Dating Violence Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth

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Abstract

Media attention and the literature on lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth overwhelmingly focus on violence involving hate crimes and bullying, while ignoring the fact that vulnerable youth also may be at increased risk of violence in their dating relationships. In this study, we examine physical, psychological, sexual, and cyber dating violence experiences among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth—as compared to those of heterosexual youth, and we explore variations in the likelihood of help-seeking behavior and the presence of particular risk factors among both types of dating violence victims. A total of 5,647 youth (51% female, 74% White) from 10 schools participated in a cross-sectional anonymous survey, of which 3,745 reported currently being in a dating relationship or having been in one during the prior year. Results indicated that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are at higher risk for all types of dating violence victimization (and nearly all types of dating violence perpetration), compared to heterosexual youth. Further, when looking at gender identity, transgender and female youth are at highest risk of most types of victimization, and are the most likely perpetrators of all forms of dating violence but sexual coercion, which begs further exploration. The findings support the development of dating violence prevention programs that specifically target the needs and vulnerabilities of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, in addition to those of female and transgender youth.

Keywords: teen dating violence, victimization, sexual orientation

Introduction

Hate crimes and bullying against youth who identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) have received much attention in the media (King, 2013) and in the research literature, with studies consistently finding higher levels of interpersonal violence among LGB than heterosexual youth (Kosciw et al., 2011). Although important, such attention masks the fact that youth who are vulnerable to violence from others may be at increased vulnerability for experiencing and perpetrating violence among themselves, particularly in their dating relationships. The goal of this study is to explore the dating violence experiences of LGB youth and compare them to those of heterosexual youth, by examining variations in the prevalence of physical, psychological, sexual, and cyber dating abuse among both populations. We also compare the rates of both teen dating victimization and perpetration among females, males and transgender youth. Lastly, we examine how often LGB victims of dating violence seek help for their experiences, in comparison to heterosexual victims, and whether any particular risk factors (e.g., poor school performance, drug use, delinquency) distinguish the two groups of dating violence victims.

The term "dating violence" encompasses varying levels and types of abuse that can range from physical and sexual violence to forms of psychological and emotional abuse, occurring between dating teens or those in romantic relationships with one another (Mulford & Giordano, 2008). Teen dating violence can be considered a developmental stepping stone in the pathway toward adult intimate partner violence, though interventions targeting adolescent experiences may have lasting effects into adulthood (Wolfe et al., 2003). For that reason, it is critical to identify which groups of adolescents are most likely to experience dating violence, so that prevention programs can be targeted accordingly.

Studies of dating violence have shown that certain factors place youth at increased risk of experiencing such abuse. These risk factors include depression and suicidal ideation, family maltreatment and abuse, lack of peer/social acceptance, poor school performance, and substance abuse (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). The same factors are often present at heightened levels in LGB youth populations, in large part because of the socially disconnected and discriminatory experiences they face—particularly upon exposure of their sexual orientation to family, friends, and classmates. In fact, up to half of LGB teens experience a negative reaction from parents when they reveal their sexual orientation, including being kicked out of the family home (26 percent) and/or physically assaulted by family members (33 percent; Ray, 2006). Further, over 60 percent of LGB youth surveyed by the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and many show increased levels of depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, school truancy, and lower grade point averages (Kosciw et al., 2011, 2008).

Most studies of teen dating violence, however, have failed to distinguish youth based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Among such studies, general prevalence estimates of dating violence victimization range widely, from about 10 to 33 percent of both girls and boys (Howard, Wang, & Fang, 2008). Little is known about the extent of dating violence and abuse among LGB specifically, though two studies provide some estimation. Using data from the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*, Halpern and colleagues (2004) studied 117 youth who reported having only same-sex romantic or sexual relationships in the 18 months prior to data collection. Twenty-four percent of those youth reported experiencing either psychological abuse or physical dating violence during that time; specifically, 13 percent reported psychological abuse only; and 11 percent reported only physical violence. Girls in

same-sex relationships were more likely to report experiencing psychological abuse and physical violence than were boys in same-sex relationships. Notably, girls in same-sex relationships were at similar risk for violence as were girls from the sample in opposite-sex relationships. Conversely, boys in same-sex relationships reported violence half as much as boys from the sample in opposite-sex relationships.

