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Penchan Pradubmook-Sherer
Mahidol University, Thailand

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Prevalence and Correlates of Adolescent Dating Violence in Bangkok, Thailand

PENCHAN PRADUBMOOK-SHERER
Mahidol University, Thailand
Faculty of Social Services and Humanities

This study explored the incidence and severity of violence in dating relationships, and identified variables that explain dating violence perpetration by Thai youths. The sample consisted of 1,296 adolescents from high schools, vocational schools, and out-of-school adolescents, between the ages of 14 and 19. Findings indicate that Thai youths maintain very intensive dating relationships. The out-of-school adolescents hold the highest dating violent behaviors. While males' dating violence scores were higher, the females were involved in all types of dating violence, exceeding the males on verbal/emotional violence. The results provide useful information about cultural influences on dating violence, and have practical policy implications for school-based prevention programs and agencies in Thailand.

Key words: Dating violence, adolescence, Thailand, school-based prevention, cultural influences

In the United States, 9% to 46% of all adolescents experienced physical violence in their current or past dating relationships (Glass, Fredland, & Campbell, 2003). Prevalence of dating violence ranged from 6.5% to 14.0% across state surveys and from 7.3% to 16.0% across local surveys (Grunbaum, Kann, Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, March 2009, Volume XXXVI, Number 1
Dating violence is emerging as a serious public health issue with far-reaching societal implications for premarital relationships among adolescents and future marital violence. In addition to the physical and emotional injury caused, personal experience of dating violence may lead to greater tolerance of intimate violence within the family (Simons, Lin, & Gordon, 1998; Tilley & Brackley, 2004).

In Thailand, dating relations among adolescents have become more common in recent years. Young Thai men have premarital sex with girlfriends more often than in the past, whereas traditional sexual sanctions on Thai girls limit their power to practice or negotiate protected sexual intercourse (Ford & Kittisuksathit, 1996; Gray & Punpuing, 1999). This situation places adolescents and young women at risk of dating violence or other forms of sexual coercion.

The aims of this research are to assess the prevalence and correlates of dating violence among male and female Thai adolescents. Research on dating violence among adolescents will be useful not only in providing guidelines for intervention at the premarital stage, but also in facilitating early prevention efforts.

**Dating violence.** Dating violence can be defined as the perpetration or threat of violence by at least one member of an unmarried (same sex or opposite sex) couple toward the other within a dating or courtship relationship. Nevertheless, most studies use different and conceptually unclear definitions of dating violence, precluding generalization of findings. For example, the terms *courtship violence* and *premarital violence* are often used synonymously, and fail to distinguish between a variety of dyadic interactions that represent different levels of commitment within dating relationships (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1991). In the literature, dating violence is often used interchangeably with the terms *abuse, violence* and *aggression*. Although these terms are similar, they have distinct meanings. Aggression refers to the act; violence incorporates the consequences of the aggressive acts, for example, the resulting injury; abuse refers to harmful intentions and aggressive acts involving unequal or dominant power (Murphy & Cascardi, 1999).
Moreover, various studies have adopted operational definitions of dating violence reflecting more and less inclusive perspectives. The broader perspectives define dating violence as acts and threats of physical, verbal, sexual and psychological violence, regardless of their perceived severity; the narrow perspectives are limited to physical violence and acts without reference to intent, consequences or context (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1991).

**Correlates of dating violence.** Research on dating violence correlates pointed to multiple risk factors related to dating violence, including familial attributes (father’s and mother’s education level, family income, family status [intact or not], experience of violence in the family of origin); interpersonal (peer influence, peers’ dating behavior, relationship commitment); and personal variables (gender, age, self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse, criminal activity, school type) [Lewis & Fremouw, 2001]. The following variables will be included in our study of dating violence among Thai youths.

**Familial attributes**

*Family socio-demographic attributes and structure.* The relation between family structure and dating violence has been widely studied in the United States, expecting more problematic family characteristics to be associated with higher incidence of dating violence (Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001; Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel, 1997; Straus & Ramirez, 2004). However, Lavoie et al. (2002) found no association between family adversity index and dating violence in the U.S. Straus and Ramirez (2007), who studied dating violence among university students in the United States and Mexico, found the lowest rate in New Hampshire (29.7%) and the highest in Juarez, Mexico (46.1%).

*Experiencing violence in the family of origin.* Following social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), other researchers regard dating violence as a behavior learned from experiencing violence in the family of origin and in associations with peers (Kaura & Allen, 2004). Several studies in the U.S. have found that, for males, experience with parent-child aggression during childhood is a significant predictor of abusive behavior toward their dating partners (e.g., Alexander, Moore, & Alexander,
A longitudinal study (Simons et al., 1998) indicated that corporal punishment by a parent was associated with later teen dating violence, suggesting that corporal punishment specifically "teaches that it is both legitimate and effective to hit those you love" (p. 475).

