

# RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR DATING VIOLENCE

Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project

Linda Chamberlain PhD MPH

## I. BACKGROUND

The references provided below were identified in by conducting searches for dating violence in two databases: Pub Med and Academic Premier for studies published between 2007 and July, 2010. Some special topic searches, such as bullying and dating violence/domestic violence and prevention were also conducted. The Alaska Family Violence Prevention Project (contact Jo Gottschalk; [jo.gottschalk@alaska.gov](mailto:jo.gottschalk@alaska.gov) can obtain any of these publications for you upon request).

## II. CONNECTION BETWEEN BULLYING, PEER VIOLENCE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND DATING VIOLENCE

According to data from a randomized controlled trial with 1734 Canadian high school students, **students (male and female) who experienced sexual harassment victimization in the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to report physical dating violence victimization 2.5 years later** (at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade). Boys who were sexually harassed were twice as likely (adjusted odds ratio = 2.02) to report physical dating violence victimization; girls who were sexually harassed were more than 3 times more likely (adjusted odds ratio = 3.73) to report physical dating violence victimization. (*Chiodo D, Wolfe DA, Crooks C, Hughes R & Jaffe P. Impact of sexual harassment victimization by peers on subsequent adolescent victimization and adjustment: A longitudinal study. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2009;45:246-252.*)

This study is with a subsample (N=1279) of 9<sup>th</sup> grade Canadian students that were part of a larger randomized, controlled trial to evaluate a school-based prevention program, the 4<sup>th</sup> R. **Peer victimization and dating victimization were moderately correlated**; peer and dating relational aggression perpetration were also correlated. Girls who used high levels of dating aggression were at risk for increased delinquency when they also reported perpetrating high levels of peer aggression. (*Ellis WE, Crooks V, Wolfe DA. Relational aggression in peer and dating relationships: links to psychological and behavioral adjustment. Social Development. 2009;18(2):253-269*)

The following longitudinal data are from the Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study which involves a household-based, stratified random sample of children and care-givers in low income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio. In this study, **being involved with antisocial peers at ages 10-15 years and increasing that involvement through adolescence increased perpetration of dating violence in late adolescence for females, males, African-American females and Hispanic males.**

Antisocial peers were defined as friends who had taken part in delinquent activities like stealing, doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and carrying a weapon. (*Schnurr MP & Lohman*

*BJ. How much does school matter? An examination of adolescent dating violence perpetration. Journal of Youth and Adolescence. 2008;37:266-283.)*

Cluster analysis was conducted with a sample of students (7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades; N=1653) in a high risk school district who reported that they were dating and disclosed perpetration of at least one form of physical violence or psychological abuse in a dating relationship in the past year. **Victimization and perpetration with same-sex peers and dating partners clustered together** among students who reported the highest levels of psychologically abusive or physically violent behavior. This was true for boys and girls. The authors noted that the results highlight the potential and importance of violence prevention efforts that address both dating and same-sex peer violence. (*Bossarte RM, Simon TR & Swahn MH. Clustering of adolescent dating violence, peer violence, and suicidal behavior. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2008;23(6):815-833.*)

Cross-sectional survey data from the 2004 Youth Violence Survey was analyzed to examine the associations between different forms of violence behavior among students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who had dated in the past year (high-risk, urban school district; N=2888). Students who reported perpetrating physical dating violence were more than 12 times more likely (adjusted odds ratio = 12.12) to report physical dating violence victimization compared to students who did not disclose dating violence perpetration. **Students who reported that they had perpetrated physical dating violence were nearly five times more likely (adjusted odds ratio = 4.90; adjusted for sex, grade, and race/ethnicity) to report perpetrating physical peer violence.** The intersection between involvement in dating and peer violence was consistent for boys and girls. (*Swahn MH, Simon TR, Hertz MF, Arias I, Bossarte RM, Ross JG, Gross LA, Iachan R, Hamburger ME. Linking dating violence, peer violence, and suicidal behaviors among high-risk youth. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 2008;34(1):30-38.*)

