

Episode 229 – Dr. Lauren Reed: Digital Dating Abuse Among Adolescents: Understanding the Role of Gender and Developing Effective Strategies for Prevention

[00:00:08] Welcome to inSocialWork. The podcast series of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work at www.inSocialWork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of inSocialWork is to engage practitioners and researchers in lifelong learning and promote research to practice and practice to research. We educate. We connect. We care. We're inSocialWork.

[00:00:37] Hello and welcome to inSocialWork. This is Louanne Bakk and I'll be your host for this episode. Recent technological advancements have had an enormous impact on how teenagers communicate and interact with one another when in dating relationships. Well digital media has distinct benefits that can strengthen relationships. Other facets of this form of communication can be potentially harmful and abusive. In this podcast Dr Lauren Reed highlights her research on digital dating abuse among adolescents and emphasizes the need to understand how social media is impacting the experience of dating violence within social relationships. She explains that while sexual expression among teenagers can be considered normal the consequences associated with digital media can be far more reaching and consequential Dr. Reed discusses the issue of gender in digital dating abuse and the differential impact of digital dating on girls and young women in relation to social pressure. Additionally she describes how and why the use of participatory action research has led to effective preventive strategies and stresses the need to include digital media when assessing for dating violence. Dr. Lauren Reed is an assistant professor of social work at Arizona State University. Her research is focused on dating and sexual violence prevention among teens and young adults. Youth participatory action research in digital dating abuse. Dr. Reed has worked with adolescent and adult survivors of dating and domestic violence and has facilitated programs to empower youth to end relationship violence. She was interviewed in September 2017 by Carol Scott Ph.D. candidate here at the UB School of Social Work.

[00:03:00] Hello everyone and welcome. My name is Carol Scott. I'm a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Today I'm joined with Dr. Lauren Reed. Dr. Reed is an assistant professor of school social work at the Arizona State University. I would like to thank you very much for joining me today. Dr. Reed It's my honor to be speaking with you.

[00:03:19] Thank you so much. I'm so glad to be here talk to read.

[00:03:22] I would like to begin with asking you to tell me about your research and practice interests.

[00:03:26] Sure I would look to so my research and practice has been focused on dating and sexual violence prevention for high school students and college students and most recently I've been working on what I call digital dating abuse which is the use of digital media which can be anything from the Internet to social media to cell phone sort of. Anything you do with digital media electronics and the use of those electronics to monitor control threatened harassed pressure coerce a dating partner. I've been focusing on the use of digital media as a context and tool for dating and sexual violence.

[00:04:05] So tell me why is that such an important issue for today's teens.

[00:04:09] Yes. So dating violence has been and continues to be a pressing social issue for today's teens. So we talk a lot about dating and sexual violence the teenagers and know that about one in three teenagers will experience some form of dating violence and that can be physical abuse sexual abuse or psychological abuse. And sort of our traditional views of dating violence have focused on

these three form sort of psychological physical and sexual. But as social media have become more and more common among high school students and we know that you know adolescents are on Twitter and Facebook and Instagram and Snapchat all the time. We sort of need to look at social media and how that might be impacting or affecting their experience of abuse. So if we're not talking about digital media as social workers then we could be missing a large piece of the abuse that our teens might be experiencing.

[00:05:04] So you talk about digital dating abuse essentially. How is that defined or how do you look at it and does it include both social media use and mobile phones or only one of the other.

[00:05:15] Great question and there sort of isn't a curse agreed upon definition of digital dating abuse and there are actually many terms that people use for the same things such as electronic aggression or cyber dating violence or other terms that have been used. But I always use digital dating abuse as a term and I define it in my work as the use of digital media to monitor control threatened harassed pressure or coerce a current or former dating partner through the use of social media or mobile phones. And I got that definition from an organization out of San Francisco called Futures Without Violence and they're an amazing organization that has sort of pioneered this work and started talking about it first. And so that's sort of the definition that I've used. So that's why I call it digital dating abuse.

