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Teens' Self-Efficacy to Deal with Dating Violence as Victim, Perpetrator or Bystander

Tinneke Van Camp¹, Martine Hébert², Elisa Guidi^{2,3}, Francine Lavoie⁴, Martin Blais² and the members of the PAJ Team

¹ School of law, University of Sheffield, UK

² Department of sexology, *Université du Québec à Montréal*, Canada

³ Department of psychology, *Università degli Studi di Firenze*, Italy

⁴ School of psychology, *Université Laval*, Canada

Abstract Multiple studies have demonstrated that adolescent dating violence is highly prevalent and associated with internalizing and externalizing problems. A number of prevention initiatives are being implemented in North-American high schools. Such initiatives do not only aim to raise awareness among potential victims and offenders but also among peer bystanders. Since teenagers mainly reach out to their peers when experiencing adversity, it is important to address adolescents' efficiency to deal with witnessing dating violence or with friends disclosing dating abuse, in addition to increasing ability to deal with experienced dating violence victimization or perpetration. The aim of this study is to explore adolescents' self-efficacy to deal with dating violence victimization and perpetration in their relationships and those of their peers. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was completed by 259 14-18 years olds in Quebec, Canada. The data allows building insight into adolescents' confidence to reach out for help or to help others in a situation of dating violence victimization and perpetration. We also considered the impact of gender and dating victimization history. Results suggest that dating violence prevention can build on teens' self-efficacy to deal with dating violence and offer them tools to do so efficiently.

Keywords Self-efficacy, adolescents, dating violence, bystander, help-seeking

The issue of intimate partner violence has received considerable and much deserved attention over the past decades. Most of these studies address perpetrated or endured violence among young adults in the context of intimate relationships or dating. Recently the focus has shifted to adolescents as victims or perpetrators of dating violence (DV). Henton et al. (1983) first described the co-occurrence of romance and violence in early dating relationships. Adolescent DV is a significant issue due to its high incidence and potential serious consequences, such as internalizing and externalizing problems and an increased risk for revictimization (Antle et al., 2011; Hébert et al., 2012). Most conservative estimates, derived from Foshee and McNaughton Reyes' (2011) review of representative empirical studies in the USA, suggest that 1 in 3 teens are victims of emotional DV and 1 in 10 of physical DV. Estimates of sexual coercion have been less documented but according to Foshee and McNaughton Reyes (2011) available studies indicate that between 1-59% of youth experience sexual victimization, depending on its definition (*i.e.* including or excluding rape, attempted rape, force, unwanted sexual contact). In Quebec, Lavoie and Vézina (2002) found that among 16 year old girls questioned about their dating experiences in the last 12 months, 1 out of 3 reports psychological DV, 1 out of 5 physical DV and 1 out of 10 sexual DV. Furthermore, studies highlight the co-occurrence of different types of DV (Foshee and McNaughton Reyes, 2011). Also, empirical research documents that DV does not only occur in serious relationships or in late teenage years. For instance, Kaestle and Halpern (2005) present evidence of psychological and physical DV in the first romantic relationship of their teenage respondents.

A number of reports suggest that there are no significant differences in prevalence between boys and girls regarding physical and emotional DV victimization (Bélanger et al., 2010; Tucker Halpern et al., 2001). Although both male and female high school students report experiences of forced sexual activity in heterosexual relationships (Geiger et al., 2008; Poitras and Lavoie, 1995), girls are more likely to do so. Eaton et al. (2010) found that in a

representative nationwide sample of American youth, 10% of the girls and 4% of the boys report having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse. Very few studies offer information as to possible motives for DV. Some studies found gender-related differences in motives (girls using DV out of self-defense and boys out of anger or to control) (Barter, 2009), while in other studies the empirical findings were inconclusive (Foshee et al., 2007; O'Keefe, 1997).

