

10-2018

From State Policy to School Practices: Accessibility and Implementation of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Education

Heidi Adams Rueda

Peter R. Fawson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/socialworkfacpub>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE

From State Policy to School Practices: Accessibility and Implementation of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Education

Heidi Adams Rueda, MSW, PhD

The University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas

Peter R. Fawson, MSW, PhD

Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

Currently, 22 states legally require or urge schools to include teen dating violence (TDV) awareness education; yet, little research has examined how school districts are interpreting and implementing these policies. In a state that mandates such education for parents and children, and within a large urban city serving primary Hispanic youth, the present article assessed the types of TDV awareness education being provided in public schools, including the accessibility of this information. Specifically, we contacted independent school districts (ISDs; $N = 10$, serving over 15,000 youth) directly to assess whether and which TDV education programs were being implemented. We also assessed whether awareness education was being disseminated via school websites in the form of a policy on TDV, as well as whether additional information pertaining to TDV (e.g., resources, programs) was available. Results are discussed, highlighting the need for use of evidence-based programming, awareness accessibility, and culturally appropriate materials for Hispanic parents and youth.

KEYWORDS: adolescent dating abuse; school social work; prevention education; program evaluation; Hispanic youth

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a serious issue facing youth in the United States. Data from the national 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014) found that 73.9% of high school students had dated in the preceding year; of these youth, over 10% reported being victimized by physical and sexual dating violence. Experiencing dating violence in adolescence is linked to a number of risk factors, including higher levels of depression, eating disorders, drug abuse, poor school performance, suicidal ideation, and lower levels of overall life satisfaction (see Temple, Le, Muir, Goforth, & McElhany, 2013). Although violence during adolescence differs from that in adult relationships, it is predictive of later intimate partner violence perpetration (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode, & Rothman, 2013). At its height, TDV may result in homicide, which is now the third leading cause of death among youth ages 10 to 24 (CDC, 2014).

Hispanic adolescents are at heightened risk for experiencing TDV. The YRBSS found that rates of both physical and sexual dating violence were higher among Hispanic adolescents (13.6% female, 7.0% male physical violence; 16.0% female; 6.7% male sexual violence) as compared to White non-Hispanic adolescents (12.9% female, 6.4% male physical violence; 14.6% female, 4.8% male sexual violence; CDC, 2014). Hispanic youth are often impacted by multiple and overlapping risks in their environment including poverty, gangs and community violence, and family stress associated with acculturation (Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Stroupe, 2009). Environmental stressors hold a compounding effect, decreasing an adolescent's ability to control negative emotions and heightening the probability of their enacting multiple forms of dating violence (Rosenfield, Jouriles, Mueller, & McDonald, 2013). Further, increased violence across ecological systems may contribute to Hispanic teens' proclivity to justify its use within their intimate partnerships (Black & Weisz, 2008; Smokowski et al., 2009). Lastly, we know that adolescents rarely seek help for TDV; Hispanic youth in particular may feel shameful seeking help from formal sources such as school personnel given cultural norms that value privacy and family cohesion (Rueda, Williams, & Nagoshi, 2015; Sabina, Cuevas, & Rodriguez, 2014).

Given these factors, school-based TDV policies and practices are particularly important in reaching Hispanic youth populations. This study answers a call for research

concerning how a state-level policy requiring TDV awareness education in Texas is being translated at the practice level (Jackson, Bouffard, & Fox, 2013; LegiScan, 2007). Specifically, the purpose of this study was to describe whether schools are providing TDV awareness education, including a school-based policy on TDV, other forms of dating violence resources on their websites, as well as school-based prevention programs. We also assessed what types of programs are being utilized, the accessibility of each of these types of information to interested parties such as parents, educators, and researchers, and whether policies and programs are available in Spanish. While it is undoubtedly important to understand the explanatory mechanisms underlying TDV, as well as to develop effective programs and evaluate those in existence, this type of descriptive study is important and largely missing from the literature on TDV (Jackson et al., 2013).

Cultural Perspective on Teen Dating Violence

Understanding culturally-bound values and beliefs with regard to Hispanic youth is essential to effectively target their perceptions of and experiences with TDV. Traditional gender values continue to exert influence on Hispanic adolescents (Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, McHale, Wheeler, & Perez-Brena, 2012), particularly as gender is an organizing facet of family life (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Research with Mexican-origin youth has found that males remain stable in traditional views of gender while females evidence decline in these views over time (Updegraff et al., 2012). As Hispanic youth adopt divergent gender roles and expectations, stress in the relationship may be heightened and contribute to aggression (Miranda, Bilot, Peluso, Berman, & Van Meek, 2006; Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, & Reininger, 2004; Williams & Rueda, 2016). These processes have been studied with acculturating Hispanic adults (e.g., Mattson & Ruiz, 2005; Sabina, Cuevas, & Schally, 2013), and are lacking with Hispanic youth couples. One observational study with Mexican American dating couples found that their discrepancy in acculturation was associated with poor communication during discussion of conflict. Further, although gender role expectations were not examined, communication style played a mediating role in predicting physical violence perpetration (Williams & Rueda, 2016). Acculturation, acculturative stress, and

shifting cultural values of Hispanic youth should be considered together with protective factors including positive aspects of machismo and marianismo (Rueda & Williams, 2015), ethnic pride, and family cohesion (Malhotra, Gonzalez-Guarda, & Mitchell, 2015). Moreover, it is essential to consider the contexts in which violence occurs.

