
Exploring Latinx Youth Experiences of Digital Dating Abuse

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Digital dating abuse (DDA), which is the use of social media and mobile phones to abuse a dating partner, is a common and harmful form of dating violence among youths. To date, this issue has not been studied among Latinx youths. The current study examined DDA among a sample of 70 Latinx youths with dating experience, using survey data on participants' experiences with traditional forms of offline dating violence, DDA victimization and perpetration, healthy relationship knowledge, and self-reported conflict resolution skills. Results showed that Latinx youths experienced DDA and that there was a strong link between DDA and offline forms of dating abuse. Most participants reported high levels of healthy relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills, but results indicated a link between DDA experience and fewer positive conflict resolution behaviors. The study has implications for the assessment and prevention of DDA among diverse populations of youths, supports the incorporation of conflict resolution skills in dating violence prevention efforts, and calls for future research on the cultural context of DDA among Latinx youths.

KEY WORDS: *adolescents; cyber abuse; dating violence; Latinx youths; social media*

Teenage dating abuse (TDA) poses a significant public health risk to youths in the United States. TDA involves a repeated pattern of behaviors to exert power and control over a dating partner, and comes in many forms including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor, & Kann, 2017). A recent meta-analysis found that among teenage romantic partners, physical dating violence, such as hitting and kicking, occurs in 20% of teenage relationships and forced sexual activity was reported in about 10% of relationships (Wincentak, Connolly, & Card, 2017).

The use of digital media technology in teenage interpersonal interactions is ubiquitous in the United States, with 95% of teenagers reporting that they have access to a smartphone (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). As digital media technologies, including social media and mobile phone use, have become an increasingly important means of communication for youths in dating relationships, these media have also come under investigation as a potential context and tool for dating violence (Henry & Powell, 2018). When social media and mobile phones are used in a pattern of behavior to harass, pressure, coerce, or threaten a current or former dating partner, it is

called digital dating abuse (DDA) (Guerra-Reyes et al., 2017; Reed, Tolman, & Ward, 2017). Youths who experience TDA in their face-to-face relationships are also likely to experience DDA (Kernsmith, Victor, & Smith-Darden, 2018; Temple et al., 2016).

As research on DDA emerges, most data come from majority-White youths and young adult populations. The current study sought to focus on understanding DDA among Latinx youths (*Latinx* is a gender-inclusive term for people of Latin American origin or descent), an underrepresented and underserved youth population in the United States. Given that the dating experiences of Latinx youths may vary when compared with their White peers, it is likely that their digital dating experiences may vary too (Vagi, O'Malley Olsen, Basile, & Vivolo-Kantor, 2015). Despite implications for how social workers, educators, and mental health professionals understand and support Latinx youths' healthy dating relationships, to our knowledge, studies have yet to explicitly examine DDA among this population. Therefore, the current study explored the frequency and experience of DDA among a sample of Latinx youths, including their knowledge of relationship skills and conflict resolution as a possible target for DDA prevention.

DDA AMONG TEENAGERS

DDA is a common and harmful form of TDA. DDA behaviors include monitoring or controlling behaviors, directly aggressive behaviors, and sexual coercion or unwanted sexual behaviors (Reed et al., 2017). Specific behaviors include pressuring a partner for sexual photos (sexting), sending or posting mean or hurtful public messages about your partner, or looking at a partner's private digital information without their permission. Recent surveys of high school-age youths found that a quarter reported experiencing DDA (Korchmaros, Ybarra, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Boyd, & Lenhart, 2013; Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). The potential consequences of experiencing these behaviors include declines in physical and mental health and well-being (Zweig, Lachman, Yahner, & Dank, 2014). Therefore, researchers and practitioners should focus on digital contexts to understand the full scope of psychological dating abuse.

Previous research suggests that girls and boys experience DDA at about equal rates, but that the experience and context of these DDA experiences differ (Reed et al., 2017; Yahner, Dank, Zweig, & Lachman, 2015; Zweig et al., 2014). For example, girls are more likely to experience pressure to engage in sexting and are also more likely to be upset by DDA experiences than boys (Kernsmith et al., 2018; Reed et al., 2017). Thus, we examined gender differences in DDA among Latinx youths.