Such incidence rates underline the need for efficient prevention. A number of prevention programs have been implemented in school environments. Such programs focus mainly on raising awareness among potential victims and perpetrators of the many aspects and consequences of DV (Lavoie et al., 2012). Among other proposed avenues, there is the objective to increase the willingness and ability of peers and community members to safely and effectively act prior, during or after DV incidents committed against strangers or friends (Banyard et al., 2004; Foubert et al., 2010; Lavoie et al., 2007; McMahan and Banyard, 2012; Shorey et al., 2012). Translated into routine-activity terminology, the purpose of such bystander education programs is to increase the presence of capable guardians in the community in order to dissuade potential offenders from committing acts of violence (McMahan and Banyard, 2012). Such prevention programs adopt a social-psychological approach and focus on ability to dissuade potential offenders as well as help victims. This type of approach is based on bystander intervention studies (Banyard, 2008; Casey and Ohler, 2012).

Social-psychologists Latané and Darley (1969) pioneered research on passive and active bystanders and motivation to help. They describe how bystander intervention depends on a series of decisions, affected by behavioral and cognitive processes. More particularly, they suggest that bystander intervention requires bystanders to notice a harmful event, interpret it as an emergency, feel responsible to intervene, feel competent to help and, finally, to act

(see also Levine, 1999). The Latané and Darley model, and subsequent studies in this tradition, focus on bystanders that are unknown to the victim. Since adolescents spend most of their time in school and among peers (Vynckier, 2012), DV prevention should also include a focus on peers and friends as potential bystanders and informal helpers (Weisz et al., 2007).

In his model on motivation to act, Bandura (2001) focuses on the feeling of competency; this is the next to last step in the series of decisions to bystander intervention in Latané and Darley's model. Bandura suggests that self-efficacy is crucial in people's decisions to act and improve one's own or another's situation. He asserts that *'[a]mong the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's belief in their capacity to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning and over environmental events [emphasis added]. [...] Unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties* (Bandura, 2001, p.10). Similarly, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010)'s theory of planned behaviour presents intention as an immediate predictor of action. Their theory has been found relevant to the prediction of a variety of behaviour (Cooke, Sniehotta and Schüz, 2007; Richard, De Vries and Van der Pligt, 1998). In this theoretical model, intention represents an individual's motivation in the sense of their reasoned plan or decision to exert effort to act (Conner and Armitage, 1998).

Following this line of thought, self-efficacy could impact help-seeking behavior when experiencing adversity as well as helping behavior when someone is being harmed. A few studies offer insight into self-efficacy to seek help for DV victimization and perpetration or to help when witnessing DV. Most of these studies look into teens' willingness to reach out after having experienced DV victimization. An important first hurdle for victims is telling someone about (a) hurtful incident(s). Disclosure of violence is an important step to

mobilize social support (Khouzam et al., 2007). Generally, according to the *International Crime Victims Survey*, interpersonal violence is the least likely of all types of crime to be reported to the police (Van Dijk et al., 2007). This is also true for adolescents. For instance, Vynckier (2012) studied the help-seeking behaviors of some 500 teenagers (14 to 16 year olds). She found that only 1 out of 10 of those who indicated that they had been the victim of theft, extortion or physical violence, disclosed the incident to the police. Such teen reluctance to report peer violence also seems to apply to dating violence (Molidor and Tolman, 1998). What is more, teenagers even seem reluctant to disclose dating violence victimization to their parents. Youth generally tend to not seek help at all, be it from informal helpers or professional support workers (Smith et al., 2000; Ashley and Foshee, 2005; Black et al., 2008). If they do reach out for help, they prefer to talk to their friends about experiences in their dating relationships (Ahrens and Campbell, 2000; Banyard et al., 2010; Black et al., 2008; Kogan, 2004; Weisz et al., 2007). They might be reluctant to disclose dating violence experiences to their parents because of their desire to be autonomous (Crisma et al., 2004) or fear their parents' reaction (Kogan, 2004). Reaching out to professionals might be inhibited by the lack of information on such resources, their wish to keep the abuse a secret, distrust in professional services or fear of retaliation by the perpetrator (Crisma et al., 2004; Vynckier, 2012). Furthermore, apart from reluctance to tell someone about abuse, research findings indicate that teenage DV victims are not likely to break up with the perpetrator (Jackson et al., 2000; Weisz et al., 2007). There is little documented information on the help-seeking behaviors of DV perpetrators. However, Ashley and Foshee (2005) found that DV perpetrators are equally reluctant to seek help and, when they do, they mostly rely on peers rather than adults.