Studies with youth, inclusive of Latino (Messinger, Fry, Rickert, Catalozzi, & Davidson, 2014), point to situational contexts as the most common for the occurrence of dating violence. Within these contexts, adolescents' communication and conflict-resolution abilities are particularly relevant (Adams & Williams, 2014; Johnson, 2008; Messinger et al., 2014). Relationship violence is often bidirectional (Giordano, Copp, Longmore, & Manning, 2015; Messinger et al., 2014) and attempts to control a partner stem from desiring of influence over a contested domain, which in adolescence is commonly jealousy or cheating (Giordano et al., 2015). Attending to the role of jealousy as contextualizing of TDV may be particularly relevant to programs targeting Hispanic youth. First, youth that are less acculturated may be more likely to ascribe to possessive personality characteristics alongside acceptance of violence as a conflict resolution tactic (Adams & Williams, 2014). In their qualitative study with Mexican American adolescents, Adams and Williams (2014) found that anger resulting from jealousy constituted youth's processes leading to physical violence perpetration. Jealousy is a common experience, one study finding that 70% of Mexican American youth had attempted to make a partner jealous within the past year (Antônio & Hokoda, 2009a). Navigating difficult emotions within the context of conflict topics may be facilitated by cultural strengths, including adaptive aspects of traditional gender roles. Amidst conversations heavily characterized by blaming and criticism, Mexican American males have been found, for example, to demonstrate positive aspects of machismo in their taking of responsibility, emotional attentiveness, and discussion of family values (e.g., pregnancy concerns, meeting parents; Rueda & Williams, 2015). This is an avenue for future research and program development.

Responding to Teen Dating Violence

Studies suggest that TDV is preventable, although most of the evaluated programs have targeted mediating variables (e.g., knowledge, dating violence norms),

lack control groups, and have not assessed long-term behavioral change. In addition, most programs have targeted youth in high school and few were directed toward Hispanic youth specifically. For example, the *Love U2* curriculum demonstrated significant increases in relationship knowledge, communication and conflict resolution skills, and a lowered acceptance of dating violence among primarily African American youth in a community setting (Antle, Sullivan, Dryden, Karam, & Bar- bee, 2011). This curriculum was offered over the course of 2 days. The 12-lesson *Relationships Smarts Plus* program, offered by the Dibble Institute, also demonstrated improvement in knowledge of what constitutes healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills among diverse youth across community and school-based samples (Futris, Sutton, & Richardson, 2013). Furthermore, Jaycox et al. (2006) found that the school-based *Ending Violence* curriculum, requiring only three class periods focusing on legal issues inherent to TDV, demonstrated significant increases in adolescents' awareness of reporting and governing laws, less acceptance regarding female to male violence, and increased likelihood to seek help as compared to youth not enrolled in the program. Unlike many of the other programs, this pro- gram targeted Hispanic youth and followed youth over time. Although this study did include a control group, behavioral differences in dating violence victimization and perpetration were not found between the control and intervention groups at 6-month follow-up.

The *Safe Dates Project* is among the few programs that have demonstrated behavioral changes as many as 4 years later. In eliciting long-term change, the program was efficacious in significantly decreasing psychological and physical abuse perpetration and increasing help seeking among primarily White and African American youth (Foshee et al., 1998, 2000, 2004). This program is extensive, requiring a full year of scholastic involvement that includes community service, poster contests, and attending a 10-session curriculum. The *Fourth R* (Wolfe et al., 2003, 2009), which integrates 21 lessons of TDV prevention education into existing health curricula, has also demonstrated long-term outcomes among primarily White youth. Specifically, sustained reductions in physical violence, particularly for adolescent boys, were reported as many as 2.5 years after the program was administered. This program has been deemed a "more promising program" in need of additional research and

development, particularly as it targets girls (Temple et al., 2013, p. 4). Of interest to the present study, Hahn et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis of school-based violence prevention programs found that violence reduction was significantly more profound for White (20.4%) versus Hispanic (0.5%) student bodies.

Federal and State Teen Dating Violence Policies

Given the steady and troubling prevalence of TDV, legislation has prioritized its prevention as an important public health concern (White House, The Office of the Vice President, 2013). In 2013, the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized with an emphasis on preventing violence by addressing adolescent dating abuse (Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, 2013). Alongside was a series of policies and prevention efforts at the federal and state levels, including the declaration of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness month (Mulford & Blachman-Demner, 2011). Many states began to pass legislation concerning TDV policies in schools. As of November of 2015, 22 states hold policies that either “urge or require” schools to implement TDV prevention education (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017, para 4). Each is accessible at the (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017) TDV website, but school districts are struggling to understand how to fulfill TDV policies (Jackson et al., 2013). Health classes are not mandated in all states, providing a void in some districts for the time to implement such education (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). Further, the wording each state policy adopts holds important implications concerning its ability to be clearly interpreted and carried out by school districts. In the state under analysis, school districts are required by law to develop and implement a TDV policy which addresses the definition of dating violence, as well as to provide students with safety planning and counseling services, training to teachers and administrators, and awareness education to parents and children (LegiScan, 2007). Recently, adolescents themselves have stepped forward in this state, creating a public service announcement and visiting the state capitol to advocate for greater attention to the nuances of this bill (Smothers, 2015). Students felt that the bill was not enforced in schools and that TDV education was not available to many teens (Smothers, 2015). Proponents of a stronger policy put forth a recent bill amendment that, if passed, would

establish a working group to examine the implementation of teen dating health education in schools (LegiScan, 2015).

School Barriers in Implementing Teen Dating Violence Policy

Schools may struggle to implement dating health education amidst competing demands. Academic achievement is often emphasized at the expense of implementing social development programs, including those targeting violence reduction (Fleming et al., 2005). Research suggests, however, that youth's relational and emotional skills are predictive of standardized test scores, and that these important mediators should be attended to at the school level (Fleming et al., 2005). Students in unhealthy relationships may have difficulty concentrating on academic priorities, whereas interventions and school services that address TDV may help to buffer or prevent this. This assertion is supported in longitudinal research of adolescent health, including the finding that one-fifth of adolescents in violent relationships (compared to 6% of the overall sample) had received failing grades (see Temple et al., 2013). To the contrary, Jackson et al. (2013) conducted a content analysis of this state's TDV policy and found that, although most sampled districts had developed a definition of dating violence and a set of consequences for it, few offered services (i.e., education, programming, safety planning) to youth themselves. The authors concluded, "as districts move forward in implementing the dating violence policy, emphasis must be placed on providing services to victims and increasing awareness" (p. 1).