In addition, Freedner and colleagues (2002) studied dating violence and abuse in a community sample of youth attending a lesbian, gay, and bisexual rally. Of the 521 youth interviewed, 35 percent were gay or lesbian, 29 percent were bisexual, and 36 percent were heterosexual. Forty-one percent of males and 37 percent of females reported some type of dating violence and abuse. Bisexual males in the sample had nearly 4 times the odds of heterosexual males for experiencing some type of abuse (physical, psychological, or sexual) and over 5 times the odds of gay males for being threatened to be outed by a partner. For females, lesbians had over 2 times the odds of heterosexual females for reporting that their partner made them fearful for their safety; bisexual females had 2 times the odds of heterosexual females for reporting sexual abuse by a partner; and bisexual females had over 4 times the odds of lesbians for being threatened to be outed by a partner.

In this study, we examine violence in the dating relationships of LGB and heterosexual youth, with the goal of comparing the prevalence of self-reported victimization and perpetration experiences, and variations in rates of help-seeking behavior and risk factors for physical dating violence victimization. Notably, no prior study has examined empirically the help-seeking behavior of LGB youth in response to dating violence; yet anecdotal and qualitative evidence supports the notion that such youth would be more likely to turn to informal sources of support (e.g. friends and acquaintances) than formal social assistance systems (e.g., Gallopin and Leigh,

2009, found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth victims believed the existing social assistance systems were not helpful to youth of their sexual orientation).

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following four research questions. First, within their dating relationships, how often do LGB youth experience and/or perpetrate dating violence and abuse, and do these rates differ from those for heterosexual youth? Second, with regard to gender identity, are there differences in rates of dating violence and abuse between male, female, and transgender youth? Third, do LGB youth seek help if they experience dating violence and abuse, and do their help-seeking behaviors differ from that for heterosexual victims? Fourth, are the risk factors for physical dating violence among LGB victims different from those among heterosexual victims? As this study represents one of the first empirical examinations of dating violence experiences among LGB and transgender youth, we offer no testable hypotheses but instead use these research questions as a guiding framework for exploring and defining the importance of these issues for future research.

Methods

Design

This study employed a cross-sectional research design with a large-scale survey of 7th-12th grade youth in 10 schools in New York (3 high schools, 2 middle schools), Pennsylvania (3 high schools), and New Jersey (2 high schools). We recruited schools that were willing to allow access to youth on a single school day to conduct a survey about sensitive topics; yielded a sample size large enough to examine the issues of interest; and provided some diversity. The New Jersey schools were in suburban areas, the New York schools were in rural areas, and the Pennsylvania schools were in small cities. Like many districts across the nation, each had some

type of anti-bullying programming in their middle and high schools and some of these programs also had an anti-teen dating violence and abuse component.

Participating students anonymously completed the survey via paper-pencil format. A two-stage consent process was used, including passive parental consent and informed assent for students. The survey was conducted on a single day, and included the census of youth attending school that day. Upon completion of the survey, each student was given contact information for local domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, and national domestic violence, sexual assault, and suicide prevention hotlines. For additional details on the study's design and methodology, see Zweig, Dank, Yahner, and Lachman (2013).

Sample

Response rates ranged from 70 to 94 percent of the school's student population, with an overall response rate of 84 percent and a total of 5,647 valid completed surveys. Nine percent of the non-response was due to student absenteeism, 3 percent was due to parent refusal, 1 percent was due to student refusal, and 4 percent was due to surveys being removed for irregularities. Of those who completed a valid survey, 3,745 youth reported currently being in a romantic relationship or having been in one during the prior year. Romantic relationships were defined as those with "a boyfriend or girlfriend, someone you have dated or are currently dating (e.g. going out or socializing without being supervised), someone who you like or love and spend time with, or a relationship that might involve sex." These dating youth were asked questions about dating violence and abuse with their current or most recent partner.

Table 1 presents the sample characteristics of the 3,745 youth who completed a valid survey and reported being in a current or recent dating relationship. Six percent of the sample identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer, or other (LGB) sexual orientation, and 94

percent identified as heterosexual (these percentages are based on valid responses, though 41 youth—one percent—did not report their sexual orientation). Approximately half of all youth were age 12-15 and half were age 16-19. Compared to heterosexual youth, LGB youth had higher proportions of female (69 percent), transgender (5 percent), and non-White (47 percent) youth. Additionally, higher percentages of LGB than heterosexual youth lived with only one parent (34 percent, compared to 29 percent) and had parents who had not graduated college, or whose educational achievement of which the youth were not aware. Notably, because a high portion of youth (27 percent) in the sample did not know or did not state their parents' highest level of educational attainment, for analyses that follow we omitted this measure. Additionally, not shown in the table due to a high degree of missing data is the gender of LGB youths' current or most recent partner; 14 percent of LGB youth reported being in same-sex relationships, 47 percent in opposite-sex relationships (including 4 percent who indicated a male/female with a transgender partner relationship), and 38 percent did not report their partner's gender.

