The Spectrum of Sexual Violence in Adolescent Relationships

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Terms Used

- Relationship abuse
- Intimate partner violence
- Relationship violence
- Dating abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Domestic violence
- Teen dating violence
Discussion on the Use of these Terms

- What do you use? Why?
- Is it important to consider the terms used? Why or why not?
Types of Relationship Abuse
Types of Relationship Abuse

- Physical
- Psychological/emotional/verbal
- Sexual
- Stalking
- Financial
Physical Abuse
Physical Abuse

- When one partner pinches, hits, slaps, shoves, or kicks another partner

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Psychological/Emotional Abuse
Psychological/Emotional/Verbal Abuse

- Name calling, harassing, bullying or other statements or threats that affect one’s sense of self

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Sexual Abuse
Sexual Abuse

- Forcing a partner to have some form of sex, even if the partner does not want to or does not consent
Stalking
Stalking

- Harassing or threatening someone in a way that causes fear

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Financial
Financial

- Controlling partner through financial control or constraints
But How and Where Does this Violence Start?
But How and Where Does this Violence Start?

- Does NOT start with physical or sexual abuse
- Starts with individual and societal attitudes and norms!
Spectrum/Continuum of Violence
Spectrum/Continuum of Violence

- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Social Norms
- Behaviors/Actions
What Are Some Attitudes and Beliefs that Society Holds Regarding Women and Sex?
Attitudes, Beliefs, Norms

- Women are (sex) objects
- If a woman is dressed sexily, she wants sex
- If a man takes a woman out on an expensive date, he has a right to expect sex
- When a woman says "NO" to sex what she really means is "MAYBE"
- Women are for procreation
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Women more “Generally”

- Often directed at women more generally, not one individual person
- Suggestive looks
- Sexist comments
- Whistling and cat calling
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Women more “Generally”

- Sexual jokes
- Rude comments
- Porn
Societal Reactions: Women more “Generally”

- Toleration
- Celebrated and laughed at on TV, talk shows, and other media
- Fall under “freedom of speech”
Societal Reactions: Women more “Generally”

- Socially acceptable
- Normative
- NOT illegal/criminalized
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Individual Women

- Directed toward a particular individual
- Verbal harassment
  - Obscene phone calls
  - Insults
  - Derogatory slang
  - Flirting
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Individual Women

- Groping and touching
  - Grabbing or pinching body
  - Unwanted touching
Societal Reactions: Individual Women

- Few significant (legal) consequences
- Depends and varies largely on community acceptance of behavior
- Consequences largely social
  - Ignored, avoided
  - Asked to leave a public area
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Individual Women

- Peeping in windows and bathrooms
- Exposing self
- Soliciting sex (for money)
Societal Reactions: Individual Women

- “Minor criminal acts”
- More significant legal consequences
- Less so because of potential threat or harm to the individual but to the community
- Reporting, arresting and convictions are done, but not often
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Individual Women

- Physical violence
  - Molestation
  - Coerced sex
  - Rape
Societal Reactions: Individual Women

- “Major criminal acts”
- Significant legal consequences
- Socially unacceptable, usually...
Resultant Actions and Behaviors: Individual Women

- Extreme sexual violence
  - Aggression
  - Kidnapping
  - Brutal assault

- Death
Societal Reactions: Individual Women

- This is when society finally notices...
Spectrum/Continuum of Violence
Words/Gestures/Jokes:
Unwanted sexually offensive words or jokes or sexual gestures

Sexual Pressure/Coercion:
Often involves exploitation; one person feels pressured to have sex

Intimidation/Threats:
Threatening action if sex not given

Nonconsensual Touch:
Groping, grabbing or feeling occur without permission

Sexual Violence:
Sexual assault, rape, physical violence
Spectrum of Sexual Abuse

- Sexist jokes
- Sexual objectification
- Jealousy
- Disregarding partner’s feelings
- Criticizing partner sexually or otherwise
- Unwanted touch
- Withholding sex
- Sexual name calling
Spectrum of Sexual Abuse

- Demanding sex
- Cheating
- Demanding sex using threats
- Forcing sex
- Forcing sex with others
- Forcing sex after being beaten
- Sadism
- Murder

The Red Flag Campaign
Healthy relationships – based on equity and respect

- Respect
- Good communication
- Trust
- Honesty
- Equality
Spectrum of Sexual Abuse

