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Dating Violence and Interpersonal Victimization Among a National Sample of Latino Youth

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 A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The purpose of this analysis was (1) to provide the rates of dating violence victimization among a national sample of Latino adolescents, (2) to determine the degree to which different forms of dating violence victimization co-occurred for this sample, and (3) to determine how much dating violence victimization overlapped with other forms of non-partner-perpetrated victimization.

Method: This analysis used data from the Dating Violence Among Latinos Study, which surveyed 1,525 Latino adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 years about past-year dating violence and non-partner-perpetrated victimization. We calculated victimization rates and relative risk ratios to evaluate the co-occurrence among different forms of dating violence victimization as well as the co-occurrence of dating violence and other forms of victimization.

Results: Results show elevated rates of dating violence victimization compared with previous studies, which is primarily accounted for by psychological dating violence. The rate of dating violence appears to precipitously increase starting around ages 13 and 14 years and is consistently higher for boys. Each type of dating violence was significantly associated with other forms of dating violence (e.g., physical and psychological). Dating violence was significantly associated with experiencing conventional crime, peer or sibling victimization, and nonpartner sexual victimization as well as being a polyvictim.

Conclusions: The results support the importance of early prevention efforts with Latino youth and addressing dating violence with both sexes. Furthermore, dating violence should be seen as a potential risk marker for youth who are experiencing multiple forms of victimization.

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 IMPLICATIONS AND
 CONTRIBUTION

Dating violence rates for Latino adolescents are substantial, primarily as a result of psychological partner aggression, with boys having a higher rate of victimization. Latino youth are likely experiencing dating violence in multiple forms, and dating violence is associated with multiple other forms of nonpartner victimization.

Research on intimate partner violence has traditionally focused on married or cohabiting couples. The seminal study of courtship violence among college students by Makepeace [1] broadened the scope of inquiry to include the examination of

violence among couples in dating relationships with recent work investigating dating violence among adolescents [2,3]. The dating violence literature lacks a comprehensive view of this problem among Latinos, one of the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States, accounting for 17% of the population under the age of 18 years [4]. Given that recent research has shown that intimate partner violence is an important issue among Latino adults [5–8], the investigation of adolescent dating violence among this group should be a priority. In addition, much of the dating violence research exists outside the context of other forms of victimization, jeopardizing the

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conclusions associated with the impact of dating violence in light of the research on polyvictimization, which shows the deleterious impact of various forms of victimization in relation to any specific type of victimization [9,10]. No research to date has evaluated the co-occurring victimization for victims of dating violence for Latino youth.

Adolescent dating violence

Recent research with national samples on dating violence victimization among adolescents has found the 12-month incidence estimates clustering around 8%–10% for physical dating violence [11–17]. The definition of dating violence adopted in different studies, including the specific types of victimization encompassed, impacts these estimates [18]. Most studies have focused on minor forms of physical violence (e.g., throwing something, pushing, and grabbing), whereas others include more serious (e.g., forced sexual relations) and nonphysical forms of aggression. There have been conflicting sex results for physical dating violence with some studies finding higher victimization rates for females [14,15,17], while others have found higher rates for males [11,19]. Regarding age, physical dating violence has been shown to be more common among 12th graders than their 9th grade counterparts [11].

Limited research exploring sexual violence among adolescents has found that most studies report victimization rates around 8%, generally being twice as high for girls than for boys [11,20]. However, these national surveys have not focused on partner-perpetrated sexual dating violence. The few national studies that have examined the prevalence of sexual victimization in adolescent dating relationships have found rates ranging from .9% to 7.9% [21–23].

Psychological dating violence can include behaviors such as insulting, swearing at, or making verbal threats. Combining these types of behaviors, Roberts et al. [17] found that males reported experiencing verbal abuse in 21% of dating relationships, whereas females experienced verbal abuse in 23% of dating relationships. Self-reported rates of perpetrating these types of behavior are higher and show a different pattern. Approximately 35% of males and 47% of females report ever perpetrating psychological abuse in a relationship [24].

Adolescent dating violence among Latinos. Research on dating violence rates among Latino youth has shown mixed results. Latino youth consistently report higher rates of physical dating violence than White adolescents, while typically reporting lower rates than African-American youth [12,14–16]. The evidence for sexual violence shows lifetime prevalence rates being lowest among either White or Latino adolescents [20,25] but highest among African-American youth. When lifetime prevalence of forced sexual intercourse is examined by sex, Latino females were more likely than females of other ethnicities to report forced sex. Latino males were more likely to report forced sex than White males but less likely to report this type of victimization than African-American males or males of other ethnicities [20].

Co-occurring victimization and polyvictimization. A growing body of literature indicates that it is important to consider the entire range of victimization experiences to which an individual is exposed. Polyvictimization [9] or multitype maltreatment [26], defined as experiencing more than one type of victimization in a given time period, has been found to be one of the strongest

predictors of negative psychological outcomes [9,10]. Victims of dating violence, including Latinos, are at particular risk of experiencing polyvictimization, suggesting that dating violence is but one of their victimization experiences [5,19,27,28].

As previously mentioned, it is important to examine co-occurrence of victimization in addition to individual victimization types [9,10,26]. Some research has examined experiences of multiple types of dating violence (physical, psychological, and sexual violence). For example, Sears et al. [24] examined the co-occurrence of multiple types of dating violence among adolescents and found that 19% of boys and 26% of girls reported perpetrating two or more forms of dating violence.

There has not been any study that specifically examines the co-occurrence of dating violence with other types of victimization among Latino adolescents. Several studies in the adult literature, however, have indicated that Latinos are likely to experience multiple types of victimizations, including partner violence [5,27–29]. In the nationally representative sample of adolescents of Finkelhor et al. [9], 9% were Latino, but these youth comprised 17% of “low polyvictims” and 22% of “high polyvictims”.

This article seeks to examine this phenomenon among a national sample of Latino adolescents in the United States. Specifically, we seek to determine the extent of physical, sexual, and psychological dating violence among Latino adolescents. We also examine experiences of polyvictimization and seek to determine the level of co-occurring victimization between dating violence and nonpartner peer victimization, child maltreatment, stalking, and nonpartner sexual victimization.

Methods

Participants

Detailed study procedures are available in the project's technical report [30], of which a summary is presented here. The Dating Violence Among Latino Adolescents (DAVILA) study was a national bilingual phone survey of Latino adolescents and their caregivers (N = 1,525), conducted from September 2011 to February 2012. To be eligible for participation, a caregiver and a Latino teen aged 12–18 years needed to live in the household. The overall response rate (RR4) for the sample was 36%. This response rate is a ratio of completed interviews and partial interviews to all interviews, noninterviews, and a proportion of cases of unknown eligibility. Over half of the households contacted were receptive to the study, as indicated by the cooperation rate (COOP4) of 55%, defined as the ratio of completed interviews and partial interviews to all interviews, refusals, and break offs. All response rate calculations are based on standard definitions used by the American Association of Public Opinion Research [31].

Table 1 reports the demographic information for the full sample. The sample was on average 14.85 years old with approximately three-fourths (76.1%) of adolescents being born in the United States. Most caregivers were married (69.2%) with their modal educational attainment being less than high school (35.2%) and 61% reporting a household income of <\$29,999. In comparing our sample to U.S. Census data on Latinos under the age of 18 years, a notably lower proportion of our sample (23.9% vs. 51.0%) was foreign born. Otherwise our sample matches on gender, proportion of intact families, and parent education [30].

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