Interpersonal variables

Peer influence. Male peer support is an important component of the adolescent culture that underlies influences and often promotes violence in dating relationships. The role of the peer group as a source of values, guidelines, feedback, and social comparison is invaluable in the process of self-construction (Harter, 1990). Peer relations may legitimize and define violence in dating relationships as normal and non-deviant behavior, by providing ideological and informational support for such violence (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) found in the U.S. that perceived peer aggression predicted reports of the levels of both conflict and aggression in dating relationships. The relative contribution of friends' dating violence and of inter-partner violence to predicting adolescent dating violence remains largely unknown (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004).

Dating characteristics. Geiger, Fischer, and Eshet (2004), in a study of high school students in Israel, found a correlation between dating violence and interpersonal factors, including the duration and degree of relationship commitment. The literature confirms that males are more likely to control females or use violence against them to enforce their dominance in longer and more committed relationships (Hanley & O'Neill, 1997). Physical abuse among dating couples is more likely to occur as the relationship becomes more serious and the level of emotional attachment and personal investment increase. Individuals may then perceive a greater right to control their partners’ behavior (Riggs & O'Leary, 1989) and regard the use of violence during conflict situations as an acceptable part of intimate relationships (Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988).

Personal variables

Gender role. One of the more consistent findings in the literature is that females report more sexual dating violence
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victimization than males (Foshee et al., 2004). However, studies in the U.S. and in Israel have demonstrated that perpetration and victimization of dating violence are prevalent in both genders (Close, 2005; Pradubmook/Sherer & Sherer, 2008). Howard and Wang (2003, 2007) argue that there are strong indications that violence in adolescent dating relationships of youth in the states involves the reciprocal use of violence by both partners, although, as Miller and White (2003) claim, the meanings and consequences of girls’ violence are strikingly different than those of boys’, and that both are grounded in gender inequality.

Studies in Canada conclude that by reproducing a traditional concept of gender role stereotypes and power relations, patriarchal society encourages men to condone violence toward women and forces women to accept a subordinate role (Totten, 2003). Women victims who report an earlier onset of dating violence are more likely to endorse traditional gender values and express a greater tendency to forgive or dismiss the violence of their male partners (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). The role of gender in socialization and power relationships plays a crucial part in shaping dating behavior between males and females. According to Rose and Frieze (1993), first dates in the states are highly scripted along gender lines in the Western world. Males follow a proactive dating script, females a reactive one. In most characterizations of dating relationships, the female is portrayed as seeking to establish an enduring relationship while the male is portrayed as interested in sexual experimentation. The female is responsible for maintaining the relationship. These gender-based scripts confer more power upon males in the initial stages of the dating relationship.

In Thai society, dating is considered a romantic and interesting part of adolescence. Chinlumprasert (2000) found that adolescents perceive dating as the way men and women can get to know each other better before they become steady boyfriends/girlfriends or lovers. Dating means going out for fun with someone special, an activity limited to two persons. Thai gender role stereotypes and cultural values determine that it is more acceptable for men to initiate the dating relationship, although the women decide whether to accept or reject it. Dating has potentially negative consequences for women. This
is because many dating activities are inappropriate for traditional Thai women (e.g., going out alone with a man, holding hands in public, etc.). This is not the case for men. Dating relationships have different meanings for the two sexes. Women are more likely than men to relate premarital sex to love and serious emotional commitment, and men are more likely to view premarital sex as experimentation (Israpahakdi, 2000). Male adolescents view having multiple heterosexual relationships as a mark of "being a real man" (Boonmongkon et al., 2000). It is particularly in the early period of dating that male-female disagreement concerning their different reasons for dating and the asymmetry of what is considered proper sexual conduct can be a source of conflict and frustration.

**Age.** Despite some support for the relation between age and dating violence in studies in the U.S. and Canada (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Raghavan, Bogart, Elliott, Vestal, & Schuster, 2004; Wolfe et al., 2001), age has traditionally failed to emerge as a significant predictor of dating violence. While older adolescents have more opportunities for dating, and girls have a greater chance of experiencing sexual violence, less is known about the increase of aggression with age, or whether gender and age interact (Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, & Haworth, 2002).

