



## Dating and intimate partner violence among young persons ages 15–30: Evidence from a systematic review



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### ABSTRACT

While there has been much empirical research on adult dating violence, only recently has research begun to also focus on young adult dating violence in general and teen dating violence specifically. With recognition of the growing research and media attention toward youth and young adult dating violence, the current study provides a systematic review of the extant literature devoted toward examinations of dating/intimate partner violence among individuals aged 15 to 30 and, more narrowly, on the prior research that has tested the effectiveness of dating/intimate partner violence interventions with this age group. Results from a comprehensive literature search of a number of existing databases revealed 169 studies that met the inclusion criteria, and 42 of these 169 studies were also characterized as intervention studies. Descriptive results are discussed for the 169 studies overall, and for the 42 intervention studies in particular in greater detail. Evidence gleaned from this systematic review revealed a number of similarities and differences between the studies in general, but also pointed toward the potential effectiveness of interventions to prevent the occurrence and re-occurrence of dating/intimate partner violence. Study limitations and directions for future research are also discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

Whether it is referred to as domestic violence, intimate partner violence, or dating violence, aggression and violence in inter-personal relationships has been a key theoretical and empirical topic of interest in the social and medical sciences, as well as in the public policy arena (e.g., Sherman, 1992; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Breiding, Chen, & Black, 2014). Not surprisingly, there is also little consensus in definitional terms—and especially in the operationalization of aggression and violence in the course of an intimate relationship, which has led research findings yielding a large range of prevalence (of violence) estimates as well as risk factors associated with violence perpetration and violence victimization across gender, age range, and relationship type. Yet, despite this variability in definitions, measurement, prevalence, and risk factors, ample attention has also been paid toward the development of prevention and intervention strategies and policies aimed at curbing

victimization and to a lesser extent perpetration. Once again, unsurprisingly, the range of such programs is wide and variable with regard to age range, treatment curriculum, and level of curriculum (community-based, school-based, counselor-based), in addition to at times being aimed at males and other times females.

This information notwithstanding, one key limitation of the literature on dating/intimate partner violence has been its near exclusive focus on adult samples, thereby limiting the knowledge accrued on this topic among adolescents and young adults. Accordingly, in this paper, we report the results of a comprehensive and systematic review of youth and young adult dating/intimate partner violence as well as reviewing interventions aimed at reducing such violence among individuals ages 15–30.

### 2. Methodology

Consistent with prior systematic reviews (Jennings & Reingle, 2012; Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle, 2012; Piquero, Jennings, & Barnes, 2012), the search strategy for the systematic review is as follows. We first

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performed a keyword search (using terms such as dating violence, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence) across a number of different databases including Criminal Justice Abstracts, National Criminal Justice Reference Services, Psych Info, EBSCO, etc. to locate articles that were potentially relevant for inclusion. Subsequently, when an article was identified through the keyword search as being potentially relevant we then read the abstract in detail and/or accessed the full article to verify that the article indeed met the search and inclusion and exclusion criteria. Specifically, the inclusion criteria was as follows: 1). Types of Studies: Studies must have focused on dating and/or intimate partner violence and involve youth/young adults ages 15–30; 2). Types of outcomes: Outcomes included dating and/or intimate partner violence; 3). Studies were included from 1981 to 2015 (e.g., 35 years). The search initiated in September 2015 and concluded in December 1, 2015; 4). Only studies from the United States were included; and 5). Studies needed to be published in English. Finally, we consulted a recent systematic review on the topic to identify any additional relevant studies that may not have been identified in the data base and keyword search (Fellmeth, Hefferman, Nurse, Habibula, & Sethi, 2013; Fellmeth, Hefferman, Nurse, Habibula, & Sethi, 2015). The results from this initial search and cleaning process and the consultation of a previous systematic review on the topic yielded 169 studies that were deemed relevant, 42 of which were determined to be and classified as dating/intimate partner violence intervention studies. Additional details on these 169 studies are reported in the Results section below.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive results from the 169 studies

A detailed description of the name of the author/s, publication year, geographic location, sample, measures, analytic techniques, age of sample, and the main findings for the 169 studies can be found in Table 1.

