



Community Research Notes

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 Department of Psychology

Fall Highlights

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Welcome to the Fall Issue of the TSS Group’s Community Research Notes. Fall quarter is always an exciting time on DU’s campus, particularly as new research assistants join the TSS Group. We are pleased to welcome **Michelle Fagan, Betsy Laird, and Chandler Taslitz** to our team.

This Fall has also been exciting in terms of opportunities to share research findings with policy makers. I was grateful to have the opportunity to participate in a small roundtable discussion with **Vice President Joe Biden**. Vice President Biden travelled to Denver to mark the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Violence against Women Act violence and talk with Denver leaders (including Mayor Hancock) about addressing the serious problem of violence against women. The roundtable offered an opportunity to highlight some of what we learned in collaboration with Denver criminal justice- and community-based partners during the **Triage Project**. For example, we documented that following police-reported intimate partner abuse:

- Community-Coordinated Responses Make a Difference: When community-based advocates coordinated with the criminal justice system to make outreach directly to women (compared to waiting for women to call agencies themselves), women reported less fear and fewer mental health symptoms one year later. Read more [here](#). Women were also more likely to engage with prosecution, including to appear in court. Read more [here](#).
- Community Matters: The severity of psychological aggression to which women were exposed varied significantly as a function of space, suggesting communities differ in tolerance of this form of abuse. For example, neighbors in some communities may call the police when they hear shouting, but not in others.
- Being Connected Matters: Women’s feelings of alienation were linked with more severe posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and dissociation symptoms. Read more [here](#).
- Job Opportunities Matter: Women’s unemployment predicted significantly greater experiences of physical

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DePrince joins community partners in a roundtable with VPOTUS Biden and Mayor Hancock.

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and sexual aggression as well as injuries six months later. Read more [here](#).

- **Revictimization and Sexual Aggression are Common:** Nearly one-third of women reported physical and/or sexual revictimization by the same offender over the following year. Intimate partner abuse is not limited to physical aggression and frequently involves sexual assault. Read more [here](#).

Research from the Triage collaboration has also been cited by the feds. For example:

- The [2012 Biennial Report to Congress](#) on the Effectiveness of Grant Programs under the VAWA cites research from Triage, “Research shows that efforts to address violence against women are most effective when they are combined and integrated into a coordinated community response (DePrince, Belknap, Labus, Buckingham, & Gover, 2012; Shepard, 1999; Shepard & Pence, 1999).
- The September [1 is 2 Many Report \(The White House\)](#) draws on our research to note, “The coordinated community response model (CCR) is one of the hallmarks of the Violence Against Women Act. Evidence shows that efforts to address violence against women are particularly effective when they are combined and integrated across various disciplines.”⁷⁴

Thanks to the community partners and women who participated in the study – they made this work possible. I hope you will keep reading for more updates from our crew. And thank you for all you do.



Predicting Acceptance of Dating Violence in Adolescent Girls

Michelle Seulki Lee, 2nd Year Graduate Student

Editor's Note: Thanks to Ann Chu and Stephanie Begun, our co-authors on the work described in this article.

Approximately 35% of adolescents witness domestic violence (DV) at some point in their lives (Finklehor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009). Witnessing DV in adolescence is associated with multiple negative outcomes, including risk of future involvement in a violent dating relationship. Dating violence against adolescent girls in particular is associated with negative health and psychological outcomes (Chu, Sundermann, & DePrince, 2013). Violence prevention efforts have converged on the importance of *acceptability of dating violence* as a risk factor for intimate violence. Unfortunately, little is known about predictors of accepting dating violence, particularly among adolescent girls who are at high risk of victimization. Using data from the Healthy Adolescent Relationship Project (HARP), we tested two predictors of acceptability of dating violence in adolescent girls who witnessed DV: relationship schema and ambivalent sexism.