DATING, DATING VIOLENCE, AND RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION AMONG LATINX YOUTHS

Latinx youths experience specific and unique familial expectations around dating. Previous research has shown that Latinx families attribute familial honor to a daughter's sexual reputation (Rueda, Nagoshi, & Williams, 2014). In a qualitative study of 75 youths, interviewed in groups separated by gender and ethnicity, Latinx participants reported that they were forbidden to date and kept their romantic relationships a secret from parents (Rueda et al., 2014). In another study, Latinx female youths were more likely than youths from other ethnic backgrounds to avoid any conversations with their parents about healthy relationships (McCullough Cosgrove, LeCroy, Fordney, & Voelkel, 2018). Given the possible greater taboo of adolescent romantic relationships (especially for girls) and lack of

communication about romantic relationships with their parents, Latinx youths may be less likely to discuss unhealthy relationship behaviors or dating abuse with their parents. Therefore, the current study sought to examine Latinx adolescents' knowledge about healthy relationship skills and conflict resolution, and whether this knowledge is associated with experiences of DDA.

Research on dating communication and dating violence among Latinx youths remains an understudied topic. Although no studies have focused specifically on DDA among Latinx youths, some larger studies included a significant minority of Latinx youths in their sample. For example, a study of 1,008 youths with 36.5% identifying as Latinx found that 13% of all participants reported experiencing digital monitoring behaviors and digital pressure to talk about sex from their partner in the past three months (Dick et al., 2014). A more recent study in which the participants were 37% Latinx youths found that 51% of all those surveyed reported experiencing DDA and 32% reported DDA perpetration (Cutbush, Williams, Miller, Gibbs, & Clinton-Sherrod, 2018). Although these studies did not disaggregate their findings by racial or ethnic group, results suggest that DDA is an issue for Latinx youths.

The few studies that focus on offline forms of TDA among Latinx adolescents find that they experience TDA at rates similar to those of their White peers (Sabina, Cuevas, & Cotignola-Pickens, 2016) with sexual TDA being experienced at significantly higher rates (Kann et al., 2014). However, other research found that physical TDA was higher for Latinx students than non-Latinx White students (Wechsler, 2012). Approximately 14% to 19.5% of Latinx youths reported experiencing offline dating abuse behaviors (Kann et al., 2014; Sabina et al., 2016).

Latinx youths have widespread access to digital media technology; a recent Pew Research study found that 95% of Latinx youths report having access to a smartphone and 82% have access to a computer at home (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Given differences in the experiences of TDA among Latinx youths, combined with the widespread use and increasing social importance of digital communication, it is imperative to examine DDA among Latinx youths.

CURRENT STUDY

The current study is the first, to our knowledge, to explore the experience of DDA among a sample of

Latinx youths. This study explored the frequency of three types of DDA: digital direct aggression, digital monitoring and control, and digital sexual abuse behaviors. We also explored participants' knowledge of healthy relationship and conflict resolution skills. Our four research questions and hypotheses are (1) For Latinx youths, how common are the three forms of DDA? Are there gender differences in DDA victimization and perpetration? We expected that rates of reported DDA would be similar among our sample of Latinx youths to those in other cultural groups, as studies including a significant portion of Latinx youths found that DDA was common. Most DDA research finds equal rates of DDA frequency among girls and boys, therefore, we expected this to be the same for Latinx youths. (2) What is the association between online and offline dating abuse? We hypothesized that like other cultural groups, Latinx youths would report strong positive associations between online and offline dating abuse. (3) How much dating relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills do Latinx youths report? (4) Are relationship knowledge and self-reported conflict resolution skills related to their DDA experience? The third and fourth research questions are largely exploratory. The goal of this study was to explore DDA experiences within a sample of Latinx youths and examine their relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills as potential areas of future social work intervention to prevent DDA.

