



ELSEVIER

“My Situation Wasn't that Unique”: The Experience of Teens in Abusive Relationships

Sharyl Eve Toscano PhD*

University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK

Key words:

Freshmen;
Abusive relationships;
Teens;
Control

College freshman and sophomores with histories of high school dating violence were invited to participate in a study about that experience. The shared experience described by ten participants was that of being controlled. Control is established by creating a sense of responsibility and is maintained by angry outburst, threats to self, and guilt. Participants described an expectation of constant contact that included techno vigilance. In their stories, young women miss good and better times, hope for “the ideal romance,” and continue to care and have concern for their abuser who is described as “troubled.”

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

TO DATE, MUCH of the knowledge about adolescent dating violence has been attained through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Data derived from this relatively large U.S. based survey have provided knowledge about the incidence and associations in teen dating violence. On average, teen dating violence rates using this survey are consistently reported around 10% or about 1 in 10 (1999 YRBS, 9.23% (Howard & Wang, 2003); 2005 YRBS, 10.3% (Howard, Wang, & Yan, 2007)). Study designs focusing on specific populations report higher incidence: 28% in a female adolescent African American sample (Raiford, Wingood & Diclemente, 2007); 16% in a rural adolescents (Marquart, Nannini, Edwards, Stanley & Wayman, 2007); and 26% in an urban population (Jain, Buda, Subramanian and Molnar, 2010). There is minimal qualitative research aimed at exploring the experience of physical and/or sexual abuse in female adolescents' dating relationships.

Research using the YRBS has resulted in reported associations between dating violence and risky youth behavior. For example, having multiple partners in an 18 month period (Tucker, Oslak, Young, Martin & Kupper, 2001), dating an older boy (Burcky, Reuterman & Kopsky, 1988; Stets, 1987), lack of academic affiliation (Saner & Ellickson, 1996), an increased number of sexual intercourse

partners (Valois, Oeltmann, Waller & Hussey, 1999), providing sexual favors, suffering from rejection, being intoxicated, and/or having an association with peer-drinking (Burcky, Reuterman & Kopsky, 1988) were all linked to physical and/or sexual violence in adolescent relationships. One study also based on the YRBS, looked at adolescents reporting interpersonal violence and forced sexual intercourse and found these groups were similar in that each was more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as riding with a drinking driver, driving while drinking, being less likely to use condoms, and being less likely to engage in health-enhancing behaviors, such as routine health and dental visits, contraceptive use, condom use, and sun protection.

Severe violence victimization such as child maltreatment and childhood witness to parental violence was predictive of perpetration of violence (Sims, Dodd & Tejada, 2008). In one urban sample, researchers found females were more likely to be perpetrators of dating violence than men (Jain, Buda, Subramanian & Molnar, 2010). Findings from a rural sample suggest that females were 3.5 times more likely to be hit, pushed, or threatened in a dating relationship (Marquart, Nannini, Edwards, Stanley, & Wayman, 2007).

Girls reporting dating violence are also more likely to report other violent behaviors, extreme sadness, suicidal actions, use of illicit substances, and engagement in risky sexual behaviors (defined as more than 2 partners in a 3 month period, use of

* Corresponding author: Sharyl Eve Toscano, PhD.

E-mail address: setoscano@uaa.alaska.edu.

drugs or alcohol before sex, or failure to use condoms) (Howard & Wang; 2003). Baynard and Cross (2008) reported an increase in depression and suicidal thoughts and found an increased risk of poor educational outcomes. In a population of young women ages 14–21 seeking abortion, dating violence was significantly related to severity of suicidal thinking ($p < 0.5$) (Nugent, Cerel & Vimbba, 2011).

Some researchers report specific associated risk depending on involvement in an abusive dating relationship. An adolescent female's risk of developing sadness and/or hopelessness, considering suicide, engaging in physical fighting, having recent sexual partners and unprotected sex increases when they also report being in an abusive relationship (2005 YRBS) (Howard, Wang & Yan, 2007). Manganello (2008) also reported an increase in unsafe sex practices.