How do teenagers feel about dealing with disclosure of dating violence by peers or witnessing it? If teenagers rely on their peers when they experience dating violence, studying adolescents' self-efficacy in dealing with disclosure or witnessing DV becomes

imperative. Such information is likely to orient prevention initiatives focused on improving adolescent bystander intervention. Empirical studies demonstrate that self-efficacy is associated with prosocial behavior (Bandura et al., 2003). For instance, Gini et al.'s (2008) study on bullying among 12 to 14 year old teenagers indicates that social self-efficacy rather than feelings of empathy towards a bully's victim was associated with defending the victim instead of standing by passively. These findings suggest that non-intervention when witnessing bullying in school is associated with not knowing what to do or fear of doing more harm than good, not with a lack of empathy (Gini et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, little is known about teenagers' reactions to hearing about or witnessing teen dating violence. What little is known suggests that teens' reactions could depend on the type of violence disclosed. Weisz et al. (2007) found that across gender and type of dating violence, youth generally adopted nurturing behavior after having been told about dating violence victimization instead of minimizing or avoiding the situation, although disclosure about severe dating violence triggered more avoidance reactions. In their study on teens' willingness to intervene when witnessing abuse, Jaffe et al. (1992) demonstrate that boys and girls are less likely to intervene in incidents concerning physical violence as opposed to verbal violence. Non-intervention could therefore be related to concerns for one's own safety. These studies indicate that adolescents' self-efficacy to deal with DV can vary depending of the type of violence. In addition, Noonan and Charles (2009) conducted focus groups with middle school students to examine peers' reactions to a friend's disclosure of DV perpetration. Their findings reveal that teenagers are reluctant to '*snitch*' should they become aware of a friend committing DV. Miller et al. (2012) highlight that such tolerance increases the pertinence of bystander education programs and raising awareness for gendered violence (see also Gidycz et al., 2011).

So far, little research has looked into possible gender differences related to self-efficacy in dealing with teen DV or whether such self-efficacy is related to a history of victimization. Bandura et al.'s (2003) study into the association between self-efficacy and prosocial behaviour demonstrates that teenage girls have a stronger sense of efficacy to experience empathy for others and are more prone to helping than males. There are only a few studies on gender differences regarding adolescent self-efficacy to help or seek help in cases of DV and they concern small samples and/or do not include psychological or verbal dating violence. In an early study on teenage attitudes towards wife assault and dating violence, teenage boys were found to be less likely to help when witnessing DV, while girls reported stronger intentions to help (Jaffe et al., 1992). In a study on a small sample of 57 high school students regarding physical and sexual violence, Black et al. (2008) found that teenage girls were more likely to reach out for support when experiencing DV victimization than boys. Some additional indications can be found in studies relying on young adults. Banyard (2008), for instance, found lower scores on efficacy scales among male college students having to deal with disclosure of DV victimization than among female students. In a subsequent study, Banyard et al. (2010) again report that female college students reacted more supportively when hearing about sexual assault against a friend than male students. While teenagers are generally reluctant to seek support for having committed DV, teenage female perpetrators of DV are more likely to do so than teenage male perpetrators (Ashley and Foshee, 2005).

Are victims of DV more likely to help other victims? To our knowledge, this particular question has not been addressed with regard to adolescent dating violence. Observations in this regard are limited to (young) adults. Ahrens and Campbell (2000) observed that in their sample of college students, respondents with a sexual assault history adopted more supportive behavior towards a friend who reveals sexual aggression than respondents without victimization experiences. However, Banyard et al. (2010), who replicated the

