

DATING VIOLENCE PATTERNS OF CALIFORNIA ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Relationship violence victimization among adolescents is more common than generally thought and involves both females and males (Lavoie et al., 1995). As a matter of social justice and civil rights, the reduction of teen relationship violence is worthy of attention in its own right. Exposure to this type of violence places youth at a risk of negative social and emotional developmental outcomes and this makes it even more desirable to discover as much as possible about this phenomenon. The fact that victims of sexual harassment in school are more likely than victims of other types of school violence to report staying home during the past 30 days due to personal fears (Furlong et al., 2000) places this topic squarely within the purview of educators. Effective and efficient prevention and intervention strategies cannot be refined without a thorough understanding of adolescent relationship violence among diverse student populations. This study presents an analysis of adolescent dating violence experiences among a diverse sample of 4,560 students who completed the 2001 administration of the California Student Survey.

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Introduction

Relationship violence is a problem in the United States. Every year millions of individuals in relationships experience aggression and its incidence escalates from adolescents into adulthood (Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999). Most research on relationship violence has focused on spousal abuse and child abuse with less attention being given to dating relationship violence, particularly among high school students. More recently, however, studies of prevalence, correlates, and intervention programs for adolescent dating violence have increased.

Perspectives on the Causes of Relationship Violence

When trying to explain the occurrence of adolescent dating violence, three main theories are generally used: Social Learning Theory, Attachment Theory, and Feminist Theory. Social Learning Theory suggests that through observational learning individuals learn social interaction skills. Thus, a person can learn violent intimate relationship behaviors through personal experience or through witnessing violent relationships. Attachment Theory suggests that individuals form working models of interpersonal relationships based on their interactions with their significant caregivers. Securely attached children are more likely to engage in

mutually supportive adult intimate relationships, whereas individuals with inconsistent parenting experiences are more likely to form dysfunctional relationships, which may involve violence. Feminist Theory views relationship violence as being gender specific, with the male as perpetrator and female as victim. In this model, female violence is driven by self-defense responses and tends to be less harmful to the victim. This theory posits that relationship violence exists because of the traditional male-female power structure that places males in a dominant role (Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999).

Definition and Measurement

Likely due in part to differing theoretical underpinnings, some researchers continue to examine dating violence from the perspective that males are the primary perpetrators and their definitions reflect this perspective (e.g., Burky, Reuter, and Kopsky, 1988). Research, however, has found that during adolescence rates of dating violence perpetration are similar for boys and girls (Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999), or that differences are small (Bergman, 1992). Hence, a more complete definition would include both male and female patterns. One such definition is offered by Wekerle and Wolfe (1999): “Relationship violence refers to any attempt to control or dominate another person physically, sexually, or psychologically, causing some level of harm” (p. 436). It is noteworthy that this definition includes multiple types of violence: physical, sexual, and psychological. Currently, best practices in this area suggest that appropriate and comprehensive measurement should take all of these types of violence into account.

Unfortunately, limitations of available dating violence measures have been noted. In studies examining prevalence, attitudes, behaviors, correlates, and program outcomes, a variety of measures have been used, which has resulted in differing operational definitions of the adolescent dating violence construct. One exception is the Modified Conflict Tactics Scale, which has been used in several studies (e.g., Cano, Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, and O’Leary, 1998; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Sheidow, and Henry, 2001; O’Leary and Slep, 2003). This scale assesses the approach and frequency of conflict management, but it does not assess all aspects of dating violence. In addition to limited consistency of measures across studies, other issues include the fact that many scales were initially developed for use with adults and then modified for use with adolescents; hence, scales lack sufficient psychometric evidence and do not necessarily differentiate between different types of violence (Price and Byers, 1999). Furthermore, measures generally use a self-report format, which can be subject to social desirability and other types of response biases. These are particularly salient matters given the generally low base rate of youth dating violence reported in some studies.

Prevalence of Adolescent Dating Violence

Despite the measurement limitations, some studies have contributed useful information to the literature discussing dating violence. In general, prevalence studies indicate that dating violence is not uncommon during adolescence, but prevalence rates vary. This appears to result from a number of factors including: populations sampled, definitions of dating violence, what could or could not be asked based in the setting (i.e., some schools will not allow certain questions about physical and sexual violence), and specification of behaviors that are considered to constitute dating violence (e.g., some studies include “psychological abuse” and others do not). Taken as a whole, these prevalence studies indicate that both males and females are involved, as are youth from rural, suburban, and urban communities. Furthermore, although some studies indicate differences based on ethnicity and socioeconomic status, adolescent dating violence occurs in every American demographic group in which it has been studied (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, and Hannan, 2003).

