

Is Adolescent Sibling Violence a Precursor to College Dating Violence?

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Objective: To determine whether experiencing sibling violence in adolescence is a significant predictor for later dating violence. The influence of parent-to-child and parent-to-parent violence is also explored. **Methods:** A modified version of the CTS2 was administered to community college students. The survey instrument used the CTS2 psychological and physical assault subscales. **Results:** Adolescent sibling violence was a predictor for college dating violence. Males re-

ported experiencing more sibling violence than females did, but females reported experiencing more dating violence, both as perpetrators and victims. **Conclusion:** Further research is needed to improve understanding of the reasons for and the long-term consequences of sibling violence.

Key words: sibling violence, dating violence, conflict tactics scales

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During the last decade youth violence has emerged as a major public health problem. Responsive publications such as *The Surgeon General's Report on Youth Violence* (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html>) and the *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention Sourcebook for Community Action* (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.html>) document this prob-

lem. Although recent events have called attention to youth violence, it is not a new phenomenon. In fact, various forms of violence, including youth violence, child abuse, and other family violence, have existed since biblical times. However, as with child abuse and family violence, society has been slow to recognize youth violence.

Despite its presence in American society, family violence did not gain prominence until the 1960s. Child abuse was afforded social significance following a description of the battered child syndrome in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.¹ Initial interest in dating or courtship violence was spurred by a suspected link between family-of-origin violence and later family-of-procreation violence.² Research spanning the last 2 decades indicates that dating violence is as extensive as marital violence.³ Researchers have come to understand the importance of studying dating violence when attempting to identify causes and patterns of intimate partner violence, because adult intimate-partner violence

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tends to expose behavior patterns that may have been initiated early in life.⁴

The feminist movement brought increased attention to the prevalence of domestic violence.⁵ However, the causes of spouse abuse, as well as effective interventions, continue to elude researchers. Domestic violence remains widespread as evidenced by the annual figures citing nearly 1.5 million women and 835,000 men who were raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner.⁶

As many as 3.3 million American wives and more than a quarter of a million American husbands have experienced severe violence.⁷ Among unmarried couples rates of interpersonal violence may be equal to those of their married counterparts.⁵ In addition, it is estimated that as many as 40% of adolescents have used some form of violence against a dating partner.⁸

Although marital violence, dating violence, and child abuse are commonly acknowledged forms of interpersonal violence, violence between siblings is rarely acknowledged, in spite of descriptions citing it as the most common form of violence in the American family.⁷ Understanding of the structure and process of sibling conflict is poor.^{8,9} In addition, sibling violence remains an underreported and inadequately studied form of family violence.^{10,11}

Sibling violence is estimated to occur in 60% of American families with more than one child living in the home.¹² Male and female siblings appear to be affected similarly, as noted by reports showing that 83% of males and 74% of females have perpetrated violence against a sibling.¹²

Although the specific causes of sibling violence are unknown, they are commonly associated with sibling rivalry, which is attributed to jealousy and competition for family resources.¹³⁻¹⁵ Many parents and scholars view this rivalry as part of a child's normal developmental process¹⁵⁻¹⁷ and see the behavior as inconsequential.^{13, 17} The possibility that sibling conflict results from anything other than normal sibling rivalry, or that sibling relationships contribute to the development of the child, is rarely considered.^{10,18,19}

Family violence research repeatedly makes reference to the cycle of violence that exists in some families.^{14,20-23} Gelles and Cornell define this cycle as the pas-

sage of violent behavior from one generation to another through parental modeling of violence as a means of conflict management.¹⁴ This violence is also described as "intergenerational," because the propensity to use violence for conflict management continues through generations of family members.¹² Straus and colleagues assert that within the family, a child's observation of violence between adults sends a message that violence is an appropriate means for resolving conflict.¹² Over time, the child internalizes these messages and then uses the sibling relationship(s) to practice and perfect behaviors modeled by their parents or caretakers.¹²

Bernard and Bernard demonstrate the relationship between observing parental violence in childhood and the subsequent expression of peer violence.²⁴ In their sample, the violence observed in the family of origin was shown to be the preferred mode of expressed violence in intimate peer relationships. These results support Steinmetz's assertion that the most common feature of aggression and violence among children is having experienced abuse or observed the abuse of other family members.²⁵ In fact, it has been suggested that violence among siblings may be a better predictor of later adult violence than observing violence between parents.²⁶

Previous research has identified a number of factors believed to contribute to violent behavior between siblings. These factors include the gender of the siblings, the age of the siblings, age difference between the siblings, birth order, and family size.^{12,27-35} There is no consensus among researchers as to each factor's specific contribution to the sibling violence.