Ahrens and Campbell study with a larger sample of college students, found that for respondents having themselves suffered sexual violence, the confrontation with sexual assault against a friend causes emotional distress. Laner et al. (2001) presented vignettes in which a situation of physical violence was described to a sample of university students and asked them whether they would intervene if witnessing such a situation. They found that respondents who had been victimized or had witnessed violence were not more inclined to intervene and stop the violence described in the vignettes. In other words, experiences with DV could inhibit helping behavior. This concurs with general victimological studies. Despite a growing body of literature on the psychological impact of victimization, it remains difficult to predict how people react to victimization (Shapland and Hall, 2007). Some victims will experience debilitating stress and decreased ability to handle issues effectively. Others manage to transform suffering into helping behavior (Van Camp and Wemmers, forthcoming; Van Dijk, 2006; Vollhardt, 2009; Warner Stidham et al., 2012). Put differently, the impact of victimization history on helping and help-seeking behavior might be unstable.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the perceived ability of adolescents to deal with dating violence against themselves or others. More specifically, the analysis will focus on the self-efficacy of victims and perpetrators to seek help and self-efficacy of adolescents as informal helpers when witnessing or learning about dating violence. The study also aims to verify whether self-efficacy to deal with DV is associated with gender and self-reported history of DV. The impact of gender and past victimization on prosocial behavior following disclosure of dating violence victimization were measured in Ahrens and Campbell's (2000) and in a replication by Banyard et al. (2010). However, these studies concern a college sample, not adolescents, and they recorded actual reactions to disclosure rather than intentions and expected response. Moreover, our study is not limited to reactions

to experience or disclosure of sexual assault, as is the case for most of the above-mentioned studies, and also includes reactions to physical and emotional dating violence.

METHOD

Participants

The present study is part of the longitudinal Youths' Romantic Relationship Project, a survey designed to document the prevalence and associated consequences of DV in youth aged 14-18. The present study relies on the pilot data obtained from a sample of 264 teenagers recruited from 11 classes in a high school in Quebec. Five questionnaires were excluded from the sample due to invalidity of responses. Out of the 259 teenagers in the sample 59.5% are girls and 40.5% boys. The sample includes an equal repartition of students from secondary grades III, IV and V. The mean age of the respondents is 15.6 (SD=1.09). The majority is Caucasian (76.4%) and speaks French (84.9%). Most respondents (57.5%) report living with both their parents under the same roof. Half of the respondents ($N=135$) reported having been in a relationship in the last 12 months.

Measures

Self-efficacy: Participants were asked to complete the Self-efficacy to Deal with Violence Scale developed by Cameron et al. (2007). In this 8-item scale, five items relate to the perception of one's ability to act when one witnesses or becomes aware of DV against a peer (e.g. 'How confident are you that you could do something to help a person who is being hit by their boyfriend/girlfriend?') and three items concern the perception of one's ability to deal with DV as a victim or perpetrator (e.g. 'How confident are you that you could tell someone you trust that you are being abused by your boyfriend/girlfriend?'). Items were scored on a 4-point scale (1= not at all confident; 4= very confident).

Physical and emotional dating violence: An adaptation of a short form (Wekerle et al., 2009) of the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (Wolfe et al., 2001) was used to evaluate having suffered or inflicted overt and covert forms of violence in the context of a dating relationship. The eight items included in this measure concern verbal and physical violence, such as saying hurtful things, ridiculing the other or keeping track of where one's partner is and with whom, kicking, hitting, slapping, pushing, pulling one's hair, shaking, or threatening to hurt the other. The respondents were asked to indicate how often this has happened to them or how often they did it to their dating partner in the last 12 months (ranging from never to 6 times and more).

Sexual assault: The survey included a short form of the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss and Oros, 1982), which measures victimization and perpetration of various forms of sexual violence using several degrees of coercion (Cecil and Matson, 2006). The respondents were asked to indicate how often in the last 12 months (ranging from never to 6 times and more) their partner kissed, caressed or touched them and tried to have or had sex with them when they did not want to by using arguments, physical force or by giving them drugs or alcohol. They were also asked to check how often they did one of these actions to their partner in the last 12 months.

