, its her and the other girl. She called some girl she never knew to the house and they're in the bedroom slapping me. So I'm discombobulated...and I'm running down the steps and the next thing I don't know what it was she grabbed but, a lamp, something, wow, straight to, in the face. I don't know if you can see it, but I had stitches right here. [Will, 36]

The quote below describes an incident in which the respondent, Alicia, indicates that she came close to committing an even more serious act of violence (shooting her partner). While Alicia did not follow through, the excerpt telegraphs her level of anger, feelings that were amplified when her partner Keith (age 23) tried to dismiss her concerns and go to bed:

[Alicia got the gun out from the drawer.] So I was standing right here and I was thinking I could just shoot him from here... No, I was, I'm carrying this dude's baby and you're out basically looking for my replacement, you know, I was so angry. [Alicia, 29]

Similarly, Holly (age 27) not only emphasized her specific concerns, but that her partner was not taking them seriously: "He walked away from me and it drove me crazy....so I threw him into the wall. Like, like shoved him into the wall. And then walked away. And walked upstairs."

It is potentially important to highlight that male and female respondents often discussed women's anger and aggressive acts in these relatively straightforward ways (e.g., "she just smacked the shit out of me right across the face; "I got one good kick in on him," "I threw him into the wall"). Yet, as the descriptions suggest, these actions were not considered trivial, as they were understood as reflections of women's underlying concerns and level of anger about specific situations. Nevertheless, neither women nor men tended to describe male perpetration or "mutual" violence in this manner. Clearly, social prohibitions against hitting women have

increased, and these dynamics likely have contributed to respondents' reluctance to describe men's violence in this direct, detailed way, particularly when referencing a current partner's actions. Below is a description of an incident that referenced male partner violence:

We was arguing back and forth and he was too close to my face and of course I push him. He push me back. And I hit him, he hit me back. And then we went back and forth for like a little bit... and then I started crying, I fell on the floor. [Bev, 25]

Another respondent Seth's (age 33) narrative account of a 'mutual' incident described a similar back and forth, but then went on to include a more serious use of violence that upended the element of apparent mutuality and finalized the sequence: "we were in each other's faces and I just like shoved her away... [then I] like grabbed her up and slammed her on the ground." Seth ended any semblance of mutuality by engaging in an act of dominance over his partner (slamming her to the ground), and this short description begins to convey the higher level of risk to women that has been effectively described in prior work. Yet focusing on men's use of violence and other controlling actions is not inconsistent with the idea that an element of contestation (verbal protests and even use of physical 'conflict tactics' on the part of the female partner) may occur alone or as part of a sequence that includes mutual violence.

Researchers have been reluctant to focus attention on women's communications and actions, as this has the potential to suggest that they have played a role in the victimization that occurs. Yet examining common sequences respondents described (often following concerns about male actions) has highlighted that a range of different relationship-based processes may be associated with commonly occurring forms of IPV. The "intimate terrorist" dynamic described by Johnson (1995) focuses on men's attempts to control many aspects of women's behavior, with violence or threat of violence and other abusive strategies employed to ensure compliance. It has been useful to explore couples' descriptions of a broader range of conflict scenarios, as the

relationship experiences of many of the respondents interviewed do not fit with the portrait Johnson described. Clearly, a major purpose of Johnson's typology was to indicate the presence of other scenarios that might characterize what he termed "common couple" and then later "situational couple" violence. Yet these common situations have not been adequately described, incorporated into theorizing about IPV, or included as a part of many prevention/intervention efforts. Further, constructing common couple violence as a more gender-neutral terrain does not illuminate the nature and impact of gendered concerns we have described in connection with these narrative accounts and that were reflected in the results of the quantitative analyses.