Some prevalence studies have examined the incidence of dating violence by asking only about physical violence (and physical threats), but not exploring psychological/emotional or sexual violence. A study by Burky et al. (1988) reported that out of 123 high school girls in Missouri, 24 percent had been victims of physical dating violence at least once, and 14 percent had experienced it repeatedly. Malik, Sorenson, and

Aneshensel (1997) reported a higher prevalence rate with 38 percent of 707 high school students from the Los Angeles area reporting being the victim of dating violence. Both of these prevalence rates fall within the range reported by Cano et al. (1998) who found that across studies, 9 percent to 57 percent of adolescents report having had at least one experience with physical aggression in a dating relationship.

Although physical violence is of considerable interest to researchers and practitioners, information about other types of violence is also useful for prevention and intervention programs. Bergman (1992) conducted a study with 631 students from three midwestern high schools. Results indicated 32.0 percent of females and 23.5 percent of males reported experiencing some kind of dating violence; 15.7 percent of females and 7.8 percent of males reported being victims of physical violence; 15.7 percent of females and 4.4 percent of males reported experiencing sexual violence; and 7.4 percent of females and 13.2 percent of males reported verbal violence. A study conducted by Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, and Haworth (2002) with 254 male and female high school students in Philadelphia reported that about 20 percent were victims of mild aggression, whereas over 50 percent reported being the victim of emotional abuse.

Even higher rates of emotional violence were found in a study involving 373 New Zealand male and female high school students (Jackson, Cram, and Seymour, 2000). In this study, 76 percent of males and 81 percent of females reported experiencing emotional violence; 76 percent of females and 67 percent of males reported experiencing unwanted sexual activity (including hugging and kissing); and 17 percent of females and 13 percent of males reported being the victims of physical violence. Despite relatively similar levels of victimization reported by males and females, there were gender differences in the ways that the violence impacted the individuals. Significantly more females reported feeling “dirty” whereas significantly more males reported being unbothered by the unwanted sexual activity. Similarly, more females than males felt fear and anger after physical abuse. While these studies failed to find large differences in victimization as a function of gender, the U.S. Department of Justice reports that females experience much higher rates of dating violence victimization than do males at all age levels (Jezl, Molidor, and Wright, 1996; Kaiser Family Foundation and YM Magazine, 1998). Of particular relevance to this investigation, the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found essentially no gender differences in victimization rates with 9.8 percent of female high-school students and about 9.1 percent of male students saying they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002). (Note: this is the same dating violence item used in this study). In summary, prevalence differences appear to be due to methodological factors and further illustrate the need for additional research.

Correlates of Dating Violence

In addition to examining the occurrence of dating violence among high school students, it is also important to gain an understanding of factors associated with dating violence. Many studies have explored variables related to being a victim of adolescent dating violence. These factors include those that relate to past experiences (e.g., family of origin and previous experience of violence), individual conditions (e.g., personality and school achievement), emotional responses (e.g., anger, shame, and guilt), and situational factors (e.g., drug and alcohol use). See Table 1 for a summary of these associations.

Family factors are related to various types of aggression. Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Sheidow, and Henry (2001) have been examined if they are also related to dating violence. A study reported in Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) found that adolescent dating violence was, in fact, associated with negative family of origin experiences, such as abuse. Similarly, O’Leary and Slep (2003) reported that dating violence victimization was significantly associated with exposure to family of origin conflict and violence. In one study, 59 percent of junior high and high school students who had been involved in dating violence came from homes in which violence occurred (Bergman, 1992). Other family factors (aside from violence) may also be related to dating

violence, as one study found that children living with both parents reported lower levels of dating violence victimization than children from single parent families (Malik et al., 1997).

In addition to studying violence in one’s family of origin, some research has examined the co-occurrence of relationship violence with other types of aggression and violence. It has been suggested that there is a relationship between partner violence and “street violence” because they share some of the same risk factors (e.g., history of abuse and witnessing violence; Gorman-Smith et al., 2001). A longitudinal study of male adolescents at risk of violence found that of those who reported engaging in “street violence,” 55 percent also reported partner violence; however, many boys participated in only one type of violence. No significant background differences were found between partner-only versus street-only offenders, but youth who participated in both types of violence had poorer family functioning than youth who participated in only one type of violence. Although this study only considered perpetration of violence, there may be a connection with victimization as well. Another study examining the relationship between violence and other types of violence found that peer violence (e.g., fighting) was significantly correlated with dating violence perpetration and sexual aggression for boys, but not as consistently for girls (Ozer, Tschann, Pasch, and Flores, 2004). Not only are other types of aggression related to relationship violence, but also certain types of relationship violence may predict others. It has been found that psychological aggression may be one of the most powerful predictors of physical partner aggression (O’Leary and Slep, 2003).

