

Severe abuse at home linked to dating violence

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Young urban black women who are exposed to severe abuse within their families are much more likely to be victims of dating violence, according to a study led by a Michigan State University researcher.

Angie Kennedy said efforts to prevent [dating violence](#) should include discussion of what might be going on in the victim's home.

"There is a lot of focus on trying to prevent dating violence for [high school students](#), which is an important goal," said Kennedy, MSU associate professor of social work. "But if you're sitting in a group talking about conflict with your dating partner and meanwhile have all these things going on within your family and no one's addressing it, that's a problem."

Youths exposed to violence in their families may begin to understand it as a normal part of life, according to the study, which appears in the research journal [Violence Against Women](#).

Kennedy and colleagues surveyed 180 female high school students in a poor Chicago community and found that:

- 85 percent of them witnessed [domestic abuse](#) in their homes, with nearly half (49 percent) reporting an adult with an injury related to the abuse
- 72 percent were physically abused themselves

- 29 percent were sexually abused.

Dating violence was strongly associated with experiencing severe levels of these forms of family abuse, the study found.

Extreme [family violence](#) also was linked to exposure to prostitution, albeit it on a limited scale. That exposure mostly involved the participants being asked if they wanted to exchange sex for money, not actively engaging in prostitution, Kennedy said.

Provided by Michigan State University

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