In a cross-sectional study with 369 **middle school** and 315 high school youth, bully-victims (students who were both bullied and bullied others) reported significantly more physical dating violence victimization compared to three other bullying subtypes: uninvolved, victims and bullies; they also experienced more emotional abuse compared to uninvolved students and victims. Bully-victims also reported the highest rates of sexual harassment victimization by peers compared to all other groups. (*Espelage DL & Holt MK. Dating violence & sexual harassment across the bully-victim continuum among middle and high school students. Journal of Youth and Adolescence. 2007;36:799-811*)

### **III. RISK FACTORS**

#### **Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco Use**

A cross-sectional survey was administered to a small convenience sample of middle school Latino youth (149 boys and 167 girls), 11 to 13 years of age. In multivariate

analyses, binge drinking was associated with more than a 10-fold increased risk of physical dating violence victimization in the past 12 months among girls. Alcohol use (at least one drink in the past year) was associated with physical dating violence victimization among boys. (Yan FA, Howard DE, Beck KH, Shattuck T & Hallmark-Kerr M. *Psychosocial correlates of physical dating violence victimization among Latino early adolescents. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2010;25(5):808-831.*)

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with all students in 7<sup>th</sup> (n=1491), 9<sup>th</sup> (n=1117) and 11/12<sup>th</sup> (n=1523) grades in a school district in a high risk community. Preteen alcohol use initiation before 13 years of age was significantly associated with physical dating violence perpetration and victimization in the past 12 months for boys and girls. The association between early alcohol use initiation and dating violence victimization (not perpetration) remained significant after adjusting for peer delinquency characteristics, parental monitoring, and other confounders in the analyses. (Swahn MH, Bossarte RM & Sullivent EE. *Age of alcohol use initiation, suicidal behavior, and peer and dating violence victimization and perpetration among high-risk, seventh-grade adolescents. Pediatrics. 2008;121:297-305.*)

These findings are from a cross-sectional study with a random sample of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students (n=2090; White: 61.1%; Black: 30.0%). In multivariate analyses, the following two risk behaviors were associated with girls perpetrating physical dating violence perpetration in the past 12 months: **cigarette use and drinking and driving**. Tobacco used was associated with dating violence perpetration by males. **Riding with a drinking driver** was associated with physical dating violence victimization for boys and girls. (Champion H, Foley KL, Sigmon-Smith K, Sutfin EL & DuRant RH. *Contextual factors and health risk behaviors associated with date fighting among high school students. Women & Health. 2008;47(3):1-22.*)

In this longitudinal study with 522 African American females (aged 14-18 years), girls who experienced physical or verbal dating violence by a boyfriend were 2.0 times more likely to report **using drugs** at one-year follow-up. Drug used was defined as having used at least one of the following six drugs in the past 30 days: tranquilizers, marijuana, amphetamines, LSD, cocaine, or crack. (Raiford JL, Wingood GM & DiClemente RJ. *Prevalence, incidence, and predictors of dating violence: a longitudinal study of African American female adolescents. Journal of Women's Health. 2007;16(6):822-832.*)

### **Community and Crime**

These findings are from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (grades 7-12) which had follow-up interviews 18 months after the baseline interview and then follow-up interviews in early adulthood. **Violent crime exposure** (seeing someone shot or stabbed) was positively associated with adolescent physical dating violence victimization. Among adolescent dating violence victims, those who witnessed violent crime were more like than those who did not to continue involvement in violent relationships into early adulthood (32% overall 6-year continuation prevalence.) (Spriggs

*AL, Halpern CT, & Martin SL. Continuity of adolescent and early adult partner violence victimization: association with witnessing violent crime in adolescence. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. 2009;63:741-748.)*

These findings are from a cross-sectional study with a random sample of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students (n=2090; White: 61.1%; Black: 30.0%). In multivariate analyses, youth's perception of **greater neighborhood organization was a protective factor** for physical dating violence perpetration in the past 12 months for both boys and girls. (*Champion H, Foley KL, Sigmon-Smith K, Sutfin EL & DuRant RH. Contextual factors and health risk behaviors associated with date fighting among high school students. Women's Health. 2008;47(3):1-22.*)

