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Family Violence, Personality Traits, and Risk Behaviors: Links to Dating Violence Victimization and Perpetration Among College Students

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Abstract

Though dating violence (DV) is prevalent on college campuses, few studies have examined a multitude of risk factors that may better explain this process. As such, we examined the role of family violence (i.e., childhood physical abuse, witnessing parental violence), personality traits (i.e., entitlement, antisocial personality [ASP] and borderline personality [BP]) and risk behaviors (i.e., risky sexual behaviors, heavy drinking, marijuana use, illicit drug use) on DV victimization and perpetration among 783 college students. Path analysis revealed that witnessing parental violence was linked to DV perpetration while experiencing more physical abuse was positively correlated with entitlement (females only), ASP traits, and BP traits. ASP traits (both males and females) and entitlement (females only) were directly associated with high-risk behaviors. Among females, entitlement was also indirectly associated with DV victimization and perpetration through sexual risk behaviors. Findings highlight the importance of histories of physical abuse and personality traits in understanding DV.

Keywords: college students, dating violence, family violence, personality traits, risk behaviors

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Dating violence (DV), which includes physical or sexual violence, threats of violence, and psychological aggression, is widespread in dating relationships (Barnett et al., 2011); over one-third of U.S. college students report DV (Stappenbeck & Fromme, 2010). This high prevalence of DV is not unique to U.S. college students. Indeed, a 17-country study of 33 universities revealed that DV perpetration ranged from 17% to 45% among college students (Straus, 2004). Moreover, experiencing DV victimization can have long lasting negative effects including poor mental health (DeMaris & Kaukinen, 2005), problematic substance use (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013), and re-victimization (Gómez, 2011; Jouriles et al., 2017). As such, DV is a major public health issue among adolescents and young adults. Risk factors for DV victimization and/or perpetration may include gender (Gover et al., 2008; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; perpetration only), childhood physical abuse (Foshee et al., 2004; victimization only; Gover et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Simons et al., 2008; perpetration only), witnessing parental violence (Duval et al., 2020; Gover et al., 2008; perpetration only), sexual risk-taking behavior (Gover et al., 2008), and substance use (Duval et al., 2020; McNaughton Reyes et al., 2012; perpetration only; Neavins et al., 2020).

Though prior research has examined multiple risks for DV, less is known about personality traits including entitlement (i.e., unreasonable expectations for receiving advantageous treatment based on a privileged social status; Campbell et al., 2004), antisocial personality (ASP), and borderline personality (BP) in this process. Though entitlement is correlated with negative behavior (Campbell et al., 2004), including DV perpetration (Tyler et al., 2017b), entitlement has seldom been examined in conjunction with heavy drinking and drug use. ASP traits have been hypothesized to develop from abusive parenting and these traits are associated with delinquent behaviors (Simons et al., 2008), but less is known about the role of ASP traits in DV. Finally, much of the research on BP traits and intimate partner violence (IPV) is based on clinical samples (Stepp et al., 2012; Whisman & Schonbrun, 2009) but these samples tend to represent the extreme end of the IPV severity continuum. Thus, less is known about the link between BP traits and less severe forms of DV. There is thus a significant need to further understand a multitude of risk factors in understanding the process of DV. As such, the purpose of the current paper

was to examine the role of family violence (i.e., childhood physical abuse, witnessing parental violence), personality traits (i.e., entitlement, ASP traits, BP traits) and risk behaviors (i.e., risky sexual behaviors, heavy drinking, marijuana use, illicit drug use) on DV victimization and perpetration among college women and men.

Literature Review

Child Physical Abuse and Witnessing Parental Violence

A history of child abuse (Foshee et al., 2004; Gover et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Tussey & Tyler, 2019) and witnessing parental violence (Duval et al., 2020; Gover et al., 2008) have both been found to be risk factors for DV perpetration and/or victimization. According to a social learning orientation, children from violent households observe and learn the techniques of aggression and then emulate this behavior in future dating relationships because it may result in rewarding outcomes. Research that has examined the effect of child abuse on DV has found both a direct (Slesnick et al., 2010; Tussey & Tyler, 2019; Tyler et al., 2017b) and an indirect link (Brownridge, 2006). Moreover, witnessing parental violence has also been found to be directly associated with DV perpetration (Gover et al., 2008) as well as indirectly associated with DV via sexual risk behaviors (Tussey et al., 2021). Additionally, child physical abuse has been found to significantly increase engagement in heavy drinking (Bensley et al., 2000) and has also been linked to higher entitlement (Tyler et al., 2017b).