It is also possible that rather than constituting non-overlapping subtypes, some features of 'intimate terrorism' may develop out of a mutual violence pattern or the reverse.¹¹ Thus, for example, over time, men may begin to rely on violence to silence women's contestations or other negative feedback, after an initial period of verbal conflict or mutual violence. Prior treatments have described a 'honeymoon' phase that precedes abusive actions, but the examples above suggest the possibility of multiple phases. Reflecting this fluidity in the character of these relationship dynamics, men may begin to escalate control or resort to violence when they believe the partner is interested in leaving the relationship. Within this context, then, a woman's desire to leave can be viewed as the ultimate negative feedback or 'reflected appraisal.' Accordingly, this break-up period is widely recognized as especially risky for women involved in volatile and/or abusive relationships (Logan and Walker 2004). To illustrate, Andrea describes a serious one-sided attack that occurred in a prior relationship after she told her partner that she wanted to leave the relationship:

All I remember was him jumping out the bushes and like choking me from behind, like a head lock. He was choking me so much and I was screaming, he choked me so hard I blew blood vessels in my cheek, my neck...bit my tongue half way through. And I had bruises everywhere, I think they said I fractured the tail bone,... I remember waking up in

the hospital, and them telling me that they just brought me back to life... they had me in a neck brace and I had IV's and a bunch of stuff all around me, beeping. [Andrea, 32]¹²

Understanding of 'causes' of conflict escalation as part of the developing micro-culture

The narrative accounts sometimes extended beyond discussions of the reasons for conflict, as respondents attempted to explain why some disagreements escalated to include more overt displays of anger and aggression.¹³ These explanations or discussions about causes often connected to women's as well as men's actions. Such discussions are consistent with the notion that while women's acts were not generally equated with those of men in terms of seriousness, female partner actions were nevertheless often considered problematic within the context of these relationships. Importantly, analyses of these accounts revealed areas of concordance about the *causes* of conflict escalation as well as about the underlying bases of disagreements.

Some of the explanations offered, including individual differences in temperament and family of origin influence, parallel prior research on the etiology of IPV. Yet it is useful to consider how these understandings are incorporated into the narrative accounts (and by inference, into the character of the developing micro-culture). Both Holly and Jack describe Holly's behavior in ways that emphasize a general propensity, focusing on her ethnic background and temperament as explanations. Recall that Holly's narrative includes the incident in which she shoved Jack against a basement wall:

I would say with conflict we still struggle when there is conflict. She's, I, I always say she's Italian cause she's she's kinda hot headed but the best way we handle conflict is kinda step away from it and revisit it when it's kinda cooled down a bit. [Jack, 26]

Because he's always the one that like walks away and tries to be calm. And I'm always the one that follows and yells. I'm Italian and Irish, so...I speak very loud, and so I remember going after him in the basement, because like, like when we're fighting...he's so calm, it's so frustrating... [Holly, 27]

Another respondent Kelsey (age 26) references her own use of aggressive tactics, and states

simply—“that’s just my own way. We’re both Tauruses, that’s probably the problem.” To illustrate the role of couple communications in connection with these understandings, however, Dave’s narrative is remarkably similar:

You know we’ll get in arguments, um, we are both Tauruses, I don’t really know if I believe in all that but yeah we are both really bull headed... [later] Like I said, we are both Taurus. I think, when the arguments happen we don’t usually come to an agreement because we are both very hard headed people. [Dave, 33]

The role of couple communications in cementing or altering views about the nature of violent expression is potentially important, and has not been considered in-depth in previous research. Thus, for example, continuing to rely on such characterological explanations may inhibit discussion of specific concerns or couple dynamics associated with serious conflicts, thus limiting opportunities for enacting couple-level changes. Other respondents focused on family background as an explanation for their own or partner actions. Note that in the narrative excerpts below, Julie and Shane both highlight differences in the way each of their parents handled conflicts as a key dynamic that has affected their own relationship experiences (Fritz, Slep, and O’Leary 2012). Yet in this instance, the new relationship (‘micro-culture’) provided opportunities for change:

I mean Shane’s family, Shane’s parents have been together since they were in high school. They were like high school sweethearts...They’re like the perfect little happy family...but in my head marriages don’t work like that... [Julie, 23]

She has learned how to calmly go over disagreements without getting so physical—because she saw that growing up. I come from a family, I’ve never seen my parents argue....they would go into another room. She says she’s seen her parents argue, push each other and stuff like that. So, to me, that’s taboo. I don’t like that, so when she used to grab me and push me, I don’t know how to react. I know how to fight a man, but I don’t know how to react with somebody that I love. [Shane, 30]

Another respondent, Sara, described an earlier period in her relationship with Don that had included one-sided violence (“when he was hitting me”), as well as several mutual violence

incidents. Don's narrative centered only on the mutual violence experiences. Sara indicated that while her friends and family had wanted her to break up with Don, she "saw the good in him," and noted that over time the relationship had become more stable. In this discussion, Sara pointed to Don's difficult family background as an explanation for his earlier actions.¹⁴ ("In his life he hasn't had it, he's had it rough all his life. His mom was a crack head. His dad was not around.... He's never seen a successful marriage)."