METHOD

Participants

High school students participated in a quasi-experimental study assessing the effectiveness of a school-based TDA prevention program on the Central Coast of California. A total of 174 students were recruited to participate in the program, and 143 of these students completed baseline surveys. Among those, 70 students identified as Latinx or Hispanic and reported dating experience. This sample of 70 students was used for all analyses in the current study. From the sample of 70 Latinx students with dating experience, most participants identified as girls (73.1%), one student identified as genderqueer or transgender, and participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years ($M = 15.65$). Students were in grades 9 (35.7%), 10 (28.6%), 11 (15.7%), or 12 (20%). Most students (65.2%) participated in a free or reduced-price lunch program and most

(78.6%) reported dating or hooking up only with the opposite sex.

Procedure

The study was conducted in three large public high schools during the 2015–2016 school year and was approved by a university institutional review board for ethical research with human subjects. These schools agreed to take part in a TDA prevention program, and participants were recruited into the program and this study through advertisements in the school, a school assembly, and referrals by teachers and school counselors. Parent or guardian consent was obtained to participate in the study. Participation in the TDA prevention program was voluntary, and parents could opt out of the research study and still request to have their child participate in the program. Few parents ($n = 8$) opted out of the research study. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Students were asked to complete the online survey using school computers or school-provided iPads, under supervision of the research team during one 50-minute class period. Students were instructed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and could skip any question that they did not feel comfortable answering.

Measures

Dating Experience. All items in this section were created for or modified from our previous research (Reed et al., 2017) for use in this study. Participants were asked, “Are you currently in a dating relationship?” with yes or no as response options. If the response was affirmative, they were asked, “How long have you been in this relationship?” with response options ranging from 1 = less than a month to 5 = more than a year. Participants were also asked, “How old is your current or most recent dating partner?” with response options “The same age I am,” “One year younger than I am,” “One year older than I am,” “More than one year older than I am,” and “More than one year younger than I am.” Participants also reported the number of dating partners in the past year, with possible responses from 1 to 6+. Finally, participants were asked about their gender identification with options including girl/woman, boy/man, and transgender/genderqueer. Participants were then asked, “What is the gender of the people you typically date or hook up with?” with responses including only girls/women, mostly girls/women, both girls/women

and boys/men, mostly boys/men, and only boys/men. These items were used to determine whether participants had same-sex dating or sexual experience.

Healthy Relationship Knowledge. The six-item Perceived Relationship Knowledge Scale (Bradford, Wade Stewart, Higginbotham, & Skogrand, 2015) assessed healthy relationship knowledge. Example items included, “My knowledge of how to listen effectively to a partner” and “My awareness of the importance of spending time together,” with the following response options provided: 1 = was/is poor, 2 = was/is fair, 3 = was/is good, and 4 = was/is excellent ($\alpha = .85$ for the current sample). Items were modified to fit an adolescent sample, in that the word “spouse” was removed from some items that indicated “spouse/partner.”

Conflict Resolution Skills. A modified and expanded version of the Healthy Conflict Resolution in Peer and Dating Relationships Scale was used (Ball et al., 2012). This measure assesses frequency of 10 healthy conflict resolution behaviors when having an argument with a close friend or dating partner. We added 14 unhealthy conflict resolution behaviors to assess the frequency of both healthy and unhealthy conflict resolution behaviors when having an argument with a dating partner. For the adapted 24-item measure, participants were given the prompt: “In your current/most recent relationship, when you have a fight, how often do you do the following?” with items such as “Put off talking until we both calm down” and “Listen to their side of the story” from the original measure and, “Blame the other person for the problem” and “Yell at them,” which were added. Responses ranged from 1 = never to 5 = always ($\alpha = .86$ for the current sample).

Dating Violence Victimization and Perpetration. Experience with physical, sexual, and psychological TDA was assessed using measures from Foshee et al. (1998) that were designed for a school-based TDA prevention program evaluation. Participants were given the prompt: “How often has your current or most recent dating partner done the following things to you?” and then were asked about psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. All Cronbach’s alphas shown are for the current sample. Psychological abuse victimization was measured using 13 items, such as “Said things to hurt my feelings on purpose” and “Threatened to hurt me” ($\alpha = .95$). Parallel items were used to

measure perpetration ($\alpha = .64$). Physical abuse victimization was measured using 14 items. Participants were given a similar prompt but told to only include it when the dating partner “did it to you first” and not count self-defense, with items including “Slapped me” and “Tried to choke me” ($\alpha = .89$). Parallel items were used to measure perpetration ($\alpha = .75$). Sexual abuse victimization was measured using two items from the Foshee et al. (1998) measure and one item from Zweig et al. (2014). Participants answered if their partner forced them into sexual activities or pressured them to have sex when they did not want to ($\alpha = .86$). For all subscales, response options ranged from 0 = never to 3 = very often. Parallel items measured perpetration, but no students reported perpetrating sexual abuse.