The Present Study

This study responds to a call for research examining the types of TD awareness education being provided in public schools, including the accessibility of this information to interested parties such as parents (Jackson et al., 2013). Jackson et al. (2013) defined accessibility by the ease of locating information concerning a district's policy concerning TDV (i.e., a definition of dating violence) and their response to TDV, which includes whether parents and youth are being made aware of it as a problem. The reader will note the ambiguity in this state's mandate to provide "awareness

education”; districts may interpret this as simply including a TDV policy, may also list TDV resources on their websites, or may deliver a TDV education program to their student body. Thus, understanding the specifics of the district’s efforts becomes important. Jackson et al. (2013) found that TDV policies were available via the district’s homepage or parent/student homepages, and were typically easy to locate, although they did not report whether policies were available in Spanish. Most districts in this state (64.6%) did not, however, have TDV awareness education on their websites that extended beyond provision of a TDV policy; 13.9% had general awareness discussion of TDV on their websites, and only 21.5% of districts more specifically included the names of prevention programs (Jackson et al., 2013). The authors did not report whether such websites and/or programs were available in Spanish, or whether the programs were actually being utilized by the school district.

In this study, we assessed the following of high school districts within a large metropolitan area: (a) the ease of locating an online TDV policy, and whether the policy was available in Spanish; (b) whether and what types of awareness education information was available online, whether such information was available in Spanish, and the ease of locating such information; (c) whether districts had implemented a TDV education program, including the ease of finding this information; and if so, (d) what programs were being utilized and whether program content was available in Spanish. Data collection spanned 3 months (Spring, 2014) and pertained to the 2013–2014 school year. This study holds relevancy to social workers, counselors, or other school-based helping professionals that may be given the added responsibility of carrying out state mandates requiring TDV awareness education. In order to support their effective choice and delivery of evidence-based practices, it is important that studies such as this one be undertaken to enrich our understanding of how federal and state policies that seek to prevent TDV are being carried out at the ground level. That is, without a descriptive understanding of what is happening in schools, we lack guidance for future research concerning how to aid helping professionals in their quest to educate youth and families about TDV and to abide by policies to do so. Further, given that there are currently no accountability measures in place to evaluate the implementation of recent TDV policy (Jackson et al., 2013), this study provides an

exploration of the extent to which mandates are being carried out.

Method

Sample

This study utilizes a descriptive modality. The large southern city under analysis is comprised of school districts inclusive of areas considered suburban, central city, urban, rural, non-metropolitan, and military. Over one-quarter of the city's population is under the age of 18 (25.7%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The city is comprised of a majority 63.6% (Hispanic), followed by 25.5% (White), and 7.1% (African American); 44% (speak a language other than English in the home) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

We used an economic development webpage to determine that there were 17 ISDs within the city boundaries; however, in further examining the webpages of three of the military ISDs as reported, it was determined that they were part of one larger ISD. Thus, our sampling frame consisted of 15 total ISDs, inclusive of 73 high schools and over 98,000 youth. We were able to ascertain information pertaining to our third and fourth research questions by speaking directly to school personnel (see procedures) for 10 of the 15 ISDs, inclusive of 61 high schools serving a total of over 84,000 youth. School websites confirmed that school districts were comprised of racially diverse student bodies, with Hispanic students representing a large often majority group (range from 20% to 100%; $M = 65.30\%$; $SD = 25.12$). Of note, in cases where this information was unattainable online, we called high schools within each district to obtain the demographic makeup of their student bodies. Schools were also diverse in socioeconomic status; we determined via U.S. News and World Report that many schools were comprised of student bodies considered economically disadvantaged. Schools ranged from 9% to 97% in students' utilization of the free lunch program with 6 of 15 districts having rates of over 50% across all schools. The average receipt of free lunch across all schools was 49.30% ($SD = 26.08$).

Procedure

The governing Institutional Review Board deemed this project exempt since the

information presented is available upon request and is thus considered in the public domain. Although no permissions were needed from each ISD to collect the information, identifying information has been removed.

In order to answer our first research question regarding the ease of locating an online TDV policy, and whether the policy was available in Spanish, we visited each district's home website page, as well as the parent and student homepages. Following Jackson et al. (2013) coding procedures, we identified that a policy was "easy" to obtain if it was on one of these web pages. It was categorized as "moderately difficult" to obtain if it was either one or two clicks away from these homepages, and was considered "difficult" to obtain if it was more than three clicks or more away from the district's (or parent/student) homepages. Once a TDV policy was located, we noted whether it was also available in Spanish.

While searching for a TDV policy, we also assessed whether any other awareness information specific to dating violence was available. In line with our research questions, this may have included links to outside resources, information on the prevention of TDV, and/or programs being offered by the district. Given that no districts discussed programs being provided in their schools, we proceeded to contact ISDs directly to obtain this information. See Figure 1 for a flowchart outlining how data were obtained. We outline reasons for refusal or "end of trail" data collection via a lack of response from the district. That is, districts that were not included in this study either (a) denied to participate ($n = 1$), or (b) did not respond after one electronic communication and one follow up phone call to both the Superintendent's Office (SO) and the subsequent second contact using the ISD webpage directory ($n = 4$). Regarding the latter, the secondary contact deemed most appropriate by the SO office and/or the ISD webpage to obtain the requested information varied. Of note, all secondary sources responded when referred by the SO office; to the contrary, no secondary sources responded without superintendent backing.

The brief survey, administered either electronically or by telephone depending on each ISD's preferred method of communication, included the following two questions: (a) Does your ISD implement teen dating violence prevention education? and (b) If so, what type of program or educational materials are being utilized?