### **Fighting and Gun Carrying**

A cross-sectional survey was administered to a small convenience sample of middle school Latino youth (149 boys and 167 girls), 11 to 13 years of age. In multivariate analyses, carrying a gun or another weapon was associated with physical dating violence victimization among boys. (*Yan FA, Howard DE, Beck KH, Shattuck T, Hallmark-Kerr M. Psychosocial correlates of physical dating violence victimization among Latino early adolescents. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2010;25(5):808-831.*)

According to data from the 2005 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **boys** who reported gun carrying (odds ratio=1.80) were more likely to report physical dating violence victimization. (*Howard DE, Wang MQ & Yan F. Psychosocial factors associated with reports of physical dating violence victimization among U.S. adolescent males. Adolescence. 2008;43(171):449-460.*)

### **Lifetime Exposure to Violence**

In a cross-sectional survey with 136,549 students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who responded to the 2007 Minnesota Survey, each type of childhood exposure to violence (physical abuse by household adult, sexual abuse by family member, sex abuse by non-family member, and witnessing physical abuse by a family member on another family member) was associated with an increased risk of adolescent interpersonal violence perpetration including dating violence (threats of harm, physically or sexually hurting someone they are going out with) for boys and girls (*Duke NN, Pettingell SL, McMorris BJ & Borowsky IW. Adolescent violence perpetration: associations with multiple types of adverse childhood experiences. Pediatrics. 2010;125:e77-e786.*)

In a cohort study with 929 girls that begin in kindergarten and did annual follow-ups until the age of 12 and again at age 15, nearly half (46.7%) of the teenage girls who disclosed a history of **childhood sexual abuse** also reported experiencing at least one form of dating violence victimization (physical, sexual, or psychological) compared to a quarter (25.2%) of girls without a history of sexual abuse. (*Hebert M, Lavoie F, Vitaro F, McDuff P &*

*Tremblay RE. Association of child sexual abuse and dating victimization with mental health disorder in a sample of adolescent girls. Journal of Traumatic Stress. 2008;21(2):181-189.)*

## **Mental Health**

Cross-sectional survey data from the 2004 Youth Violence Survey was analyzed to examine the associations between dating violence, peer violence, and suicide among students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who had dated in the past year (high-risk, urban school district; N=2888). Involvement in any physical violence victimization or perpetration in dating relationships or with peers increased the **odds of attempting suicide** compared to students who did not report peer or dating violence. The intersection between involvement in dating and peer violence was consistent for boys and girls. *(Swahn MH, Simon TR, Hertz MF, Arias I, Bossarte RM, Gross LA, Iachan R, Hamburger ME. Linking dating violence, peer violence, and suicide behaviors among high-risk youth. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 2008;34(1):30-38.)*

In a national telephone interview survey (2005 National Survey of Adolescents; N=3,614) of ethnically diverse youths, ages 12-17 years, **symptoms of PTSD** were associated with an increased risk of serious dating violence victimization (physical assault in which participant was badly injured or beaten up and/or threatened with a weapon, sexual assault, and/or drug/alcohol-facilitated rape) for both genders after adjusting for demographic variables, other traumatic stressors, and stressful events. Having experienced a previous or recent stress life event was also associated with an increased risk of having been a victim of serious dating violence for boys and girls. Stressful life events included parental divorce or separation. *(Wolitzky-Taylor KB, Ruggiero KJ, Danielson DK, Resnick HS, Hanson RF, Smith DW, Saunders BE, Kilpatrick DG. Prevalence and correlates of dating violence in a national sample of adolescents. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. 2008;47(7):755-762.)*

According to data from the 2005 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **boys** who reported **sad/hopeless feelings** were nearly two and half times more likely (OR=2.42) to experience physical dating violence victimization. *(Howard DE, Wang MQ & Yan F. Psychosocial factors associated with reports of physical dating violence victimization among U.S. adolescent males. Adolescence. 2008;43(171):449-460).*

## **Sexual Experiences and Risk Behaviors**

**Initial sexual experience at age 13 or earlier and unwillingness of initial sexual experience** were the strongest predictors of dating violence in a cohort intervention study with 590, predominantly Hispanic adolescent girls (average age 15) in the juvenile justice system. *(Kelly, Cheng, Peralez-Dieckmann & Martinez E. Dating violence and girls in the juvenile justice system. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2009;24(9):1536-1551.)*