Procedure

One public school in Quebec was selected and agreement to participate from the principal was obtained. The teachers of the different classes in which the survey would be presented took part in an information session about the project and its objectives. The data collection took place over a period of four days. A research assistant presented herself in the different classes and introduced the aims of the survey and confidentiality issues. After having obtained consent from the students, they completed the self-report questionnaire in class under the supervision of the research assistant. The survey was completed within one time

period. Participants received a list of resources including phone numbers and websites of health and community resources in the region. One Ipod shuffle and four gift certificates were awarded by a prize draw. The study received approbation from the ethics' committee of the *Université du Québec à Montréal*.

RESULTS

The results will be presented in three sections. First, results pertaining to the factor structure of the Self-efficacy to Deal with Violence Scale will be summarized. Second, analyses exploring possible gender differences on self-efficacy will be presented. Finally, data related to the possible influence of experiencing DV will be summarized.

Factor structure

The 8 items of the Self-efficacy to Deal with Violence Scale (Cameron et al., 2007) were first subjected to principal components analysis (PCA). Prior to performing PCA the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .30 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO; Kaiser, 1974) value was .83 and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p < .001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of two components with eigenvalues exceeding 1. An inspection of the screen plot revealed a clear break after the second component. To aid in the interpretation of these two components, a Varimax rotation was performed.

As presented in Table 1, the rotated solution revealed the presence of a two-component structure. The solution explained a total of 57.18% of the variance, with Component 1 contributing 34.93% and Component 2 contributing 22.25%. The first component, which includes items 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8, has been named "Helping behavior as a bystander" and these

items concern perception of ability to intervene when one witnesses DV (e.g. item 2: *How confident are you that you could do something to help a person who is being hit by their boyfriend/girlfriend?*). The second component, which includes items 1, 5, and 6, has been labeled “Help-seeking behavior as a victim or perpetrator” and the items relate to the perceived ability to deal with DV when one is the affected party (e.g. item 6: *How confident are you that you could tell someone you trust that you are abusing your boyfriend/girlfriend?*). The internal consistency evaluated by Cronbach’s Alpha, is .83 for helping behavior and .52 for help-seeking behavior.

Table 1

Gender differences in self-efficacy

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the two component scores across gender. Results shown in Table 2 reveal a significant difference ($t(160)=4.03, p=.000$) in scores for boys ($M=14.82, SD=4.01$) and girls ($M=16.68, SD=2.80$) for the helping behavior dimension. A significant difference was also found between the help-seeking behavior dimension for boys ($M=7.89, SD=2.15$) and girls ($M=8.71, SD=1.88$) ($t(251)=3.18, p=.002$). These differences reveal that, female teenagers are more optimistic about their ability to do something in comparison to males, regardless of experiencing dating violence or witnessing it.

To further explore gender differences, we conducted item analyses. As shown in Table 2, there were significant differences in scores for boys and girls on all items of the self-efficacy scale, with the exception of the first and second item. Inspection of mean scores on each item indicate that girls show the highest mean score for item 7 ($M=3.63$), so they feel most *confident* that they could encourage a friend who is being abused to report it to a trusted person. Meanwhile, for boys the highest score is associated with item 2 ($M=3.30$);

they feel *quite confident* that they could do something to help someone who is being hit by their partner. Both males ($M=2.19$) and females ($M=2.46$) show the lowest average score for item 6: both genders do *not feel very confident* that they could tell someone they trust that they are abusing their boyfriend/girlfriend. Male adolescents seem to show difficulties to denounce the violence inflicted by themselves (item 6) as well as by someone else (item 3; $M=2.63$).

Table 2

Self-efficacy as a function of victimization status

Finally, a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the possible impact of gender and past dating violence experiences on Factor 1 (“Helping behavior as a bystander”) and Factor 2 (“Help-seeking behavior as a victim or perpetrator”). As shown in Table 3, there was a statistically significant main effect for gender in both factors: Factor 1, $F(1, 129)= 6.84, p=.01$ and Factor 2, $F(1, 132)= 10.91, p=.001$. However, the main effect for past DV experiences [Factor 1: $F(1, 129)= .23, p=.632$; Factor 2: $F(1, 132)= 1.37, p=.244$] and the interaction effect [Factor 1: $F(1, 129)= .52, p=.471$; Factor 2: $F(1, 132)= .90, p=.344$] did not reach statistical significance. As such, teenagers with or without victimization experiences present similar self-efficacy scores.