[00:06:01] And how did you get interested in studying that.

[00:06:04] Yes I did when I was in my MSW program several years ago. I was doing work at a local domestic violence shelter in southeast Michigan where I was living and I was working both in crisis intervention with adult survivors and I was running a support group for survivors who were in the shelter. And then I was also training volunteers so I was interfacing with a lot of adults and a lot of teens who were interested in the topic of dating and domestic violence and sort of my training and the literature at the time were telling me to talk about sort of these traditional forms of domestic violence physical sexual and psychological abuse. But when I was working with these clients and with the volunteers they kept asking a million questions about digital media. So they were talking about Twitter and they were talking about you know what do I do in my assailant is texting me a million times a day and wants to know where I am and what I'm doing or uses digital media to keep track of me or send me threats you know over a digital media what do I do. And I was really struck as a practitioner that we didn't have any information for them we didn't know what to tell them we didn't know how big of an issue this was and it wasn't part of our training. So I sort of thought it was a huge gap in our understanding. And if we're going to be working with teens and we need to sort of understand their experience we need to be talking about digital media. So then in my research like if I say I started studying this topic to sort of help practitioners know what to do how to assess for it how to intervene and then eventually how we can work to prevent these forms of abuse.

[00:07:42] Yes. Because you're right almost every adolescent teenager young adult uses social media and they constantly are on their phones so that's an interesting gap that you found. I absolutely think needs more research. Is it gendered? Do boys and girls experience digital dating abuse the same or their differences.

[00:08:00] That's a great question and that's been sort of my focus for the past couple of years because I think that the gender debate is an issue sort of in dating violence broadly when we're looking at dating violence and there's a lot of talk about you know can boys experience dating violence how does that look. Maybe this isn't a gendered issue. Maybe both boys and girls are experiencing dating violence the same you know how should we be intervening. She would be talking about gender at all. And it's been sort of this intense debate in the field. And so I kind of

sought to bring that debate to digital dating abuse and use sort of the new technologies to take a new look at that debate. And so I come from a perspective that this is a gendered issue. And so in my work I have seen huge gender differences and I will say that. Everyone can experience dating violence and digital dating abuse no matter what your gender is and no matter what kind of relationship you're in. And there are definitely are boys and men who can be victims of these forms of abuse. But in my work I've seen overwhelmingly that these things differentially impact girls and women. So even though boys might be experiencing abuse then we definitely need to be concerned about that. Girls tend to bear the social pressure and the consequences especially of digital dating abuse. So in my work I've seen that when boys and girls experienced the same kinds of digital dating abuse behaviors girls are more likely to be upset distressed uncomfortable embarrassed to feel scared and they're more likely to have these sort of negative emotional responses or more upset by these things. And also there's a lot of indication that they sort of incur more social judgment. So especially around sexting I do a lot of work around sexting and sort of the pressure to send sexual photos and both boys and girls are sending sexual photos and videos to each other. But girls are much more likely to be pressured to send sexual photos by a partner or more likely to be asked by a partner to send sexual photos and they're judged socially whether they send photos or not. So if they don't send sexual photos they're sort of judged for being pruner and you know called all kinds of names and then if they do send the photos they're more likely to go viral and they're more likely to be called terrible names for sending the photos. So even though boys and girls are experiencing these behaviors at about equal rates the consequences and the implications for girls seem to be much worse.

[00:10:24] Interesting. So this sounds to me similar to this stereotypic beliefs about gender that occurs online. So is this similarly to what you are seeing online.

[00:10:34] Yes I would say so yes. And I think it's very similar sort of the gender dynamics that happen. I think what happens online is sort of this element that you can distribute these things instantaneously. It's a huge social network. So you know the consequences that you're experiencing might be more far reaching because you know if you are pressured to send a sexual photo to your partner and you do it and then it gets sent you know on Twitter to hundreds of your friends then those consequences can sometimes be more far reaching. But yes it's basically the same dynamics that are happening off line but just amplified a little bit.