Results

This research sought to better understand how school districts have responded to this state’s policy to develop and implement a TDV policy that addresses the definition of dating violence, as well as to provide youth and parents with awareness education. In doing so, we present our results in three sections. The first presents findings concerning each school district’s TDV policy as available online and the ease of accessing this information; the second delineates our ability to locate awareness education as broadly defined (e.g., resources and information available on school districts’ web- sites, TDV programs offered in schools); the third and final section captures the types of programs being utilized by ISDs.

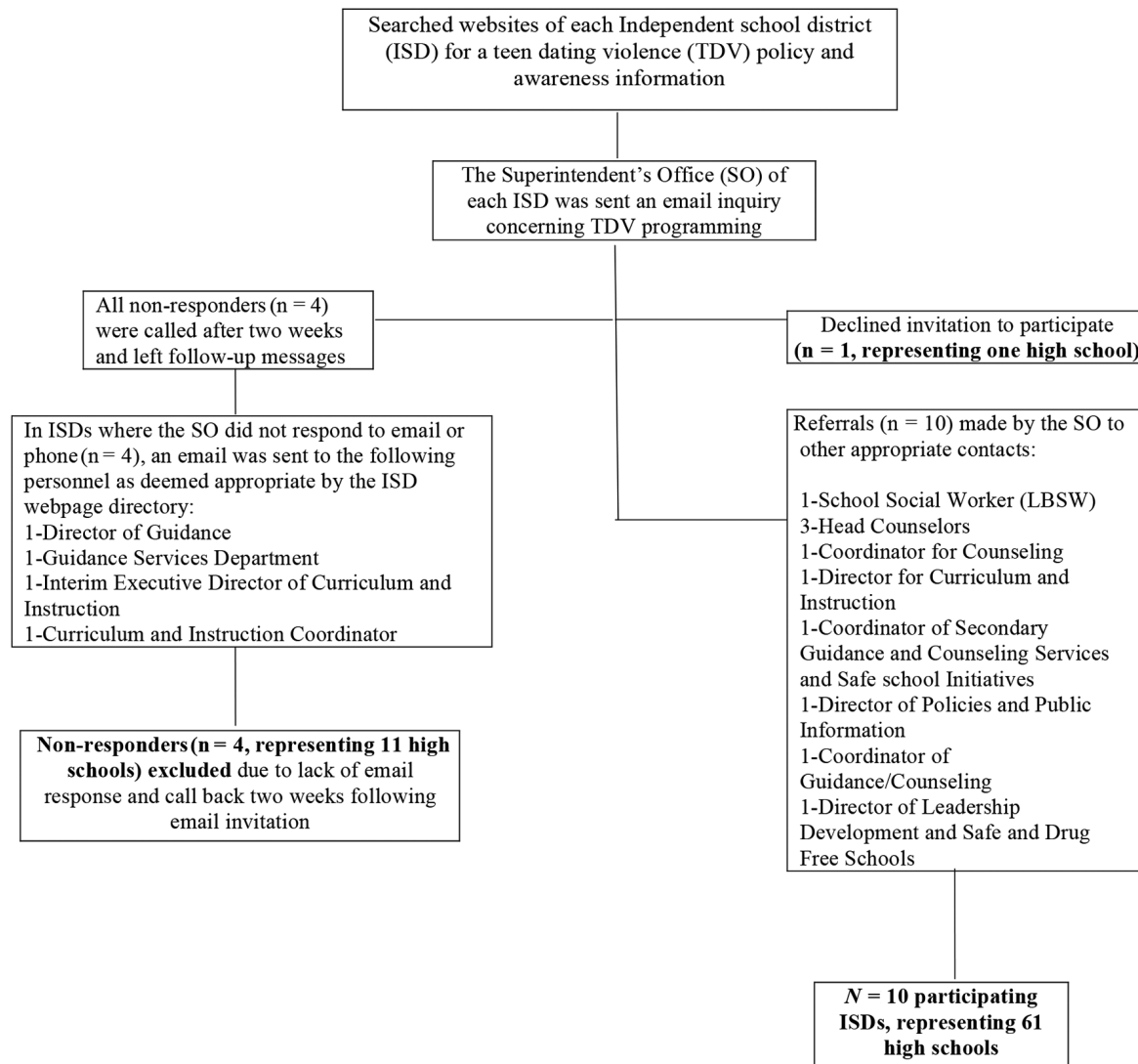


Figure 1. Sampling method flowchart.

Table 1. Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Awareness and Prevention Education Provided by Independent School District (ISD)

	high Schools in ISD	Students in ISD	TDV Policy Accessibility	TDV education Provided
ISDs providing TDV education				
1	<i>n</i> = 4	<i>n</i> = 5,783	Moderately difficult ^a	<i>Love Notes</i> ^a
2	<i>n</i> = 1	<i>n</i> = 1,206	Easy	<i>Love is Respect</i> ; <i>Don't Let Yourself</i> ^a ; February TDV awareness
3	<i>n</i> = 3	<i>n</i> = 1,305	Not available	<i>Relate Right</i>
4	<i>n</i> = 2	<i>n</i> = 3,771	Moderately difficult ^a	<i>Reducing the Risk</i> ; <i>Parenting and Paternity Awareness</i> (p.a.p.a.)
5	<i>n</i> = 15	<i>n</i> = 29,380	Not available	In-class presentations by counselors using materials gathered from conferences and community organizations and including materials from the <i>Choose Respect</i> ^a program
6	<i>n</i> = 2	<i>n</i> = 3,219	Easy ^a	Created by counselors; each year is different and involves awareness building and pledging to have violence-free relationships; February TDV awareness
7	<i>n</i> = 19	<i>n</i> = 21,208	Difficult ^a	Awareness lesson included in health classes as provided by counselors (no curriculum named)
8	<i>n</i> = 3	<i>n</i> = 2,946	Easy ^a	Created by counselors from research and attending conferences
Totals	<i>N</i> = 49	<i>N</i> = 68,818		
ISDs not providing TDV education				