In a cross-sectional survey with 196 Canadian girls (ages 12-18) in the care of child protective services, **the age of first sexual relationship, number of sex partners, and having been pregnant** were related to having experienced severe physical dating victimization. Having been pregnant increased the odds of severe physical abuse by a dating partner more than threefold (3.60). Dating violence was measured with the Conflict Tactics Scale and severe physical violence as defined as “My dating partner kicked, bit or hit me” and “My partner punched or hit me with something that could hurt.” (Manseau H, Fernet M, Hebert M, Collin-Vezina D & Blais M. *Risk factors for dating violence among teenage girls under child protective services. International Journal of Social Welfare. 2008;17:236-242*).

According to data from the 2005 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **high school age boys** who had **unprotected sexual intercourse** (odds ratio=1.81) were more likely to report physical dating violence victimization (Howard DE, Wang MQ & Yan F. *Psychosocial factors associated with reports of physical dating violence victimization among U.S. adolescent males. Adolescence. 2008;43(171):449-460*.)

#### **IV. FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS**

A cross-sectional survey was administered to a small convenience sample of middle school Latino youth (149 boys and 167 girls; 27.6% 6<sup>th</sup> graders; 32.6% 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and 29.4% 8<sup>th</sup> graders), 11 to 13 years of age. In bivariate analyses, parental monitoring, family connectedness, and parental academic encouragement were protective factors for girls experiencing physical dating violence victimization. Only family connectedness was protective for boys experiencing physical dating violence victimization in the bivariate analyses. However, none of the parental protective factors were linked to the odds of being a victim of physical dating violence in multivariate analyses in this study with a relatively small study population. The authors noted that the lack of evidence that parental factors uniquely affected the likelihood of victimization based on multivariate analyses may be that its effect is mediated by peer relationships and/or school engagement which were not examined in this study. (Yan FA, Howard DE, Beck KH, Shattuck T & Hallmark-Kerr M. *Psychosocial correlates of physical dating violence among Latino early adolescents. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2010;25(5):808-831*).

#### **V. SCHOOLS/ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In a cross-sectional survey with a stratified, multi-stage sampling of Jewish and Arab Moslem junior high and high school students in Israel (n=1357), **academic achievement in the preceding year was protective** for physical and emotional dating violence victimization among Jewish students, particularly females. (Sherer M. *The nature and correlates of dating violence among Jewish and Arab Youths in Israel. Journal of Family Violence. 2009;24:11-26*).

In a cohort intervention study, predominantly Hispanic adolescent girls (average age 15;N=590) in the juvenile justice system, **school attendance** was negatively correlated with dating violence (poor school attendance was associated with an increased risk of dating violence). The negative correlation between dating violence and school attendance was limited to bivariate analyses. . (Kelly, Cheng, Peralez-Dieckmann & Martinez E. *Dating violence and girls in the juvenile justice system. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2009;24(9):1536-1551.* )

According to bivariate analyses of the data from the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey for San Francisco (n=2419) and Los Angeles (n=1228), high school girls who were victims of physical dating violence in the past 12 months were more than twice as likely **not to attend school** due to feeling unsafe at school or on the way to or from school on one or more occasions in the past 30 days compared to nonabused girls (20% versus 8%). (Davis, A. *Interpersonal and physical dating violence among teens. Focus: Views from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. September, 2008. Available at vawnet.org*)

Analysis of longitudinal data from the Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study (Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio), indicated an association between **academic difficulties in early adolescence** (10-15 years old) and higher rates of dating violence perpetration six years later for Hispanic males (this association was not found for African American boys or girls). Dating violence perpetration was measured with the Conflict Tactics Scale. (Schnurr MP & Lohman BJ. *How much does school matter? An examination of adolescent dating violence perpetration. Journal of Youth and Adolescence. 2008;37:266-283*).

