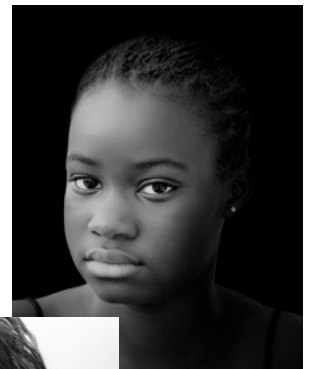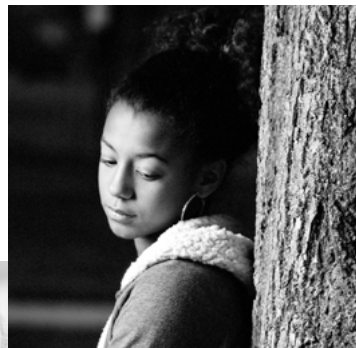# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

IN THE

AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

IDVAAC
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Institute on Domestic Violence In
The African American Community

IDVAAC FACT SHEET

Overview

African American youth ages 12-18 are disproportionately represented among teens experiencing dating violence.

DEFINING DATING VIOLENCE

Dating violence refers to actual or threatened acts of physical abuse, sexual or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner. It can occur in person or electronically.

WHAT DOES DATING VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE?

- Insults, verbal abuse & threats
- Sexual harassment and/or sexual assault
- Social sabotage
- Physical assault
- Cyber- bullying and harassment, ranging from intentionally embarrassing or cruel online posts or digital pictures, to online threats, negative comments, to stalking through emails, websites, social networks and text messages.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND AFRICAN AMERICANS?

- Dating violence occurs across gender, socioeconomic, and age sub-groups. For example, women and girls ages 16 to 24 experience the highest per capita rate of intimate partner violence, inclusive of dating violence.[1, 2]

- In a recent national survey of high school students who dated, 21% of females and 10% of females experienced physical and/or sexual dating violence. [3]

- In addition, results reported in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) indicate that African American teens are more likely to be hit, slapped or hurt by their boyfriends or girlfriends than are White or Latino youth.[3]

- In studies, between 20 and 50% of teen girls 15 to 18 who have been in a relationship say that they have been a victim of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse by a boyfriend. [4, 5]

- In 2011 African American students (12%) were more likely to report being victims of dating violence than white students (8%) (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (June 8, 2012).[2]

- In 2013 73.9% of students who dated or went out with someone during the 12 months before the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 10.3% had been hit, slammed into something, or injured with an object or weapon on purpose by someone they were dating. The prevalence of dating violence was higher among female (13%) than among male (7.4%) students. [3]

- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey also indicates that in 2013 black female (12.3%) and white female (12.9%) students in grades 9-12 were equally likely to report having experienced teen dating violence. In contrast, despite having a lower prevalence of exposure to teen dating violence than black female students, black male (8.2%) were more likely than were white male (6.2%) students to report experiencing teen dating violence. [3]

- Among the 73.9% of students nationwide who dated or went out with someone during the 12 months before the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2013, 10.4% of students had been kissed, touched, or physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times during the 12 months before the survey (i.e., sexual dating violence). The prevalence of sexual dating violence among teens is higher among female (14%) and male (6.2%). [3, 7]
  The prevalence of sexual dating violence is higher among white female (14.6%) than black female (8.8%) students. In contrast to white students, black female (8.8%) and male (8.9%) students enrolled in grades 9-12 are nearly equally likely to report sexual dating violence victimization. [3]

- A substantial number of teen dating violence incidents occur in school buildings or on school grounds. [8]

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

   A risk factor is anything that increases the likelihood that an individual will experience harm. Risk factors may be found in the individual, in the family, or in the community. Risk factors have additive effects. That is, the more risk factors that are present the greater the likelihood that a teenager will experience teen dating violence victimization, perpetration of teen dating violence or both.

INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL RISK FACTORS

- Witnessing or experiencing relationship violence in the home or among extended family and friends [9, 10]

- Association with anti-social peers (e.g. gang members, chronic offenders) and peers who accept relationship violence as a normal or routine means of resolving relationship conflict. [9, 10]

- Substance abuse. [9, 10]

- Multiple sex partners. [9, 10]

- Pregnancy. [9, 10, 31]

- Homelessness. [9, 10]

- Depression. [9, 10]

- Belief that violence among intimates is acceptable. [9, 10]

- Acceptance of problematic constructions and enactments of masculinity and femininity as represented in African American youth popular culture. [9, 10]

- Having a friend involved in dating violence. [9, 10]

BELIEFS

- Antagonist attitudes toward male/female relationships. [10, 12]

- Internalization of the belief that relationships between African American males and females are characterized by an adversarial relationship in which men and women are socialized to be suspicious of one another. [10, 12, 16, 17, 20]

FAMILY RISK FACTORS

Response: the sources cited below including the work of Jody Miller and Nikki Jones have found TDV in the African American community to be associated with the list of behaviors listed below

- Inadequate parental supervision and monitoring of youth has been found to be associated with teenage sexual experimentation, teen pregnancy, and teen dating violence. [8, 9, 10, 11]

- Exposure to violence within the family of origin or within one extended family and friendship network. [15, 16, 18]

- Poverty and economic stress. [11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19]

EXPOSURE TO ANTI-SOCIAL PEERS

- Early involvement (at ages 10 to 15) with antisocial peers has been found to be associated with linked to dating violence perpetration African American adolescent males and females. In addition, teens who experience or perpetuate dating violence tend to also be involved in broader social networks that involve multiple forms of exposure to risky health behaviors, such as bullying, delinquency and substance use. [8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16]

- Research indicates that African American youth who have peers/friends who maintain favorable attitudes toward the use of violence as a means of resolving relationship conflict, are themselves prone to engage in acts of dating violence. [8, 9, 10, 11, 16]

- African American girls and young women affiliated with gangs, gang members and/or street-oriented youth are at increased risk of experiencing dating violence compared to females who are not affiliated with gangs or gang members. [9, 16]

COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

• Residence in communities impacted by concentrated poverty, high rates of unemployment, and diminished economic opportunity. [15, 17]

  Exposure to high rates of community violence (e.g. murder, robbery, aggravated assault, assault) in disadvantaged African American communities has been found to be associated with the acceptance of violence as a means of resolving disputes between strangers, acquaintances, and intimate partners. [17, 18, 27] wFor example, data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health fond that teens enrolled in grades 7-12 who were exposed to violent crime (seeing someone shot or stabbed) were 32% more likely to be victims of physical dating violence. [15]

• African American girls and young women affiliated with gangs, gang members and/or street-oriented youth are at increased risk of experiencing dating violence compared to females who are not affiliated with gangs or gang members. [9, 16]

MEDIA FACTORS

• Some researchers and scholars have found that exposure to sexist and misogynistic feminine scripts that are often depicted in African American youth popular culture art forms like gangsta rap provide justifications for verbal abuse and relationship violence among. For example, it has been reported that the more time spent watching rap and hip hop videos, the more African American teens were found to internalize the notion that romantic heterosexual relationships among African American males and females are routinely characterized by conflict.[12,.22, 23, 24, 25, 26]

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Overall, there is a lack of scholarship and research which seeks to offer a theoretical explanation of the scope of intimate partner violence generally or teen dating violence among African Americans. For the most part theoretical explanations of intimate partner violence and dating violence among African Americans have largely drawn on race-neutral theoretical explanations which ignore the significance of race and the African American experience as providing a context and justification for teen dating violence. There is no one single factor that sufficiently explains the etiology and patterning of dating violence among African Americans. Thus the best approach toward explaining teen dating violence among African Americans is one that seeks to consider its intersectionality. As such, teen dating violence in the African American community is influenced by a combination of structural, cultural, and situational factors, including: exposure to intergenerational environmental stress (e.g., institutional racism, lack of employment, concentrated poverty, poorly managed schools), [17, 18, 19, 20] and exposure to a cultural and situational context in which many males of varying age groupings prioritize masculine enactment based on male dominance and a willingness to resort to violence as a means of resolving disputes with romantic partners. [17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26]

Listed below is a brief review of how researchers have sought to explain teen dating violence among African American youth.