[00:11:10] Interesting which only adds to the necessity for this research because if it's occurring naturally online as it was off line to a stronger degree than that just calls for more research which I appreciate you looking into this. So is digital dating abuse similar to cyber bullying or how are they the same or different.

[00:11:29] Yeah this is something that I get asked a lot because I think cyber bullying has a lot of national attention and rightly so. You know cyber bullying is a huge issue and a lot of people say why do we have to have a different topic called you know digital dating abuse. Why is it different. Isn't it just cyber bullying. And I would say that both of those things are very rare. They are research and both of them are important in both of them are terrible issues and I sort of draw from a lot of cyberbullying research and practice work in my work but I would say that it is different because of the element of the romantic relationship. So when you're a teenager romantic relationships are super important you're really highlighted. Those are things that are that allow you to gain status. It's sort of it's everything you're seeing on the media is obsessed with romantic relationships and who is dating who and what sexual activity you might be engaging in. And it's sort of something that's really salient for teens. And so when someone within your relationship someone that you love someone that you care about someone that you have a lot of your emotions wrapped up in is the one that's hurting you. I think that those consequences are different. And I think our interventions in our prevention looks different because we have to talk about relationships

and what's healthy and what's not and how do you have a romantic relationship as a teen and what does that look like and you're sort of competing with a lot of media messages and cultural messages about what relationships look like. So I do think that the romantic relationship context makes that unique.

[00:12:56] I couldn't agree more. And if I can go back to a piece I think that's important in some of the research I've been reading that you've done you make an interesting point that dating was used to be a private interaction between two people and now it's gone public essentially because of the use of digital media. And I know that you brought up the point about sexting. Can you tell us more about that and why is it sexting good or bad for teens. Is it a big issue.

[00:13:21] Yeah so sexting is something that get asked a lot about because we definitely see it in the media. Right. And there have been some pretty terrible consequences from sexting going viral. You know we've seen things in the military recently. And so this is something that gets highlighted a lot. And I think and I'm also trained in addition to being a social worker I'm trained as a developmental psychologist. So I think a lot about normative sexual development for adolescents and what that looks like and how is how does sexting fit into that. It is a confusing question and I think when researchers and practitioners first started thinking about sexting there was a moral panic around it. You know this. Oh my goodness like these teenagers are sending these sexual photos of each other and they don't know the consequences. And what if they try to get a job in the future and these pictures surfaced then there was a lot of moral panic around how to get teenagers to stop sending text messages. And when I was working in high school teachers would come to me all the time and say you know all my kids are sexting how can I make these girls stop sending these photos. What can we do. And I would look at them and I would say well yeah we can definitely talk about that. But how do we also get the boys to stop distributing these photos around the school and that sort of stop them in their tracks and they were like oh let's think about that because I do think as a developmental psychologist that sort of sexual expression and experimenting in these ways is pretty normal. It's actually not that different than what teens have been doing. Always we just had the element of digital media that we didn't have before. So I actually think that you know if these behaviors are welcomed and their consensual and nobody's being coerced then I actually think they're pretty normal and not a huge cause for concern. But there's two problems. One is the legal problem. So technically if you're under the age of 18 and you're sending these photos you can be charged with a felony for distribution of child pornography because you are distributing sexual material of someone who's under the age of 18. So that is an issue and the legislation hasn't really caught up with how to deal with that yet because it's obviously different than your sort of classic child pornography case. But the law hasn't quite figured out how to handle that. And so you sort of see some really unfortunate situations where a girl will send a photo to a partner and her and the partner will both get punished equally and there's no sort of nuanced understanding about what's happening there. So there's a legal issue. But then the issue that I'm more interested in is an issue of coercion. So what I see a lot of times is that these sexual photos are used as a bargaining chip or sort of as a bribe. So girls will often get a ton of pressure to send these photos and you know it's sort of seen as like a sign of intimacy like you know we're so close and we're so in love that I have a naked photo of you on my phone is sort of a sign of intimacy. And so girls may or may not want to send these photos but whether or not they do they definitely don't want them distributed all over the school. And I've even seen cases where in some high school school districts all the boys in the district will all send their naked photos that they have to one person. They'll have a dropbox account online and only the boys in the school will have the password to it and they sort of have a database of all these naked photos of girls in their school with their names and school listed on the photos. And so that's obviously an issue when you sort of take away someone's autonomy and someone's ability to choose how these photos are being used and distributed. And it's a form of sexual violence. And so I think that when there is this coercion or manipulation or deception involved then it becomes an issue of concern and within a relationship it can be a form of dating violence. So I'm

