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In Reply

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In reply:

In response to our manuscript,¹ Basile² and Hamburger raise the importance of using clear definitions in dating violence research. We concur that the field is comprised of multiple definitions that are in need of more clarity and consistent use,³⁻⁸ and we certainly could have been clearer in our language. However, we also find that there are emerging areas of research for which the best use of terms still have to be developed. Thus, whether or not "reciprocity" was the best term for the conceptual approach used for the analyses and findings presented in our manuscript¹ can be debated. Perhaps more significantly, the manuscript also raised other and equally important issues that we hope will help drive future research and guide violence prevention strategies, specifically for adolescents where most prevention efforts are targeted.⁹

The main objective of our brief research report¹ was to illustrate, primarily using descriptive and correlational statistics, that there was a significant association between victimization and perpetration of dating violence among adolescent boys and girls. This remains an understudied topic among adolescents, despite an emerging literature focused on adults that underscores that reciprocity is common and also more likely to lead to injuries, which has important implications for prevention.^{6,8,10-14} Our findings, corroborated by earlier research of adults, show that adolescent boys and girls who report both victimization and perpetration are also more likely to experience injuries.^{8,10}

We agree that ideally the findings we presented should pertain to specific relationships. However, given the scarcity of data available on this topic and the difficulty of studying adolescent relationships, as noted by Basile² and Hamburger, we thought it important to share these findings so that future dating violence research can be conducted with this important

aspect in mind. Even though the adolescents included in our study may have responded across multiple partners and relationships, it is informative that the data we presented replicated findings from the adult literature, which used a more specific definition of reciprocity.¹⁰ These findings raise important questions about reciprocity and the underlying processes by which reciprocity leads to greater injury, such as the escalation of violence among partners.^{8,10,11} Similarly, the findings may also suggest that the propensity for an adolescent to be a victim and perpetrator of violence is stable across the brief and unstable relationships experienced in this developmental phase. With these questions in mind, we hope that the analyses we presented will be replicated in future studies that examine issues of reciprocity within and across relationships. However, these remain important and unaddressed questions for future research.

Finally, the most important issue going forward for the field of dating violence prevention research will be to conduct large, empirical studies of representative populations that apply a true public health approach to this important topic. Our efforts should focus on how to best serve boys and girls at risk for violence and to identify those relationship contexts and circumstances that increase risk for injury. Meanwhile, we welcome suggestions for new terminology and definitions that more accurately capture the range of dating violence victimizations and perpetration that may occur across relationships, specifically for adolescents.

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