Personality Traits

Entitlement. Studies have identified various correlates of entitled attitudes, including early exposure to family risk factors and deviant behavior. For example, experiencing child abuse and witnessing domestic violence among college men has been linked to the development of beliefs whereby they feel entitled to abuse their own partners (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). Witnessing family violence is also strongly linked to aggression and the belief that violence can be justified (Calvete & Orue, 2013), which may be interpreted as a form

of entitlement. Additionally, a sense of masculine sexual entitlement towards women is tied to more positive endorsement of rape-related beliefs among men (Hill & Fischer, 2001) and risky sexual behaviors, such as unprotected sex (Santana et al., 2006). Though the personality trait of general entitlement has been deemed a fruitful area to explore among DV perpetrators, little research has examined this relationship (Pornari et al., 2013).

Entitlement is important for understanding DV given that it has been linked to numerous ASP traits (Skeem et al., 2005), such as dominance, hostility (Campbell et al., 2004; Raskin & Terry, 1988), resentment, and difficulty forgiving others (Exline et al., 2004). Specifically, in their study of college students, Tyler et al. (2017b) found that higher entitlement was positively correlated with heavy drinking, drug use, and sexual risk behaviors. Moreover, they found that entitlement was associated with DV perpetration via all three risk behaviors including heavy drinking, drug use, and sexual risk behaviors (Tyler et al., 2017b).

Borderline Personality. BP symptomatology (aka Borderline Personality Organization) is characterized on a continuum of low to high BP traits (Dutton, 2006). It occurs in approximately 11%–15% of the general population (Dutton, 1995; Gunderson, 1984; Hines, 2008). The impaired social functioning associated with individuals who have a BP can occur in friendships but are most likely to manifest in romantic relationships that are described as intense, unstable, stormy, and chaotic (González et al., 2016; Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017; Sijtsema et al., 2014; Stepp et al., 2012). The romantic dysfunction associated with those who have a BP includes hostility to perceived rejection, unstable perceptions of trustworthiness, higher levels of relationship distress, lower levels of relationship satisfaction, a greater number and shorter duration of romantic relationships, and, most notably, the perpetration of DV (Lazarus et al., 2019; Whisman & Schonbrun, 2009).

A recent study by Munro and Sellbom (2020) found a positive association between having a BP and IPV. Several studies have also shown an association between BP and IPV perpetration (Clift & Dutton, 2011; Edwards et al., 2003; Lazarus et al., 2019; Okuda et al., 2015; Porcerelli et al., 2004; Reuter et al., 2015; Ross & Babcock, 2009; Stepp et al., 2012). Finally, BP traits have been associated with DV in samples

of university students, with respect to both perpetration (Clift & Dutton, 2011; Hines, 2008; Brownridge & Tyler, 2022) and victimization (Brownridge & Tyler, 2022).

Antisocial Personality. Though less research has been conducted specifically on ASP traits, extant data have implicated ASP traits in DV among college students (Brownridge, 2006). Furthermore, ASP traits have been found to be associated with high-risk behaviors including heavy episodic drinking (Sylvers et al., 2011), marijuana use (Shorey et al., 2017), and DV (Krishnakumar et al., 2018) among college students. Specifically, some research suggests that though many of the risk factors for DV perpetration are similar for women and men (e.g., child abuse, alcohol use), DV perpetration is often related to ASP traits among men (Dardis et al., 2015) but to a lesser extent for women. Krishnakumar et al. (2018) using the International Dating Violence Study found that for both males and females, having greater ASP traits was associated with a physical assault-psychological aggression typology. ASP traits was also characteristic of other DV typologies (Krishnakumar et al., 2018). Finally, Kivisto et al. (2011) found that among a sample of college males, higher levels of ASP traits was associated with more frequent physical and psychological DV perpetration.

Risk Behaviors

There is ample research on college students that has shown a positive link between the use of alcohol and increased risk for DV victimization and perpetration (Shorey et al., 2011; Tussey & Tyler, 2019; Tyler et al., 2017b; perpetration only). Less is known, however, about other risk factors such as marijuana use even though it is one of the most used substances among college students following alcohol (Shorey et al., 2017). Using daily diaries with female college students, Shorey and colleagues (2014) found that greater alcohol consumption was associated with an increased odds of perpetrating physical DV while marijuana use was associated with an increased odds of perpetrating psychological but not physical DV. Shorey et al. (2017) have argued that marijuana use has been found to increase anxiety and irritability, which may increase the risk for DV (Shorey et al., 2017). Much of the research on marijuana and DV is preliminary, however, and Shorey