really interested in sort of what happens around that coercion.

[00:17:04] That's fascinating. So even sexting or the sending of the pictures in the course that seems to be gender gap.

[00:17:12] So in my work and I have a new paper I'm working on where we looked at sexting and racist sexting for boys and girls and my work has been pretty close. You know it's really high. It can be anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of high school students who are saying that they're sending sext messages which is very high. So it seems if you just look at those frequency rates that both boys and girls are sexting at equal rates and you're like oh this isn't a gendered issue but I asked about motivation for why they sent sexual photos and both boys and girls were most likely to say that they just sent these sex messages to be fun or flirtatious or to have fun. So most of the time they were saying this is not a big deal but girls were twice as likely as boys to say I received pressure to send these photos or my partner at me repeatedly until I gave in and then I sent them a photo. So about 40 per cent of girls were experiencing some form of pressure to send these photos. So I do think that although both boys and girls are sexting girls are more likely to receive pressure and coercion to do so and they're judged more harshly in the social context.

[00:18:17] That's fascinating because of the pressure and the coercion that's recurring and how girls are feeling that is this what is important for social workers like why. What can social workers who are listening to this podcast take away from this and do in their practice. What's the take home message for them.

[00:18:34] Sure yeah. So what I always tell social workers is to first of all to not give harmful messages so to not tell girls like oh you need to just stop sending these sext messages. So to avoid sort of shaming what can be really normative sexual experimentation and then I told social workers to make sure that when you're assessing for dating violence that you're asking about digital media so you're not just asking you know have you ever been hit or have you ever been pushed or do they yell at you you know use words and use digital media. In your assessment asked them about what happens on Twitter. Ask them about their digital boundaries and their relationships and do they have them or ask them if they ever feel uncomfortable about the number of messages that their partner sends them during the day or do they feel controlled by what they post or don't post on social media. So asking those questions because if they don't ask those questions a lot of teens don't know that these behaviors are part of abuse because we don't talk about them. But then the minute you start talking to them they might say Oh yeah that actually does make me feel really uncomfortable or oh I didn't know that I wasn't supposed to give my twitter password to my partner. I thought that everybody did that. You know so it's really important to ask about digital media use in relationships as part of assessing for dating violence and look for those signs. So that's definitely important. And I think when you do sort of encounter someone their client who's experiencing dating violence. Pay attention to those gender dynamics. Don't just assume that there's one person who's at fault and one person is experiencing consequences. Ask about the gender dynamics in that relationship who makes the decisions. Who's experiencing social consequences and be a little slow to judge and be thinking about what possible gender dynamics might be at play assessment and the language that you use with clients paying attention to digital media and paying attention to gender dynamics will be really really helpful if you're working with teen clients around these issues.

[00:20:33] So when you say teen and when you look at your research when are the age groups that you're looking at. Is it only like high school or do you look at college. What's your age group.

[00:20:41] Yeah so I started this work. With college students. So when I first started doing this work I developed a measure of digital dating abuse for college students just because I had more access to college students since I was at a university and I wanted to sort of pilot this measure and

figure out what was happening. And then once they sort of got more comfortable with how I was thinking about these things and measuring it I went into high school and started working with high school students and I think that's sort of my primary interest just because I'm interested in prevention. So these things definitely happened in high school and college. But I'm interested in sort of intervening with high school students while they're having sort of their first romantic relationships and getting them to understand the role of digital boundaries in these relationships and helping them have healthy relationships both online and off line. So I'm really interested in prevention.