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem reflects individuals' evaluations of their abilities and attributes, as well as their momentary feelings of self-worth, such as pride or shame (Brown, Dutton, & Cook, 2001; Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Self-esteem has been defined as the totality of an individual's cognitive thoughts and affective emotions regarding the self (Haney & Durlak, 1998), as well as social identity elements derived, in part, from processes of reflected appraisal (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). Pflieger and Vazsonyi (2006) indicated that low self-esteem has a significant effect on dating violence victimization, perpetration and attitudes among adolescents.

**Alcohol and drug abuse.** Alcohol and drug abuse are commonly associated with increased incidence of dating violence (Chase, Treboux, & O'Leary, 2002; Maxwell, Robinson, & Post, 2003). Research in Canada indicates that it is common for both the offender and the victim to be drinking at the time of a sexual assault (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). Maxwell et al.
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(2003) found in the U.S. that about three in ten high school students reported having sex while either they or their partners were "very drunk, very stoned, or unconscious." Substance abuse was found to increase the likelihood that both males and females would perpetrate dating violence (O'Keefe, 1997). Women who reported binge drinking and cocaine abuse over the month preceding the incident were also more likely to be victims of dating violence than women who did not drink or use cocaine during that period.

Criminal activity. Some studies found a relationship between criminal activity and dating violence (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Sheidow, & Henry, 2001). Thus, Straus and Ramirez (2004) indicate that a history of criminal acts is associated with an increased probability of dating violence.

Study status. Schwartz and DeKeseredy (2000) did not find a relation between school type and admitted levels of male violence in Canada. However, the customary division in Thailand into out-of-school youths, vocational school students and high school students determines, to some extent, the peer group influence and cuts across SES lines as well. Our research design will enable the study of these expected differences.

Given the social rather than personal nature of the phenomenon, a multidimensional approach—taking into account familial, personal, interpersonal and social dimensions—will be used to investigate the phenomenon. More specifically, the study examines the relationship between dating violence, with reference to four dimensions: (1) family violence and family characteristics; (2) individual attributes; (3) peers' effects; and (4) dating relationships.

Hypotheses

1) Family attributes. The more aggressive the punishments received by individuals in their family of origin, and the weaker the family characteristics (lower education level of parents, lower family income, non-intact family), the greater the probability of perpetrating dating violence.

2) Individual attributes. Gender—Males will commit more dating violence than females; the more negative the personal characteristics (lower self-esteem, higher substance
abuse, higher delinquency rates, the lower the school type, the lower the grade and the older the age), the greater the probability of perpetrating dating violence.

3) Peers' effects. The more peers perpetrate dating violence and the more they advise their peers to commit dating violence, the greater the probability of perpetrating dating violence.

4) Dating relationships. The greater the importance of the dating relationship, the longer the duration of the relationship, and the higher the frequency and length of meetings, the greater the probability of perpetrating dating violence.

Methodology

Sample
Thai adolescents were randomly selected from three groups: out-of-school adolescents, adolescents attending vocational schools, and adolescents attending academic high schools (school type), using a stratified clustered random sampling procedure. First, a random sample of localities stratified by geographical area was drawn. Bangkok represents both social diversity (including a range of upper, middle and lower social classes) and cultural diversity (including adolescents with both traditional and modern perspectives), so the sample encompasses the possible variation of adolescents of Thailand. Following the classification determined by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (2005), the study divided Bangkok into four geographic areas: inner city, east adjacent city, west adjacent city and the suburb. Second, in each area, a systematic random cluster sampling method was used to select two high schools and three vocational schools, whereas out-of-school adolescents were selected by accidental random sampling technique from communities and workplaces. Third, we used simple random sampling to select two 10th and 11th grade classes in each selected school. All students attending school at the time of data collection were asked to participate in the study. Fewer than 10 pupils refused to participate. The final sample consisted of 1,296 participants (582 adolescents from nine high schools, 613 adolescents from ten vocational schools and 101 adolescents who were out of school).
Instruments used in this study

We used a Thai translation of some scales that were originally in English. The accuracy of the translation was verified using the back-translation method. When possible (like with the Rosenberg self-esteem scale) our translation was compared to others in the Thai language. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a group of 40 students. Proper adjustments were taken following these steps.

Individual attributes were measured by several instruments. A demographic questionnaire addressed gender, education and study status, age and last year's average grade score. Self-reported delinquency behavior was assessed by a revised version of Sherer's (1990) self-report delinquency questionnaire, which includes 24 categories covering the entire range of offences committed by juvenile delinquents in Thailand. To simplify the analysis, these categories were collapsed under the main categories used in the customary crime report classification system in Thailand: crimes against public order; crimes against persons; crimes against property; and violation of municipal ordinances (Ministry of Justice, 2006). The questionnaire consists of eight items; higher scores reflect a greater number of delinquent acts committed by the subject. Sherer (1990) found this instrument highly reliable in Israel. The Cronbach $\alpha$ score in the current study = .743.