Table 1. Variables associated with youth dating violence

Factors Associated with Dating Violence	Citation Source
Experienced family-of-origin violence (e.g., abuse)	Bergman (1992); O’Leary and Slep (2003); Wekerle and Wolfe (1999)
Growing up in a single-parent home	Malik et al. (1997)
Engaging in other violent acts	Gorman-Smith et al. (2001); Ozer et al. (2004)
Experienced past dating violence	Cano et al. (1998)
Low academic achievement	Bergman (1992); Gorman-Smith et al. (2001)
Poor interpersonal adjustment	Wekerle and Wolfe (1999)
Displaying antisocial behavior	O’Leary and Slep (2003)
Poor anger management	Feiring et al. (2002)
Engaging in arguments with boy/girlfriend	Burky et al. (1988)
Demonstrating dominance/jealousy	Cano et al. (1998)
Lacking guilt for actions	Feiring et al. (2002)
Using drugs/alcohol	Burky et al. (1988); Malik et al. (1997)

In addition to concurrent violence exposure, previous experience with violence has also been examined. It has been found that exposure to weapons and experiencing violent injury may partially explain relationship violence, particularly for boys (O’Leary and Slep, 2003). Additionally, background factors (e.g., previous dating violence experiences) may place a person at risk for future relationship violence (Cano et al., 1998). These prior risk factors may interact with current relationship factors (e.g., level of verbal conflict and relationship dissatisfaction) to increase the likelihood of aggression. An implication of this “background-situational model” is that focusing on current situational factors may provide a viable intervention strategy (O’Leary and Slep, 2003).

Personal individual factors are also related to adolescent dating violence. For example, low academic achievement has been a significant predictor in multiple studies (Bergman, 1992; Gorman-Smith et al., 2001).

Additionally, poor interpersonal adjustment, low social resources (Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999), and antisocial behavior (O'Leary and Slep, 2003) may also play a role.

Emotional and temperamental factors are also related to the occurrence of dating violence. Poor anger management is one of the most frequently cited reasons for both female and male adolescents' use of aggression in romantic relationships (Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, and Haworth, 2002). Furthermore, many incidences of physical aggression are preceded by an argument (Burky et al., 1988). In addition to deficient anger control, research suggests that jealousy is commonly cited as a precursor to violence in high school and college relationships, and that using dominance/jealousy tactics significantly contributed to classification of relationships as being aggressive or non-aggressive (Cano et al., 1998). Guilt and shame also appear to play a part. Feiring et al. (2002) found that not taking responsibility for ones' actions and having lower levels of guilt and shame are related to increased relationship aggression.

Drug and alcohol usage has been implicated in relationship aggression. Malik et al. (1997) report that alcohol use in general is associated with increased risk of being a dating violence victim. Substance use has also been implicated in specific events of violence. In their study of prevalence, Burky et al. (1988) found that drinking alcohol preceded approximately one-third of incidents of dating violence and 14 percent were preceded by drug use. In examining sexual violence, Jackson, Cram, and Seymour (2000) found that in instances of unwanted sexual activity, alcohol or drugs were involved about 25 percent of the time. These studies further emphasize an integrated pattern in which dating violence is implicated with a range of high-risk youth behaviors and typically does not occur as an isolated victimization event.

When discussing correlates of dating aggression, it is relevant to examine attitudes toward dating violence. Many prevention and intervention programs focus on conveying appropriate attitudes and accurate knowledge; however, this may not always easily translate into behavioral changes. Much of the research on dating violence among high school students examines their attitudes towards the use of violence. Although acceptance of violence is associated with higher levels of aggression (O'Leary and Slep, 2003), attitudes do not universally predict behavior. For example, although boys and girls generally express negative attitudes about dating violence, it still occurs at fairly high rates (Price and Byers, 1999). Feiring et al. (2002) found no strong associations between aggressive behaviors and attitudes; however, they reported that the correlation between perpetrating violence and dysfunctional sexual attitudes was stronger for boys than girls.