[00:21:29] Interesting can you tell us more about that we're if you're a social worker listening and you hear this kind of stuff what kind of advice can you give in prevention because I know your research also looks at evaluation and intervention programs so I was wondering if there's anything you can speak to.

[00:21:44] Definitely. So my prevention work. I sort of take an approach of a youth participatory action research approach. And so if anyone hasn't heard about that before it's this idea that prevention work doesn't have to be top down. It doesn't have to be social workers or educators going into a community and saying this is what I think we should do to end this problem and sort of running an implementation of an intervention. Youth participatory action research says that youth are the experts about their own lives. Right and they know what issues are important in their own community. And they probably know things that could be done to fix it. And so we're sort of harnessing the autonomy that teenagers are searching for but they don't always have when they're teenagers and we're sort of pointing them in a positive direction. So a lot of the stuff that I would do is as I would I co-facilitator a group. Of teen volunteers where you know they've volunteered to be in this group once a week we met and we did train them in sort of the basics of dating violence and sexual violence. And then they designed interventions and workshops and events and speakers that would go out and they would themselves go out to high schools and community centers and present to their peers on these issues. So we didn't have to tell them that digital media was important because they already knew. So because this is already so much a part of their life they automatically talked about digital media and issues of digital dating abuse because they were experiencing it. So I think doing youth lead and peer education programs is super important around these issues because you know I can only go in and talk to a class and do so much. I might be much less likely to make an impact than if their own peers are talking about these issues. And I think because social media is inherently social in order to protect erupt some of these behaviors we need to make it not cool to do these things. So if there are student leaders in your school who are going around and talking about these things they're posting things online about digital dating abuse and all the problems with it. You might be like oh this isn't cool for me to be doing. Maybe I should stop doing it. And I think that having these youth led efforts is probably the most effective way that we can prevent some of these behaviors. So that's the kind of work that I've done with teens.

[00:24:04] That's an interesting point because they are their own experts right. They're the ones who use social media to the level of like the are more than you or I would and the language they use and the way that they speak to each other is important because we can go in as adults or as researchers and say hey guys this isn't cool and they'll just be like here's one more adult telling me what to do versus their own peers going in. This is what's happening to people who do this and we shouldn't do to each other like that.

[00:24:34] Exactly. Exactly. And I mean this happened to me a million times where I go into high school classrooms and I start talking about these things and then I learn something new. You know I wasn't a Twitter user until recently. And I got a big education and Twitter doing this work because I was initially asking all about Facebook and asking them about their Facebook use and what they do on Facebook. And then I piloted some of this work with high school students and they looked at

me like I was crazy you know they're like no one uses Facebook anymore like you should be asking about Twitter and snap chat. And I just had no idea. And these things change very quickly. So we sort of can't do this work without the engagement of teens. And I think engaging teens is a better long term solution anyway. So and I've gained a lot of inspiration from working with teens and seeing some amazing advocacy from teen leaders. And they're sort of hungry to talk about these things and hungry to find solutions. And so I think it's our job to sort of give them a platform.

[00:25:33] Fascinating. I want to bring it up I research social media use in younger adults. And I'm fascinated by this idea of difference between platforms. So when you're speaking to them what platforms do they Spearman's digital dating abuse on and which ones don't they.