(Continued)

Table 1. Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Awareness and Prevention Education Provided by Independent School District (ISD) (Continued)

	high Schools in ISD	Students in ISD	TDV Policy Accessibility	TDV education Provided
9	<i>n</i> = 1	<i>n</i> = 2,700	Easy ^a	None
10	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 12,764	Easy ^a	None
Totals	<i>N</i> = 12	<i>N</i> = 15,464		
Total surveyed	<i>N</i> = 61	<i>N</i> = 84,282		
IDS not responsive				
11	<i>n</i> = 1	<i>n</i> = 1,549	Not available	
12	<i>n</i> = 3	<i>n</i> = 2,326	Not available	
13	<i>n</i> = 5	<i>n</i> = 6,228	Difficult	
14	<i>n</i> = 1	<i>n</i> = 2,374	Easy ^a	
15	<i>n</i> = 2	<i>n</i> = 1,332	Not available	
Totals	<i>N</i> = 12	<i>N</i> = 13,809		

^aDenotes that the policy or curriculum is available in Spanish. The online *Choose Respect* program content is not entirely available in Spanish, although there are resources in Spanish available for parents on the website. We exclude some programs named that do not focus on information pertaining to TDV (e.g., programs focusing exclusively on sexual behavior, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception). All student body information was gathered from school websites or by calling school registrars offices.

Ease of Accessing School District Teen Dating Violence Policies

Ten of 15 (67%) sampled ISDs had TDV policies available online, all of which were contained within student–parent handbooks. Consistent with (Jackson’s et al. (2013)) definition, we defined having a TDV policy as communicating a definition of TDV to parents and youth. Each of the 10 policies also included consequences for engaging in TDV; one additional ISD that was not counted as having a TDV policy included consequences for engaging in TDV but without having provided a definition of it. Eight of 10 policies (i.e., student–parent handbooks) were available in Spanish. Six student handbooks were found easily, two with moderate difficulty, and two with difficulty. See Table 1 for each school’s policy accessibility alongside its respective size and provision of TDV education.

Ease of Accessing Awareness Education

Of the 15 ISDs, one website contained general awareness education about TDV. This information may be considered “easy” to locate in that it was one click away from the parent homepage. The information contained was a link to a website (Lauren Dunne Astley Memorial Fund, 2014) with resources for another state and national websites and hotlines. No websites contained information specific to educational programs being offered by the district, nor were any local or state resources made available to parents or teens. The reader will note from Figure 1 the difficulty we had in locating the programming being offered by each district; superintendent backing in the form of referrals to the appropriate channels aided in our ability to identify this information (10 of 11 districts). To the contrary, we were unable to obtain this information from alternative channels (sought on our own) when the superintendent had not made a referral (four districts). Of the superintendents’ 10 referrals, counseling/ social work services were the most able to assist us in obtaining information on the district’s TDV programming; the reader will also note below that such professionals were also often responsible for creating and delivering TDV education.

Teen Dating Violence Prevention education

Of the 10 ISD ($N = 61$ high schools) respondents for this study, eight ($N = 49$

high schools) reported that their high schools implemented some form of TDV education during the 2013–2014 school year, although curricula and materials varied considerably. Specifically, one used the curriculum *Love Notes* by the Dibble Institute (Pearson, n.d.); another used the curriculum *Love is Respect* (Break the Cycle, n.d.), as well as videos from a curriculum campaign entitled *Don't let yourself* available via the web (El Paso Attorney General and District Attorney, n.d.); a third implemented a curriculum initiated by the local county Family Justice Center called *Relate Right* (Bexar County Family Justice Center, n.d.); a fourth implemented a sexual health education curricula *Reducing the Risk* (Barth, 1989), which focuses on healthy relationship and TDV content while addressing teen parenting prevention (Kirby, Barth, Leland, & Fetro, 1991). The latter was taught together with the *Parenting and Paternity Awareness* (p.a.p.a.) curriculum, which addresses sexual health education specifically (Office of the Attorney General of Texas, 2014). Four ISDs reported that their high schools utilized social worker or counselor-made TDV education stemming from research, modules from existing programs, and materials from conference attendance on the subject of TDV. One specifically cited that they draw materials from the CDC (2006) *Choose Respect* initiative via an online tool that offers videos, youth's stories, and activities. See Table 1 for a complete listing of programs by school district. We also include whether materials are available in Spanish as ascertained via program websites. Finally, two ISDs did not implement any type of TDV prevention education. One stated that they had in the past but no longer do. In total, nearly 69,000 students were receiving some form of education on TDV and over 15,000 were not.

Discussion

This study sought to understand how a state law mandating that school districts develop a TDV policy and provide awareness education to parents and teachers (LegiScan, 2007) was being translated into practice. Specifically, we examined the accessibility of TDV policies and awareness information via school districts' websites, as well as whether educational programs were being utilized by each school district. We found that TDV policies were relatively easy to locate, but that other awareness information was absent. We therefore contacted school districts directly to learn of the

types of programs being utilized. Given the high prevalence of Hispanic youth and families in this part of the country, we were also interested in whether materials (i.e., policies, programs) were available in Spanish.

Our sample was comprised of a large Hispanic youth population; culturally grounded programs are important in reaching youth with meaningful and relevant TDV curricula (Malhotra et al., 2015). There are few programs that have been designed or adapted for Hispanic youth specifically, although Malhotra et al. (2015) suggest the incorporation of culturally relevant modules including acculturative stress, gender expectations, ethnic pride, and strong family values. Such programs may be particularly valuable for Hispanic youth, for whom confidentiality, trust, and the importance of close relationships (i.e., the romantic relationship itself, friends, and of immediate and extended family) should be prioritized (Rueda et al., 2015). Most helping professionals' codes of ethics hold a privileged role in reaching Hispanic youth with effective and culturally relevant TDV prevention education, as well as encourage their professions to carry out and share evaluations of their own practice with youth (American Psychological Association, 2010; American School Counselor Association, 2016; National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

Taken together, findings highlight a number of important points. First, they align with those of Jackson et al. (2013) in that there was more attention paid to certain aspects of our state's policy than to others. A definition of TDV was relatively easy to find within student–parent handbooks, published and available on two-thirds (10/15) of the sampled school district's websites. Fewer (8/10) were available in Spanish. Schools had not provided TDV awareness information beyond the student handbooks on their websites. While fulfilling the awareness education mandate may be interpreted in a number of ways, an initial step would be to make information available on district websites about TDV as an issue, and to link students and families to local, state, and national resources. The CDC (2015) offers a free website to parents, teens, and educators with some educational materials available in Spanish.