Relationship schema refers to the mental representations we have about close others. From a social learning perspective, frequent exposure to DV in childhood may teach adolescent girls that romantic relationships are associated with harm. Thus, as youths witness greater levels of DV, they may learn to be more accepting of violence in relationships because their schematic representations of relationships are more strongly linked to expectations of harm. Previous research (DePrince, Combs, & Shanahan, 2009) has demonstrated automatic relationship-harm associations in women who experienced multiple types of interpersonal violence. Similarly, our current study found that frequency of DV exposure in childhood was associated with stronger relationship-harm associations in adolescent girls, and stronger relationship-harm associations were associated with greater acceptability of dating violence.

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Furthermore, relationship-harm associations mediated the relationship between frequency of DV and acceptability of dating violence – in other words, automatic relationship-harm associations is one link that connects early DV exposure and later accepting of dating violence.

In addition to relationship schema, we also tested the role of ambivalent sexism in girls' acceptance of dating violence. Ambivalent sexism refers to the notion that sexism may be exhibited through both negatively- and positively-valenced attitudes toward women (e.g., espousing opinions of women as both lacking competence and as more nurturing and pure compared to men). Prior research has found associations between endorsements of ambivalent sexism and the acceptance of dating violence, rape myths, and victim blaming (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). Our current study found that hostile sexism (i.e., negatively-valenced attitudes about women), but not benevolent sexism, predicted acceptability of dating violence in adolescent girls. Neither aspect of ambivalent sexism was linked with frequency of DV exposure.

Thus, the current study suggests that early exposure to DV influences mental frameworks of relationships in adolescent girls, which may influence how likely they are to accept violence in romantic relationships. The results also indicate that social attitudes (e.g., sexist beliefs) are not directly affected by DV exposure and are likely to be influenced by multiple factors throughout the lifespan. Nevertheless, girls' espousal of hostile sexist beliefs predict how likely they are to accept dating violence. Our findings contribute to research examining the mechanisms that link early exposure to violence and later acceptance of violence in adolescent girls. By examining predictors of acceptability of dating violence, we hope to better understand the social and cognitive predictors of victimization risk in this vulnerable population.

References

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On the Move with the TSS Group

Heading to [COVA](#) this year? Well, come on by to check out two panels involving members of the TSS Group.

- On Tuesday from 10:30-12, **Kerry Gagnon** will co-present with **SAIC's** very own **Michelle Spradling** on Denver's Women's Health Project.
- On Tuesday from 1:30-3, **Tejas Srinivas** and **Michelle Lee** will co-present with **Emily Nourse** from **Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center** on "Using Data to Inform Wrap-Around Legal Services," drawing on the Partnering to Access Legal Services (PALS) Project.

Earlier this year, Anne presented at a small meeting of researchers convened by the National Institute of Justice on "Elder Mistreatment: Using Theory in Research." A detailed summer of the meeting is now [available](#).

TSS Group Alum, Dr. **Ryan Matlow**, accepted a new position as Director of Research Programs, Stanford Early Life Stress and Pediatric Anxiety Program, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, Stanford University.

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[HTTP://WWW.DU.EDU/TSSGROUP](http://www.du.edu/tssgroup)





Advice for Parents on Communicating with Their Daughters about Dating Violence

Becca Babcock, 4th Year Graduate Student

ExpertBeacon.com is a website dedicated to providing professional and trustworthy advice to the public about many of life's challenges; a reliable "beacon" of information amongst the landscape of abounding, questionable sources on the internet. ExpertBeacon publishes expert guidance for twelve diverse content areas ranging from advice on health, wellness or relationship issues to tips on managing a business or keeping an exceptional home and garden. With readers from over 20 countries accessing the website's content that is infamous for its clear and concise presentation of "Do's and Don'ts," ExpertBeacon represents a unique opportunity for the TSS Group to disseminate information derived from its research initiatives (e.g. Healthy Adolescent Relationship Project: HARP) to the broader public.