Sibling violence is believed to peak as the oldest sibling in the dyad reaches the age of 10 to 14 years.¹² The decreased violence after that age is believed to result from better communication skills and, therefore, a decreased need for violence to resolve conflicts. In addition, as adolescence approaches children spend less time with family members and more time with peers; violence is believed to subside because the children do not spend as much time with one another.

As adolescents pull away from their siblings, their energies are focused on establishing and maintaining peer rela-

tionships. Older adolescents begin dating. Ostensibly, as the opportunities for sibling violence decline, the opportunity for experiencing dating violence emerges. It is not known whether the forms of violence experienced in the sibling relationship persist and become the preferred forms of conflict in the dating relationship. It has been demonstrated that violent behaviors experienced as a child at the hands of one's parents do carry forward into preferred forms of violence in adult conflicts with one's spouse or significant other.²⁴ Therefore, it is possible that violent behaviors expressed and received during childhood would carry forward into other childhood and adolescent peer relationships.^{26,36-38}

Many college dating relationships involve some form of physical violence,³⁹ as high as 75% in one study.⁴⁰ In addition, between 12% and 35% of high school students are perpetrators or victims of violence in their dating relationships.⁴¹ Compared to individuals with no self-reported experience with abuse, students who have been involved in a violent dating relationship held significantly less negative attitudes toward slapping a partner in both a dating or marital relationship.^{42,43}

The literature links observing marital violence in one's family of origin and experiencing both dating and marital violence in one's family of procreation. In addition, the sibling relationship may act as a blueprint for subsequent peer relationships.^{26,35,44,45} Although the plausibility of this claim appears reasonable, few published works investigating the connection between sibling and peer relationships are available,^{10,26,35,46-47} and even fewer studies address the relationship between adolescent sibling violence and young adult dating violence. If the occurrence of sibling violence increases the probability of subsequent violent interactions, then it is imperative that research focus on understanding the role of violence within the sibling relationship.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether experiencing sibling violence in adolescence is a significant predictor for later dating violence. For this study, sibling violence is characterized by intentional acts of violence (verbal or physical), that have a high potential for injuring the victimized sibling. Sibling violence can include a range of behaviors

such as being pushed, slapped, angrily grabbed, hit with a fist or object, kicked, choked, or assaulted with a gun, knife, or other weapon.¹⁴ Sibling abuse, sibling conflict, sibling violence, and sibling assault are considered to be synonymous terms. Additionally, no differentiation is made among step-, half, or full sibling status.

Dating violence is defined as an act of verbal or physical violence by at least one member of an unmarried dyad on the other within the context of a dating situation. The range of behaviors includes those cited previously. For this study any violence occurring in the context of a date is considered dating violence. The violence did not have to occur within a committed dating relationship.

METHODS

Data were collected from students attending a large urban community college in the southeastern United States. To facilitate the disclosure of sensitive information, the survey instrument was anonymous and self-administered. Participation was voluntary and without incentives.

Thirty-six sections of English I were surveyed during a 30-day period. Classes representing only one discipline were chosen to avoid the possibility of duplicate responses from participants. The status of English I as a general course requirement for most students provided an opportunity to obtain a sample closely representative of the general community college population. To accommodate class schedules, survey administration times were prearranged with course instructors. However, students were not informed of the survey prior to the date of administration. There was no opportunity for students absent on the day of administration to participate in this study. Due to scheduling incompatibility, 4 course sections were not surveyed. The study was approved by the institutional research review board of the sponsoring institution.

Participants

Data were collected from 538 students. Students who did not have siblings, were married, and/or were over the age of 30 years were excluded from this analysis (n=167). Therefore, the final sample consisted of 371 community college students. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 30

years ($M=20.43$, $SD 2.77$). All respondents were unmarried and 49.6% were female. Approximately 50% of the students reported their race/ethnicity as white, followed by 21.6% Hispanic, 14% black, 5.1% mixed, and the remaining 9.3% either Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or other descent. Approximately 81.7% of the sample comprised first-year students, and 13.7% were second-year students. The majority (60.2%) of participants reported their parents' marital status as "presently married to one another," and among other participants parents were either divorced (34.1%) or had never been married to one another (5.8%). Nearly 76% were either the oldest or second-oldest children in their family. The mean age difference between siblings was 4 years ($SD=3.9$).