et al. (2017) call for continued research in this area. Moreover, other research finds that illicit drug use (and marijuana use) are risk factors for DV perpetration and/or victimization (Durant et al., 2007; Testa & Brown, 2015; Tussey & Tyler, 2019). For example, Durant et al. (2007) found that those who used illicit drugs in the past 30 days were more likely to experience physical DV. Moreover, past 30-day alcohol and marijuana use were also found to be linked with physical DV perpetration (Durant et al., 2007). Research using the International Dating Violence Study also found an association with drug use and physical victimization, but no main effect was found for alcohol use and total victimization (Sabina et al., 2017). Sabina et al. (2017) suggest that the use of illicit drugs may lead to participation in other risky behaviors making students more vulnerable compared to those who use alcohol. Finally, sexual risk-taking behavior has been found to be prevalent among college students and is associated with more frequent heavy drinking (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Tyler et al., 2017a). Sexual risk-taking behaviors have also been found to be important correlates of DV perpetration for both male and female college students (Gover et al., 2008).

Theoretical Framework

The current study uses an antisocial orientation perspective (Simons et al., 1998, 2008) to understand the linkages between early family violence and DV. The antisocial orientation perspective (Simons et al., 1998, 2008) suggests that children exposed to poor parenting, such as physical abuse, are at greater risk for DV through delinquent behavior and substance use. Specifically, it is argued that a general pattern of antisocial behavior is passed from parents to their children and because these children are more likely to develop antisocial tendencies, which persist throughout the lifespan, this affects the probability that they will engage in DV. Others have also found support for this model in that maltreated children are likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior and violence as adults (Park et al., 2012). Based on an antisocial orientation perspective, it is important to consider not only substance use and sexual risk behaviors when examining the association between child abuse and DV perpetration (Simons et al., 2008), but also personality traits that may result from early family violence including entitlement, ASP traits and BP traits.

Methods

Data were gathered in the 2019–2020 academic year at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Undergraduate enrollment is approximately 25,000 students and the racial composition at this university is approximately 80% White. The sample consisted of 783 undergraduate college women and men.

Procedure

Undergraduate students enrolled in social science courses completed a paper and pencil survey with 194 questions that focused on family histories, risk and protective behaviors, sexual assault, dating violence, mental health, and support services. All students were given a packet, which included the survey, consent form, and a handout listing various campus resources (e.g., counseling) available to students. Every student was eligible to participate. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary, and their responses were anonymous. Students were given the option of extra credit for filling out the survey. If a student did not wish to complete the survey, they were given another option for extra credit. Students were told that if they chose not to fill out the survey or do the alternative extra credit assignment, it would not affect their course grade. The overall response rate was approximately 96% (783/810). The Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln approved this study.

Measures

Independent Variables. *Child physical abuse* included six items from the Parent to Child Conflict Tactics Scale (PC-CTS; Straus et al., 1998), such as, while you were growing up, how often did a parent/caregiver, “throw something at you in anger,” “hit you with an object,” and “hit you with a fist or kick you hard” (1 = always to 5 = never). Items were reverse coded and then dichotomized (0 = never, 1 = one or more times) due to skewness. A count variable was created such that a higher score indicated more child physical abuse ($\alpha = .85$).

Witnessing parental violence included four items adapted from the PC-CTS (Straus et al., 1998), that asked respondents to indicate how many times they have ever seen or heard either of their parents/

caregivers engage in any of the following behaviors toward the other parent/caregiver: (1) pushing, shoving, or grabbing, (2) throwing an object at the other person in anger, (3) threaten to hit the other person, and (4) hitting or punching the other person using their hand, fist, or another object (1 = frequently/always to 5 = never). The items were reverse coded and then dichotomized (0 = never, 1 = one or more times) due to skewness. A count variable was created such that a higher score indicated witnessing more parental violence ($\alpha = .94$).

Entitlement included 10 items from the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004) such as “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others” and “I feel entitled to more of everything” (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A summed scale was created where a higher score indicated higher entitlement ($\alpha = .72$).

Antisocial personality traits included nine items from the Antisocial Personality Symptoms scale of the Personal and Relationships Profile (Straus et al., 1999). These items measure personality features derived from DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and included the following three subscales: Impulsive/rule-breaking (e.g., “I often do things that are against the law”), deceit (e.g., “I often lie to get what I want”), and mistreatment of others (e.g., “I only treat people badly if they deserve it”); 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The nine items were summed such that a higher score indicated more ASP traits ($\alpha = .76$).