Respondents' lengthy narratives also included frequent references to the influence of experiences with prior partners. These themes were common, highlighting the need to explore in greater depth how experiences with prior partners are incorporated into the new couple's developing micro-culture.¹⁵ For example, Joe indicated that initially Chloe did not trust him in large part because of very negative experiences with a prior partner, Chad:

The only conflict Chloe and I have is her previous relationship was very abusive and very, it was very hard. Just with the abuse part and so her trust levels are way down. And then she met me and realized that you know I'm a lot different. I'm going to treat her with the utmost respect and, she's starting to realize that, that I'm not her ex. [Joe, 23]

Joe's narrative forged a strong contrast between his own attitudes and that of Chloe's former boyfriend. Yet it is of interest and consistent with our general focus that due to a long period between interviews, Chloe indicated that Joe had cheated on her and they are no longer together.

Jackie's and Anthony's relationship was also initially affected by Jackie's experiences with a prior partner Brian. Jackie describes highly abusive acts that Brian had committed that well illustrate the traditional focus on male jealousy, but also incorporated her own concern that he had gone out with other girls:

He stole my check to go out and pick up these girls and have fun and left me at home. [Jackie put on a new, silky nightgown and waited for him to return]...woke me up, what the hell are you doing with that damn thing on who the fuck you waiting on, what man was in my house.... Next thing you know he just started whamming on me just like taking blows to me...it was always like my arms and body shots and like in my chest, in

my legs in my butt...he didn't hit me in my face...he didn't want everyone else to know. [later] I was talking to Anthony [current partner], texting here and there and my ex picked up a glass table, threw it and it shattered on the back of my head. [Jackie, 28]

Jackie's relationship with her current partner Anthony (age 28) was quite different. Both respondents brought up that Jackie was the only one who had become aggressive in their current relationship. However, Anthony's reactions and general orientation were helpful as they had worked together to develop a different set of relationship dynamics:

[it was after work], and I kinda exploded and like shoved him a little. But he looked at me and said I'm gonna pretend like that didn't happen because you're having a bad day and I know you've worked a long time...Anthony taught me not to even play fight with my children... 'boys do not put their hands on their mother.'

In this new context, then, Anthony's capacity to 'take the role of the other,' stance of avoiding all use of aggressive tactics, and both partners' commitment to the future coalesced to put the new relationship on a different path.¹⁶

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sociological research on patterns of IPV has most often focused on what we referred to as imported elements—factors such as family history or peer normative climates that precede conduct within intimate relationships but often influence conduct within them. Other studies of social influences have reached further 'outside' to consider the impact of neighborhood characteristics, public policy decisions, and criminal justice responses. Psychologists have more often pointed to individual-level factors such as personality traits or attachment styles that retain the emphasis on what individuals bring with them as they navigate their romantic relationships. Feminist scholars moved the lens closer to our focus in this investigation in outlining specific relationship dynamics (e.g., desire for control, tendency to isolate the partner, jealousy) that are often associated with men's use of violence. Yet the theoretical emphasis remains on the degree to which broader structural bases of gender inequality tend to be replayed at the couple level. In

this sense, traditional feminist treatments can also be classified as theories of importation.

Descriptions of relationship dynamics included in early feminist theorizing and incorporated into many programmatic efforts have focused on issues of power and control, and highlighted that injurious actions are not limited to the acts of violence themselves (e.g., intrusive control as a warning sign of abuse). While this perspective has provided the impetus for positive social changes along multiple fronts, in this article we argued that depictions of these dynamics are not comprehensive as they: a) do not tap the full complement of relationship processes associated with IPV, b) may best describe later-in-the-process dynamics, and c) in emphasizing men's objectives and strategies (e.g., desire for control and power), bracket off what women want and what they do within these relationships. Further, recognizing the pressing nature of harms posed by relationships that fit the label 'intimate terrorism,' the associated depictions nevertheless do not fit seamlessly with the experiences of many couples who reported experiencing significant levels of IPV (i.e., those Johnson labeled 'common' couple and later 'situational' couple violence). More fundamentally, we argued that ongoing interaction and communication within the relationship necessarily creates a micro-culture, one that is constantly evolving, and imperfectly captured by focusing only on broader structural influences or earlier socialization.