Respondents were asked to designate the gender of the sibling with whom they experienced the most conflict during the referent age period of 10 to 14 years. Using the gender of the respondent and the gender of the designated sibling, sibling dyad composition was determined; the gender of the older sibling is presented first. Sibling dyads represented in the sample were Male/Female (28.9%), Female/Female (24.8%), Female/Male (24.0%) and Male/Male (22.3%).

Measures

A modified version of the revised conflict tactics scale (CTS2) was used to measure violence in family and dating situations. This study used 2 of the 5 subscales, namely, the psychological aggression and physical assault subscales.⁴⁸ The negotiation, injury, and sexual coercion scales were not used. Within the CTS2 questions relating to each category of violence, (ie, sibling, dating, parent to parent, and parent to child) are identical, and each item is presented in relationship pairs.

For example, a measure of perpetrating mild sibling violence asks respondents approximately how many times during the time they were 10 to 14 years of age they insulted or swore at their sibling and vice versa. A measure of severe dating violence perpetration asks respondents how many times during the past 12 months they have used a knife or gun against a date. Victimization is measured by asking how many times during the past 12 months a date had used a

knife or gun against the respondent.

Additional survey items designed to enhance content validity and reliability distinguish the CTS2 from the CTS1.⁴⁸ Also, CTS2 questions contain revised wording for better clarity and specificity and improved differentiation between minor and severe acts of violence.⁴⁸ Internal consistency reliability for the CTS2 psychological aggression subscale is .79 and .86 for the physical assault scale.⁴⁸ Preliminary evidence of construct validity is present. However, construct and discriminant validity analyses are ongoing. Because the CTS2 is conceptually and methodologically identical to the CTS, it is expected that its validity will be supported.⁴⁸ The CTS2 items are presented in relationship pairs, and the self-administered instrument requires approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Although there are several scoring methods for the CTS2, the most basic method was used, which employs summing the values in each response category. Responses for each item range from 0 to 6, with a response of 0 indicating the behavior never occurred and a response of 6 meaning the behavior occurred more than 20 times during the referent period. The referent period for sibling violence was specified as ages 10 to 14 years, and the referent period for dating violence was during the past 12 months. The total possible violence score for each individual category ranged from 0 to 216.

To understand the influence of one's role as perpetrator and/or victim of violence, total categorical violence scores were separated into mutually exclusive scores for perpetrator and victim status. Each respondent received a perpetrator score and a victim score for each category of violence. Victimization scores were determined by summing the responses to all questions relating to violence received, and perpetrator scores were based on responses to questions asking about violence expressed.⁴⁸

Data Analysis

Frequencies, descriptive statistics, and ordinary least squares regression were used to determine statistically significant relationships. All statistical tests were conducted at $\alpha = .05$. Models were evaluated on the basis of the magnitude of R^2 values and the associated F

Table 1
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of
Univariate Correlates of Total Sibling Violence

Predictors of Sibling Violence	B	SE B	Beta	t	p(t)
Gender	8.746	4.259	.097	2.054	.041*
Age	-2.246	.771	-.135	-2.912	.004*
Gender of Sibling	-10.176	4.168	-.112	-2.442	.015*
Age Difference	-3.718	.667	-.260	-5.576	.000*
Parent-to-child Violence	.809	.095	.528	8.538	.000*
Parent-to-parent Violence	-.128	.098	-.081	-1.308	.192
	R ² =.314	F(6,327)=24.972	P=0.000		

statistical test. Missing values within individual cases were addressed through listwise deletion. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 for Windows® was used for data entry and analysis.

RESULTS

Sibling Violence

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the variable "total sibling violence" and the respondents' gender, age, birth order, number of children in the family, gender of the designated sibling, and age difference in the sibling dyad. Both age ($r=-.127$) and age difference between siblings ($r=-.255$) were inversely associated with sibling violence ($P<.01$). Age difference between siblings in the dyad represented nearly 7% of the 11.2% variance accounted for in total sibling violence ($F [6,330] = 6.941, P=.0005$).