[00:25:49] Yes. So I hear a ton about texting so texting or imessage. So I hear the most common form of digital dating abuse is what I call digital monitoring and control and that's using social media to sort of monitor the whereabouts and activities of your partner. So a huge thing I hear is oh my partner texts me 150 times a day and they want to know what I'm doing and where I am and who I'm doing it with then can they come over and you know just this very persistent monitoring. And a lot of people would come back at me and say oh like that's a big deal. Teens are texting each other all the time and I would respond with yeah you're right. So you know if it's mutual and it's welcomed and both partners are texting each other twenty five times an hour then that's fine. You know as long as it's consensual and it feels good to them but it becomes a problem when one person is feeling uncomfortable or they're feeling controlled or sort of not safe with the amount of monitoring that they're getting from their partner or how jealous their partner is or how many messages they're getting at what times and what those messages say. So it's how the partners are feeling about that that A that I think is important. So a lot about texting and then in terms of other social media Instagram Twitter snap chat are the big ones that I'm hearing about now. So Snapchat gets a lot of bad rap for sexting and I think oh it is a platform for that. But again I'm only really concerned when there is coercion or manipulation involved and a lot of stuff about Twitter and sort of conflict on Twitter. So you know a partner saying harassing or mean things on Twitter or you know couple of getting into twitter fights on Twitter where it's very public and everybody can see it or a lot of monitoring of like who you're following. So I would talk to some teenage girls who said that their boyfriend made them unfollow all the boys that they were following because you know following someone or liking a photo or read tweeting something was seen as like almost sexual like oh why are you liking their photo like what are you doing. You know a lot of monitoring of who they're talking to on social media. And I hear this from boys as well. It definitely goes both ways. And yeah those are sort of the most common platforms that I hear about.

[00:28:10] So tell me how do you measure the type of questions you're asking because as you're speaking I'm thinking fascinating you write a lot of teenagers wouldn't think that it's weird for you know your partner to say you can't follow this person. But if you're doing so against your own will or because you're being told too and you feel pressure. Now it's a completely different thing. so how do you measure this what are the type of questions you ask and then maybe the listeners can think oh I need to ask this for my clients as well.

[00:28:35] Sure. Yeah. And this is sort of an ever evolving issue because it's hard to measure digital media use. So I sort of started modeling my survey questions I developed a survey measure and I modeled it after sort of traditional measures of dating violence. So I would have questions that said you know has your dating partner ever done this and done this or done that. And there are questions like has your partner ever looked at your digital information without your permission or were they ever pressured you for a sexual photo that you didn't want to send them or have they ever threatened you physically using a form of social media. So I had to sort of ask all of these questions that covered the range of behaviors that I thought might be possible and then I would ask them Has this ever happened to you or has this ever happened in your most current or most recent relationship.

And that was sort of how I started. And that's just looking at frequency and prevalence rate. So has this ever happened to you and maybe how often is it happening in your relationship. And then I sort of wanted to get more at the context and how this feels. Because I think that just looking at the frequency is only telling us part of the story because again going back to gender it appears that boys and girls are experiencing at equal rates. And so if you only ask about frequency you're not getting the full story of the gender dynamics so I would end my more recent work. I also ask follow up questions. So I would say oh you know you've experienced this behavior and then you get follow up questions that said the last time this happened how did it feel or how much did this upset you. And then I allowed them to respond and then I say How did you respond to this. And I asked both about emotional responses. How did it feel so were you happy. Are you sad. Were you scared really uncomfortable. Were you excited. You know what are a range of possible emotional responses you could have had. And then I also ask about behavioral responses. So did you stop talking to them. Did you confront them about it. Did you block them on social media. Did you do nothing. Did you say nothing. No. I ask about both emotional and behavioral responses. And when you started to ask about motivations and responses that's when you sort of see a lot of the gender dynamics appear. So I would encourage everyone who's doing this work to not only ask has this happened to you and how often because how often is an indication of perhaps how serious it is but also asked about their motivations for engaging in these behaviors and their emotional and behavioral responses to these behaviors. And that will give you a fuller picture.

[00:31:08] I agreed because I think in the follow up questions where you're asking you both the emotional behavioral responses that's when you really truly see the impact that it has on the individual.

[00:31:18] Right. Yeah it's been my experience.

[00:31:20] This might not be part of your research but so we know that social media use and cell phone use like digital use has some positive benefits. Are you noticing with respect to your research. Any positives that are coming out of this or can we use social media to turn it on its dime and help people instead of hurting people.