Table 3

DISCUSSION

Our data suggest that, on average, adolescents feel confident about their ability to deal with DV. For instance, both girls and boys feel confident they could break up with their partner

if they get insulted and take action if they witness someone being hit. However, we also found that, across gender, youth perceive some interventions to be easier to do than others. More particularly, teenagers seem more confident to help someone else than to seek help for oneself. This is in concordance with the literature on adolescent self-efficacy (Ahrens and Campbell, 2000). Similarly, Brown and Messman-Moore (2010) observed that young adults more readily admit that their peers are at risk and have more difficulty monitoring their own behavior and experiences. Moreover, teenagers feel least confident to reach out for committing DV.

Girls generally report higher self-efficacy to deal with having witnessed or experienced DV than boys, as suggested by Banyard and colleagues (Banyard, 2008; Banyard et al., 2010). While boys paint a positive picture of their competence to seek help for themselves or others when confronted with DV, they feel less confident than girls. Our results further demonstrate that girls feel most confident to encourage a victim of DV to talk to someone they trust, while boys feel most confident they could intervene when they witness someone being hit. Overall, male teenagers seem to have less difficulty in directly intervening or to act as opposed to talking to someone, whether it concerns something that happens to them or to another. Girls do not present diminished self-efficacy when it comes to verbal skills. This concurs with findings based on adult samples of male bystanders to be more likely to engage in heroic and risky behaviour to help others in need, while women prefer more nurturing strategies (Eagly and Crowley, 1986; Frasier Chabot et al., 2009). Also, male respondents in our sample indicate to be least likely to tell on someone who is abusing their partner. Adolescent male tolerance for DV perpetration was also highlighted by Noonan and Charles (2009).

While we found gender differences in self-reported efficacy to deal with DV, one's victimization experiences do not appear to affect help-seeking or helping behavior in the

present study. This result is slightly contradicted by reports on (young) adult samples. For instance, in their study on intimate partner violence among adults, Beeble et al. (2008) observe that the likelihood to assist survivors of partner violence is positively associated with one's own victimization experiences. Nonetheless, while Ahrens and Campbell (2000) found that college students with a sexual assault history adopted more supportive behaviour towards victims of sexual aggression than respondents without victimization experiences, Banyard et al.'s (2010) findings suggest that sexual assault against a friend causes emotional distress for victimized college students. Our findings might be explained by the fact that our research sample includes adolescents who are still in an important developmental stage in their lives (Collins, 2003). They also reported on recent events (i.e. experiences with DV in the last 12 months). In other words, it could be hypothesized that the impact of their victimization experiences has not fully manifested itself yet. The impact of DV experiences on one's self-efficacy might only become apparent in a later stage in life. However, this hypothesis should be further investigated. It is also possible that the severity and consequences of DV influence self-efficacy; such variables were unfortunately not considered in the present analysis.

The results of the present study have several practical implications. Firstly, our observations encourage the advancement of bystander education approach (McMahon and Banyard, 2012). Considering that teenagers mainly reach out to peers when experiencing violence (e.g. Ahrens and Campbell, 2000; Banyard et al., 2010; Black et al., 2008; Kogan, 2004; Weisz et al., 2007), it is reassuring to find that peers feel confident that they can deal with this, including their willingness to talk to an adult or encourage someone to do so. However, their willingness and confidence to be able to help does not imply that they will provide efficient support. For instance, Jackson et al. (2000) suggest that disclosure of adolescent DV to peers is associated with a decreased likelihood for the teenage victim to break up with the perpetrator. It can be assumed that adolescents have little experience in