Second, although information concerning the types of TDV education being offered in schools is publicly available to parents and the larger community, we found that this information was very difficult to obtain. To the contrary, a published online

guide to addressing dating violence in schools within the framework of this state's mandate outlines that "these trainings should be organized to reach all members of the school community, including students, educators, parents/guardians, administrators..." (Texas Council on Family Violence, n.d., p. 5). Top-down leadership is important, particularly when it concerns the implementation of state policies within school districts. To the contrary, those ISDs that did not respond seemed to lack superintendent backing and their consistent referral to other helping professionals revealed a lack of centralized leadership concerning this issue. At the district and individual school level, social workers and counselors should work to ensure that parents and youth have access to the types of TDV education provided by schools, including the materials as available by the publishers. We did not directly assess the information parents were given regarding the programs and policies in place at their children's schools, but a recent public service announcement created by youth themselves in this state suggests that many youth and families are not reached with information about TDV (Smothers, 2015).

Third, the findings of this study are encouraging in that many ISDs surveyed are reaching high school youth with TDV prevention education. They also, however, align with literature suggesting that there is room for improvement in the provision of this form of awareness information (Jackson et al., 2013), and particularly in the utilization of evidence-based programs. Schools face barriers in delivering curricula; for example, that health classes are not always mandated (and are not in this state) misaligns with state mandates to implement TDV education. In spite of this barrier, research supports that schools are an ideal place to universally reach youth with healthy relationship programs (Temple et al., 2013). This study offers a preliminary exploration of what schools are doing to address TDV. Of interest, we found there was a lack of continuity in TDV education across districts and a hodge-podge of implementation materials and strategies. In and of itself, this is not necessarily problematic as perhaps school social workers and counselors are meeting the unique needs of their student bodies. It does, however, point to a need for evaluative research and raises concerns about whether core components of the programs are compromised through adaptation. It also highlights the difficulty for parents and interested parties to be able to understand the education that youth are receiving—particularly since a majority included a mix of social worker- and

counselor-adapted materials. Further, most programs being utilized did not contain information in Spanish on their websites, pointing to additional difficulty that Hispanic families may have in understanding materials and resources.

Of the programs utilized, we were only able to find evaluation information on three. In a study by Kerpelman (2010), youth that participated in the *Love Notes* curriculum were significantly more likely to demonstrate knowledge of healthy relationship dynamics and less likely to use and endorse verbal and physical aggression at post-test. Evaluators reported that this curriculum is a derivative of the *Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program*, registered as an evidence-based by SAMSHA (Barbee, Becky Antle, & Owen, 2013). Recently, this program has demonstrated effectiveness in targeting outcomes related to teen pregnancy prevention and sexual health risk (Barbee, Cunningham, van Zyl, Antle, & Langley, 2016). Second, the *Love is Respect* consulting team offer an evaluation of their website component (loveisrespect.org), and report that those visiting the site demonstrated small but significant changes in knowledge and tolerance of abuse (Evaluation and Training Institute, 2013). Finally, the *Choose Respect* initiative has been implemented within the *Expect Respect* program, which has demonstrated gains in the knowledge and skills necessary for healthy relationships (Ball, Kerig, & Rosenbluth, 2009).

Limitations And Future Directions

This study does not offer an evaluation of the TDV programs being utilized. Further, this research is not generalizable to other states; however, it does provide a starting place for educators, policy makers, and school personnel to assess their own state policies, the availability and transparency of such policies in their districts, and the advancement of school- and community-based TDV preventative interventions. Future research should ask counselors and social workers about their knowledge of TDV, including best practices in working with culturally diverse adolescent victims and perpetrators; research with school counselors and nurses, for example, suggests that such professionals receive very little if any training about TDV despite that they are regularly approached with this issue (Khubchandani et al., 2012; Khubchandani, Telljohann, Price, Dake, & Hendershot, 2012). This consideration is of relevance in that

we found they are asked to deliver such education to youth. Another avenue for future research would be to compare states that do and do not have a TDV policy in place in order to better understand the impact of these policies on TDV.

Conclusion

This state policy's mandate to provide "awareness education for students and parents" (LegiScan, 2007) is a step forward in the hopes of reducing the prevalence and impact of TDV. Many schools have cited that they are confused, however, as how best to implement the state mandates within their schools, as no real road map has been given to them (Jackson et al., 2013). This study suggests that many districts are making a dating violence policy available, but that more could be done to reach families with other forms of awareness education. While school-based helping professionals are creatively drawing from available curricula in order to deliver TDV education, the use of evidence-based programs and the evaluation of programs in use are critical aims if TDV policy mandates are to be effective. Further, culturally relevant programs for Hispanic youth, as well as other diverse youth populations, are required.