• Given the disproportionately high rates of intimate partner violence among African Americans, African American youth who witness violence in their home of origin are at increased risk of repeating this behavior and/or accepting intimate partner violence as normal, thereby leading to an intergenerational cycle of intimate partner violence. [16, 17, 18]

• Various research studies have found that young African American males are more likely to use physical violence as a means to control their girlfriends as a result of the internalization of patriarchal beliefs that encourage male dominance and female submission. In contrast, research on teen and youth dating violence has found that young women and teenagers are more likely to use violence in self-defense in response to emotional abuse and/or physical violence from their male partners. [19, 20, 21]

• Exposure to concentrated poverty and associated stressors (e.g., welfare dependence, chronic unemployment, material deprivation, racial disparities in school suspension and expulsion, compromised parental supervision) increases the likelihood that African American teens who reside in such communities will resort to dating violence as a means of resolving relationship conflict [15, 16, 19]

CONSEQUENCES OF DATING VIOLENCE IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Exposure to teen dating violence has a number of health and emotional consequences. In addition, the occurrence of consequences may vary by race, age and gender.

• Among adult victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 22% of women and 15% of men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age. [1]

• Teen victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors (taking diet pills or laxatives and vomiting to lose weight), engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide. [28,29, 30, 31]

• African American females who experience dating violence are more likely to experience STD's, non-monogamous partners, less empowered to negotiate condom use, and more likely to be pregnant. [28, 29, 30, 31]

• Sexual coercion within the context of dating relationships has the potential to compromise victims' sexual health by increasing their risk of pregnancy and contracting STD's, HIV and AIDS. [28, 29, 30, 31]

• National and local studies show that teens exposed to dating violence are at increased risk for injuries and have greater tendencies to engage in unhealthy activities including, sexual activities, suicide ideation, and drug, alcohol & tobacco abuse. [28, 29, 30, 31]

• Fear of re-victimization in the future. [29]

- Dating violence in the African American community has been found to be associated with acts of retaliatory violence in which male relatives of female victims seek to punish those who have perpetrated acts of dating violence against their female relatives.[32]

- Teen dating violence is more likely than non-teen dating violence to occur in public settings (e.g., schools, shopping malls, movie theaters, skating rinks and other leisure places). As such, there are a number of consequences of teen dating violence which have unique consequences, including: embarrassment and being publicly ridiculed, developing negative reputations for tolerating dating violence and/or perpetuating dating violence, and reluctance to attend school. [3, 17, 21]

- Among adult victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 22% of women and 15% of men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age.[1]

TEEN VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The term "protective factor" refers to conditions and experiences which promote resilience and serve to mitigate or buffer the effects of experiencing teen dating violence victimization and/or perpetrating acts of teen dating violence. Similar to risk factors, protective factors tend to be grouped into individual, family, and community categories. There are several protective factors which reduce the risk of experiencing teen dating violence.

INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Growing up exposed to mutually respectful marital and dating relationships in the home of origin.

- Proactive avoidance of substance abuse.

- Abstaining from sexual relationships.

- Delaying/avoiding teen pregnancy.

- Growing up in a emotionally and economically stable household.

- Belief that violence among intimates is unacceptable.

- Exposure to supportive adults who are available to communication and guidance.

- Internalizing a commitment to academic achievement and career goals. [8]

FAMILY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Exposure to effective parenting and parental support. [8, 32]

- Parental supervision of youth-based activities, including dating relationships. [8]

ASSOCIATION WITH PRO-SOCIAL PEERS

Response: Association with pro-social fears functions as both an individual and community protective factor.

- Routine association with peers who are committed to academic achievement and career goals. [8]

- Routine association with peers who proactively seek to avoid substance abuse.[8]

- Routine association with peers who believe that dating violence is unacceptable within romantic relationships. [8, 32]

COMMUNITY-LEVEL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- The provision of a broad range of adult supervised youth activities.[8]

- Critical mass of economically stable families. [20]

- Low rates of intergenerational poverty. [8, 9, 10, 11, 20]

PREVENTING TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

The ultimate goal of teen dating violence prevention and intervention is to stop dating violence before it begins. Very little is known about what works to prevent dating violence among teens who reside in economically disadvantaged urban communities, and specifically African American teens. However, in recent years efforts have been made to develop and implement prevention and intervention strategies which seek to reduce the occurrence of teen dating violence among African American youth, particularly those who reside in communities experiencing high rates of socio-economic disadvantage and crime. An increasing number of teen dating violence prevention programs focus on changing attitudes and behaviors associated with dating violence and promoting the development of skills needed to build and maintain healthy relationships.