[00:31:41] And I realize that I talk I spend a lot of time talking about the negative of social media and digital media use. And I always try to balance it because I don't think that it's all bad. And there are definite positive aspects of digital media. Sport relationships and I've done some work where I've asked college students and high school students you know what are some of the positives you've experienced and so I hear a lot of good things. So I hear a lot of like I feel closer to my partner when I can text them during the day and we can talk or a lot of couples especially in college that are long distance. They use face time or they use different forms of digital media to stay in touch and to feel closer. I hear a lot about just being able to seek partners more easily because of digital media. So you know widening your dating pool is important. There is an element of added closeness and familiarity when you get to sort of communicate through multiple means throughout the day. So when it's welcomed and mutual then it can be a really great thing in a relationship. And you can share you know you can share photos with each other you can share what's happening in your day and that all sort of develops intimacy. And I have seen a lot of in terms of prevention and intervention. Social media can be used as a tool to end disease. These forms of abuse. And so I've seen a ton of online campaigns that have started you know hashtags about these issues and even Web sites and tools that have been developed specifically for engaging teens on social media about these issues. So there's apps that have been developed and Futures Without Violence that organization that I mentioned before that I've done some work with. They've actually just launched an app for teens that talks about a lot of these issues. So we're sort of using social media as intervention and they have a campaign called that's not cool. And you can go to. That's not cool. And you can see the ways that they're using social media to engage youth to prevent abuse. So I

think that there is a lot of potential there and we can sort of harness some of that energy.

[00:33:46] I couldn't agree more because I sit in the camp of social media has both benefits and risks and I think that we can foster the benefits to help reduce the risks. Right. Especially with your approach to intervention and prevention in a community like participatory action research where I think we can absolutely use it there and say hey guys this isn't cool but this is how we can use it to help not hurt each other.

[00:34:09] Right. Exactly. Exactly. And there has been instances of this. So I hear a lot about teens a lot of the teens I work with used tumbler and tumbler has sort of become this like social justice for teens to talk about social issues. And so there are models for this and there are teens that are doing this work. It's just sort of making it more mainstream and giving them the tools to do it more and bringing some of those tools to things like Twitter and Snapchat where traditionally they haven't been. So I think there is a ton of potential there.

[00:34:40] Perfect. So where do you see this going next for you Dr. Reed.

[00:34:44] Yes so I'm working I just moved to a new state so I'm now in Arizona. I was doing this work in Michigan and in California. And so I'm in a new state which is really exciting and I'm hopefully trying to make some connections with the local high schools here in Phoenix and to sort of replicate some of the Youth Participatory action work that I've done in other states. And so I'm really excited about that. And you know there's a different demographic in Arizona. I'm excited to look at these issues and how they might impact youth of different cultures and so that will be a focus of mine here in Arizona. And I'm doing a lot of the papers that I'm writing right now focus on sexting and prevention. And what we can do about it. So I'm really excited to start publishing some of my work on prevention which I haven't had a chance to do yet. And then just sort of trying to engage the youth here in Arizona. I'm also doing some work with college students more and I partnered with Futures Without Violence who I've mentioned a couple of times and we're doing a needs assessment of how colleges and universities are engaging college men in fraternities and an ROTC program to be allies in preventing dating and sexual violence. So I'm really interested in sort of working with college men as well as allies and positively engaging men in this prevention work. So that's some of the new directions that I'm that I'm currently taking.

[00:36:06] Right. If teens can go and tell each other Hey guys this isn't cool. I think men being allies is an interesting way because like you said prior. What if we start teaching women not to ask for these questions or not to force women to send pictures.

[00:36:20] Right. Exactly. And that's the true prevention. That's the true prevention. As for the stuff not to happen at all not just how girls respond to it. The girls shouldn't have to have that in the first place right. Like if they want to send them like you said there's positives it can help grow a relationship. But if they're sending them because they're afraid if they don't their boyfriend will break up with them for example. That's not cool.