- Unhealthy relationships – based on attempts to control the other person
  - Poor communication
  - Pressure
  - Dishonesty
  - Struggles for control
  - Inconsiderate behavior
Spectrum of Sexual Abuse

- Abusive relationships – based on power and control
  - Accusations
  - Blame shifting
  - Isolation
  - Pressure
  - Manipulation
What are some ways in which sexual violence/abuse occurs?
Sexual Violence/Abuse
Can Occur…

- Face-to-face
- Electronically/Digitally
  - Words
  - Pictures
  - Excessive messaging
  - Sexting
  -Spying
  - Digital sabotage
Rates of Sexual Violence/Abuse
Rates of Sexual Violence/Abuse

- Each year in the US, at least 400,000 adolescents experience serious physical and/or sexual violence in a dating relationship.

Miller, 2009; Wolitzky-Taylor et al, 2008
Rates of Relationship Abuse

- 1 in 4 adolescents report some form of abuse each year
- 1 in 5 US teen girls report ever experiencing physical and/or sexual partner abuse
- 1 in 7 adolescent boys report ever experiencing abuse

CDC MMWR, Feb 2008; CDC Violence Prevention
Rates of Relationship Abuse

- Among adults who were victims of abuse, 22% of women and 15% of men first experienced some type of partner violence during adolescence (11-17 years old)

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Use of Technology as a Tool for Relationship Abuse

1 in 4 teens in a relationship report being called names, harassed, or put down by their partner via cell phone or texting.

FutureWithoutViolence.org
Use of Technology as a Tool for Relationship Abuse

- 1 in 5 teen girls have electronically sent or posted nude/semi-nude photos or videos of themselves
  - 12% of these girls say they felt pressured to do so

FutureWithoutViolence.org
Use of Technology as a Tool for Relationship Abuse

Among those who experienced digital harassment:
- 84% reported being psychologically abused
- 52% reported being physically abused
- 33% reported being sexually coerced

Zweig et al., 2013
What are Risk Factors for Perpetration of Sexual Violence
Individual Level Risk Factors for Perpetration of Sexual Violence

- Perceived acceptability of sexual violence
- Belief in strict gender roles
- Aggressive behavior
- Early sexual debut
- Affiliation with abusive peers
- Experience with violence in the home

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Community Risk Factors for Perpetration of Sexual Violence

- Resource poor community
- Social norms
- Limited restrictions and sanctions against violence

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Societal Risk Factors for Perpetration of Sexual Violence

- Traditional gender norms
- Social norms

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Consequences of Sexual Violence
Consequences of Abuse: General Health

- Injuries – broken bones, bruises
- Pelvic pain

Raneri & Wiemann, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Sarker, 2008
Consequences of Abuse: Reproductive

- Increased risk of unintended pregnancy
  - Adolescent girls in physically abusive relationships were 3-5 times more likely to become pregnant
- Pregnant teens are 2-3 times more likely to experience during and after pregnancy

Raneri & Wiemann, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Sarker, 2008
Consequences of Abuse: Reproductive

- Girls who experience abuse post-delivery are twice as likely to have a repeat unintended pregnancy.
- More likely to have low birth weight babies and perinatal deaths.
- More likely to have STIs, PID.

CDC; Raneri & Wiemann, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Sarker, 2008
Consequences of Abuse: Psychological

- Anxiety/depression
- Sleep Disorders
- Suicidality

CDC; Black, 2011; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Roberts et al, 2003; Warshaw et al., 2009
Consequences of Abuse: Health Behaviors

- High-risk sexual behavior
  - Early sexual debut
  - Unprotected or unsafe sex
  - Having unhealthy and multiple sex partners
  - Trading sex for food, money, other

CDC; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Plichta, 2004; Warshaw et al., 2009
Consequences of Abuse: Health Behaviors

- Eating Disorders
  - Fasting
  - Vomiting
  - Restricting
  - Overeating

CDC; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Plichta, 2004; Warshaw et al., 2009
Summary of Sexual Violence/Abuse

- Terms and definitions vary greatly, but meaning behind them is similar
- There is a continuum of abuse that is largely socially constructed
- Violence/abuse is common
- Associated with multiple risk factors at multiple levels
- Has significant health and social consequences

CDC; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Plichta, 2004; Warshaw et al., 2009
Questions??

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CDC; Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Plichta, 2004; Warshaw et al., 2009