Borderline personality traits included eight items from the Borderline Personality Symptoms scale of the Personal and Relationships Profile (PRP; Straus et al., 1999). These items, which were also used by Hines (2008), measure personality features derived from DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and included the following two subscales: Instability (e.g., “My mood is always changing”) and self-harm (e.g., “I’d do almost anything to keep people from leaving me;” 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). The eight items were summed such that a higher score indicated more traits of BP ($\alpha = .82$).

Sexual risk behaviors included three items, which asked respondents (1) how old they were the first time they had sexual intercourse (reverse coded to 1 = never experienced sexual intercourse to 5 = less than 14 years old); (2) the number of people they have had sexual intercourse with (vaginal or anal penetration; 1 = none to 6 = 10 or more); and (3) how often they used condoms during sexual

intercourse (1 = always to 3 = never; 4 = never had sexual intercourse). Those who reported never having sex for item 3 were coded as “1.” The three items were standardized and then a mean scale was created where a higher score indicated riskier sexual behavior ($\alpha = .71$).

Heavy drinking included two items (Testa et al., 2003), which asked respondents, during the past 12 months, “how many times have you gotten drunk on alcohol” and “how many times have you consumed five or more (if you’re a man)/four or more (if you’re a woman) drinks in a single sitting” (1 = never to 5 = five or more days per week). The two items were averaged such that a higher score indicated more frequent heavy drinking (Testa et al., 2003). The correlation between the two items was .80.

Marijuana was a single item measure which asked respondents, “how often in your lifetime have you ever used marijuana?” (1 = never, 2 = a few times, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily).

Illicit drug use was a single item measure which asked respondents, “how often in your lifetime have you ever used illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, meth, heroin)?” (1 = never, 2 = a few times, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily). This variable was dichotomized due to skewness.

Dependent Variables. *Dating violence perpetration and victimization* included six items from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996), which asked respondents to indicate how many times they did each of the following to their current/former partner and how many times their current/former partner did this to them in the past 12 months: (1) threw something that could hurt, (2) kicked, (3) punched or hit with something that could hurt, (4) slammed against a wall, (5) beat up, and (6) insulted or swore (1 = never to 5 = more than 10 times). Due to skewness, both dependent variables (perpetration and victimization) were dichotomized (0 = never; 1 = at least once).

Data Analytic Strategy

Four fully recursive path models were estimated using the maximum likelihood estimator in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to simultaneously examine the pathways to DV perpetration and victimization for females and males. Models were run separately by gender as

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Women and Men

<i>Dichotomous variables</i>	<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>		χ^2
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	
DV perpetration	138	27.0	54	20.1	4.39*
DV victimization	135	26.4	62	23.1	0.97
Lifetime illicit drug use	26	5.1	27	10.1	6.93**
<i>Continuous variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t-test</i>
Child physical abuse	0.97	1.37	1.41	1.62	3.85**
Witnessing parental violence	0.64	1.25	0.73	1.33	0.95
Entitlement	24.76	5.16	25.80	5.47	2.58**
ASP traits	13.35	3.30	15.35	3.78	7.52**
BP traits	14.46	4.41	15.04	4.49	1.70***
Sexual risk behavior	0.03	0.83	-0.06	0.83	-1.44
Heavy drinking	1.82	0.79	1.87	0.92	0.76
Lifetime marijuana use	1.89	0.98	2.01	1.19	1.46

DV = dating violence, ASP = antisocial personality, BP = borderline personality.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p < .10$.

women and men significantly differed on several of the variables including child physical abuse, the personality trait variables, drug use, and perpetration (see Table 1). Standardized beta coefficients (β) are reported in all figures. Though we estimated four separate path models, one for victimization and one for perpetration for both females and males, Figure 1 (females) and Figure 2 (males) display victimization and perpetration results combined into a single model for parsimony for each gender. Three cases were dropped due to missing data on the study variables. The sample size for final analyses was 780 cases ($n = 512$ females; $n = 268$ males).