Alcohol/drug use was measured by three items—use of alcohol, use of light drugs and use of heavy drugs—on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (use every day). Self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1979), comprising 10 items that measure overall self-esteem. This Guttman scale has a reproducibility of 92%, and was originally developed to measure adolescents' self-esteem. High levels of validity and reliability for the scale have been confirmed by several hundred studies (e.g., Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988; Guimond & Roussel, 2001). Responses range from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. The scale has a cross-cultural equivalence that was validated in a study in 53 nations (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). It is probably the most used measure of personal self-esteem in ethnic identity and acculturation research (Moore, Laflin, & Weis, 2008). Many studies used the scale in Thailand
and its validity was proven (Charoensuk, 2007; Leelakulthanit & Day, 1992; Weisz, McCarty, Eastman, Chaiyasit, & Suwanlert, 1997). The Cronbach \( \alpha \) score in the current study = .749.

Family relations were measured by looking at socio-familial adversity and corporal punishment. Socio-familial adversity included information about parents' age, education, occupations, socioeconomic status and family income. Corporal punishment was measured using physical maltreatment indicators adopted from Lau, Chan, Lam, Choi, & Lai (2003). Participants responded to the following three items, representing different aspects of physical maltreatment: (1) “Did you receive corporal punishment from your family members in the last year?” (2) “Were you beaten for no reason by your family members during this year?” and (3) “Have you ever been beaten to injury by your family members?” In Thailand, beating for a reason is often seen as a method of discipline rather than as abuse; thus, a distinction is made between the first two items. The three categories are not mutually exclusive. The Cronbach \( \alpha \) score in this study = .689.

Interpersonal relationships with peers were measured by DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (1998) instruments, for which there are numerous indications of validity. Specifically, these scales include male peer support, informational support, and association with abusive peers.

This scale defined male peer support as association with peers who sexually and physically assault women, and the resources provided by peers to perpetuate and legitimize these behaviors (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998a; Godenzi, Schwartz, & DeKeseredy, 2001). We used two sub-scales of these measures: informational support and association with abusive peers. Informational support refers to the guidance and advice that influence men to physically and sexually abuse their dating partners. This sub-scale includes six items, such as: “Did any of your friends ever tell you that it is acceptable for a man to hit his dating partner or girlfriend in certain situations?” The responses were scored on a dichotomous scale (1=yes, 0=no). DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998) indicated a Cronbach \( \alpha \) = .70 for this sub-scale. The Cronbach \( \alpha \) score in this study = .767.

Association with abusive peers explores how many of the subjects' friends have actually engaged in physical, sexual or
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psychological abuse of their dating partner. The three items were adopted from DeKeseredy and Schwartz’s study (1998). Respondents were asked: “How many of your male friends insult their dating partners and/or girlfriends, swear at them, and/or withhold affection?” “Used physical force…” “Made forceful physical sexual attempts towards their girlfriends?” The response scale included 1 (none), 2 (1-2 persons), 3 (3-5 persons), 4 (6-10 persons), and 5 (more than 10 persons). DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998) indicated a Cronbach α = .65 for this sub-scale. The Cronbach α for this study = .667.

Dating violence, dating relations, dating partner characteristics and level of commitment were measured using the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI) [Wolfe et al., 2001]. This is a 35-item, self-report instrument that assesses dating violence and dating relationships. Dating violence/abuse includes five subscales: threatening, verbal/emotional, relational, physical, and sexual abuse. Each question about dating violence/abuse is posed twice, “…first, in relation to the respondent’s behavior toward dating partners and second, in relation to dating partners’ behavior toward the respondent” (Wolfe et al., 2001, p. 279). The response scale points are 0 (never); 1 (seldom, this has happened only one or two times); 2 (sometimes, this has happened about three to five times); and 3 (often, this has happened six times or more). Various exploratory and confirmatory studies have indicated high reliability and validity for this instrument (Wolfe et al., 2001). The Cronbach α scores for the five violence subscales in this study were: for the threatening subscale α = .811; for the verbal/emotional subscale α = .847; for the relational subscale α = .472; for the physical subscale α = .811; and for the sexual subscale α = .77.

