

Predictors of Dating Violence Perpetration among Adolescents

The intergenerational transmission of violence is supported by a vast literature base, however, research shows that predictors of dating violence perpetration during adolescence includes more than their exposure to parental violence. Not only does parental violence influence the adolescents' likelihood to perpetrate violence in a dating relationship, but other traits of the adolescent and their family will negate or exacerbate this relationship. The aim of the present study was to fill the gap in current research by considering individual and family factors that are related to adolescent dating violence perpetration. Individual traits assessed include: age, gender, race, child abuse, academic achievement, drug and alcohol use, mental health problems, and externalizing behavior problems. Family characteristics assessed are: parental violence, parental monitoring and mother-child relationships.

Sample & Procedure

Data come from the three waves of the *Three-City Study* which is a household-based-stratified-random-sample longitudinal survey administered to nearly 2400 low-income mothers and their children in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio. The third wave of data collection began in February 2005 and will continue through September 2005, following the 2000 families from Wave 2, 2001. So far 1376 families have been interviewed in Wave 3 (W3). The sample is predominately Black and Hispanic (>89%), have incomes 200% or less of the poverty line and had a child between 0 and 4 years or 10 and 14 years in Wave 1, 1999 and who are now 16 to 20 years old. Data on the 442 adolescents that have been interviewed thus far in Wave 3 are utilized (Mean Age = 17.6).

Measurement. Similar to Waves 1 and 2, mothers participated in 2-hour, in-person interviews covering topics such as family demographics, child well-being, and family functioning, including

domestic violence. Adolescents also participated in 30-minute, in-person interviews where they were asked the same questions as in the first two waves. Unique to W3, adolescents were also asked about romantic relationships, including the key variable of interest in these analyses, dating violence perpetration.

Results & Discussion

A t-test was performed to identify differences in levels of perpetration by gender. It was found that girls ($M=1.41$) perpetrate more violence than boys ($M=.42$; $t=8.063^{***}$). Next, a regression was run to identify individual and family level predictors of perpetration. In these models, scores for the individual and family level predictors were averaged between the first two waves of data. The final model shows that parental violence, adolescents' gender, drug and alcohol use, academic achievement, and parental monitoring were significant in predicting adolescents' dating violence perpetration (See Table). When the regression was run separately for each gender, the results showed that females' perpetration only was influenced by mothers' exposure to domestic violence, disrupted family life, and academic achievement. Externalizing behaviors was related to perpetration but for boys only, whereas drug and alcohol use, parental monitoring and stability of mom's marriage were predictors for both boys and girls. Future analyses will consider community factors such as association with anti-social peers and community and school violence.

Table 1 Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting Dating Violence Perpetration from Individual and Family Level Characteristics

| | Total Sample (N=442) | | | | Female Adolescents (N=248) | | | Male Adolescents (N=194) | | |
|--|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Parental Violence ^A | .11* | .19*** | .17** | .17** | .15* | .13* | .14* | .07 | .06 | .06 |
| <i>Controls</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male Adolescent ^B | -.31*** | -.27*** | -.27*** | -.28*** | | | | | | |
| Adolescent Age in Years, Wave 3 | .03 | .03 | -.04 | -.05 | .01 | -.07 | -.07 | .09 | .01 | -.01 |
| White Adolescent ^B | .08+ | .08+ | .04 | .05 | .08 | .02 | .03 | .11 | .06 | .07 |
| African American Adolescent ^B | .11* | .11* | .09* | .09* | .08 | .08 | .07 | .15+ | .08 | .09 |
| Income-to-needs ^A | .01 | .01 | .02 | .01 | .05 | .05 | .05 | -.06 | -.04 | -.06 |
| Stably Married ^B | -.02 | -.02 | .01 | -.01 | -.15+ | -.12 | -.14+ | .18* | .19* | .20* |
| Stably Single ^B | -.06 | -.06 | -.04 | -.04 | -.18* | -.15+ | -.14+ | .12 | .12 | .12 |
| <i>Interaction</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Parental Violence by Adolescent Gender Interaction | | -.12+ | -.11+ | -.11+ | | | | | | |
| <i>Adolescent Characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Externalizing Behavior Problems ^A | | | .06 | .05 | | .01 | -.01 | | .21* | .20* |
| Mental Health Problems ^A | | | -.01 | .01 | | .04 | .03 | | -.09 | -.06 |
| Drug and Alcohol Use ^A | | | .23*** | .18*** | | .18** | .12+ | | .34*** | .32*** |
| Academic Achievement ^A | | | -.11* | -.10* | | -.16* | -.15* | | -.02 | -.02 |
| Has Been Sexually Abused | | | .04 | .05 | | .04 | .07 | | .04 | .04 |
| <i>Family Characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Parental Monitoring of Adolescent ^A | | | | -.13* | | | -.17* | | | -.11 |
| Mother-Adolescent Trust and Communication ^A | | | | .01 | | | .05 | | | -.03 |
| Mother-Adolescent Anger and Alienation ^A | | | | -.01 | | | .02 | | | -.08 |
| F, Prob>F | 7.63*** | 7.15*** | 7.66*** | 6.77*** | 2.28* | 2.92*** | 2.74*** | 1.68 | 3.79*** | 3.21*** |
| R ² | .11 | .11 | .17 | .18 | .06 | .13 | .15 | .02 | .15 | .15 |

Notes: (1) *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$.; (2) Betas or standardized coefficients are reported.; (3) A, These composites are an average of the wave 1 and wave 2 scores on these constructs; and (4) B, Female adolescents, Hispanic adolescents and disrupted family forms are the omitted comparison groups.