Furthermore, experts in the field suggest that that best and promising practices in teen dating violence tend to include program components which (1) recognize that there are multiple stakeholders (e.g., teens, both boys and girls, parents, teachers, youth service providers (e.g., public agencies, non-profit organizations and for profit businesses-skating rinks, shopping malls) which cater to youth clients and members of the local public health community) who must be included in efforts to address teen dating violence; and (2) that effective prevention and intervention in teen dating violence must be age-appropriate recognizing that the nature, situational context, and consequences of teen dating violence varies across age groups. [8, 21, 32, 34]

The Centers for Disease Control's Dating Violence Matters initiative is an example of a teen dating violence program that exemplifies a focus on targeting teen dating violence programing toward African American youth who reside in disadvantaged communities through program components that target a range of key stakeholders. [34]

Dating Matters is a teen dating violence initiative developed by the Centers for Disease Control. http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/DM_Overview-a.pdf

It focuses on 11– to 14–year–olds in high-risk, urban communities. It is a comprehensive intervention in that it includes specific preventive strategies for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. A major goal of Dating Matters is to target various stakeholders (e.g. youth, parents, teachers, and public health service providers) with dating violence awareness information and prevention training through the use of various interventions. What is unique about Dating Matters is that it is organized and delivered in a manner where dating violence awareness information may be delivered across various age groupings (6th grader, 7th grader, and 8th graders). A major feature of the intervention is Safe Dates instruction for youth. The Safe Dates Curricula build skills, such as emotion identification, healthy coping, communication, and conflict resolution that are relevant to the prevention of multiple forms of violence, such as bullying. The student programs utilize a variety of teaching styles to maintain student engagement, retention of information, and provide opportunities to practice skills.

Educating parents to be aware of dating violence and appropriate actions to take to reduce risk is an essential feature of dating violence prevention. Consistent with this view, the Dating Matters teen dating violence prevention initiative includes a Parenting Education component. Dating Matters parent programs build on the current evidence-base of effective programs for youth health to equip parents with skills to communicate with their child about dating violence and use positive parenting skills. Parent programs target the following risk factors for TDV: harsh parenting, low parental monitoring, negative parent-child interactions, and witnessing violence in the home. Demonstrations of Dating Matters have been funded and implemented in Oakland, Chicago, and Fort Lauderdale., 34

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PROMISING PRACTICES

In order to effectively address teen dating violence in the African American community, prevention and intervention programs must be comprehensive and recognize the importance of targeting multiple stakeholders. Listed below are examples of evidence-based interventions that have been found to be effective in addressing domestic violence among African American teens and teens designated as high risk.

• Healthy Relationship Awareness Workshops
http://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/

Loveisrespect's mission is to engage, educate and empower young people to prevent and end abusive relationships. On its website Loveisrespect provides a broad range of resources and tools that may be used by teachers, counselors, and peer educators to facilitate discussion of teen dating violence and to enhance youths' awareness of the signs of teen dating violence.

• School-Based Teen Dating Violence Prevention
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/236175.pdf

Evaluation of Shifting Boundaries, a school-based teen dating violence intervention targeted toward youth in grades 6 & 7. Shifting Boundaries is organized into 6 curricular sessions in which youth are exposed to information pertaining to the consequences of dating violence, the construction of gender roles, the use of anti-teen dating violence posters to increase awareness and reporting, and indicators of healthy relationships.

• Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs targeted toward males and females
http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/tpp_program/db/#

The Office of Adolescent Health, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services has a compiled a comprehensive manual which identifies and describes commonly used best practices funded through the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program.

• Family Based Interventions to Prevent Teen Dating Violence
http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/preventing_sexual_violence/resources_publications/ResearchReview_FamilySafeDates_2013.pdf

Families for Safe Dates is a family-based program designed to assist families in developing the communication and parenting skills to prevent teen dating violence.

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