This instrument includes 17 items relating to participants’ dating relationships over the previous year, along with questions about leisure-time activities, dating partner characteristics and the length and importance of each relationship. To these, we added two questions about the frequency and length of meetings.
Results

The sample consisted of 1,296 male (45.5%) and female (54.5%) adolescents from high schools (47.29%), vocational schools (44.90%), and out-of-school adolescents (7.7%) between the ages of 14 and 19. Most respondents reported that their parents lived together, although out-of-school students reported the highest rate of parental separation and divorce. We found demographic differences among the participants by school type. The out-of-school adolescent group is somewhat older than the high school student group, their families are less intact, their parents have higher unemployment rates, their families are somewhat larger and their income is lower than adolescents in schools (see Table 1). The characteristics of our participants and their families are similar to those of the Thai population at large (for comparisons, see National Statistical Office, 2000).

Among adolescents who reported alcohol use, 22% (n=22), 13% (n=74) and 1.8% (n=11) of the out-of-school adolescents, vocational school and high school students respectively, were frequent drinkers (reported drinking every week to every day). Post hoc analysis (LSD) indicated that high school students drank less alcohol and used fewer drugs than the out-of-school group or the vocational school students.

Among adolescents who reported delinquency behavior, 42% had at some time taken part in a group fight, 36% had at some time caused intentional damage to public property, and approximately 10% had been arrested in connection with criminal activities. ANOVA indicated significant differences on participation in group fights by school type F(2,1278)=32.29, p<.006). Post hoc analysis (LSD) indicated that the three groups differed significantly with regard to involvement in group fights, with the out-of-school group scoring higher than the other two groups.

Most participants (58.8%) reported having friends who perpetrated psychological aggression toward their dating partners, and approximately 29% reported having friends who used physical and sexual violence against their dating partners. Significantly higher percentages of association with violent friends were found in out-of-school and vocational...
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants who have started dating, by school type (N=635).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables:</th>
<th>Out of school n=101 (14.51%)</th>
<th>Vocational n=322 (46.3%)</th>
<th>High School n=272 (39.11%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46 (45.5%)</td>
<td>165 (51.2%)</td>
<td>69 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55 (54.5%)</td>
<td>157 (48.8%)</td>
<td>203 (74.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant age*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td>15.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Status*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents live together</td>
<td>68 (68%)</td>
<td>236 (74.2%)</td>
<td>202 (74.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or divorced</td>
<td>23 (23%)</td>
<td>60 (18.9%)</td>
<td>54 (20.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or two parents died</td>
<td>9 (9%)</td>
<td>22 (6.9%)</td>
<td>14 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's employment*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works</td>
<td>67 (69.8%)</td>
<td>256 (82.6%)</td>
<td>229 (84.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't work</td>
<td>7 (7.3%)</td>
<td>11 (3.5%)</td>
<td>7 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>13 (13.5%)</td>
<td>23 (7.4%)</td>
<td>21 (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td>9 (9.4%)</td>
<td>20 (6.5%)</td>
<td>13 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's education*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>5 (6.9%)</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>37 (51.4%)</td>
<td>87 (33.7%)</td>
<td>55 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>15 (20.8%)</td>
<td>86 (33.3%)</td>
<td>49 (21.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/College</td>
<td>10 (13.9%)</td>
<td>46 (17.8%)</td>
<td>57 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>4 (5.6%)</td>
<td>32 (12.4%)</td>
<td>51 (22.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA or Higher</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>5 (1.9%)</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works</td>
<td>46 (47.4%)</td>
<td>200 (63.5%)</td>
<td>164 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t work</td>
<td>40 (41.2%)</td>
<td>90 (28.6%)</td>
<td>90 (33.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7 (7.2%)</td>
<td>16 (5.1%)</td>
<td>9 (3.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td>4 (4.1%)</td>
<td>9 (9%)</td>
<td>6 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's education*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>7 (9.9%)</td>
<td>4 (1.5%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>37 (52.1%)</td>
<td>128 (47.8%)</td>
<td>97 (41.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>17 (23.9%)</td>
<td>67 (25.0%)</td>
<td>45 (19.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/College</td>
<td>8 (11.3%)</td>
<td>42 (15.7%)</td>
<td>38 (16.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>21 (7.8%)</td>
<td>52 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA or Higher</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>6 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family monthly income*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10,000</td>
<td>26 (44.8%)</td>
<td>85 (33.6%)</td>
<td>39 (17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001 to 20,000</td>
<td>19 (32.8%)</td>
<td>75 (29.6%)</td>
<td>82 (36.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001 to 30,000</td>
<td>5 (8.6%)</td>
<td>33 (13.0%)</td>
<td>42 (18.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,001 to Highest</td>
<td>8 (13.8%)</td>
<td>60 (23.7%)</td>
<td>65 (28.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of siblings*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>92 (91.1%)</td>
<td>300 (93.8%)</td>
<td>257 (94.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>4 (1.3%)</td>
<td>4 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>7 (6.9%)</td>
<td>16 (5.0%)</td>
<td>10 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01
school groups than in the high school group. Out-of-school adolescents reported having stronger negative attitudes toward women than vocational school or high school students.