DDA Victimization and Perpetration. DDA was assessed with a 36-item measure (Reed et al., 2017; Reed, Ward, Tolman, Lippman, & Seabrook, 2018) of victimization and perpetration of three types of DDA behaviors: (1) digital direct aggression, (2) digital monitoring and control, and (3) digital sexual abuse. For victimization, participants were given the following prompt: “How often has your current or most recent dating partner done the following things to you using the Internet or a cell phone?” Response options ranged from 0 = never to 3 = very often. All Cronbach’s alphas shown are for the current sample. The Digital Direct Aggression Victimization subscale (eight items, $\alpha = .79$) measured digital behaviors meant to hurt, humiliate, or threaten a dating partner using social media or a mobile phone (for example, “Sent me a threatening message” and “Spread rumors about me”). Parallel items measured perpetration ($\alpha = .34$). One item from this scale was removed from reliability analysis (“Threatened to harm my partner physically”) because it was not reported by any of the participants. The Digital Monitoring and Control Victimization subscale (six items, $\alpha = .91$) involved using social media or mobile phones to keep track, intrude on the privacy, and control the activities and relationships of a dating partner (for example, “Monitored who I talk to and am friends with” and “Looked at my private information [text messages, e-mails, etc.] to check up on me without permission.”) Parallel items measured perpetration ($\alpha = .74$). The Digital Sexual Abuse Victimization subscale (four items, $\alpha = .82$) included pressuring a dating partner for online or offline sexual behavior and engaging in unwanted distribution of sexual images (for example,

“Sent me a sexual or naked photo that I did not ask for” and “Pressured me to sext”). Parallel items measured perpetration ($\alpha = .76$).

RESULTS

Students were selected because they had dating experience, and 34.3% of students were currently in a dating relationship at the time of survey, with most in this relationship for less than a year (83.3%). About half of participants (53.2%) reported having one dating partner in the last calendar year, 30.6% reported two partners, 8.1% reported three partners, 3.2% reported five partners, and 4.8% ($n = 3$) reported having six or more dating partners.

Dating Violence and DDA Experience among Latinx Youths

Analyses showed that all three types of offline TDA and all three types of DDA were common among this sample of Latinx youths in their current or most recent relationship as compared with rates in other cultural groups. Table 1 displays the prevalence and mean frequency of reported TDA and DDA experiences for all subscales. *T* tests revealed no significant gender differences for both

TDA and DDA subscales, but there were some differences by individual item. To correct for multiple tests, a *p* value of .01 was selected to minimize Type II error. Table 2 provides the frequency of each type of DDA behavior by gender. The most commonly reported types of DDA victimization behaviors among this sample of Latinx youths were pressure to sext (27.2%), pressure to have sex or do other sexual activities (27.0%), and most of the digital monitoring and control behaviors (between 19.6% and 33.7%). There were gender differences in some individual DDA victimization behaviors that met or approached our adjusted statistical significance. Girls were more likely to report that their partner sent a mean or hurtful private message, $t(63.97) = 2.64, p = .010$ and that their partner looked at their private digital information to check up on them without permission, $t(62.07) = 2.81, p = .007$. There was only one significant gender difference in the perpetration of individual DDA behaviors. Girls were found to be more likely than boys to report pressuring their partner to sext, $t(48) = 2.86, p = .006$, as no boys reported pressuring their partner to sext. This indicates that although there are no gender differences overall in the frequency reported of

Table 1: Rates and Frequency of Teenage Dating Abuse and Digital Dating Abuse among Latinx Youths in Current or Most Recent Relationship ($N = 72$)