Based on data from the national, cross-sectional Youth Risk Behavioral Survey of high school students, physical dating violence victimization in the past 12 months was more prevalent among female students who earned “**mostly Cs**” compared to female students who earned “mostly As.” . (Kelly, Cheng, Peralez-Dieckmann & Martinez. *Dating violence and girls in the juvenile justice system. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2009;24(9):1536-1551.* )

## VI. PREVENTION

Twelve focus groups (ethnically diverse; segmented by sex and grade level) were conducted with **middle school age students** (11-14 years old) in the Atlanta area. Focus group participants described **healthy tween relationships** as following some form of gender role conformity; examples included that boys should provide material support or gifts while girls are expected to provide social/emotional support. They distinguished dating relationships from friendship by gender restrictions on behavior—for example, boys are nicer to a dating partner compared to others and girls should restrain their

appetite for food and loud expression when they are with their boyfriends. Themes that emerged relative to prevention included:

- Building skills to promote problem solving and bystander behavior particularly during the middle school years when dating is just
- The need to tailor efforts to age, race/ethnicity, and gender due to how dating violence was perceived differently by these factors
- Creating appropriate messengers such as peer educators; most youth rejected the option of approaching teachers, parents or counselors for help

*(Noonon RK, Charles D. Developing teen dating violence prevention strategies: formative research with middle school youth. Violence Against Women. 2009;15:1087-1105).*

The 4th R, a 21-lesson, **school-based curriculum that addresses healthy relationships, sexual health, and substance abuse**, was evaluated with 1722 Canadian 9th grade students in a cluster randomized trial. At 2.5 years follow-up (end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade), the prevalence of physical dating violence perpetration was higher in controls versus intervention students (9.8% vs. 7.4%). Sex by group analyses revealed that 3% of boys in the intervention group reported physical dating violence perpetration compared to 7% of boys in the control group; however, the intervention had no effect on girls. Physical dating violence was measured with the Adolescent Dating Relationship Inventory. Boys who received the curriculum were also more likely to use condoms than boys in the control group. The cost of the program averaged \$16 (Canadian) per student. *(Wolfe DA, Crooks C, Jaffe P, Chiodo D, Hughes R, Ellis W, Stitt L, Donner A. A school-based program to prevent adolescent dating violence: a cluster randomized trial. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. 2009;163(8):692-699).*

The effectiveness of a high school marriage education curriculum (“Connections: Relationships and Marriages”) designed to **teach students about healthy relationships and marriage** was evaluated with a small sample (n=72) of predominantly female (80.6%) high school students in a nonrandomized, longitudinal study with a control group. While most of the immediate effects of the curriculum (attitudes, communication skills etc.) faded within 4 years of follow-up, students who received the curriculum reported a reduction in using physical or verbal aggression to resolve a conflict in a dating relationship, an increase in self-esteem, and an increase in family cohesion over the 4-year follow-up period. The study findings are based on the 1-year and 4-year follow-up questionnaires which had a very low response rate (20%). Physical and verbal aggression were measured with the Conflict Tactics Scales. *(Gardner SP & Boellaard R. Does Youth relationship education continue to work after a high school class? A longitudinal study. Family Relations. 2007;56:490-500.)*

An evaluation of **Break the Cycle’s Ending Violence curriculum** with Latino youth indicated improved knowledge, less acceptance of female-on-male aggression, and

enhanced perception of the helpfulness and likelihood of seeking assistance from a number of sources immediately after the program. Improved knowledge and perceived helpfulness from an attorney were maintained 6 months later but there were no differences in recent dating violence victimization or perpetration (*Jaycox LH, McCaffrey D, Eisenman B, Aronoff J, Shelley GA, Collins RL, Marshall GN. Impact of a school-based dating violence prevention program among Latino Teens: randomized controlled effectiveness trial. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2006;39(5):694-704.*

A randomized clinical trial design was used to evaluate five waves of data from the **Safe Dates** Project. Results indicated reductions in psychological, moderate physical, and sexual dating violence perpetration and moderate physical dating violence victimization. Marginal effects were found for sexual victimization (*Foshee VA, Bauman KE, Ennett St, Suchindran C, Benefield T, Linder GF. Assessing the effects of the dating violence prevention program “safe dates” using random coefficient regression modeling. Prevention Science. 2005;6(3):245-258.*