Only 53.47% (695) of participants had started dating (out of school: 55 females, 46 males; vocational school: 157 females and 165 males; high school: 203 females, 69 males), a somewhat lower proportion than in Western countries (Pradubmook/Sherer & Sherer, 2008); the mean age for initiation of dating in our sample was 15.88 (SD=1.18). Participants reported intense relationships, indicated by their frequency of meetings: 49.6% meet once a day, either in or out of school. Furthermore, the majority of participants (68.1%) regarded their relationships as important or very important.

Of the 695 participants in our study who dated, 49.2% of the males and 46.7% of the females had been threatened by their partners; 49.2% of the males and 46.7% of the females reported being verbally or emotionally abused; 65.8% of the males and 59% of the females had been relationally abused; 41.9% of the males and 41.2% of the females had been physically abused and 43.2% of the males and 46.7% of the females claimed that they had been sexually abused by their partners. These figures (Table 2) indicate that Thai youths experience a very high incidence of dating violence, especially when compared to reports of dating adolescents in other countries (Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002; Howard & Wang, 2003, 2007; O'Leary, Slep, Avery-Leaf, & Cascardi (in press).

To examine the hypotheses, we studied the dating group's answers. The relationships of the independent variables with the participants' own dating violence were used, analyzed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the AMOS program (Arbuckle, 1999). We conducted the SEM model analysis using a Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML), which is asymptotically unbiased for large samples, under the assumption of randomly missing data (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999).

The model yielded a significant chi-square statistic, $\chi^2(df=369)=1592.8$, $p<.001$. However, this may have been due to the large sample size. In such cases, fit indices offer a more reasonable estimation of the fit of the model (Kaplan, 1990; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The fit indices suggested that the model fits the data: Sample size $\approx 695$; NFI=0.71;
Adolescent Dating Violence in Thailand

IFI=0.76 CFI=0.76; RMSEA=.068, .0716 < RMSEA < .0812. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. A model of precursors of dating violence.

The model produced the following fit results: Sample size ≈ 695; \( \chi^2(\text{df}=369)=1592.8, p<.001 \). NFI=0.71; IFI=0.76 CFI=0.76; RMSEA=.068.

The various independent variables account for 25% of the dating violence. The highest loadings on the dating violence factor were for the relationships with partners, followed by family attributes' impact, peer influences and personal characteristics (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 1 addressed family attributes. We confirmed this hypothesis. We found that the higher the frequency and severity of punishment, the higher the dating violence; the higher the parents' education level, the more intact the family and the higher the income, the lower the persons' incidence of dating violence.
Hypothesis 2 dealt with individual attributes. We confirmed this hypothesis. Males indicated higher incidence of dating violence. The higher the incidence of antisocial behavior, alcohol and drug abuse, the older the age, and the lower the school type and self-esteem, the higher the incidence of dating violence.

Hypothesis 3 dealt with peer group effects. We confirmed this hypothesis. The greater the support of friends in the use of violence and the more they behaved violently toward their dating partners, the higher the incidence of dating violence.

Hypothesis 4 addressed dating relationships. We confirmed this hypothesis. The greater the importance and length of the relationships, and the more frequent and intense are the meetings, the higher the incidence of dating violence.

**Discussion**

Our results indicate that a high percentage of Thai youths are involved in various forms of dating violence in their relationships, typically involving both partners. Adolescents’ academic status—attending high school, attending vocational school or being out-of-school adolescents—is significant with regard to dating violence. On the whole, the out-of-school group reported the highest dating violence rates. As expected, a gender-effect was found for dating violence. However, the multivariate analysis indicated that females are involved in all types of dating violence relationships. Their involvement rates exceed those of males in verbal/emotional violence, but they had lower sexual abuse scores.

**Dating violence**

Thai youths perpetrate and experience much higher rates of dating violence than Western youths. This is evident from the much higher percentages of Thai youths who admitted experiencing abuse on all five dating violence measures (Grunbaum et al., 2004; Howard & Wang, 2003, 2007; O’Leary et al., in press; Raghavan et al., 2004; Silverman, Rai, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2004). This holds true for reported experiences of dating violence, both as the perpetrator and as the victim. In the U.S., 25% of dating adolescents have experienced
physical and/or sexual dating violence (Foshee, Linder, & Bauman, 1996). Cecil and Matson (2005) examined levels of sexual victimization among a sample of 14- to 19-year-old African American adolescent women: 32.1% reported having been raped, 33.7% had experienced sexual coercion, and 10.8% reported attempted rape.