#### 3.2. Publication year, geographic location, sample and age characteristics ( $n = 169$ )

Overall, the year of publication ranged from 1981 (Makepeace, 1981) to 2015 (Boladale et al., 2015; Bradley, 2015; Cornelius et al., 2015; Diaz-Aguado & Martinez, 2015; Edwards et al., 2015; Kaukinen et al., 2015), although greater than two-thirds of the studies were published since 2000. This is not surprising as it reflects the recent growing interest in youth and young adult dating/intimate partner violence. While the majority of the studies were conducted in the U.S. ( $n = 139$ ), there was still a considerable amount of international representation with studies being based in Canada ( $n = 11$ ; Brendgen et al., 2002; Collin-Vézina et al., 2006; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1995; Kelly & DeKeseredy, 1994; Lavoie et al., 2000; Pedersen & Thomas, 1992; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Sharpe & Taylor, 1999; Wolfe, Scott, Wekerle, & Pittman, 2001; Wolfe, Wekerle, Scott, Straatman, Grasley, & Reitzel-Jaffe, 2003; Wolfe, Crooks, Jaffe, Chiodo, Highes, Ellis et al., 2009), Korea ( $n = 4$ ; Gover et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2014; Yom & Eun, 2005), China ( $n = 2$ ; Anderson et al., 2011; He & Tsang, 2014), United Kingdom ( $n = 2$ ; Archer & Ray, 1989; Hird, 2000), Australia ( $n = 2$ ; Brown et al., 2009; Chung, 2007), New Zealand ( $n = 2$ ; Jackson et al., 2000; Magdol et al., 1997), Nigeria ( $n = 1$ ; Boladale et al., 2015), Poland ( $n = 1$ ; Doroszewicz & Forbes, 2008), South Africa ( $n = 1$ ; Swart et al., 2002), Taiwan ( $n = 1$ ; Shen, 2014), and Spain ( $n = 1$ ; Diaz-Aguado & Martinez, 2015). In addition, two studies were large scale/global studies with many different countries represented (Hines & Straus, 2007; Straus, 2004).

The sample size of the studies ranged from a low of  $n = 24$  (Lavoie et al., 2000) to a high of  $n = 81,247$  (Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002). The types of samples and age ranges varied considerably with some studies including: middle school students (e.g., Taylor et al., 2010), high school students (e.g., Wolfe, Scott, Wekerle, & Pittman, 2001),

undergraduate students (e.g., Lejeune & Follette, 1994), undergraduate students in fraternities (e.g., Foubert & Marriott, 1997), undergraduate student athletes (e.g., Holcomb et al., 2002), pregnant girls (e.g., Florsheim et al., 2011), and adjudicated delinquents (e.g., Salazar & Cook, 2006). In addition, some studies focused only on females (e.g., Buelna et al., 2009), other studies targeted only males (e.g., Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001), and a few studies involved dating couples (e.g., Archer & Ray, 1989). Finally, although the literature oftentimes using the terms dating violence and intimate partner violence interchangeably (Jennings et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2013; Reingle et al., 2013), we considered it important to distinguish between those studies that were primarily focused on teen dating violence (TDV) versus adult dating violence/intimate partner violence (ADV/IPV). Caution is also needed when interpreting/summarizing the results as studies that focus on ADV/IPV often include individuals (often of an unknown/unreported number) who are cohabitating with their partner in addition to those that are not cohabitating. ADV/IPV risk has been reported to vary as a function of cohabitation (Theobald, Farrington, Ttofi, & Crago, 2016). Nevertheless, 54.4% of the studies ( $n = 92$ ) focused on TDV, 43.8% of the studies ( $n = 74$ ) focused on ADV/IPV, and 1.8% of the studies ( $n = 3$ ) focused on a considerably mixed group of teens and young adults.

#### 3.3. Measures and analytic techniques used ( $n = 169$ )

There were a wide range of measures used to operationalize dating/intimate partner violence across the 169 studies, but the majority of the studies relied on Straus's (1979) Conflict Tactics Scale or Straus et al.'s (1996) Revised Conflict Tactics scale. These scales, and modifications of them, typically rely on a series of questions where respondents are asked to endorse the frequency of use of tactics in a relationship such as being "pushed, grabbed, or shoved", "slapped", "kicked, bit, or hit", "choked", "beat up", "threatened with a knife or gun", etc. (e.g., Chase et al., 2002). Other studies often utilized items from sources including the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Brener, Collins, Kann, Warren, & Williams, 1995; see also Brown et al., 2009) where respondents are asked "During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap, or physically hurt you on purpose?"; Foshee's (1996) scale of physical and psychological victimization and perpetration where *physical* victimization and perpetration is based on a list of 18 behaviors that may have happened on a date by a partner or to a partner (e.g. scratched, slapped, physically twisted arm, slammed or held against will, kicked, bent fingers, bit, tried to choke, pushed, shoved or grabbed, dumped out of car, threw something at, forced sex, forced sexual activities, burned, hit with fist, hit with something hard besides fist, beat up, assaulted with gun or knife) and *psychological* victimization and perpetration is based on a list of 14 behaviors that may have happened on a date by a partner or to a partner including threatening to damage property, throwing something but missed, started to hit but stopped, threatened to hurt, prevent doing things with other people, prevent talking to someone of the opposite sex, made to describe every minute of the day, insulted in front of others, put down looks, blamed for everything bad that happened, said things to hurt feelings, threatened to start dating someone else, did something to make jealous, brought up something from past to hurt (e.g., Foshee et al., 1998); or Wolfe, Scott, Wekerle, & Pittman's (2001) Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (e.g., Wolfe et al., 2003), which is a 70-item measure to be completed by teens in reference to a recent dating partner and their experiences with victimization and perpetration of dating violence over the past two months. Response options range from never, seldom (1–2), sometimes (3–5) and often (6 or more). Similar to the variability in measurements of dating/intimate partner violence, the 169 studies employed a number of different analytical techniques in their research including: ANOVAs, ANCOVAs, MANOVAs, chi-square tests, correlations, linear regression, logistic regression, multinomial logistic regression, hierarchical linear modeling, and count-based regression.

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