Symbolic interaction theorists recognize the ongoing influence of external factors, but view social interaction and communication as nevertheless central to an understanding of human behavior and the creation of culture. Feminist post-structural theorists similarly focus on the importance of language and communication in the reproduction of gender inequalities, yet underscore that one's positions are multifaceted and fluid rather than fixed from the outset. With these ideas as a conceptual backdrop, then, we argued that even in situations involving conflict and constraint, the reciprocity of perspectives emphasized in SI theorizing and this element of

fluidity are present and potentially consequential. Areas of shared understanding encompass ideas about sources of conflict as well as about why conflicts sometimes escalate. Further, our focus on this developing micro-culture does not accord with the notion that issues of gender recede from view, as might be surmised from approaches viewed as “gender neutral.”

To examine relationship dynamics associated with IPV in greater detail, we drew on a mixed method longitudinal study that has focused on the intimate relationship experiences of a large, diverse sample of young adults originally interviewed as adolescents. The current study relied on questions in the most recent structured survey that asked specifically about the presence of conflicts revolving around male actions and/or female partner actions. In addition, for the first time we conducted in-depth couple level interviews with a subset of respondents who had reported IPV on the survey instrument along with separate interviews with their partners. Taken together, these data provide a different perspective on gender and IPV, as we documented couple dynamics that appear to occur frequently, but that have not been examined in-depth relative to those associated with one-sided acts of male perpetration. The findings thus offer additional context for interpreting results of prior research (e.g., women’s relatively high levels of self-reported IPV; men’s reports about partner control attempts; observed discontinuities across time and different partners) that have remained undertheorized in existing treatments. Results based on the structured survey and the complete sample indicate that both men and women in the sample reported higher levels of conflict due to concerns related to men’s actions. In turn, while conflicts related to female partner actions were significantly related to IPV, conflict related to male partner actions was more strongly linked to the odds of reporting IPV in a current or most recent relationship. These relationship-specific factors mattered net of traditional precursors such as exposure to IPV in the family of origin, and highlight the utility of considering the

‘content’ of disagreements as a way of further illuminating the play of gender in relationship dynamics associated with violence.

The in-depth interviews with male and female partners describing a focal relationship in general buttressed results from the quantitative analyses. Analyses of the in-depth interviews revealed important distinctions, especially the tendency of male partners to minimize women’s concerns. Yet partners’ discussions of *domains* associated with conflict, particularly men’s infidelity, as well as factors underlying conflict escalation (*perceived causes*) revealed a significant level of concordance at the couple level. The findings of observed similarity in understandings about reasons for conflict and ‘causes’ thus contribute to but extend theorizing in the SI tradition. For example, narratives sometimes revealed a keen understanding of the other partner’s viewpoint, indicating that a level of role-taking is likely to occur, even within the confines of highly conflictual relationships, and where the referent is the genesis of conflict itself. We described this as a developing ‘micro-culture’ to anchor the idea that meanings are crafted on-site, as well as based on imported elements such as family history and gender socialization.

This accords with Mead’s (1934) basic insight that interaction and communication support the human capacity for sociality, but complicates the notion that consensus inevitably follows as an outcome of the ‘reciprocity of perspectives’ (Lengermann and Niebrugge 1995). Although the general process of communication and role taking to a degree transcends gender, we do not conclude from these analyses that gendered processes disappear from view. A focus on couple communications is thus consistent with feminist post-structural position that has foregrounded the unfinished character of gendered power arrangements, and the idea that within the context of intimate relationships in particular, these are subject to continual negotiation.

Results highlighting the salience of concerns about men's actions fit well with a range of prior studies documenting that men more often do things that are likely to be considered problematic (including but not limited to infidelity). Within the context of relationships of greater duration and significance that are often formed during young adulthood, then, it is reasonable to expect that women may express dissatisfaction about these problem areas-- particularly when such actions reflect violations of trust and threaten the relationship in fundamental ways. The study findings indicate that they do. Women's responses may include attempts to control or monitor men's actions, verbal expressions of disagreement, and in some instances the use of aggressive "conflict tactics." Gendered perspectives clearly come into play as these relationship scenarios unfold, as the character of women's reactions is likely to be influenced by a strong interest in and investments in relationships ("I'm carrying this dude's baby and you're out basically looking for my replacement"). In turn, the negative 'reflected appraisals' such expressions of concern signal may be experienced aversely by men whose earlier socialization may not have included: restrictions on freedom of movement, welcoming critical feedback, curtailing one's capacity to demonstrate masculinity by accruing additional sexual conquests, or walking away from verbal and/or physical challenges.