[00:36:44] Exactly. And I think it can help boys also. I think that starting these relationships in high school is really scary for both boys and girls and any kind of relationship that they're in. And I think that everyone is sort of looking for positive models and how this is supposed to look because everyone is sort of seeking intimacy. And so when I talk to college boys you know they also want good relationships and they also want to feel cared for and they just might not know how to do that. And so they sort of fall back on these more harmful media messages or are these toxic masculinity messages that they've been taught as sort of a roadmap for how to act. But I don't think that helps them either. So I'm interested in and really trying to trying to break the mold and find some other ways to communicate to teens about how to have healthy and fun relationships using social media.

[00:37:36] And I think that's brilliant because right. It's a cycle because what if for example the men or the boys really don't want to do this but they're feeling pressured to do it from their own friends because their friends are like hey my girls doing this your should too. Right. So in fact I think if we can start talking about these kind of things maybe we'll hear more from the men and we can switch things up.

[00:37:56] Exactly yeah I hope so. And I've worked with some really amazing teenage boys who have been advocates and work in my programs and done some really cool prevention work. So I've been inspired by that and I'd like to sort of do that more.

[00:38:10] Agreed. And if you don't mind. You mentioned culture and looking at different cultures in your new state. Congratulations on. Thank you. You're welcome. Have you done any work on the differences of digital dating abuse or sexting and cultures and if so what is it showing.

[00:38:25] Yeah a good question. I think that's a really early question to ask. I think it's been done. There has been work in dating violence more broadly and different cultures and I think there are some there is some work. You know what might be the differences between like black teens and white teens for example are looking at teens in the Latino community. And we're sort of finding that teens who are minority ethnic racial minorities might be more at risk for these forms of abuse than others. And we don't exactly know why. And so that's been something I've been really interested in. And when I was in California I was working with a lot of primarily Latino population. And so I was in high schools working with these teens and seeing a face to face how we can sort of tailor some of our interventions towards different cultures and how things might appear be talked about different and different cultures and I think that where it can be applied to digital dating abuse prevention as well because I think that there might be differences in the ways that teens from different cultures use social media and the way that they talk about social media and they might be using different platforms. And so I think that those are things that definitely should be looked at and I don't think to my knowledge that that's been a focus of digital dating abuse work thus far. So I do have some data on digital dating abuse among Latino teens and I'd love to sort of delve into some of that data and start that work.

[00:39:44] Yes I think that that will be a great gap to be filled because I think that we know that different cultures are different race or ethnicities use different platforms right. So it would be interesting to see how this all plays out in a digital dating abuse world. And I think that that's a huge gap to come in and I can't wait for that research to come out of yours.

[00:40:05] Thanks. Same here.

[00:40:08] Like any other big major take home message that the listeners are listening to we should hear if we haven't already.

[00:40:14] Well I just I guess I would just want to emphasize the sort of the power of the youth participatory approach and making sure that in all of this work where we're making sure that it's relevant and important to the teens that we're working with I think that's sort of my biggest message. And to notice that dating violence and sexual violence and digital dating abuse these are all sort of overlapping issues. And so if a teen is experiencing digital dating abuse they're also likely to be experiencing online abuse. And so paying attention to how these digital behaviors are happening in a constellation of other potential victimization and making sure that we're looking at all forms of possible victimization or working with our clients because as we know in research you know we tend to sort of Stylo things and talk about one thing at a time but in the world of our clients they're often dealing with many things simultaneously. And so making sure that we we keep

that in mind.

[00:41:08] Right. And then they say it's happening start asking follow up questions about how they're responding and how they're feeling about it. Perfect. Well that's all they have unless you want to say anything else to read.

[00:41:19] I think that's all thank you so much.

[00:41:21] You've been listening to Dr. Lauren Reed's discussion on digital dating abuse and strategies for prevention. I'm Louanne Bakk. Please join us again at inSocialWork.

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