dealing with relationship problems and that, while they feel confident about being able to provide support, this support is not necessarily efficient. Reliance of youth on their peers requires that adolescents get the appropriate tools to deal with it. Bystander education programs can build on teens' self-reported willingness and confidence to help their peers and can focus on providing them with strategies and resources to react efficiently when witnessing or hearing about DV. Meanwhile, one needs to be careful not to put all eggs in one basket: in addition to investing in peer bystander education, there is also a need to continue to invest in raising awareness for teen DV among school staff and parents as well as among potential victims and perpetrators. Especially since teens' confidence to deal with one's own experiences is weaker than to help someone else, it is important to provide victims and perpetrators with the tools to deal with their experiences. Moreover, bystander education programs are fairly new and few have so far been evaluated (Casey and Ohler, 2012). The effects of programs centered on raising bystander intervention have not been sufficiently empirically established (Banyard, 2011). This is also true for the effect of bystander education on the reduction of DV (Gidycz et al., 2011).

Secondly, since boys seem to feel less confident than girls when confronted with DV, prevention programs, irrespective of their focus on potential victims and perpetrators or on potential bystanders, should pay particular attention to boosting boys' confidence to deal with DV (Banyard et al., 2010). Particular attention should be paid to their verbal or communication skills. Teenage males feel most confident that they could intervene but present lower self-efficacy as far as talking to someone is concerned. While girls are more inclined to talk to someone, boys are more prone to take action, such as intervening when someone is hit. As such, they may put themselves more at risk of harm by getting involved in a violent situation. Prevention programs need to address dangers of direct interventions by witnesses and offer alternative helping behaviors, such as talking to the victim or reporting violence to an adult. Thirdly, we observed a male tolerance for gendered violence

in the form of a lower sense of self-efficacy to tell on a perpetrator among their peers. Although self-efficacy to inform someone about a friend abusing their partner is positive among boys, it received the lowest score in the self-efficacy scale. It therefore justifies highlighting the need to address it in bystander education programs, as already suggested by Gidycz et al. (2011) as well as by Miller et al. (2012). They remark that through bystander education one strives to raise awareness and reduce tolerance for gendered violence, which might in turn dissuade teens from verbally or physically assaulting peers.

Some limitations need to be emphasized. Firstly, the use of self-report data urges us to exercise caution. Since our main concern in this article is with self-efficacy and confidence of young people that they can deal with DV, which is an important factor in prosocial behaviour, self-report is a justifiable methodology. Nonetheless, self-report data may be considered by some as less reliable and valid. For instance, in relation to sensitive topics such as victimization and perpetration, self-reports might produce an underestimation of incidents. However, various sources teach us that this risk may in fact be overstated. Self-reports have been found to result in reliable estimates of alcohol consumption or drug use (*e.g.* Darke, 1998; Del Boca and Noll, 2000). Moreover, a test-retest reliability of the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS), a widely used self-report survey conducted on a regular basis among teenagers in the USA, demonstrates that overall students report risk behaviour (including DV) reliably over time (Brener et al., 2002). Furthermore, Denniston et al. (2010) compared the reliability of data collected through the YRBS in different conditions, *i.e.* in-class paper-and-pencil, in-class online completion and 'on your own' web conditions. Their findings favour in-class administration of the YRBS. Similarly, Koss and Gidycz (1985) compared the results of completion of the Sexual Experiences Survey (which was included in this study) in a paper-and-pencil and directive interview condition. They found that reporting of sexual dating violence was more reliable in the paper-and-pencil condition, which counters the reliance on interviewers to increase response reliability. Finally,

Rosenblatt and Furlong (1997) did reliability and validity checks on self-report survey data that was collected on violence on campus from secondary school students. They observe that only a relatively small number of students failed the reliability and validity checks; these respondents reported significantly higher incident rates than the respondents who passed the reliability and validity checks imbedded in the survey. These authors conclude that self-report surveys are responsible methodological procedures, on the condition that researchers adhere to rigorous procedures, such as uniform application and screening for obvious response sets and incomplete surveys. Such principles were respected in the present study, i.e. by having the survey presented in different groups by the same research assistant and by removing unreliable responses from the dataset.