A subsequent multiple regression analysis explored the contribution of parent-to-parent and parent-to-child violence to total sibling violence scores. Respondent sibling violence scores were regressed on the linear combination of gender, age, gender of sibling in dyad, age difference between siblings in the dyad, parent-to-parent violence, and parent-to-child violence. The $R^2=.314$ was statistically significant, $F(6,327) = 24.972, P=.000$, and suggests that for the population 31.4% of the variance in sibling violence is associated with the model's explanatory variables. The explanatory variables parent-to-child violence and age difference between siblings had the greatest impact on sibling violence scores.

Two regression models were used to

explore the predictive nature of one's sibling violence victim and perpetrator status. Respondent perpetrator of sibling violence scores were regressed on the linear combination of gender, age, gender of sibling, age difference in the sibling dyad, mother-to-father violence, father-to-mother violence, mother-to-child violence, and father-to-child violence. There was a positive and statistically significant association ($P<.01$) between respondent perpetrator of sibling violence and gender ($r=.133$), mother-to-father violence ($r=.229$), father-to-mother violence ($r=.156$), mother-to-child violence ($r=.321$), and father-to-child violence ($r=.364$). The positive coefficient for the independent variable gender indicates that males reported higher sibling violence scores. An inverse correlation ($P<.01$) was present between perpetrating sibling violence and one's age ($r=-.133$) and the age difference between siblings ($r=-.255$). The full model was statistically significant, $F(8,311)=15.310, R^2=.283, P<.001$ suggesting that for the population 28.3% of the variance in perpetrating sibling violence is associated with the model's explanatory variables.

Respondent victim of sibling violence scores were regressed on the linear combination of gender, age, gender of sibling, age difference between siblings, mother-to-father violence, father-to-mother violence, mother-to-child violence, and father-to-child violence. There was a positive and statistically significant association ($P<.01$) between respondent victim of sibling violence and mother-to-father violence ($r=.298$), father-to-mother violence ($r=.247$), mother-to-child violence ($r=.396$), and father-to-child violence ($r=.466$). An

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Model 1

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perpetrating Dating Violence	2.3963	1.43986	319
Gender	.5172	.50049	319
Age of Respondent	20.3918	2.78361	319
Perpetrated Sibling Violence	35.2476	22.92491	319
Victim of Sibling Violence	36.0345	23.79106	319
Mother-to-child Violence	13.5831	15.08003	319
Father-to-child Violence	13.1724	16.07799	319
Mother-tofather Violence	10.3229	15.01946	319
Father-to-mother Violence	11.1254	17.45857	319

inverse correlation was present between being the victim of sibling violence and age difference of the sibling dyad ($r = -.263$). The full model was statistically significant, $F(8,308) = 20.906$, $R^2 = .352$, $P < .001$ suggesting that for the population 35.2% of the variance in sibling violence victimization is associated with the model's explanatory variables.

Sibling and Dating Violence

Two least squares solutions were estimated to evaluate the association between each of the outcome variables, namely dating violence perpetration and dating violence victimization and a set of 8 explanatory variables (gender, age, perpetrated sibling violence, victim sibling violence, mother-to-child violence, father-to-child violence, mother-to-father violence, and father-to-mother violence) for both models. Preliminary analysis of the

outcome variables determined that the outcome variable dating violence was positively skewed; therefore, a square root transformation was applied to the variable.

The means and standard deviations of the variables included in both models are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Regression model 1 explores dating violence perpetration, whereas model 2 explores dating violence victimization.

The parameter estimates and statistical test values and results for model 1 are reported in Table 4. The $R^2 = .226$ was statistically significant, $F(8,310) = 11.303$, $P < .0005$, and suggested that for the population 22.6% of the variance of dating violence perpetration is associated with the model's explanatory variables. For model 1, four of the 8 explanatory variables were statistically significant: gender ($\beta = .294$, $t(310) = 5.629$, $P < .0005$);

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Model 2

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Victim of Dating Violence	2.3571	1.50324	319
Gender	.5141	.50059	319
Age of Respondent	20.3574	2.73186	319
Perpetrated Sibling Violence	35.2790	22.91632	319
Victim of Sibling Violence	35.9060	23.68499	319
Mother-to-child Violence	13.2947	14.36149	319
Father-to-child Violence	12.8809	15.28590	319
Mother-to-father Violence	10.3229	15.01946	319
Father-to-mother Violence	10.8307	16.69660	319

Table 4
Regression Parameter Estimates and Associated Statistical Tests
for Outcome Variable Dating Violence Perpetration