Perpetration of Dating Violence

Although developing a better understanding of dating violence victimization is vital, understanding violence perpetration is also necessary for implementing appropriate prevention programs. Research has found higher rates of dating violence perpetration of any type by females than males, but males generally perpetrate more severe types of violence; however, some of these results may be due to gender differences in reporting (Malik et al., 1997). In their study of 37 students in an alternative high school program, James, West, Deters, and Armijo (2000) found that males and females perpetrated psychological abuse at about the same rate, but males were more likely to perpetrate severe physical violence. There also may be overlap between victimization and perpetration. Malik et al. (1997) found that out of 707 students from five Los Angeles area high schools, 39 percent reported perpetrating violence and 38 percent reporting being a victim. Within these percentages, perpetration among girls was higher than boys and the authors concluded that victimization and perpetration tended to co-occur. Additionally, they found that older adolescents reported higher levels of perpetration (and victimization) than younger adolescents. Feiring et al. (2002) also found that higher levels of mild aggression were perpetrated by girls in a sample of 254 high school students in Philadelphia. However, the current state of knowledge co-occurrence of dating violence perpetration and victimization requires additional research.

The Current Study

Despite the information that has already been gathered regarding the incidence and correlates of dating violence, clearly more work needs to be done. Although some of the previous prevalence studies had samples including hundreds of students, there are few large-scale prevalence studies with representative samples. (The study conducted by Ackard et al. (2003) utilized a large nationally representative sample and the YRBS now includes a dating violence victimization item.) In addition, given the apparent linkages among dating violence, other forms of violence, and high-risk youth behaviors, research is needed to explore these relationships in greater depth, particularly as they pertain to school-associated behavior. The current study aims to address this need by utilizing a large sample of students that represent California's secondary school population. Using information gathered as part of the biennial 2001 California Student Survey (see www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/244) provides an opportunity to explore the incidence and pervasiveness of dating violence among California's youth and to gain more detailed information about the school correlates of this experience. It also provides a unique opportunity to explore the relationships between dating violence and the experience of other types of violent victimization at school.

Method

Sample

Participants are a subset of students who completed the California Student Survey (CSS), a statewide survey administered to a representative sample of students in the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades. Students who completed the CSS were included in these analyses based on the following criteria:

- included in the final dataset and were not screened out because of problematic responses;
- provided responses to demographic questions regarding their gender, grade level, and ethnicity;
- responded to the dating violence victimization item with a positive or negative response, indicating that they were in a relationship and therefore the question was relevant; and
- provided a response to an item that asked about other victimization experiences at school.

Participants who did not meet all of these criteria were excluded from analyses.

Using a random stratified sample of youth in the state of California, data were gathered from 8,238 students. Records were screened from the dataset if they had a combination of responses that indicated inconsistencies, exaggerated drug use, the endorsement of a fictitious drug, or particular responses to an item that asked about their honesty when responding to the survey. Each of these problematic responses was assigned a point and students who received more than 3 points were eliminated from the file. Based on these criteria, 79 students were screened from the original dataset. In addition to these records, students were excluded when they did not meet the criteria outlined above (responded to all relevant demographic questions, responded that to the dating violence question that they were in a current relationship, and answered the other school victimization question). The final sample included in these analyses consisted of 4,560 students.

Approximately equal numbers of students in each of the three grades were included in the sample (32.3 percent 7th graders, 31.2 percent 9th graders, 36.5 percent 11th graders), and there were slightly more females than males in the sample (54.3 percent female). The ethnicity of students in the sample indicated that the majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian or Hispanic/Latino (33.8 percent Caucasian, 31.0 percent Hispanic or Latino/a, 6.9 percent Asian, 6.3 percent Black or African American, 1.7 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.0 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 19.4 percent Other). Although participants were permitted to identify more than one ethnic group, for the purposes of this analysis, they were assigned to only one. Participants who indicated a specific ethnic group and "Other" were

assigned to the specific ethnic group. Those who indicated Caucasian and another ethnic group were assigned to the ethnic group they endorsed. The remaining students who endorsed more than one ethnicity were placed in the “Other” group.