With the exception of sexual abuse, we found a higher incidence of dating violence among the out-of-school group on all measures of dating violence. Sexual dating violence is probably a unique case. In Thai societies, sexual activity is highly controlled and has serious social implications for women. Dating behavior develops through socialization and ongoing experiences. Therefore, the cultural norms and beliefs embedded in one’s personality, together with social values and norms, form the basis for dating violence. The literature indicated that more traditional gender role attitudes significantly predict male infliction of violence on women in intimate relationships (Bookwalta, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Geiger et al., 2004; Sherer & Etgar, 2005). The mechanism underlying the perpetration of sexual dating violence in Thai society requires further clarification, although several possible interpretations of this result are proposed. First, while sexual activity has a very high priority during adolescence (Frydenberg, 1997), sexual power and sexual experience are key elements of masculinity in patriarchal society. A double standard for premarital sexual intercourse reveals that in Thailand men are encouraged by society to be sexually active without restraint, while women who respond to a man’s desire are condemned (Boonmongkon et al., 2000; Chinlamprasert, 2000). Women are forced by their partners to consent to unwanted sex to prove their affection and fidelity. This situation places adolescents and young women at risk of dating violence or other forms of sexual coercion.

One of the more important differences in our assumptions and results derives from the expected influences of cultural effects. While some studies have concluded that more traditional societies prohibit violence in general, and dating violence in particular, our expectations and results support a contradictory effect. Thus, Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, and Reininger (in press) expect acculturation to be
associated with greater prevalence of dating violence victimization among Latino American females in the U.S. It is true that Thai youths are undergoing a process of modernization. But it may be impossible to evaluate and specify their exact point of progress, or whether they have reached the acculturation point at which they have adopted some Western norms that support dating violence. It appears to us, however, that the alternative explanation is correct, namely that results must be studied specifically with regard to cultural differences. While it may be possible that other traditional cultures do not support dating violence as a consequence of their values and norms, it seems that the Thai culture, which supports male privilege, paves the way to the endorsement of dating violence.

**Dating characteristics**

We found that Thai adolescents maintain very intense dating relationships during adolescence. Participants reported having frequent meetings with their partners, with whom they maintain long and meaningful relationships. Ironically, this may be connected to higher dating violence rates among our subjects, for the literature indicates that males in deeper and more committed relationships are more likely to control females or use violence against them in order to enforce their dominance (Hanley & O'Neill, 1997).

Cleveland, Herrera, and Stuewig (2003) found that different degrees of relationship commitment affected many of the associations between female and male characteristics and the incidence of abuse among youth in the U.S. Thus, relationship commitment was a significant predictor of abuse in high-seriousness relationships, but not in low-commitment relationships (Cleveland et al., 2003). Similarly, the risk of violence against the dating partner generally increases as the relationship continues (Geiger et al., 2004). Therefore, the probability of dating violence increases in extended and committed relationships. This supports our finding of greater experience of dating violence among the Thai females who attributed greater significance to their long-term relationships than males. The finding that the out-of-school group meets with their partners more frequently, may, in itself, emphasize their level of relationship commitment, and thus be reflected in higher
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rates of dating violence. Further research should involve these variables, as no data in Thailand has been collected on the relationship between the level of seriousness of dating relations and dating violence.

**Peers' influence**

The literature attests to a clear influence of peers' behavior on dating violence (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Close, 2005; Harter, 1990; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; Silverman & Williamson, 1997). Our results confirmed these expectations. It seems that in Thailand, as in Western countries, youths exchange reports with their peers of having used dating violence, thus supporting and legitimizing this behavior. The more the peers commit dating violence, thus serving as behavioral models, the higher the incidence of dating violence. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) offers another, plausible explanation—Thai youths' sense of identity with their peer groups motivates their identification and behavior. According to the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individuals gain a sense of personal worth from their collective associations, such as group affiliation. A person's social identity, a part of the individual's self-concept originating in the knowledge of membership in a social group, derives from belonging to the peer group together with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981). Thus, assuming that the values and norms of the peer group behavior support dating violence, we may assume that the dating violence will also be supported. This state of affairs may explain the higher rates of dating violence among our participants.

**Gender differences**

Males reported a higher incidence of dating violence than females, lending support to previously reported findings in the literature (Feiring et al., 2002; Geiger et al., 2004; Weisz & Black, 2001). However, we found that females were involved in all types of violent dating behaviors, consistent with findings of studies that found involvement of both genders in perpetration and victimization in dating violence (Close, 2005; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005; Howard & Wang, 2003; Sherer, in press).