Abuse Type	Percent of Sample Experienced	Frequency <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Frequency Range (0–3)
Dating violence experiences			
Sexual abuse			
Perpetration	0.0	—	—
Victimization	28.6	0.25 (0.60)	0–3
Physical abuse			
Perpetration	24.6	0.05 (0.12)	0–0.64
Victimization	40.0	0.14 (0.29)	0–1.64
Psychological abuse			
Perpetration	44.9	0.11 (0.16)	0–0.62
Victimization	59.4	0.40 (0.63)	0–2.77
Digital dating abuse experiences			
Digital sexual abuse			
Perpetration	18.6	0.10 (0.30)	0–1.75
Victimization	37.1	0.37 (0.65)	0–3
Digital direct aggression			
Perpetration	36.2	0.10 (0.16)	0–0.5
Victimization	44.3	0.23 (0.40)	0–2.13
Digital monitoring/control			
Perpetration	53.6	0.28 (0.41)	0–2.00
Victimization	57.1	0.58 (0.77)	0–2.67

Note: For the range of mean frequency, 0 = never happened and 3 = very often.

Table 2: Percentage of Digital Dating Abuse (DDA) Behavior Reporting by Subscale and Gender

DDA Subscale	Total Victimization	Girls (n = 49)		Boys (n = 17)	
		Victimization	Perpetration	Victimization	Perpetration
Digital sexual abuse					
Pressured to sext	27.2	30.6	16.3**	17.6	0.0
Sent a sexual/naked photo that the partner did not want/ask for	18.5	16.7	10.4	5.9	5.9
Sent a sexual or naked photo/video to others without permission	5.4	4.1	2.0	5.9	6.2
Pressured to have sex or do other sexual activities	27.0	33.3	4.2	11.8	0.0
Total	37.1	36.7	20.4	29.4	11.8
Digital direct aggression					
Shared an embarrassing photo or video with others without permission	20.7	14.3	16.7	23.5	29.4
Sent a mean or hurtful <i>private</i> message	24.2	28.6**	18.7	11.8	17.6
Posted a mean or hurtful <i>public</i> message	8.7	10.2	8.3	0.0	0.0
Spread a rumor	19.8	16.3	4.2	18.7	5.9
Sent a threatening message	12.1	16.3	2.1	6.2	0.0
Threatened to physically harm	10.1	14.9**	0.0	0.0	0.0
Used cell phone or online account to pretend to be me/my partner	8.8	8.2	0.0	0.0	5.9
Used information from a social networking site to tease or put down	6.6	6.1	4.2	0.0	5.9
Total	44.3	44.9	36.7	35.3	41.2
Digital monitoring and control					
Pressured to respond quickly to calls, texts, or other messages	33.7	36.7	25.0	29.4	23.5
Monitored whereabouts and activities	33.3	33.3	29.8	31.2	23.5
Sent so many messages that I/my partner felt uncomfortable	32.6	36.7	6.2	29.4	0.0
Pressured for passwords to access cell phone or online accounts	20.9	22.4	8.3	13.3	6.2
Looked at private information to check up on me/my partner without permission	19.6	24.5**	12.5	6.2	11.8
Monitored who I/my partner talks to/is friends with	41.3	44.9	29.2	47.1	41.2
Total	57.1	57.1	53.1	58.8	58.8

Note: Figures shown in bold represent significant gender differences, with greater mean frequency bolded.
** $p < .01$.

each DDA subscale, several individual behaviors occur more often among Latinx girls.

Association between Online and Offline Dating Violence

Zero-order correlation analyses (see Table 3) examined whether the frequency of online DDA experi-

ence was associated with offline TDA experience among this sample of Latinx youths. To correct for multiple tests, we restricted the p value to .01 to minimize Type II error. As hypothesized, there was a strong positive correlation overall between the three DDA subscales and offline forms of dating violence, with the exception of sexual abuse perpetra-

Table 3: Zero-Order Correlations between Digital Dating Abuse Experiences, Offline Teenage Dating Abuse Experiences, Healthy Relationships Knowledge, and Conflict Resolution Skills

Subscale	Digital Sexual Abuse		Digital Direct Aggression		Digital Monitoring/Control	
	Victimization	Perpetration	Victimization	Perpetration	Victimization	Perpetration
Psychological victimization	.638***	.243	.860***	.510***	.807***	.567***
Psychological perpetration	.343**	.049	.329**	.643***	.389**	.268
Physical victimization	.354**	.019	.692***	.179	.588***	.495***
Physical perpetration	.184	-.017	.562***	.181	.417***	.368**
Sexual victimization	.584***	.068	.822***	.261	.660***	.351**
Sexual perpetration						
Relationship knowledge	-.084	.039	-.211	-.272	-.137	.055
Conflict resolution skills	-.177	-.026	-.355**	-.260	-.366**	-.059

Note: No participants reported sexual abuse perpetration.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$.

tion. Digital sexual abuse perpetration and digital direct aggression perpetration showed little to no association with offline forms of TDA among these Latinx youths.