Within the contemporary context, public opinion has slowly shifted regarding the acceptability of men hitting their partners, but women's use of "aggressive conflict tactics" is not as well understood or as heavily proscribed. Prior research and descriptions in fact sheets about IPV emphasize that while men's violence is injurious in many ways, women's acts may be dismissed by men or seen as 'laughable' (Molidor and Tolman 1998). Based on the dynamics women and men described in the narrative accounts we analyzed, however, we would argue that in context women's actions have meaning as they telegraph the perceived seriousness of their

concerns, and the feelings of anger and disappointment they are experiencing.

The narratives elicited from couples showed that ongoing interaction and communication can also provide a basis for reifying ideas about the inevitability of conflict, as well as for working to change underlying behaviors that may have precipitated these disagreements. Further, analyses related to men's attempts to make light of or minimize the women's concerns revealed that such attempts to turn the tables and in effect 'victim-blame' were not uniformly effective, and often only increased feelings of anger women indicated that they experienced. This adds to prior research that has revealed how men have belittled partners (and engaged in more severe actions such as gaslighting), because previous studies have not generally included attention to women's responses other than feelings of distress. The quantitative and qualitative results described here converge in highlighting that women often do not accept the notion that conflicts were the result of their own actions. And, while sometimes framing the issues differently, the findings are important in revealing that men tended to agree that issues surrounding their own actions, particularly infidelity, were the primary drivers of conflict.

Men's attempts to monitor their partners' whereabouts as a precursor to violence and severe acts of aggression, as described in prior work, most readily evoke themes of male dominance. Yet other relationship dynamics described in the current study (i.e., continuing to engage in behavior that female partners find troublesome, or minimizing their concerns), nevertheless reflect the continuing impact of beliefs about male privilege and thus for some couples ultimately work to perpetuate gender inequalities. Researchers have tended to bracket off women's attempts to contest the current state of affairs or their expressions of anger, recognizing the pressing need for men to take full responsibility for their own aggressive actions (i.e., to avoid any sense of blaming the victim). Yet a perspective that includes attention to women's

perspectives, feelings, and behaviors and in turn, couple-level dynamics, is likely to provide the most comprehensive framework for understanding the genesis and potentially the cessation of these forms of conflict.

Intersectionalities. We limited the focus here to gender dynamics among heterosexual couples within the TARS sample, but research on the relationship experiences of young adults who identify with the more complete range of gender identities will be required for a comprehensive assessment.¹⁷ Further, contemporary research has highlighted variability in perspectives and behavior associated with the confluence of gender and the experiences linked to other status positions, including race/ethnicity and social class (Miller 2008b). Thus, additional research is needed on ways in which variability in these experiences not only influences the prevalence of IPV and related forms of coercive control, but the gendered relationship dynamics we highlighted in this study.

Issues of sequencing. Research is needed that more fully addresses issues of sequencing, and linkages between the relationship processes emphasized here and the intimate terrorism dynamic described in prior work. While these may be two different populations characterized by distinct sets of dynamics, as Johnson hypothesized, it is possible that men's severe control attempts and one-sided violence may follow not just a 'honeymoon period,' but a phase of open disagreement that the introduction of male violence (and threats of violence) shuts down. It is also possible that flashes of intimate terrorism occur in relationships evidencing primarily elements of mutual aggression. In addition, we did not focus centrally on the role of concerns about women's actions, including infidelity, that were significantly related to IPV, as these dynamics have been covered extensively in prior research. However, additional research is needed on the interrelated nature of these concerns, as well as issues of sequencing. For example, one hypothesis is that

women's involvement with other men, while occurring less frequently, may take place later in the relationship's history, and more often reflect a desire to actually leave the relationship (Brand, Markey, Mills, Hodges 2007). In this way, male partners may react not simply because they are the jealous type, but because they correctly perceive that the partner is considering ending the relationship.