Secondly, our data are cross-sectional and should therefore be considered as exploratory. Thirdly, future studies should validate the factor structure with a larger sample of participants. Also, the small sample size precludes the consideration of other variables that may impact perceived self-efficacy. For instance, severity or chronicity of victimization in dating or other confrontation with violence (witnessing interparental violence, peer harassment) may lead to relevant differences. Future studies will need to explore such possibilities. Fourthly, other relevant factors, such as attitudes concerning DV, may need to be integrated to gather a more comprehensive picture of correlates of self-efficacy in youth. Self-confidence to be able to intervene or look for help is only one step towards action, following the model proposed by Latané and Darley (1969), even though according to Bandura (2001) it is the most essential step. Therefore, it would be of interest to study the other steps in the Latané and Darley study in relation to adolescents dealing with DV, e.g. regarding the interpretation of incidents as hurtful or harmless. Sears et al. (2006) offer an initial insight into teens' perceptions regarding behaviour in a dating context they consider as unacceptable. The youngsters in their focus groups displayed a certain tolerance for DV that did not immediately result in hurt, for instance. The association between self-efficacy,

interpretation of adverse dating behavior and actions in response to it should be further investigated.

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Table 1

Varimax-Rotated Component Matrix After Principal Component Analysis of the Self-efficacy to Deal with Violence Scale

Item	Factor		
	1	2	h^2
Factor 1 “helping behavior as a bystander” ($\alpha = .828$)			
2. <i>How confident are you that you could do something to help a person who is being hit by their boyfriend/girlfriend?</i>	0.79	-0.06	0.60
3. <i>How confident are you that you could tell an adult about a person who pushes their boyfriend/girlfriend?</i>	0.75	0.29	0.64
4. <i>How confident are you that you could get help for someone whose boyfriend/girlfriend forces them to have sex with them?</i>	0.81	0.11	0.68
7. <i>How confident are you that you could encourage a friend who is being abused to tell a trusted adult?</i>	0.60	0.45	0.56
8. <i>How confident are you that you could tell an adult if a friend is being abused by their boyfriend/girlfriend?</i>	0.69	0.42	0.66
Factor 2 “help-seeking behavior as a victim or perpetrator” ($\alpha = .517$)			
1. <i>How confident are you that you could break up with a boyfriend/girlfriend if they insulted you all the time?</i>	-0.06	0.66	0.45
5. <i>How confident are you that you could tell someone you trust that you are being abused by your boyfriend/girlfriend?</i>	0.28	0.70	0.56
6. <i>How confident are you that you could tell someone you trust that you are abusing your boyfriend/girlfriend?</i>	0.24	0.62	0.44

Eigenvalue	3.52	1.05
% variance	34.93	22.25

Note. $N= 259$. The largest structure coefficient is shown in bold.

Table 2

Independent-samples t-Test analyses by gender of the Factor 1, Factor 2 and each items of the Self-efficacy to Deal with Violence Scale

	Girls		Boys		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Factor 1	16.68	2.80	14.82	4.01	4.03	160	.000
Item 2	3.44	0.72	3.30	0.79	1.44	254	.151
Item 3	3.05	0.86	2.63	1.04	3.47	194	.001
Item 4	3.22	0.79	2.95	1.08	2.13	176	.035
Item 7	3.63	0.66	3.07	1.09	4.65	153	.000
Item 8	3.35	0.80	2.93	1.06	3.39	182	.001
Factor 2	8.71	1.88	7.89	2.15	3.18	251	.002
Item 1	3.21	0.73	3.07	0.87	1.42	256	.156
Item 5	3.03	0.88	2.64	1.02	3.10	199	.002
Item 6	2.46	1.05	2.19	1.08	1.97	252	.05

Note. *N* = 259

Table 3

Mean and standard deviation and two-way between-groups analysis of variance testing effect of sex and past dating violence experiences on Factor 1 and Factor 2

	No DV				At least one form of DV				Two-way ANOVA		
	Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		F		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	Sex	DV	Sex*DV
Factor 1	16.78	3.60	15.55	3.82	16.94	2.69	14.77	4.22	6.84**	0.23	0.52
Factor 2	9.26	1.97	7.71	2.13	8.49	1.91	7.63	2.10	10.91***	1.369	0.90

Note. $N=135$; ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$