Association between Relationship Skills and DDA Experience

Latinx youths in this sample reported high levels of healthy dating relationship knowledge ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.60$) and conflict resolution skills ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.60$). T tests examined gender differences, and no significant gender differences were found. See Table 3 for zero-order correlations between healthy dating relationship knowledge, conflict resolution skills, and DDA experience. To correct for multiple tests, we restricted the p value to .01 to minimize Type II error. As expected, there was a significant negative association between both digital direct aggression victimization and digital monitoring and control, and conflict resolution skills. Participants who reported that their partner perpetrated more frequent digital direct aggression or digital monitoring control in their relationship were less likely to use positive conflict resolution skills during an argument with their partner.

We split the sample by gender and ran the zero-order correlations again to determine if there were different patterns of associations for Latinx girls and boys. For Latinx girls, the negative association between digital direct aggression and conflict resolution skills remained, $r(49) = -.363$, $p = .010$, as did the negative association between digital monitoring and control victimization and conflict resolution skills, $r(49) = -.446$, $p = .001$. No significant correlations remained between DDA, healthy rela-

tionship knowledge, and conflict resolution skills for boys.

DISCUSSION

This study explored reports of DDA, associations between online and offline TDA, and healthy relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills among 70 Latinx high school students from the Central Coast of California. The TDA victimization rates in this convenience sample of Latinx youths were 28.6% for sexual abuse, 40% for physical abuse, and 59.4% for psychological abuse, which were higher than rates reported in a recent meta-analysis of teenage romantic partners (for example, 20% experienced physical dating violence; 10% experienced forced sexual activity) (Wincentak et al., 2017). Similarly, DDA rates of 37.1% for digital sexual abuse, 44.3% for digital direct aggression, and 57.1% for digital monitoring and control in this sample were much higher than 25% of DDA found in past surveys (see, for example, Korchmaros et al., 2013), although other research has found similar rates of these DDA types (see, for example, Reed et al., 2017).

There are a few possible reasons for higher-than-expected rates of dating violence and DDA in this sample. First, there might have been selection bias related to how participants were recruited for this study. This sample was drawn from students who elected to, or were directly recruited into, participation in a school-based TDA prevention program. The Latinx youths were drawn from one community, and thus do not represent all Latinx youths in the United States. Prior research found higher rates of offline physical (Wechsler, 2012)

and sexual dating violence (Kann et al., 2014) for Latinx students than non-Latinx White students. Thus, it is possible that Latinx youths are more likely than others to experience TDA and DDA. However, before conclusions can be drawn, these findings should be replicated with a representative sample of Latinx youths.

TDA and DDA perpetration rates mirrored or were lower than the rates of victimization in each category. Lower rates of DDA perpetration compared with victimization is consistent with previous studies (see, for example, Reed et al., 2017; Zweig et al., 2013). Self-reported rates of offline sexual abuse perpetration were lower than rates of victimization; no participants reported perpetuating sexual abuse, despite 28.6% of participants reporting experiencing sexual abuse victimization. This discrepancy suggests that participants drawn to this study are either less likely to engage in sexual abuse perpetration, or more influenced by social desirability for sexual abuse perpetration than for other TDA perpetration behaviors.