Results

Sample Characteristics

The total sample consisted of 783 respondents. Of these, 512 respondents (65%) were female. In terms of race 617 respondents (78.9%) were White, 31 were Black/African American (4.0%), 65 were Hispanic or Latino (8.3%), 46 were Asian (5.9%), 3 were American

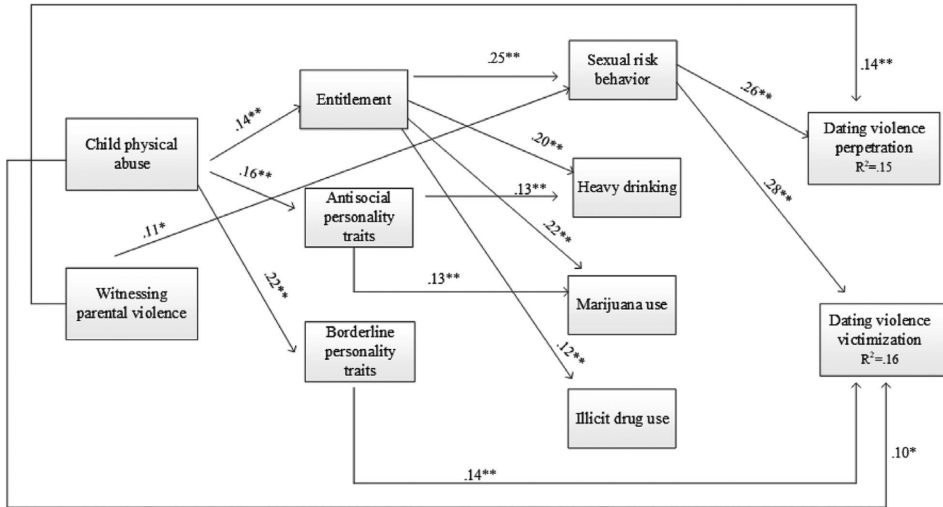


Figure 1. Correlates of female dating violence victimization and perpetration+ (only significant paths shown). *N* = 512. * *p* ≤ .05, ** *p* ≤ .01. + Victimization and perpetration models ran separately but combined here for parsimony.

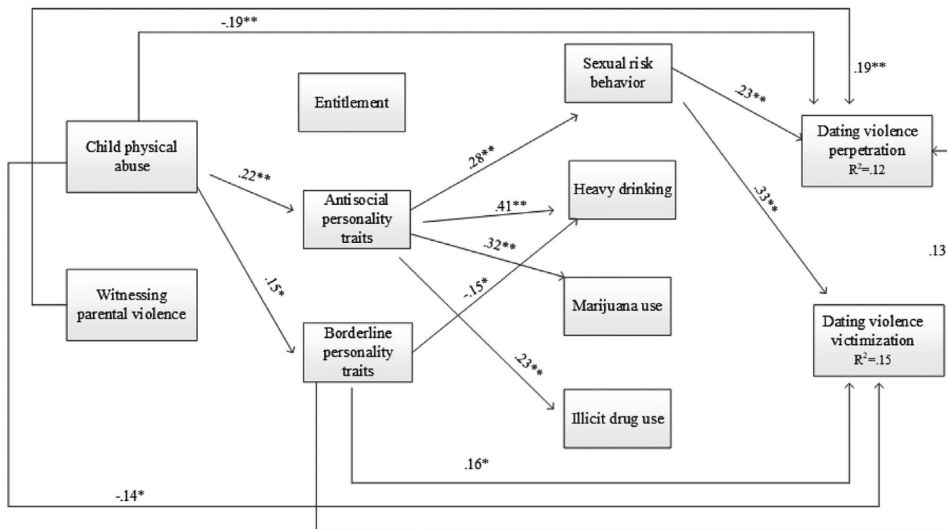


Figure 2. Correlates of male dating violence victimization and perpetration+ (only significant paths shown). *N* = 268. * *p* ≤ .05, ** *p* ≤ .01. + Victimization and perpetration models ran separately but combined here for parsimony.

Indian (0.4%), and 20 (2.5%) identified their race/ethnicity as other. In terms of abuse, 404 respondents (52%) reported experiencing one or more types of child physical abuse while 214 respondents (27%) reported witnessing at least one incident of parental violence. Finally, 192 students (24.5%) reported perpetrating DV in the past year while 197 (25.2%) reported being victimized by a partner in the past year (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics by gender).