A comprehensive assessment of relationship dynamics associated with IPV will also include more systematic attention to the reciprocally related nature of many of these relationship experiences. For example, prior work has shown that male and female levels of partner control, jealousy, jealousy induction, and use of violence are significantly correlated (authors). The experience of IPV may also erode feelings of commitment, providing a different lens on the IPV-infidelity link (see Table 2 results, which revealed a significant association between IPV and assessments of the relationship's future, but do not address the issue of causal order). Yet the presence of these complex interrelationships itself fits well with the SI perspective, feminist post-structural theorizing, and our general notion that intimate relationships are lifelong sites of continuous learning and adjustment (see author).¹⁸

Past-present linkages. The analyses did not focus heavily on the factors we labeled 'imported' elements, as these have also been addressed extensively in prior work. Yet factors such as family history were significant predictors in the multivariate models. The objective and potential contribution of the current analysis has been to highlight that discussions about these more basic 'causes' were often folded into the conflict narratives elicited from the respondents and their partners--thus becoming an integral part of each couple's unique micro-culture. This suggests that couple-level interaction and communication further reinforce or challenge each partner's understandings about causes and their malleability, as well as about the immediate

concerns underlying particular disagreements. Future research should include assessments of the complex interplay of these background and relationship-based factors. For example, results of supplemental interaction models indicated that concerns about male partner actions had a stronger impact on IPV when respondents reported a history of exposure to parental violence.

Taking into account these and other study limitations (e.g., the sample is regional and limited to one phase of the life course), the analyses nevertheless contribute beyond prior work in shedding light on relationship processes and forms of violence that almost by definition occur more frequently relative to the more extreme forms of abuse such as the intimate terrorism dynamic that has been stressed in many prior investigations of IPV. Thus, the conceptual terrain we identified has not been well-traveled either within the context of traditional feminist theorizing or gender neutral approaches. The gap is significant, as research, whether relying on TARS, other community based studies, or national samples, has demonstrated links between self-reports of these experiences and depression (Fletcher 2010), relationship instability (Halpern-Meehin et al. 2013), and declines in the well-being of children exposed to these forms of parental conflict (Vu et al. 2016). And indeed, some research has shown that IPV that involves a ‘mutual’ element may be more likely than one-sided actions to result in injuries to women victims (Whitaker, Hailey, Swahn and Saltzman 2007).

These findings also have implications for prevention and intervention strategies. Some gender-neutral programs have centered more on the form than the content of interpersonal conflicts (e.g., anger management programs), but these are likely to offer only a partial solution if underlying bases of conflict are not fully recognized and addressed. Programs based on feminist perspectives have focused on gendered processes, but have primarily emphasized the male partner's attempt to control and dominate the partner, positioning this as a general objective

of men's use of aggression and other intrusive actions. This picture describes well one set of highly injurious relationship processes, but does not take into account the apparent variability in these dynamics we documented in the current study. Thus, program content should also raise the prospect that conflict may involve: a) control dynamics revolving around specific contested domains such as men's infidelity, b) women's efforts to change (control) their relationship circumstances along with men's controlling actions, and c) negative emotions, communications, and actions that may arise from perceived 'blocked action' on the part of both partners in the relationship. Reflecting on the interactive aspects of conflict may prove a logical and recognizable starting point for developing programs that then go on to highlight the distinctively gendered features of these dynamics, and of the use of violence within the context of intimate relationships.

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END NOTES

¹ U.S. Census data indicate that our sample mirrors the characteristics of the Toledo MSA and the sociodemographic characteristics of the Toledo area closely parallel national figures in terms of education (80% in the Toledo MSA vs. 84% in the U.S. are high school graduates), median family income (\$50,046 vs. \$50,287), and marital status (73.5% vs. 75.9% married two-parent households), and race (13% vs. 12% African American).

² While results are similar, we prefer to present results based on the 8-item measure, as this is consistent with the measures of prior IPV and parents' IPV.

³ The main independent variables were coded using a mean score of 5 items on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Concerns about men's actions was coded using men's reports about their own behavior and women's reports about their partner's behavior. Concerns about women's actions is coded using women's reports of their own behavior and men's reports of their partner's behavior. We averaged the 5 items to keep the scores in a range from 1-5. In supplemental analyses we ran models with a summated scale and substantive results remained the same. We chose not to recode into a binary measure in order to maintain maximum information about our focal variables.