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Measures

Survey measures included those regarding youths' demographic characteristics (including sexual orientation), experiences with dating violence and abuse, school performance, parental involvement, risk behaviors, psychosocial adjustment, and social interactions. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

Demographic characteristics.

These measures included youths' self-identified sexual orientation (*Of the following, which do you primarily identify as? Heterosexual/straight, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, Queer, Other*) and gender (*What is your gender? Male, Female, Transgender/Gender-queer*).

Other demographic characteristics included age, race/ethnicity, and the state in which youth were surveyed (two schools in New Jersey, five schools in New York, and three schools in Pennsylvania).

Teen dating violence and abuse.

Respondents who were currently in a romantic relationship or had been in one in the past year were asked a series of questions about teen dating violence and abuse with their current or most recent partner. Romantic relationships were defined as those with "a boyfriend or girlfriend, someone you have dated or are currently dating (e.g. going out or socializing without being supervised), someone who you like or love and spend time with, or a relationship that might involve sex." Questions covered four types of teen dating violence and abuse: physical dating violence, psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion.

Physical dating violence.

Physical dating violence questions were derived from a scale developed and validated by Foshee (1996), measuring three types of abuse: mild physical violence (3 items; α=.723 for victimization and α=.745 for perpetration), moderate physical violence (5 items; α=.775 for victimization and α=.753 for perpetration), and severe physical violence (6 items; α=.854 for victimization and α=.859 for perpetration). All 16 items were asked in two separate series of questions to asses both victimization experiences and perpetration behaviors. Response options for these questions were: (0) never happened, (1) happened 1 to 3 times, (2) happened 4 to 9 times, and (3) happened 10 or more times. Examples of mild violence include scratching and slapping; examples of moderate violence include kicking, biting, twisting arms, and slamming and holding against walls; and severe violence include choking, burning, hitting with a fist, and assaulting with a knife or gun.

Psychological dating abuse.

Psychological dating abuse questions were based on measures adapted from the Michigan Department of Community Health's (MCH; 1997) control and fear scales, as well as Foshee's (1996) psychological abuse scales. Items from these scales were combined into four psychological dating abuse subscales based on Foshee's (1996) conceptualization of these behaviors: threatening behaviors (4 items; α=.731 for victimization and α=.630 for perpetration), monitoring (6 items; α=.885 for victimization and α=.831 for perpetration), personal insults (4 items; α=.804 for victimization and α=.723 for perpetration), and emotional manipulation and fear (7 items; α=.852 for victimization and α=.760 for perpetration). All 21 items were asked for both victimization experiences and perpetration behaviors. Response options were (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, and (3) very often. Examples of threatening behaviors include damaging something that belonged to the partner or threatening to hurt the partner. Examples of monitoring behavior include not letting partner do things with others, telling partner they could not talk to people of the gender that he/she dates, and trying to limit contact with family and friends. Examples of personal insults include insulting partners in front of friends and calling partner names to put them down or make them feel bad. Examples of emotional manipulation include making the partner feel unsafe or uneasy when they spend time alone together, threatening to start dating someone else, making the partner feel owned or controlled, and making the partner feel afraid to tell others the truth.

Cyber dating abuse.

Respondents who reported currently being in a dating relationship or being in a dating relationship within the past year also were asked 16 questions relating to cyber dating abuse by their current or most recent partner, six of which were adapted from Picard (2007) and 10 of

which were created for the survey or adapted from a cyberbullying scale by Griezel (2007). All 16 questions were asked twice: the first time to capture victimization experiences during the prior year and the second time to capture perpetration behaviors during the same time period. Response options were (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, and (3) very often. Examples of cyber abuse items included pressuring partners to send sexual or naked photo of themselves, sending partners sexual or naked photos of him/herself that s/he knew the partner did not want, sending threatening text messages to partners, and using a partner's social networking account without permission.

Sexual coercion.