Explanatory Variables	B	SE B	Beta	t	p(t)
Intercept	.860	.614			
Gender	.845	.150	.294	5.629	.000*
Age	.0179	.027	.035	.667	.505
Perpetrated Sibling Violence	.0211	.008	.336	2.537	.012*
Victim of Sibling Violence	-.0096	.008	-.159	-1.158	.248
Mother-to-child Violence	-.0124	.007	-.130	-1.740	.083
Father-to-child Violence	.0231	.007	.258	3.421	.001*
Mother-to-father Violence	.0238	.008	.248	3.026	.003*
Father-to-mother Violence	-.0040	.007	-.049	-.563	.574
	R ² =.226	F(8,310)=11.303	P<.0001		

perpetrated sibling violence (beta = .336, $t(310) = 2.537$, $P = .012$); father-to-child violence (beta = .258, $t(310) = 3.421$, $P = .001$); and mother-to-father violence (beta = .248, $t(310) = 3.026$, $P = .003$). The standardized regression coefficients suggest that the strength of relationship between the 4 explanatory variables and dating violence perpetration is moderately low.⁵⁰ Examination of the dummy-coded gender variable (0=male, 1=female) suggests that when controlling for the other variables in the model, women on average were more likely to experience dating violence as perpetrators.

The parameter estimates and statistical test values and results for model 2 are reported in Table 5. The $R^2 = .162$ was statistically significant, $F(8,310) = 7.490$,

$P < .0005$, and suggested that for the population 16.2% of the variance of dating violence victimization is associated with the model's explanatory variables. For model 2, four of the 8 explanatory variables were statistically significant: gender (beta = .523, $t(310) = 3.211$, $P < .001$); father-to-child violence (beta = .252, $t(310) = 3.366$, $P = .001$); mother-to-father violence (beta = .294, $t(310) = 3.056$, $P = .002$); and father-to-mother violence (beta = -.187, $t(310) = -2.003$, $P = .046$). The standardized regression coefficients suggest that the strength of relationship between the 4 explanatory variables and the dating violence perpetration is moderately low.⁵⁰ Examination of the dummy-coded gender variable suggests that when controlling for the other variables in the

Table 5
Regression Parameter Estimates and Associated Statistical Tests
for Outcome Variable Dating Violence Victimization

Explanatory Variables	B	SE B	Beta	t	p(t)
Intercept	1.739	.670			
Gender	.523	.163	.174	3.211	.001*
Age	-.0173	.029	-.031	-.590	.556
Perpetrated Sibling Violence	.0091	.009	.139	.978	.329
Victim of sibling Violence	.0031	.009	.048	.329	.743
Mother-to-child Violence	-.0131	.008	-.125	-1.637	.103
Father-to-child Violence	.0248	.007	.252	3.366	.001*
Mother-to-father Violence	.0294	.010	.294	3.056	.002*
Father-to-mother Violence	-.0166	.008	-.187	-2.003	.046*
	R ² = .162	F(8,310) = 7.490	P = .000		

model, women on average were also more likely to experience dating violence as victims.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between sibling violence and explanatory variables such as birth order, family size, age, gender composition of the sibling dyad, and age difference between the siblings. Correlation coefficients indicate a weak, but statistically significant association between sibling violence and gender, age and age difference between siblings in the dyad. The inverse relationship between sibling violence and age difference between siblings supports previous literature that children experience more violence in the sibling relationship when they are closer in age. Although the literature is inconclusive regarding which gender experiences more sibling violence, consensus leans toward males experiencing higher levels of sibling violence. The higher sibling violence scores reported by males in this study support this assertion. However, the predictive ability of age difference between siblings was far greater than for gender. These findings indicate that although gender does play a role in violent sibling relationships, siblings closer together in age experience higher levels of violence.

Surprisingly, parent-to-child violence was a significant predictor of sibling violence, but parent-to-parent violence was not. The strongest predictors of sibling violence were parent-to-child violence and age difference between the siblings. The low impact of parent-to-parent violence on sibling violence was unexpected. Based on previous literature, it was hypothesized that children learn and mimic violent behaviors observed during violent interactions between parents.²⁴ Thus, parent-to-parent violence was expected to be a moderate to strong predictor of sibling violence. Although these present findings were not anticipated, they support Straus' assertion that parental use of corporal punishment can have long-term negative effects on children.⁴⁹ Apparently, memories of experienced violence influence future actions more than observed violence does.