Gender and DDA

There were no statistically significant gender differences in experience of the three subscale types of DDA. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as inferences were drawn from a relatively small sample size of 70 Latinx youths. Reports of digital sexual abuse victimization and perpetration were trending higher among girls across three of the four individual digital sexual abuse behaviors (with the exception of “Sent a sexual or naked photo/video to others without permission”), but further research with a larger sample size is needed to confirm this trend. There were significant or approaching significant differences in individual DDA behaviors. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to report pressuring their dating partner to sext and to report that their partner sent them a mean or hurtful private message and looked at private information to check up on them without permission. These results were somewhat consistent with the emerging DDA literature among primarily White youths, in the sense that many studies find equal rates of DDA experience for boys and girls. However, DDA research also indicates that sexual DDA may be more likely to be experienced by girls, and DDA may have differential negative emotional and behavioral impacts on girls (Reed et al., 2017). In addition, the very low rates of digital direct aggression reported by boys in the cur-

rent sample is unique and suggests that factors of sample size or sample selection may have affected results. Further research on Latinx youths is warranted to discern whether DDA gender dynamics among Latinx youths mirrors or differs from that of other groups.

Association between DDA and Offline Dating Violence

Results were consistent with prior research that found a link between online DDA and offline TDA experiences (Kernsmith et al., 2018; Reed et al., 2016). Like other cultural groups, this study supported that Latinx youths who experience DDA are also likely experiencing offline abuse, and vice versa (Kernsmith et al., 2018). However, this association was not wholly consistent across all types of online and offline victimization and perpetration. Significant associations were found between several DDA victimization and perpetration subscales and offline dating violence victimization subscales. However, digital sexual abuse perpetration was not associated with any types of offline dating violence victimization and perpetration, and digital direct aggression perpetration was only associated with offline psychological abuse victimization and perpetration. Conversely, there was a strong association between DDA monitoring and control perpetration and all types of offline victimization and perpetration. These results indicate that although DDA is conceptually similar to offline psychological abuse, all forms of DDA were not associated with offline abuse as we expected. It is possible that the characteristics and widespread consequences of digital media do not allow it to neatly map onto offline dating violence. Perhaps DDA provides a unique opportunity for a different subset of youths, particularly Latinx youths, to engage in TDA.

Healthy Relationship Knowledge, Conflict Resolution Skills, and DDA

Results indicated that boys and girls alike reported strong and healthy dating relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills. There were significant associations between conflict resolution skills and DDA in the sample overall and for girls separately, but not for boys. These results indicate that less frequent use of positive conflict resolution skills was associated with more experience (both perpetration and victimization) with DDA, particularly for girls. These results might be supported by

investigating these associations with a larger sample size, especially for boys. Improving positive conflict resolution skills may prevent unhealthy digital dating behaviors in dating relationships. It is important to note that this finding does not suggest that youths are responsible for preventing their partner from perpetrating offline dating violence or DDA by improving their conflict resolution skills. However, maladaptive relationship communication has been associated with TDA in a study of racially and ethnically diverse urban youths (Rueda, Yndo, Williams, & Shorey, 2018). As Rueda et al. (2018) argued, teaching conflict resolution skills should not be the sole aim of TDA prevention programs, but it can be a helpful and important component.

DDA and Latinx Youths

Cultural context may influence dating relationships for Latinx youths (Milbrath, Ohlson, & Eyre, 2009). Future research should explore the influence of cultural socialization around dating, violence, and gender to better understand the unique cultural experience of Latinx youths around DDA. This research should measure youth endorsement of Latinx conceptualizations of gender and gender roles and should also include measures of acculturation. For example, Latinx cultural models of relationships are rooted in cultural mores and romantic care factors such as *familismo* (that is, the needs of the family take priority over individual needs), and *respeto* (that is, deference to authority—in this case, the authority of the parent) (Haglund et al., 2019; Malhotra, Gonzalez-Guarda, & Mitchell, 2015; Stein, Gonzalez, Cupito, Kiang, & Supple, 2015). Communication within relationships for Latinx adolescents is also rooted in the gender role expectations and values of *machismo* (that is, boys as strong protectors and figures of authority in relationships) and *marianismo* (that is, girls as virginal, unspoiled, and submissive with strong devotion to their family) (Deardorff, Tschann, & Flores, 2008; Rueda & Williams, 2015). Future research should explore how familismo, respeto, machismo, and marianismo might serve as risk or protective factors for DDA experience among Latinx youths.