Direct Effects

Results for the path analysis for females (only significant paths given) shown in Figure 1 revealed that women who experienced more child physical abuse had higher entitlement ($\beta = .14$; $p \leq .01$), higher ASP traits ($\beta = .16$; $p \leq .01$), and higher BP traits ($\beta = .22$; $p \leq .01$), compared to women who experienced less child physical abuse. Additionally, women who experienced more child physical abuse also reported having experienced DV victimization in the past 12 months ($\beta = .10$; $p \leq .05$). Having witnessed more family violence was positively associated with engaging in more sexual risk behaviors ($\beta = .11$; $p \leq .05$). Also, having higher entitlement was positively associated with participating in more sexual risk behaviors ($\beta = .25$; $p \leq .01$), more heavy drinking ($\beta = .20$; $p \leq .01$), lifetime marijuana use ($\beta = .22$; $p \leq .01$), and lifetime illicit drug use ($\beta = .12$; $p \leq .01$). Additionally, ASP traits was positively associated with heavy drinking ($\beta = .13$; $p \leq .01$) and marijuana use ($\beta = .13$; $p \leq .01$). College women with greater BP traits were more likely to have experienced DV victimization ($\beta = .14$; $p \leq .01$). Moreover, engaging in more sexual risk behaviors was positively associated with DV victimization ($\beta = .28$; $p \leq .01$). Finally, women who reported experiencing DV perpetration were significantly more likely to have witnessed parental violence ($\beta = .14$; $p \leq .01$) and to have engaged in more sexual risk behaviors ($\beta = .26$; $p \leq .01$). Having more BP traits was also marginally associated with DV perpetration ($\beta = .09$; $p = .06$; results not shown). The models explained 16% and 15% of the variance in DV victimization and perpetration, respectively among college women.

Results for the path analysis for males (only significant paths given) shown in Figure 2 revealed that men who experienced more child physical abuse had greater ASP traits ($\beta = .22$; $p \leq .01$) and greater BP

traits ($\beta = .15$; $p \leq .05$), compared to men who experienced less child physical abuse. Additionally, men who experienced less child physical abuse were more likely to report having experienced DV victimization in the past 12 months ($\beta = -.14$; $p \leq .05$). Having more ASP traits was positively associated with participating in more sexual risk behaviors ($\beta = .28$; $p \leq .01$), more heavy drinking ($\beta = .41$; $p \leq .01$), lifetime marijuana use ($\beta = .32$; $p \leq .01$), and lifetime illicit drug use ($\beta = .23$; $p \leq .01$). College men with fewer BP traits were more likely to report heavy drinking ($\beta = -.15$; $p \leq .05$). Moreover, engaging in more sexual risk behaviors was positively associated with DV victimization ($\beta = .33$; $p \leq .01$), as was having more BP traits ($\beta = .16$; $p \leq .05$). Finally, men who reported engaging in DV perpetration were significantly more likely to have witnessed parental violence ($\beta = .19$; $p \leq .01$), to have engaged in more sexual risk behaviors ($\beta = .23$; $p \leq .01$), to have more BP traits ($\beta = .13$; $p \leq .05$), and to have experienced less child physical abuse ($\beta = -.19$; $p \leq .01$). The models explained 15% and 12% of the variance in DV victimization and DV perpetration, respectively among college men.

Indirect Effects

The indirect effect results are shown in the Appendices. The full indirect effect results for DV perpetration for females (top half of Appendix A) revealed that two variables, child physical abuse and entitlement, had a significant indirect effect on DV perpetration through entitlement and sexual risk behaviors. Specifically, women who experienced more child physical abuse had higher entitlement and participated in more sexual risk behaviors, which was linked to DV perpetration. Additionally, college women with higher entitlement engaged in more sexual risk behaviors, which, in turn, was associated with DV perpetration.

The full indirect effect results for DV victimization for females (bottom half of Appendix A) revealed that child physical abuse and entitlement had a significant indirect effect on DV victimization through BP traits and through entitlement and sexual risk behaviors. Specifically, those who have experienced more child physical abuse have a greater number of BP traits, which is linked to DV victimization. Additionally, college women who experienced more child physical abuse

had higher entitlement and participated in more sexual risk behaviors, which was linked to DV victimization. Finally, college women with higher entitlement engaged in more sexual risk behaviors, which in turn was associated with DV victimization.

The full indirect effect results for DV perpetration for males (top half of Appendix B) revealed that child physical abuse had a significant indirect effect on DV perpetration through ASP traits and sexual risk behaviors. Specifically, men who experienced more child physical abuse had higher ASP traits and participated in more sexual risk behaviors, which was linked to DV perpetration. The full indirect effect results for DV victimization for males (bottom half of Appendix B) revealed that no variables had a significant indirect effect on DV victimization.

Discussion

The current paper examined the role of family violence (i.e., childhood physical abuse, witnessing parental violence), personality traits (i.e., entitlement, ASP traits, BP traits) and risk behaviors (i.e., risky sexual behaviors, heavy drinking, marijuana use, illicit drug use) on DV victimization and perpetration among college women and men. Overall, results show that histories of child physical abuse and witnessing parental violence continue to impact both college women and men in their dating relationships. Moreover, child physical abuse was linked to personality traits of ASP traits, BP traits, and entitlement (women only) and entitlement and/or ASP traits were in turn positively correlated with participation in high-risk behaviors. BP traits was positively associated with DV victimization for both men and women and with DV perpetration for men only. Sexual risk behavior was positively associated with DV victimization and perpetration for both women and men. These results contribute to the growing body of knowledge suggesting that personality traits are important for understanding the process of DV and these personality traits appear to operate differently for college women and men.