⁴ We restrict the measurement of prior IPV to waves 1 and 2 to ensure temporal ordering of romantic relationships. In addition, these waves occur primarily during in adolescence. Prior research has shown that this is a key formative period in the life course, and that experiencing partner violence during this time is related to future IPV (Gomez 2011).

⁵ We note that 107 respondents did not report a relationship at the wave 1 or wave 2 interviews and thus did not report on early experiences of IPV. These respondents are coded as 0 indicating

they do not have a history of IPV.

⁶ Recognizing the interrelationships between these types of concerns, we compare the model fit based on log likelihoods, which reveals that concerns about male partner actions adds more to the model fit relative to concerns about female partner actions. As discussed in Demaris (2004, p.125) we also tested the hypothesis that β_1 (concerns about men's actions) = β_2 (concerns about women's actions) and found a significant difference ($p < .05$) indicating that the effect of concerns about men's actions on IPV is significantly greater than the effect of concerns about women's actions.

⁷ While we focused primarily on physical IPV, we recognize that abuse takes many forms. Thus, we also estimated these models relying on a 19-item psychological abuse scale, and the pattern of results is similar.

⁸ Five coders analyzed and developed summary abstracts about each of the interviews and subsequently wrote memos about areas of concordance/discordance apparent across the two interviews, and they and the authors observed what appeared to be significant levels of concordance at the couple-level. A sixth coder, not involved in the initial transcribing and analysis, rated the narratives regarding the issue of key concerns and concordance levels. However, as these figures are based on judgements about lengthy interviews that frequently included multiple themes, findings should be viewed as providing an overall sense of the content of the narratives, rather than as a definitive set of findings.

⁹ Some theoretical treatments of relationship dynamics associated with violence have sought to move the emphasis away from emotional processes, with the goal of focusing on the rational and strategic bases of IPV (e.g., Boonzaier 2008). This line of theorizing has been generally useful, as the approach highlights limitations of rationalizations on the part of perpetrators that often

included the idea that their emotions have simply taken over or gotten the best of them.

However, some treatments of links between emotion and cognition have highlighted that these need not be conceptualized as oppositional forces (Lively and Heise 2004; Seeburger 1992).

Further, previous research has shown that anger is a reliable correlate and predictor of IPV for women and men (Capaldi et al., 2012).

¹⁰ We note that Mark had also cheated, highlighting that the experience of concerns related to the partner's actions are not as isolated as portrayed in this discussion and analysis.

¹¹ Consistent with this notion, prior analyses of two waves of structured responses, based on the TARS, indicate significant levels of change over time in the 'form' of IPV reported (whether mutual, female-only perpetration, male-only perpetration, or no violence (authors).

¹² Accounts such as Andrea's are relatively infrequent within the context of the couple interviews, and most often reference a prior partner. This underscores the need to include attention to this broader set of life course experiences, as well as focusing on dynamics involving the current partner. In addition to the more comprehensive span of time, the tendency of respondents to include such details about a prior partner likely reflects the instability of violent relationships as well as social desirability concerns that may limit discussion of highly negative incidents involving a current partner.

¹³ We recognize that these interview data access narrated reasons and causes, and thus reflect imperfectly on the full range of reasons and causes associated with these behavior patterns.

¹⁴ This narrative also illustrates that Don's challenging family experiences could also served as excuse or justification for unacceptable actions, as a number of scholars have previously emphasized (Anderson and Umberson 2001).

¹⁵ To a degree, the frequent mentions were prompted by interviewer questions about similarities and differences in various relationships, but these discussions nevertheless often went on to describe potentially important effects on their current relationship.

¹⁶ In a prior study focused on desistance from IPV perpetration, we found that relationship based considerations (as contrasted with, for example, fear of arrest) were often viewed as the impetus for making the kinds of changes associated with the cessation of these behaviors. Yet in a sense that study, while hopeful, was ‘putting the cart before the horse.’ And indeed the self-reports and official statistics underscore that levels of IPV remain high and may even peak during the young adult period we focused on in this couple-based investigation.