The sexual coercion measure included two items from Foshee's (1996) physical abuse scale (being forced to have sex and forced to do sexual things that person did not want to), one from Zweig and colleagues' (2002) scale measuring unwanted sexual intercourse (having sexual intercourse when person did not want to), and one additional from Zweig and colleagues (1997; being pressured to have sex). The item from Zweig and colleagues (2002) was only included in the victimization scale; all other items were included in the perpetration measure as well. Response options for Foshee's (1996) items and the item created for this study were: (0) never happened, (1) happened 1 to 3 times, (2) happened 4 to 9 times, and (3) happened 10 or more times. The item from Zweig and colleagues' (2002) scale was a binary measure with yes (1) and no (0) response options. Measures of internal consistency were acceptably high for both scales: α=.737 for victimization and α=.723 for perpetration.

School performance.

School performance was assessed by respondents' attendance at school and grades. School attendance was coded as every weekday (2) or less than every weekday (1), while grades were grouped into three categories: (1) As and Bs, (2) Bs and Cs, and (3) Ds and Fs.

Parental involvement.

Parental closeness was measured as the mean of two items taken from the Add Health Wave II (http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/codebooks/wave2) Relations with Parents interview, measuring closeness between the respondent and his/her primary parent or guardian. Response options were (0) not at all, (1) a little bit, (2) moderate, (4) quite a bit, and (5) extremely. Parental communication frequency was a scale (alpha=0.624) consisting of 4 items taken from the Add Health Wave II Relations with Parents interview and measured the extent to which respondents spent time talking with their parents about things going on in their lives. Response options were (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, and (3) often. Parental activities frequency was a scale (alpha=0.677) consisted of 5 items taken from the Add Health Wave II Relations with Parents interview and measured the extent to which respondents spent time doing activities with the parent or guardian with whom they spent the most time. Response options were (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, and (3) often.

Risk behaviors.

Risk behavior measures included those related to youths' substance use, delinquency, and sexual activity. To measure substance use, we used the Communities that Care (2006; http://www.communitiesthatcarecoalition.org/surveys) drug use scale (alpha=0.776 for the whole scale), which included alcohol/binge drinking, marijuana use, and serious drug use (including non-prescription drugs) over the last 30 days (alpha=0.887 for the serious drug use items). Response options were (0) never, (2) 1-3 times, (6.5) 4-9 times, and (15) 10 or more times. For

delinquency, we included nine items from the Communities that Care delinquency scale measuring the variety of delinquent activity youth participated in over the last year (alpha=0.734). For one item (attacked someone with the intent to harm), the survey specified that the respondent should answer about anyone other than a person who the respondent had dated in the last year (so the item measures non-dating violence). Response options were yes (1) or no (0). Finally, for sexual activity, the survey asked respondents who reported having vaginal intercourse, anal sex, or oral sex a series of questions about their sexual activity. We used 6 items from the Add Health Wave II survey and created 3 items for this study; all items were analyzed separately. Response options varied for each item.

Psychosocial adjustment.

Measures of psychosocial adjustment were based on respondents' answers to the depressive symptoms, anxiety, and anger/hostility subscales of the Symptom Assessment-45 (SA-45) Questionnaire (Strategic Advantage, Inc., 1998), shown to be reliable and valid on both patient and nonpatient adult and adolescent populations. All three scales ranged in value from zero to 20, with higher values indicating more depressive symptoms, anxiety, or anger/hostility. Response options were not at all (0), a little bit (1), moderately (2), quite a bit (3) and extremely (4). Depressive symptoms (alpha=0.892) were measured by five items assessing symptoms of loneliness, hopelessness, worthlessness, disinterest in things, and feeling blue. Anxiety (alpha=0.861) was measured by five items assessing symptoms of fearfulness, panic, tension, and restlessness. Anger/hostility (alpha=0.839) was measured by five items assessing symptoms such as uncontrollable temper outbursts, getting into frequent arguments, shouting, and feeling urges to harm others or break things.

Social interactions.

The survey also asked several questions tapping into youths' interactions with others, such as the number of hours per day that youth spent on the cell phone and computer. In addition, we measured the frequency of prosocial activities using 12 items from the Add Health Wave I Daily Activities section to measure prosocial activities among respondents. We added two items (reading and participating in school groups) to this scale (alpha=0.652). Response options were (0) never, (2) 1-3 times, (6.5) 4-9 times, and (15) 10 or more times. We also examined positive relationship quality. Students who were currently or recently in a relationship were asked 20 questions about the positive qualities of their relationship, such as feeling loved and cared for by a partner, feeling proud to be with that partner, and having a partner who is supportive of their activities and interests. These items were adapted from the MCH (1997) affection measure. Response options were (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, and (3) very often. Cronbach's alpha measuring the reliability of this scale was 0.973.