References

- Adams, H. L., & Williams, L. R. (2014). "It's not just you two": A grounded theory of peer-influenced jealousy as a pathway to dating violence among acculturating Mexican American adolescents. *Psychology of Violence, 4*(3), 294–308.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. Retrieved from <http://apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>
- American School Counselor Association. (2016). Ethical standards for school counselors. Retrieved from <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Ethics/EthicalStandards2016.pdf>
- Antle, B. F., Sullivan, D. J., Dryden, A., Karam, E. A., & Barbee, A. P. (2011). Healthy relationship education for dating violence prevention among high-risk youth. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 173–179.
- Antônio, T., & Hokoda, A. (2009a). Gender variations in dating violence and positive

- conflict resolution among Mexican adolescents. *Violence and Victims*, 24, 533–545.
- Antônio, T., & Hokoda, A. (2009b). Gender variations in dating violence and positive conflict resolution among Mexican adolescents. *Violence and Victims*, 24(4), 533–545.
- Ball, B., Kerig, P. K., & Rosenbluth, B. (2009). “Like a family but better because you can actually trust each other”: The Expect Respect dating violence prevention program for at-risk youth. *Health Promotion Practice*, 10(1 Suppl), 45S–58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1524839908322115>
- Barbee, A. P., Becky Antle, M. S. S. W., & Owen, J. (2013). *What evaluating evidence-based training curricula can teach us about evaluating child welfare training*.
- Barbee, A. P., Cunningham, M. R., van Zyl, M. A., Antle, B. F., & Langley, C. N. (2016). Impact of two adolescent pregnancy prevention interventions on risky sexual behavior: A three-arm cluster randomized control trial. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(S1), S85–S90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303429>
- Barth, R. P. (1989). *Reducing the risk: Building skills to prevent pregnancy*. Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates/Network Publications.
- Bexar County Family Justice Center. (n.d.). Relate right. Retrieved from <http://relat-erightsa.weebly.com>
- Black, B. M., & Weisz, A. N. (2008). Dating violence: A qualitative analysis of Mexican American youth’s views. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13, 69–90.
- Break the Cycle. (n.d.). Love is respect. Retrieved from <http://www.loveisrespect.org/download-materials>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). VetoViolence: Choose respect. Retrieved from <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2013. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6304.pdf?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=youth-risk-behavior-surveillance-united-states-2013-pdf
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Dating matters: Understanding

- teen dating violence prevention. Retrieved from <http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/datingmatters/respect.html>
- El Paso Attorney General and District Attorney. (n.d.). Don't let yourself. Retrieved from <http://www.dontletyourself.org>
- Evaluation and Training Institute. (2013). Evaluating loveisrespect.org. Retrieved from http://eticonsulting.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/LIR-Report_FINAL.pdf
- Exner-Cortens, D., Eckenrode, J., & Rothman, E. (2013). Longitudinal associations between teen dating violence victimization and adverse health outcomes. *Pediatrics*, *131*(1), 71–79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-1029>
- Fleming, C. B., Haggerty, K. P., Catalano, R. F., Harachi, T. W., Mazza, J. J., & Gruman, D. H. (2005). Do social and behavioral characteristics targeted by preventive interventions predict standardized test scores and grades? *The Journal of School Health*, *75*(9), 342–349. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2005.00048.x>
- Foshee, V. A., Bauman, K. E., Arriaga, X. B., Helms, R. W., Koch, G. G., & Linder, G. F. (1998). An evaluation of Safe Dates, an adolescent dating violence prevention program. *American Journal of Public Health*, *88*(1), 45–49.
- Foshee, V. A., Bauman, K. E., Ennett, S. T., Linder, G. F., Benefield, T., & Suchindran, C. (2004). Assessing the long-term effects of the Safe Dates program and a booster in preventing and reducing adolescent dating violence victimization and perpetration. *American Journal of Public Health*, *94*(4), 619–624.
- Foshee, V. A., Bauman, K. E., Greene, W. F., Koch, G. G., Linder, G. F., & MacDougall, J. E. (2000). The Safe Dates program: 1-year follow-up results. *American Journal of Public Health*, *90*(10), 1619–1622.
- Futris, T. G., Sutton, T. E., & Richardson, E. W. (2013). An evaluation of the Relationship Smarts Plus program on adolescents in Georgia. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*, *1*, 1–15.
- Giordano, P. C., Copp, J. E., Longmore, M. A., & Manning, W. D. (2015). Contested domains, verbal 'amplifiers', and intimate partner violence in young adulthood. *Social Forces*, *94*(2), 923–951. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov055>
- Hahn, R., Fuqua-Whitley, D., Wethington, H., Lowy, J., Liberman, A., Liberman, A., & Dahlberg, L. (2007). The effectiveness of universal school-based programs for

the prevention of violence and aggressive behavior. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 56, 1–12.

- Jackson, R. D., Bouffard, L. A., & Fox, K. A. (2013). Putting policy into practice: Examining school districts' implementation of teen dating violence legislation. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 25, 503–524.
- Jaycox, L. H., McCaffrey, D., Eiseman, B., Aronoff, J., Shelley, G. A., Collins, R. L., & Marshall, G. N. (2006). Impact of a school-based dating violence prevention program among Latino teens: Randomized controlled effectiveness trial. *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 39(5), 694–704. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.05.002>
- Johnson, M. P. (2008). *A typology of domestic violence: Intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and situational couple violence*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Kerpelman, J. (2010). The YouthBuild USA evaluation study of Love Notes...Making relationships work for young adults and young parents. Retrieved from <http://www.dibble-institute.org/Documents/YBUSA-Love-Notes-Evaluation-report-2010.pdf>
- Khubchandani, J., Price, J. H., Thompson, A., Dake, J. A., Wiblishauser, M., & Telljohann, S. K. (2012). Adolescent dating violence: A national assessment of school counselors' perceptions and practices. *Pediatrics*, 130(2), 202–210. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-3130>
- Khubchandani, J., Telljohann, S. K., Price, J. H., Dake, J. A., & Hendershot, C. (2012). Providing assistance to the victims of adolescent dating violence: A national assessment of school nurses' practices. *The Journal of School Health*, 83, 127–136.
- Kirby, D., Barth, R. P., Leland, N., & Fetro, J. V. (1991). Reducing the risk: Impact of a new curriculum on sexual risk-taking. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 23(6), 253–263.
- Lauren Dunne Astley Memorial Fund. (2014). Promoting healthy teen relationships, the arts, and community service. Retrieved from <https://laurendunneastleymemorialfund.org/>