Child Physical Abuse and Witnessing Parental Violence

Based on an antisocial orientation perspective (Simons et al., 2008; Simons et al., 1998) we developed a theoretical model of the different pathways through which child physical abuse and witnessing parental violence contribute to an increased risk of DV perpetration and victimization among female and male college students. Consistent with our path model, child physical abuse was positively associated with entitlement (females only), ASP traits and BP traits. College women and men who experience more child physical abuse tended to have greater ASP and BP traits and for females, greater entitlement. According to an antisocial orientation perspective, these personality traits are a consequence of poor parenting, and these traits are likely to lead to participation in high-risk behaviors. The current findings on the link between child physical abuse and entitlement are consistent with previous work with college students (Tyler et al., 2017b), though this is an area in need of further study. Child physical abuse was also positively associated with DV victimization among females, which is consistent with prior work (Foshee et al., 2004; Gover et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Tussey & Tyler, 2019). Those who experience physical abuse as a child may learn that this behavior is normative and be more accepting of it when it occurs in their dating relationships. Among males, child physical abuse was significantly associated with both DV perpetration and victimization but in the opposite direction of what was expected. One possible explanation for this finding is the high correlation between child physical abuse and witnessing parental violence; the latter of which did have a positive association with DV perpetration and may be explaining most of the variance. Our results also show that witnessing parental violence had a positive association with DV perpetration for both males and females, which is consistent with prior research (Duval et al., 2020; Gover et al., 2008). It is plausible that children who observe physical violence between their parents learn the techniques of aggression and then emulate this behavior in future dating relationships because it may have rewarding outcomes such as getting their partner to do what they want them to do.

Personality Traits

Our results show that entitlement was positively associated with sexual risk behavior, heavy drinking, marijuana use, and illicit drug use among female respondents. A sense of entitlement has been linked to risky sexual behaviors (Santana et al., 2006; Tyler et al., 2017b), as well as heavy drinking and drug use (Tyler et al., 2017b). When individuals have a greater sense of entitlement, they feel they are more deserving than others and perhaps feel that the same rules do not apply to them. As such, they may be more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors including substance use for lack of fear of any negative repercussions. Interestingly, among males, entitlement was not associated with any high-risk behaviors, nor was it associated with child physical abuse. This is contrary to expectations and the literature which finds that college men who experience child abuse and witness domestic violence develop beliefs whereby they feel entitled to abuse their own partners (Silverman & Williamson, 1997) and believe violence can be justified (Calvete & Orue, 2013). One possible explanation for the lack of a significant finding among males may be that ASP traits and BP traits, both of which are associated with child physical abuse, are personality traits that often develop because of child abuse (Egeland et al., 2002; Farrington, 2005). Though males who experienced more child abuse may feel more deserving (i.e., entitled), the early abuse may manifest itself in ASP traits instead, which are linked to all four risky behaviors.

Next, our results indicate that while entitlement was linked to all four risk behaviors among females, it was ASP traits that was linked to all four risk behaviors among males, the latter of which being consistent with prior research (Shorey et al., 2017; Sylvers et al., 2011). Males who have higher scores on ASP traits tend to engage in rule-breaking behaviors or activities that are against the law, which may explain why they have higher rates of heavy drinking, as well as histories of marijuana use and illicit drug use. For females, ASP traits were linked to heavy drinking and marijuana use. Finally, BP traits were not associated with any high-risk behaviors among women but among men, BP traits were negatively associated with heavy drinking. BP traits measured in the current study focused on instability and self-harm (i.e., internalizing), so it is reasonable that BP traits are not

associated with high-risk (externalizing) behaviors. However, this still does not explain why BP traits are negatively correlated with heavy drinking. One possible explanation may be that some men with higher BP traits may be less social and may be less likely to party, especially if their mood is always changing (a characteristic of BP). As such, less campus socialization may translate to less alcohol use and explain the negative association with heavy drinking.