Results

Table 2 shows the prevalence of dating violence and abuse experiences among youth in a current or recent dating relationship, and separately for those who identified as LGB and heterosexual. In general, LGB youth showed significantly higher rates of all types of dating victimization and perpetration experiences, compared to heterosexual youth. Specifically, higher percentages of LGB youth reported being victimized by physical dating violence (43 percent), psychological dating abuse (59 percent), cyber dating abuse (37 percent), and sexual coercion (23 percent), than did heterosexual youth, who reported rates of 29, 46, 26, and 12 percent, respectively. Similarly, higher percentages of LGB than heterosexual youth reported perpetrating physical dating violence (33 percent), psychological dating abuse (37 percent),

cyber dating abuse (18 percent), and sexual coercion (4 percent); by contrast, among heterosexual youth the rates were 20, 25, 12, and 2 percent, respectively.

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Table 3 shows the same information on the prevalence of dating violence experiences among youth in a relationship, but adds information about the differences in the rates based on gender identity (male, female, and transgender). Across the board, the few transgender youth in the sample reported some of the highest victimization rates of physical dating violence, psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion; however, they also reported the highest perpetration rates of physical dating violence, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion. Female youth were second most likely to be victimized by psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion, and second most likely to perpetrate physical dating violence, psychological dating abuse, and cyber dating abuse. Male youth had the lowest victimization rates with regard to psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion, and were more likely than female youth to experience physical dating violence as victims and to perpetrate sexual coercion.

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Table 4 shows the prevalence and timing of help-seeking among teen dating violence and abuse victims in the overall sample, and among LGB compared to heterosexual youth. Notably, higher proportions of LGB victims of dating violence and abuse sought help (18 percent), did so within one day of the incident (8 percent), and did so after the first incident of violence (10 percent), compared to 8, 3, and 3 percent of heterosexual victims.

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Next, we examined differences between LGB and heterosexual victims of physical dating violence across the aforementioned demographic characteristics and risk factor measures. In Table 5, we show the results from simple bivariate tests on these measures between LGB and heterosexual victims. In these preliminary analyses, which do not control for demographic characteristics of youth, a number of differences emerged as statistically significant at $p<.05$. As shown, LGB victims were more likely than heterosexual victims to be from Pennsylvania; female or transgender; non-White; earn poorer grades in school; use alcohol and/or serious drugs; engage in delinquency; have been sexually active in their lifetime; have poorer psychosocial adjustment as measured by higher frequencies of depressive symptoms, anger/hostility, and anxiety; and spend more hours per day on the computer. LGB victims were also less likely to attend school every day.

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To assess which of these differences were most strongly correlated with LGB orientation among physical dating violence victims, and to control for differences in demographic characteristics between LGB and heterosexual youth, we estimated a series of multivariate logistic regression models—run only on victims—with a dependent variable coded as 1=LGB victim and 0=heterosexual victim. These regressions tested the significant characteristics in Table 5 in domain-specific models, with demographic characteristics as controls, and then tested the characteristics that remained statistically significant (after controls were added) in a final multivariate model. Results from this final model are presented in Table 6. As shown, the most pronounced correlates of LGB orientation among physical dating violence victims showed that LGB victims, compared to heterosexual victims, were: less likely to be female than male (odds ratio of 0.488); more likely to be transgender than male (odds ratio of 5.948); less likely to be

White (odds ratio of 0.368); less likely to earn As and Bs in school than Ds and Fs (odds ratio of 0.574); committing a higher number of delinquent acts (exp(β) equals 1.211); more likely to have engaged in prior sexual activity (odds ratio of 2.241); showing more frequent feelings of depressive symptoms (exp(β) equals 1.067); and spending more hours daily on the computer (exp(β) equals 1.144).

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Discussion

In recent years, numerous media accounts and research studies have highlighted the higher rate of interpersonal violence victimization among LGB youth compared to heterosexual youth. These claims were supported by past research on bullying experiences (Kosciw et al. 2011, 2008; Birkett et al. 2009), but little empirical evidence with regard to teen dating violence. In the current study, we compared LGB youth to heterosexual youth in terms of the amount of teen dating violence and abuse they experienced, and if these groups of victims differed in terms of help-seeking behavior and other life factors. In addition, this study makes a unique contribution to the knowledge base on these issues by examining gender identity and dating violence separate from sexual orientation.