- LegiScan. (2007). H. B. 121 § 37-0831. Retrieved from <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/80R/billtext/html/HB00121F.HTM>
- LegiScan. (2015). TX H. B. 1142 § 37-0831. Retrieved from <https://legiscan.com/TX/text/HB1142/2015>
- Malhotra, K., Gonzalez-Guarda, R. M., & Mitchell, E. M. (2015). A review of teen dating violence prevention research: What about Hispanic youth? *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 16*(4), 444–465. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1524838014537903>
- Mattson, S., & Ruiz, E. (2005). Intimate partner violence in the Latino community and its effect on children. *Health Care for Women International, 26*(6), 523–529. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07399330590962627>
- Messinger, A. M., Fry, D. A., Rickert, V. I., Catalozzi, M., & Davidson, L. L. (2014). Extending Johnson's intimate partner violence typology: Lessons from an adolescent sample. *Violence Against Women, 20*(8), 948–971. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077801214546907>
- Miranda, A. O., Bilot, J. M., Peluso, P. R., Berman, K., & Van Meek, L. G. (2006). Latino families: The relevance of the connection among acculturation, family dynamics, and health for family counseling research and practice. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families, 14*, 268–273.
- Mulford, C. F., & Blachman-Demner, D. R. (2011). Teen dating violence: Building a research program through collaborative insights. *Violence Against Women, 19*, 756–770.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2008). Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- National Conference of State Legislatures. (2017). Teen dating violence. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-dating-violence.aspx>
- Office of the Attorney General of Texas. (2014). Parenting and paternity awareness. Retrieved from <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/parenting-and-paternity-awareness-p.a.p.a>
- Pearson, M. A. (n.d). *Love notes*. Berkeley, CA: The Dibble Institute.
- Raffaelli, M., & Ontai, L. L. (2004). Gender socialization in Latino/a families: Results from two retrospective studies. *Sex Roles, 50*, 287–299.

- Rosenfield, D., Jouriles, E. N., Mueller, V., & McDonald, R. (2013). When at-risk teens are violent towards romantic partners: The role of common stressors. *Psychology of Violence, 3*, 260–272.
- Rueda, H. A., & Williams, L. R. (2015). Mexican American adolescent couples communicating about conflict: An integrated developmental and cultural perspective. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 52*, 17–181.
- Rueda, H. A., Williams, L. R., & Nagoshi, J. L. (2015). Help-seeking and help-offering for teen dating violence among acculturating Mexican American adolescents. *Children & Youth Services Review, 53*, 219–228.
- Sabina, C., Cuevas, C. A., & Rodriguez, R. M. (2014). Who to turn to? Help-seeking in response to teen dating violence among Latinos. *Psychology of Violence, 4*, 348–362.
- Sabina, C., Cuevas, C. A., & Schally, J. L. (2013). The effect of immigration and acculturation on victimization among a national sample of Latino women. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 19*(1), 13–26.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0030500>
- Sanderson, M., Coker, A. L., Roberts, R. E., Tortolero, S. R., & Reininger, B. M. (2004). Acculturation, ethnic identity, and dating violence among Latino ninth-grade students. *Preventive medicine, 39*(2), 373–383.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2004.01.034>
- Smokowski, P. R., David-Ferdon, C., & Stroupe, N. (2009). Acculturation and violence in minority adolescents: A review of the empirical literature. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 30*(3–4), 215–263. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10935-009-0173-0>
- Smothers, H. (2015). Meet the middle school girls changing TX dating violence legislation. *Jezebel*.
- Temple, J. R., Le, V. D., Muir, A., Goforth, L., & McElhany, A. L. (2013). The need for school-based teen dating violence prevention. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Information Policy for Children at Risk, 4*. <http://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/childrenatrisk/vol4/iss1/4>.
- Texas Association of School Boards. (2012). A guide to Texas public education. Retrieved from <https://texasschoolguide.org/>

- Texas Council on Family Violence. (n.d.). A guide to addressing dating violence in Texas schools. Retrieved from [http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/hb121/A Guide to Addressing Dating Violence in Texas Schools.pdf](http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/hb121/A%20Guide%20to%20Addressing%20Dating%20Violence%20in%20Texas%20Schools.pdf)
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Quick Facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4865000.html>
- Updegraff, K. A., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., McHale, S. M., Wheeler, L. A., & Perez-Brena, N. J. (2012). Mexican-origin youth's cultural orientations and adjustment: Changes from early to late adolescence. *Child Development, 83*(5), 1655–1671. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01800.x>
- Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. (2013). §47. Retrieved from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113s47enr/pdf/BILLS-113s47enr.pdf>
- White House, The Office of the Vice President. (2013). 1 is 2 many campaign releases new public service announcement on dating violence [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/1is2many>
- Williams, L. R., & Rueda, H. A. (2016). Mexican American adolescent couples' vulnerability for observed negativity and physical violence: Pregnancy and acculturation mismatch. *Journal of Adolescence, 52*, 170–181. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.08.001>
- Wolfe, D. A., Crooks, C., Jaffe, P., Chiodo, D., Hughes, R., Ellis, W., . . . Donner, A, Stitt, L. (2009). A school-based program to prevent adolescent dating violence: a cluster randomized trial. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 163*(8), 692–699. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/archpediatrics.2009.69>
- Wolfe, D. A., Wekerle, C., Scott, K., Straatman, A. L., Grasley, C., & Reitzel-Jaffe, D, Jaffe, D. (2003). Dating violence prevention with at-risk youth: A controlled outcome evaluation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*(2), 279–291.

Acknowledgment. We would like to thank Nicole A. Bell, LMSW, former graduate student in the Master of Social Work department at the University of Texas at San Antonio, for her idea to conduct this project and data collection efforts.