Among both men and women, BP traits were also positively associated with DV victimization and DV perpetration (though marginally significant for females). These findings are consistent with prior research which has found a link between BP traits and DV perpetration (Clift & Dutton, 2011; Hines, 2008) and victimization (Brownridge & Tyler, 2022) among college students. Because research indicates that BP traits can manifest in dating relationships that are intense or unstable (González et al., 2016; Navarro-Gómez et al., 2017; Sijtsema et al., 2014; Stepp et al., 2012), those who have more BP traits may have characteristics that include hostility to perceived rejection, unstable perceptions of trustworthiness, higher levels of relationship distress, and lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Lazarus et al., 2019; Whisman & Schonbrun, 2009) all of which may increase risk for DV perpetration. Similarly, those with more BP traits often have mood changes and if they are feeling low or depressed, they may be at greater risk for being victimized within their dating relationship (Lehrer et al., 2006).

Risk Behaviors

Our results for risk behaviors show that only sexual risk behavior was associated with DV perpetration and victimization for both males and females, which is consistent with prior research (Gover et al., 2008). However, contrary to research which shows a positive association between alcohol consumption, marijuana use, and/or illicit drugs with DV (Durant et al., 2007; Testa & Brown, 2015; Tussey & Tyler, 2019; Tyler et al., 2017b), we did not find support for these relationships in the current study. One possible explanation for this may be because illicit drug use (Sabina et al., 2017) and heavy drinking (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Tyler et al., 2017a) have been found to be associated with sexual risk behaviors. That is, some students may be engaging in all these

risk behaviors at some point (recall illicit drug use and marijuana use asked about lifetime use), but it is sexual risk behaviors that are often more prevalent (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Tyler et al., 2017a) and thus may be explaining more of the variance in DV.

Indirect Effects

There were few significant indirect effects in this study. Child physical abuse and entitlement were indirectly associated with both DV perpetration and victimization for women. Specifically, women who experienced more physical abuse had higher entitlement and participated in more sexual risk behaviors, which was linked to DV perpetration and victimization. Moreover, women who experienced more physical abuse had a greater number of BP traits, which was linked to DV victimization. The indirect effect of entitlement on DV perpetration via sexual risk behavior is consistent with prior work (Tyler et al., 2017b). Among men, only physical abuse was indirectly associated with DV perpetration through greater ASP traits and then greater sexual risk behaviors. Current results for both women and men show the lasting effect that child physical abuse has on risk behavior and DV perpetration/victimization.

Overall, our findings are generally consistent with an antisocial orientation perspective whereby children exposed to poor parenting, such as physical abuse, are at greater risk for DV through antisocial behaviors and high-risk activities. Specifically, it is plausible that a general pattern of antisocial behavior is passed from parents to their children and because these children are more likely to develop antisocial tendencies, including entitlement, ASP traits, and BP traits, this increases their probability of engaging in high-risk behaviors and DV.

Limitations. Some limitations should be noted. First, all data are based on self-reports. Despite this, participants were informed that their answers would be anonymous so it is less likely that they would be motivated to bias their responses. Another limitation is the retrospective nature of some of the measures (i.e., past 12 months), which may have resulted in some over- or underreporting if respondents misremembered their behavior or experiences. Third, this study was cross-sectional; therefore, inferences about causality cannot be made.

Fourth, this study cannot be generalized to the whole college population given that the sample was not randomly selected. Fifth, though college students in general experience high rates of dating violence, it is possible that college students, specifically social science majors, may have different experiences from other majors as well as from the general population of young adults. Also, we were unable to examine the severity of dating violence because of the skewness of the individual dating violence items. It is possible that being able to examine severity may have yielded some different results. Finally, this study only focused on females and males; thus, these dating violence experiences cannot be generalized to transgender and non-binary individuals.

Conclusion

This study has many strengths that contribute to the body of knowledge on DV among college students. First, our analysis of personality traits including entitlement, ASP traits and BP traits are important for further understanding the process of DV perpetration and victimization as well as understanding their link with early family history variables. Current study results show that all three of these personality traits are important for understanding the linkages between child physical abuse and high-risk behaviors. Second, much of the research on BP traits and IPV is based on clinical samples (Stepp et al., 2012; Whisman & Schonbrun, 2009), which tend to represent the extreme end of the IPV severity continuum. Thus, less is known about the link between BP traits and less severe forms of DV. Our results show that BP traits are indeed important for understanding DV and that BP traits are also linked to early child abuse. Third, we had a large enough sample to examine women and men separately to see whether the process of DV looks similar for both groups. By examining women and men separately, we were able to reveal the unique contribution of entitlement and its role in understanding DV among college women. Future research may wish to examine personality traits, along with other risk factors of DV, to see whether they operate similarly among other samples of college students.

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