Measurement

The 9th (2001-2002) California Student Survey (CSS) was used in this analysis. (Information about the California Student Survey is available from the Office of the California Attorney General (www.ag.ca.gov and <http://safestate.org/index.cfm?navID=254>) and WestEd (<http://www.wested.org/hks>). The CSS is used as part of California’s efforts to monitor, understand, and prevent adolescent use of risk behaviors and promote their well-being. Since 1991, the California Attorney General’s Office has conducted a biennial survey of alcohol and other drug use to monitor statewide trends. The Departments of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) and Education (CDE) collaborate with the Attorney General to implement the CSS. Over time, the content of the CSS has expanded to include assessment of other risk or health behaviors such as youth violence, exposure to prevention programs, and the effectiveness of mentoring. The 2001-2002 administration (data collected between November 2001 and February 2002 involving 113 secondary schools), for the first time, asked about students’ experiences related to dating violence. For this analysis items pertaining to dating violence, school and non-school risk behaviors, and resilience were used (a listing of the [specific items are available from the authors upon request or posted at www.education.ucsb.edu/school-psychology](http://www.education.ucsb.edu/school-psychology)). The high school version of the CSS is available in English and Spanish.

One item in the California Student Survey (CSS) specifically asks about dating violence: Have you “been hit, slapped, or physically hurt by your boyfriend/girlfriend on purpose?” Respondents can reply “yes,” “no,” or “Does not apply; no boy/girl friend in past year.” This item is identical to one used in the YRBS. Students who indicated that they were not in a relationship were excluded from this analysis because they were not in social contexts that exposed them to potential dating violence.

Procedure

The CSS was administered following the same methods as previous CSS administrations. Participation by schools and students was voluntary and positive parental consent was required. WestEd staff under conditions of strict confidentiality and anonymity administered the CSS.

Results

Which students report dating violence victimization?

Overall, 9.7 percent of the students in a dating relationship reported that they had experienced physical dating violence within the past year (nearly identical to the YRBS results). Of these students, proportionately there were slightly more males (10.5 percent) than females (9.0 percent). Victimization rates across socio-cultural groups were also comparable with African Americans (10.8 percent) having slightly higher rates than Whites (10.1 percent), Latino/as (9.2 percent), and Asians (7.7 percent). Finally, victimization rates increased across the 7th (8.4 percent), 9th (9.6 percent), and 11th (10.9 percent) grades.

What are the correlates of dating violence victimization?

As a preliminary examination, we compared the responses of dating violence victims and non-victims across a range of risk behaviors and experiences (substance use, school victimization, critical behaviors/experiences, and harassment) and social and personal supports (school-adult relationships and personal/social/school assets). Given the number of victims in the sample and the generally comparable victimization rates across

demographic variables, all students were combined into victim or non-victim groups. (A table with detailed responses is available from the authors or online at www.education.ucsb.edu/school-psychology.)

Substance use (past month)

Victims had significantly higher rates of use across all substances, with past month alcohol use being the most commonly used substance (50.6 percent vs. 33.3 percent). Tobacco use (cigarette smoking: 31.3 percent vs. 18.4 percent; and smokeless: 8.4 percent vs. 1.9 percent) showed the greatest difference between victims and non-victims.

School victimization experiences (past 12 months)

We were particularly interested to examine school violence experiences to gain a better understanding of the pervasiveness of victimization. For both the victims and non-victims the two most common victimization experiences at school involved sexual jokes, comments, or gestures and mean rumors or lies. However, about 3 in 5 victims reported these experiences compared with about 1 in 2 non-victims. In addition to sexual jokes and comments, physical fighting (49.3 percent vs. 25.4 percent) and being threatened with a weapon (28.0 percent vs. 8.5 percent) showed the greatest difference between victims and non-victims.

Harassed on school property

Compared to the other school victimization experiences, harassment occurred at much lower rates. Harassment due to race, ethnicity, or national origin was the most common experience for both victims and non-victims (25.1 percent vs. 12.0 percent). The experiences that most strongly differentiated victims from non-victims were being teased because of a disability (14.9 percent vs. 3.3 percent) and sexual orientation comments (21.0 percent vs. 6.7 percent).

Critical experiences and behaviors

The pattern of exposure to critical, high-concern experiences and behaviors were identical for both victims and non-victims, with again victims showing significantly higher rates on all items. Past year feelings of sadness and depression (for at least two weeks) is unfortunately reported by about 1 in 3 non-victims, however, nearly 2 in 3 victims reported depressive symptoms. In addition to markedly higher rates of depressive symptoms, victims were particularly more likely to report that they had sold drugs (26.7 percent vs. 9.8 percent) or carried a gun to school (11.9 percent vs. 2.6 percent).