There exists an abundance of research based on the YRBS with researchers reporting on incidences and correlations derived from this large data base. There are benefits to this form of research but exclusive reliance on survey descriptive research may fail to advance the state of the science of adolescent dating violence where permutations of the same data is reported with slight variations in packaging. Hickman, Haycox and Armonoff (2004) suggest that research is challenged by the almost exclusive use of major national data sources, and that this results in premature conclusions and inconsistencies among risk factors between studies. In Jouriles, Platt and McDonald (2009) review of the literature, they note that alternatives to one-time, self-reported survey assessments are scarce in the literature. Instead, the literature in the area of adolescent dating violence consist of study designs aimed at surveying the occurrence of specific acts of violence within a particular time period.

The Theory of Female Adolescents' Safety as determined by the Dynamics of the Circle (TFASDC) (Toscano, 2007) is the result of a grounded theory study aimed at exploring adolescent dating relationships. As concepts emerged from narrative data analysis, concepts related to group membership and relationship characteristics resulted. According to the TFASDC (Toscano, 2007), the following concepts might be predictive of a relationship becoming negative and/or abusive: beginning and/or ending a relationship, dating an older boy, dating a boy who was not a member of the teen group, being distant from or lacking membership in a peer group, being isolated from her group, having a relationship lasting a long period of time as well as becoming sexually active. In subsequent survey research aimed at testing the TFASDC model, 5 concepts from the TFASDC were found to be associated with dating violence (being distant from a group or lack of group cohesion, increased number of dating partners, dating an older boy, increased length of relationship, and increased number of sexual partners) (Toscano, 2010).

In this study I used a retrospective approach in an attempt to describe the experience of adolescent dating violence over time. By asking college women about abuse in their adolescent relationships, they include in their description

multiple relationships and transitions. The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of physical and/or sexual abuse in female adolescents' dating relationships.

Methods

Ten participants were recruited and interviewed. These participants were recruited and selected from a larger survey study aimed at investigating violence in adolescent dating relationships. In that study, 188 participants ages 18–26, with the majority (n=180) being 18–20 were recruited from one of two college health service clinics and one college campus center. All students were in their freshman or sophomore year of college. The majority (n = 170) were Caucasian with the remainder of the group consisting of multiracial (n = 3), Hispanic (n = 5), Asian (n = 7), Black (n = 1), and East Indian (n = 1). All study sites were located in the North East Region of the United States. In the Toscano (2010) study participants completed a survey which included the Danger Assessment (Campbell, 1986). The DA is a 17-item dichotomous (yes/no) measure aimed at identifying risk factors associated with homicide committed against women by their intimate partner. Participants who completed the survey were invited to participate in an in depth interview if they answered yes to any items on the Danger Assessment.

The initial study finished before reaching theoretical saturation. After seven interviews were completed an extension and revision to the IRB to include recruitment using posters was filed and approved. The posters included the same screening protocol and all participants answered yes to one or more items on the Danger Assessment. Recruitment via poster continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Participants were not matched to their original survey data and students recruited via poster did not complete the survey. Study participants reported in this study were 18–20 years old, however, specific data on the 10 participants interviewed were not collected due to concerns they could be identified. The sample did include diverse students but given the small number of minority students within the respective student body populations identifying a student by race and including the specifics of their story may pose a risk of individual identification. Instead, general sample statistics from the larger survey study are provided. The three additional students recruited via posters also attended one of two colleges from which the original survey was completed.

All study procedures adhered to the approved IRB proposal. Students who completed the interview received a \$25 cash payment at the completion of the interview. Interviews were audio-taped. All interviews were conducted during the normal business hours of the respective counseling programs existing at each study site. Both sites had an emergency crisis call number and a back-up police service on call counselor. Participants were informed prior to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2668372>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2668372>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)