Taking into account the overlap between delinquency-
related violence and partner violence (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005), we must note the recent (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005) growing criticism of the role of the feminist theory of intimate violence in shaping theory, research and policies in the field, “that precludes the notion of female violence, trivializes injuries to males and maintains a monolithic view of a complex social problem” (p. 680). In fact, many indications exist that show equivalent rates of serious female violence.

Another possible explanation for the similar dating violence rates by gender is that young people who share similar beliefs about dating violence are attracted to each other. As a result, those who accept some form of dating violence and those who resent it will find their suitable—and distinct—partners. At the same time, it seems more reasonable to assume that dating violence is a learned and shared phenomenon, and involvement in a situation in which one of the partners uses violence legitimizes the use of violence by the other partner through modeling and reinforcement processes (Bandura, 1986).

Implications for policy and interventions

Systematic interventions are needed to reduce violence in dating relationships (Foshee et al., 2004). Preventive educational programs must be established to confront male and female adolescents’ beliefs that violence is an acceptable response to conflict. Preventive programs should be initiated in middle school when dating attitudes and behaviors first develop. Educating adolescents about sexual coercion and assault should also be part of the regular school curriculum and public service programs. Efforts to change social norms would also reduce young people’s confusion regarding sex and enhance their responsibility with regard to sexual activities.

The present results also suggest several potential targets for prevention efforts. Given the influence of peers in this domain, effective programs should be group-based and should use peer power to influence adolescents. Moreover, dating violence prevention efforts should include activities designed to counter the negative influences of peer behavior. Same-sex interventions have been found to be more effective than gender-mixed
### Table 2a. Dating violence by perpetrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Don’t study</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th></th>
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<td></td>
<td>Females M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>Males M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Females M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Males M</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>I threatened</td>
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<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.71</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I verbal or emotional</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.64</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.49</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I relational</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=3) (α=.81)</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>I physical</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.32</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.80</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I sexual</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=4) (α=.89)</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= # of items in scale; α = Reliability coefficient alpha; a = p for school type effects, b = p for Gender effects; * p < .05, **p < .001; Number of group members: 1). Out-of-school study females=55; 2). Out-of-school males=46; 3). Vocational school females=157; 4). Vocational school males=165, 5). High school females=203, 6). High school males=69.

### Table 2b. Dating violence by school type and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Don’t study</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td>M SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I threatened</td>
<td>2.08a**</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=4) (α=.89)</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I verbal or emotional</td>
<td>2.26**</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.76b**</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=8) (α=.94)</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I relational</td>
<td>2.15**</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=3) (α=.81)</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I physical</td>
<td>1.98**</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=4) (α=.90)</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sexual</td>
<td>2.04**</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.29**</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=4) (α=.89)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
groups for changing attitudes and behaviors (Feiring et al., 2002). Multi-faceted school-based educational and awareness programs that include videos, workshops, presentations, plays and classroom discussions are relevant and potentially effective prevention strategies. They create an atmosphere for students to demonstrate mutual respect, which can change attitudes, increase knowledge and change behavior intention (Jaffe, Sudermann, & Reizel, 1992).

The involvement of healthcare providers in prevention strategies (primary, secondary, and tertiary) is essential in reducing adolescent dating violence. Screening for dating violence may reveal exposure to multiple forms of violence in the adolescent’s life, including experiences of parents’ physical and sexual violence and witnessing family and community violence. The complexity of this issue should be brought to the attention of the healthcare providers.

Limitations and research suggestions

These findings should be viewed with caution in light of several limitations. First, data were obtained entirely by self-report. Respondents were asked to recall dating violence occurring within the last year, with the risk of some memory distortion or deliberate response distortion. Participants may report to meet others’ expectations (social desirability) or to hide certain information. Nevertheless, self-report is no less reliable than official data when reporting deviant behavior (Comes, Bertrand, Paetseh, Joanne, & Hornick, 2003).

Given the social rather than personal nature of the phenomenon, there is a need for further research concerning cross-cultural and social group differences, which takes into account race, ethnicity, gender and other related factors. Another warranted piece of research on dating violence is a longitudinal cohort study that addresses the onset of violence, which is crucial in identifying potential causes of dating violence. Such a study would determine whether risk factors, such as peer support of violence, negative attitudes toward women, attitudes supporting violence, and alcohol and drug use are the consequences or the causes of dating violence. The inclusion of adolescents from varied cultural and social backgrounds
would provide additional information about the extent to which the present findings can be generalized across different social contexts. Future research should also focus on intervention and assessment of dating violence education and prevention programs in school-based settings.

Acknowledgement: We express our gratitude to WHO, Thailand, for granting this research.

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