In this sample, males reported higher scores for perpetrating sibling violence. Along with gender, age, and age difference between siblings, father-to-child vio-

lence was a statistically significant predictor of sibling violence. Interestingly, mother-to-child violence was not statistically significant. In this model, father-to-child violence had a 2.5 times greater impact on perpetrating sibling violence scores than did gender. The concept of vicarious learning asserts that children imitate the behavior of influential people in their lives.³⁶ These findings suggest that children are using conflict tactics with their siblings similar to those used by their fathers. This conclusion is a reasonable one because males report higher sibling violence scores and more closely identify with, and imitate behaviors exhibited by, their male parent.

The statistically significant predictors of one's sibling violence victimization were dyad gender composition, age difference between siblings, mother-to-child violence, father-to-child violence, mother-to-father violence and father-to-mother violence. The strongest predictor was father-to-child violence, with twice the impact on sibling violence victimization than that of mother-to-child violence. Importance of these variables suggests a climate of violence that may exist in some families as a result of children's using conflict tactics with siblings that are similar to conflict tactics they have experienced with their parent(s).

Separation of the variables into dating violence perpetrator and victim status produced moderately low associations between the dependent variable and mother-to-father and father-to-mother violence. Although the associations between sibling violence perpetrator, sibling violence victim, and dating violence perpetrator scores were weak, perpetrating sibling violence predicted perpetrating dating violence. In addition, father-to-child and mother-to-father violence were significant predictors of perpetrating dating violence, as was respondent gender. Perpetrating sibling violence had the greatest impact on perpetrating dating violence, followed by mother-to-father violence. This finding is both unexpected and difficult to interpret. Among these respondents males report higher levels of sibling violence, but females report higher levels of dating violence perpetration and victimization. The relationship between mother-to-father violence and perpetrating dating violence offers further support for the assertion that behaviors observed

between parents are expressed in later intimate relationships. In future research, seeking an understanding of the context of violent behaviors may clarify this finding.

In this sample, female respondents reported higher dating violence victimization scores. Father-to-child violence, mother-to-father violence, father-to-mother, and gender emerged as significant predictors of dating violence victimization. Interestingly, mother-to-father violence had the greatest impact. Even though perpetrating sibling violence predicted perpetrating dating violence, neither sibling violence victim status nor perpetrator status emerged as a significant predictor of dating violence victimization. The possibility exists that victims of dating violence have been exposed to more parent-to-parent violence and are, therefore, more accepting of violent behaviors from persons with whom they have close relationships. In addition, previous research asserts that adolescents may become more accepting of violent conflict tactics as they receive increased exposure to them. Gully found that adolescents opposed to violence between dating partners in high school were accepting of the violence by their second year in college.²⁶

Limitations

These results indicate a number of significant findings, but limitations necessitate cautious generalization. The cross-sectional design offers a snapshot of events occurring during one period of time. Events preceding or following the reported violence have not been considered. Interpretations are clouded by a lack of information regarding the context of the reported violence. This absence of clarity makes it impossible to know whether the reported violence was offensive or defensive, or occurred from other circumstances. Also, in some instances, respondents are recalling behaviors that may have occurred 8 to 12 years ago. The effect of recall is demonstrated by the fact that younger respondents reported higher violence scores. Recall may also have been affected because the self-report data collected at one time point did not offer respondents any opportunity to think through past events. However, previous research indicates that although memories of events may fade over time, serious

events are less likely to be forgotten.⁵¹ Lastly, the size and selection of the study sample limits generalizability to the general population.

Implications

Sibling violence is not without long-term consequences. Moreover, the presence of violent behavior, whether observed or experienced directly, can affect relationships later in life. In addition, better understanding of the influence of parent-to-child violence on both sibling and dating violence requires more research. Based on these data, though males report more sibling violence, females report more dating violence. These findings support the need for both genders to learn appropriate conflict management techniques. That females are the sole victims of violent conflict is no longer a valid assumption. These findings imply a direct relationship between exposure to, and expression of, violent acts. Sources of exposure to violence such as through the media or community or school violence also need to be considered when attempting to understand sibling and dating violence.

Although the research question was answered, additional questions have evolved. Future research should be prospective and contain a qualitative component that fosters understanding of the context of violent behaviors within interpersonal relationships. In addition, an understanding of violence within blended households, single-parent families, or homes with paramours is necessary. Lastly, research is needed that helps clarify the meanings individuals attach to acts of violence. ■

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