Research indicates that Latinx cultural expectations may be increasingly flexible for more recent generations of Latinx youths in the United States. In a longitudinal study of 246 Mexican-origin participants, Latinx girls demonstrated more declines in their endorsement of rigid gender role attitudes

than Latinx boys over time, potentially leading to opportunities for relationship conflict in heterosexual dating relationships if gender expectations do not align (Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, McHale, Wheeler, & Perez-Brena, 2012). A recent qualitative study of 10 Latinx heterosexual couples found that male teenagers demonstrated high levels of what scholars are calling adaptive machismo, which includes values and activities such as emotional availability, demonstrations of affection, desire to financially care for a female partner, responsibility in child rearing, and responsibility to the community or friends into the individual's more traditional experience of machismo (Williams & Rueda, 2016). This adaptive machismo may be a protective factor for adolescent relationships and decrease male-partner perpetration of abusive behaviors. Therefore, the emerging literature on Latinx cultural values and the association with dating violence are mixed; future research is needed and should include digital forms of abuse.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of this study, including an exclusively Latinx sample and in-depth survey of DDA and TDA, there are limitations that should be addressed with future research. First, our participants represent a group of high school students who had dating experience, were seeking participation in a TDA prevention program, and were able to obtain parental consent. This might explain why their ratings of TDA were relatively high; perhaps they were seeking support. In addition, data were cross-sectional with a small sample, limiting the ability to detect variance. Data were collected with one group of Latinx youths from one community and are not representative of all nationalities and cultural groups that represent the U.S. Latinx population. The perpetration scales had lower internal consistency reliability than the victimization scales. It is difficult to determine whether low reliability was due to low numbers of reported perpetration, cultural differences in the experience of DDA, or other factors. It is possible that people who are perpetrators of violence are hesitant to report the full scope of perpetration for social desirability reasons. Finally, this measure has never been used with an exclusively Latinx sample. Future research is needed to better understand the reliability and validity of TDA perpetration scales, particularly for Latinx participants.

Implications

This study has important implications for social work practitioners and educators working with Latinx youths. DDA is experienced by Latinx youths and likely occurs in a constellation of other dating abuse experiences. The current study suggests that as in other studies of DDA among primarily White samples, there is a strong link between online and offline dating abuse. Therefore, social workers should incorporate this knowledge into their interventions with teenagers who might be experiencing or participating in DDA. To do so, social workers should include digital forms of abuse in any assessments or interventions with Latinx youths involved in TDA. If practitioners and educators only ask students about possible physical, sexual, and psychological abuse without asking about their digital interactions with dating partners, they might be missing key parts of teenagers' experiences. Safety planning around TDA can also include digital media, such as blocking an abusive partner on social media sites or changing their phone number. Teenagers are unlikely to tell anyone about their dating violence experiences, and when they do tell someone, it is most likely to be a peer (Black & Weisz, 2004; Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Molidor & Tolman, 1998). Social workers should be invested in training teenagers how to respond if a friend tells them about a DDA experience, including how to identify problematic digital dating behavior and how to connect someone with resources. This is particularly important within minority cultural groups, as teenagers might be most likely to access resources that are culturally sensitive.

The current study also has important implications for preventing DDA. Schools may want to include healthy relationship knowledge and conflict resolution skills as a universal feature in health or other relevant courses. Knowledge acquisition may not be enough to alter dating behaviors, and conflict resolution skills are likely not sufficient to prevent DDA at its most severe. However, knowledge about healthy relationships may help those experiencing more isolated unhealthy digital dating behaviors, as this abuse may result from lack of relationship skills rather than behaviors motivated by power and control. Practitioners should include DDA and TDA items in schoolwide screenings to proactively identify students who are experiencing dating abuse and connect them to services that may help interrupt the cycle of abuse and help develop

healthy relationship skills. We also encourage social workers to include teenagers in DDA prevention efforts whenever possible. The way that youths use and understand the role of digital media in their dating relationships is shaped by their cultural beliefs and norms. Including youths from various cultural backgrounds and identities as peer advocates to prevent TDA in their community would help to ensure that efforts to prevent digital forms of TDA are generationally and culturally relevant. Further research is needed to understand cultural values, acculturation, and how these may be used in a strengths-based approach to healthy relationship promotion and TDA prevention. **SWR**

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