I wrote a web-article for ExpertBeacon's "Raising Teens" section in the Family and Parenting content area titled: "How should you talk to your daughter about dating violence?" (to visit the article, click [here](#)). This article began by emphasizing the prevalence of dating violence—i.e. 1 in 3 teens experience some form of dating abuse in the United States—to encourage parent readers to ponder the idea that the issue of dating violence could apply to their daughters. Although adolescent boys can also certainly be victims of dating violence, the article focused primarily on providing advice for parents to talk to their daughters, since adolescent girls are more frequent victims of dating violence. Despite the focus on communication between parents and their teenage daughters, much of the article's content is also applicable (or can be readily modified) to discuss dating violence with teenage sons as well.

Five "Do's" were presented as recommendations about how to promote open communication between parent and teen as well as explain/discuss important dating violence topics: 1) create an atmosphere for communication; 2) discuss gender roles, power and control in relationships; 3) talk about dating "red flags" and how to recognize them; 4) encourage your daughter to trust and assert herself; 5) develop a plan for your daughter to stay safe. Advice urging parents to explain the concept of dating "red flags" to their daughters and how to identify them was derived from one of the dating violence prevention programs implemented with teenage girls in the child welfare system as part of TSS group's HARP study. Specifically, literature suggests that increasing risk detection abilities in dating situations, including recognizing one's own bodily signals of discomfort or fear, can help teenagers in navigating tumultuous dating situations. The article suggested that parents attempt to assuage concerns that their daughters' could have about being perceived by others as "bossy" (based on societal gender stereotypes) if they assert themselves to their dating partner. The article also emphasized the importance of parents constructing a plan of action in collaboration with their daughter so she can keep herself safe if she were to find herself in a dangerous dating situation.

The article also described five "Don'ts" for parents who would like to facilitate a positive, candid conversation with their daughters about dating violence: 1) Do not judge or criticize; 2) Do not shy away from discussing sexual assault or rape; 3) Do not believe that your daughter must be dating for you to discuss this topic; 4) Do not be a know it all; 5) Do not pressure your daughter to talk if she is not ready. The "Don'ts" were created with the intent of attuning parents to how their pre-conceived expectations about dating or how the conversation "should" go as well as their verbal and non-verbal communication can either facilitate or hinder a dating violence conversation between parent and daughter. We hope this advice can help encourage parents to take the leap in opening up a conversation about dating violence with their daughters; another step in the direction towards prevention.



Sure, we know lots of facts and figures about unwanted sexual experiences.



But, facts and figures don't tell the whole story.
Each woman's story is unique.
Learn about the Women's Health Project.

- ✓ Have you had an unwanted sexual experience in the last year?
- ✓ Did you tell someone (such as a counselor, advocate, police officer, health provider) about that experience?
- ✓ Are you 18 years of age or older?

Women who answer yes to these questions are invited to participate in the Women's Health Project.

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

- 4 interviews over 9 months with a female interviewer.
- The first interview takes 3 hours; the others each take 2 hours.
- Everything in the interview is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
- We are trying to learn:
 - ... what can people say and do to help after an unwanted sexual experience?
 - ... what is it like to talk to counselors, health providers, advocates, lawyers, or the police?
 - ... what makes it easier or harder to cope?
 - ... what is it like to try to find services that can help?

WILL MY COUNSELOR OR THE POLICE KNOW THAT I AM IN THE STUDY?

No. We will not tell anyone you are in the study. We keep everything you tell us about your experiences private.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY TIME?

Yes! To thank you for your time, you can receive up to \$230 total, as follows: \$50 for the first interview, \$55 for the second interview, \$60 for the third interview, \$65 for the fourth interview.

WHAT ABOUT GETTING TO THE INTERVIEW?

We can help with cab fare, bus tokens, or \$10 cash for transportation costs. You tell us which you prefer.

CONTACTING US

For more information, please contact us:

Private email: healthstudy@du.edu Private phone: 303.871.4103 Website: www.du.edu/tssgroup/womenshealth

Agency information for the project is available at <http://www.du.edu/tssgroup/womenshealth/agencyinfo>