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2015

### Information Technology, Social Networking, and Controlling Behaviors Among Adolescent Girls Involved in Dating Violence

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#### Recommended Citation

Joppa, Meredith C.; Rizzo, Christie J.; and Johnson, Jessica, "Information Technology, Social Networking, and Controlling Behaviors Among Adolescent Girls Involved in Dating Violence" (2015). *Title IX Research and Resources*. 7.

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## OBJECTIVE

- Teen dating violence (DV) occurs on a continuum from verbal/emotional abuse to rape and murder
  - Foshco et al., 1996
- Researchers are beginning to explore the impact of information technologies (IT; e.g., mobile phones) and social networking (SN; e.g., Facebook) on adolescent DV behaviors.
- Cyber DV:
  - Occurs in 26% of currently-dating adolescents' relationships
  - Is associated with other forms of DV
  - Is more common among female adolescents
    - Zweig, Lachman, Yahner, & Dank, 2014
- However, little is known about DV-involved adolescent girls' use of social networking and information technology (SNIT) or their experiences with cyber DV and perpetration of controlling behaviors.
- The present study examined SNIT use and associated controlling behaviors in a sample of predominantly ethnic minority, economically disadvantaged adolescent girls with a history of DV involvement.
- Girls with DV histories will report high levels of involvement in SNIT as well as frequent engagement in controlling behaviors via SNIT.

## HYPOTHESIS

## METHOD

- Data are from the baseline assessment of a randomized controlled trial of a group CBT-based intervention to reduce HIV and DV risk among DV-involved adolescent girls
- 109 girls (ages 14-17;  $M = 15.75$ ) in a medium-sized New England city
- Endorsed a history of DV in a confidential school-based screening
- Racial/ethnic distribution of the sample:
  - 50% Hispanic
  - 35% African American
  - 22% White
  - 8% African American Indian
  - 3% Asian
- 82% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch

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## MEASURES

- **Social Networking and Controlling Behaviors**
  - Unpublished measure developed for this study
  - 40 items assess whether or not participating has engaged in SNIT use, cyber controlling behavior perpetration and victimization (0=No, 1=Yes)

## SNIT Use

SNIT Behavior	N	%YES
Have desktop computer	72	67%
Have laptop computer	75	69%
Have Cellphone	94	88%
Have smartphone	64	60%
Send/receive texts	92	87%
Have SN profile	97	90%
Have instant messenger account	51	47%

## Cyber Controlling Behaviors:

### Perpetration

Controlling Behavior	N	%YES
Checked partner SN profile for flirting	71	66%
Gave friends fake names	22	20%
Checked partner call list	32	30%
Checked partner texts	36	33%
Jealous after reading partner's SN profile	67	62%
Found out about partner cheating via SN	42	39%
Found out about partner cheating via texts	22	20%

## Cyber Controlling Behaviors:

### Victimization

Controlling Behavior	N	%YES
Partner asked for SN password	36	33%
Partner asked for buddy list	17	16%
Partner looked at SN profiles for flirting	58	54%
Partner checked call list	46	43%
Partner checked text messages	48	44%
Partner jealous after reading SN profile	53	49%

## RESULTS

- SNIT Frequency
  - Nearly all participants reported having an active profile on a SN site, text messaging, and sending photos online
    - Many also sent photos via text message
  - Maintaining an SN profile was the most common behavior, while instant messaging was the least common.
- SNIT Controlling Behavior Frequency
  - Close to half of the participants reported that their partners felt jealous after reading their SN profile or looked at their SN profiles for evidence of flirting.
  - Many participants engaged in similar own controlling behaviors via SNIT: over two-thirds reported that they felt jealous after reading a partner's SN profile or looked at an SN profile for evidence of flirting.
  - Partner controlling behavior via SNIT was reported more frequently than participant perpetration.

## CONCLUSIONS

- This study is the first to examine SN/IT use and cyber controlling behavior perpetration/victimization among predominantly ethnic minority adolescent girls with DV histories.
- Our findings suggest that controlling behavior victimization and perpetration via IT/SN is common, highlighting the need to address IT and SN in DV prevention for high-risk adolescents.
- Our results also have policy implications: DV education is mandatory in 15 states, and school-based DV prevention curricula would benefit from incorporating examples of and strategies for avoiding SNIT controlling behaviors.
- It will be important to tease apart both within-person and between-person differences in SNIT and controlling behavior involvement in this sample.
  - For example, previous research with this sample showed no differences in SNIT and controlling behavior involvement according to level of depressive symptoms.
    - Johnson, Joppa, & Rizzo, 2015
  - Future research should examine differences in SNIT and controlling behaviors according to relationship status and length, peer norms, and individual factors such as emotion regulation.