School adult resources

We also particularly wanted to better understand how victims perceived their access to sources of school adult supportive relationships. As with many of the risk experiences and behaviors, the pattern of adult resources had nearly the same order for victims and non-victims; however, the victims now reported significantly lower rates of access to supportive adults at school. About 2 in 5 victims reported that there was an adult at school that cared about them compared to about 1 in 2 non-victims (37.8 percent vs. 53.3 percent).

Personal, social, and school assets

Across both victims and non-victims, students were more likely to report that they had positive internal personal assets (e.g., empathy for others; 62.5 percent vs. 69.6 percent), followed by access to social and family supports (e.g., helping to make family decisions; 46.8 percent vs. 59.9 percent), with access of school resources (e.g., doing things at school that make a difference; 21.8 percent vs. 25.5 percent) being the lowest.

Discussion

The results of this investigation into the dating violence experiences of California's adolescents revealed that victims present a strong, consistent pattern of exposure to and participation in a broad range of high-risk behaviors. The rate of reported dating violence in this stratified, random sample of 7th, 9th, and 11th graders in

(9.7 percent) was nearly identical to that derived from the 2001 administration of the YRBS (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002), which used the same item. This suggests that there does not appear to be anything unusual about this California sample when compared to other national samples.

The most important finding was that compared to their non-victim dating peers, victims were significantly more likely to also report higher level of substance use, exposure to school violence victimization/harassment, and very high-risk behaviors, such as exposure to weapons. This pattern is consistent with previous research showing that adolescent dating violence victims represent a very high-risk group who have multiple, pervasive needs (e.g., Coker, McKeown, Sanderson, Davis, Valois, and Huebner, 2000; Gorman-Smith et al., 2001; O'Leary and Slep, 2003; Ozer et al., 2004). When this pattern of multiple risk factors is considered against the general backdrop of the incidence of these risk behaviors and experiences among all youth, several behaviors stand out. As found in previous studies these youths showed higher rates of substance use (e.g., Malik et al., 1997), exposure to other types of violence and weapon possession (Cano et al., 1998; Pellegrini, 2001), and poor social-emotional adjustment (Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer, 2002; Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999).

It was of interest to learn that the personal, social, and school assets that might buffer the negative effects of victimization were present for many victims. However, they were significantly lower among victims than for their non-victim peers. This finding points to the need to better understand the role of risk and protective factors in the lives of dating violence victims:

- Were they more vulnerable to victimization because of fewer available assets?
- Where their assets diminished as part of the victimization experiences (e.g., being more isolated from family or peer supports)?
- Are both true?

Future research will need to develop a clearer picture of developmental forces and trends.

The results of this study also suggest that the experiences of these victims might be an exaggeration of general adolescent experiences because the rank ordering of the incidence of the risk behaviors were generally comparable for victims and non-victims. Victims' problems appear to be quantitative exaggerations of youth experiences, not, at least given the variables available, qualitatively different problems; however, the sheer number of risks experienced by the victims shows that they are a particularly vulnerable group. In addition, of particular interest is that victims of dating violence also reported more frequent school associated risk experiences.

Finally, these findings are limited, of course, to physical victimization and future research should continue to examine other non-physical forms of excessive control in adolescent dating relationships (Foshee, 1996). In addition, we need to point out that this analysis grouped all victims together, but certainly future research should look for patterns or subtypes of victimization.

Conclusion

One can certainly imagine how stressful it is for a student to experience dating violence knowing that the following day they may have to sit in class with the perpetrator. As schools recognize this problem and implement dating violence prevention and support programs, it will be important to assess carefully the utility and efficacy of these prevention programs (Smith and Donnelly, 2001). To achieve this goal, they should include multiple assessment points and follow-up, and include both quantitative and qualitative measures. Emotional and other consequences of dating violence should be measured, and it is essential that outcome measures ensure as best as possible that the meaning of each item is unambiguous (Wekerle and

Wolfe, 1999). The results of this investigation show that adolescent victims of dating violence also report pervasive involvement in various types of high-risk experiences and behaviors and they have less access to personal, social, and school assets/resources. This is not a hopeful combination and should motivate schools and communities to consider the dating experiences of students and to develop resources to support violence victims. Given the complex web of behaviors associated with dating violence, future studies should focus more on the sequence of adolescent risk behaviors in order to better understand if dating violence is one of a set of possible negative developmental outcomes associated with exposure to other high-risk behaviors or if dating violence itself precipitates victimization in other non-dating contexts.

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