¹⁷ Based on narratives of respondents who reported other gender identities and experiences at prior waves, we would expect that some of the same areas of disagreement and dynamics we focused on here may figure into the IPV experiences of these young adult respondents.

Nevertheless additional research is needed on various imported elements (e.g., challenges of forging relationships within heterosexist normative climates), micro-level dynamics associated with conflict and conflict resolution (Cannon et al. 2015), and connections between the two.

¹⁸ While we focused primarily on the broader set of relationship dynamics that respondents linked with conflict and IPV, additional research is needed on the gendered nature of specific beliefs and contingencies that serve as underpinnings of the use of violence itself. For example, while men in the sample were well aware that violence against a female partner should be avoided, some respondents mentioned conditions that might negate the general prohibition, such as being hit in the face, in front of other people, or when a woman hits a man “like a man.”

Based on the results of this study, additional research is needed on the role of women’s use of aggressive tactics as a part of common sequences.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Full Sample and by Gender (n=904)

Dependent variable	Total		Range	Women (n=493)		Men (n=411)	
	Mean/%	SD		Mean/%		Mean/%	
Any IPV	0.22			0.22		0.23	
Present: Sources of conflict							
Concerns about men's actions	1.70	(0.78)	1-5	1.71		1.70	
Concerns about women's actions	1.54	(0.62)	1-5	1.51		1.57	
Past Experiences							
Parent's IPV	1.38	(0.79)	1-5	1.40		1.36	
Respondent Prior IPV	0.29			0.26	*	0.33	
Partner's Prior IPV	0.26			0.21	***	0.32	
Traditional gender role attitudes	2.53	(1.00)	1-5	2.23	***	2.89	
Future							
Relationship Uncertainty	2.41	(1.12)	1-5	2.35	*	2.50	
Sociodemographic characteristics							
Female	0.55			-		-	
Age	25.43	(1.83)	22-29	25.41		25.46	
Race							
White	0.68			0.68		0.68	
Black	0.21			0.21		0.21	
Hispanic	0.11			0.11		0.11	
Mother's education							
Less than high school	0.11			0.11		0.10	
High school	0.33			0.33		0.33	
Some college	0.33			0.33		0.33	
College or more	0.23			0.23		0.24	
Adult status characteristics							
Working Full Time	0.56			0.50	***	0.63	
Parent	0.45			0.49	*	0.40	
Relationship status							
Dating	0.44			0.42		0.47	
Cohabiting	0.32			0.30		0.34	
Married	0.24			0.28	**	0.19	

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

indicates significant difference between males and females * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 2. Odds Ratios for any IPV (n=904)

	Zero Order	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Present: Sources of conflict					
Concerns about men's actions	4.16 ***				3.19 ***
Concerns about women's actions	3.80 ***			3.14 ***	1.76 **
Past Experiences					
Parent's IPV	2.10 ***	1.86 ***	1.95 ***	1.91 ***	1.92 ***
Respondent Prior IPV	1.80 ***	1.56 *	1.45	1.54 ***	1.43
Partner's Prior IPV	1.89 ***	1.60 *	1.32	1.08	0.97
Traditional gender role attitudes	1.23 *	1.15	1.13	1.13	1.11
Future					
Relationship Uncertainty	1.55 ***		1.64 ***	1.27 *	1.00
Sociodemographic characteristics					
Female	0.95	0.97	0.98	1.03	0.90
Age	0.97	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.98
Race					
White	-	-	-	-	-
Black	1.82 **	1.33	1.19	1.07	0.80
Hispanic	2.09 ***	1.86 *	1.80 *	1.71 *	1.76
Mother's education					
Less than high school	1.85 **	0.89	0.89	0.87	0.80
High school	-	-	-	-	-
Some college	1.10	0.91	0.83	0.89	0.89
College or more	0.41 ***	0.61	0.56 *	0.62	0.72
Adult status characteristics					
Working Full Time	0.49 ***	0.54 ***	0.51 ***	0.53 ***	0.54 **
Parent	1.83 ***	1.04	0.88	0.81	0.73
Relationship status					
Dating	-	-	-	-	-
Cohabiting	1.79 ***	2.05 ***	2.55 ***	2.75 ***	2.45 ***
Married	0.96	1.68 *	2.58 ***	2.75 ***	2.49 **
Likelihood Ratio		125.12 ***	159.21 ***	213.48 ***	268.50 ***

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

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