We found that LGB youth showed significantly higher rates of all types of dating victimization and perpetration experiences, compared to heterosexual youth. More specifically, LGB youth were more likely to report being victimized by physical dating violence, psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion than heterosexual youth. Similarly, LGB youth reported higher rates of perpetration for physical, psychological, and cyber dating violence and abuse than did heterosexual youth. Because the majority of studies on teen dating violence have not distinguished LGB youth in their samples, or otherwise focused solely

on a heterosexual youth sample or LGB youth sample, it is difficult to determine if the current study's findings are in line with findings from past studies. Additionally, the perpetration of teen dating abuse among LGB youth has not been a focus of past research on the issue. Thus, it is difficult to make assumptions as to why LGB youth have higher rates of perpetration than heterosexual youth, especially given the study's small sample size of LGB youth, without further research. That said, Freedner and colleagues (2002) found that LGB youth were at a higher risk for physical, psychological, or sexual abuse than their heterosexual counterparts, and were consistently threatened to be outed by a partner (also, see Robinson et al., 2013, for longitudinal evidence showing higher rates of peer victimization among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth in the United Kingdom, compared to heterosexual youth). Thus, it is clear that LGB youth experience high rates of teen dating violence and abuse, and high perpetration rates of such behaviors, but further research is needed to more fully understand these experiences.

The few transgender youth in the sample reported the highest rates of victimization with regard to all forms of dating violence compared to male or female youth. They also reported the highest perpetration rates for everything except psychological dating abuse. Though the sample of transgender youth is very small, these findings indicate that transgender youth are quite vulnerable to dating violence. Although past research has not looked specifically at victimization and perpetration rates of transgender youth versus youth of other gender identities, it is clear that more research is needed specifically on transgender youths' experiences with teen dating violence to further understand the vulnerability of this particular group and develop appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

Different risk factors are related to being a victim of teen dating violence and abuse based on sexual orientation. This study found that LGB victims of physical dating violence were more

likely to be females or transgender youth who experienced higher levels of depressive symptoms, had lower grades, committed more delinquent acts, and were likely to have a history of prior sexual activity. This is in line with past research (Kosciw, et al. 2011; Birkett et al. 2008), which has found that LGB youth report higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower grade point averages, and increased likelihood of truancy. Another layer to this dynamic may be race/ethnicity, although this study had limited ability to examine race given it was confounded with site location and socioeconomic status in this sample. Past research has indicated that minority stress, the impact of an oppressive culture (DiPlacido 1998; Meyer 2003; Gillum and DiFulvio 2012), has been linked to increased isolation, shame, depression, substance abuse and suicide among victims of intimate partner violence (Allen & Oleson 1999; Lock & Kleis 1998; Shidlo 1994). Balsam and Szymanski (2005) found this to be particularly the case in women's same-sex relationships. However, race has not been addressed specifically in the research on LGB youth and teen dating violence; thus, further research is needed to understand the intersection between race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and dating violence. Additionally, there has been no research—beyond the current study—that has looked specifically at the cross-section of risk factors for dating violence, gender identity, and sexual orientation, something very much needed to properly address this issue.

As with all research, this study is subject to limitations related to its design, sample and measurement. First, the sample is limited to those youth who attend school (which excludes those who have dropped out) and, specifically, those who attend schools with administrators who were supportive of the study and willing to allow students to be surveyed about sensitive topics. Thus, the sample may have been limited to youth from potentially forward-thinking schools and excluded some disconnected and/or disadvantaged youth, perhaps skewing the prevalence rates

of the interpersonal violence experiences being measured. In addition, based on the schools that were willing to participate, the sample is largely white and has a lower proportion of middle school youth compared to high school youth. Second, although we explore how victimization is related to other life factors based on sexual orientation, this is a cross-sectional survey. Thus, we are unable to disentangle life factors that act as risk factors for experiencing victimization from factors that are consequences of such experiences. Finally, although we derived our measures from existing literature wherever possible, the extent of youths' under-/over-reporting of violence and abuse experiences cannot be assessed; however, youth self-reports have been shown to be valid in past studies (Ebesutani et al. 2011; Ridge et al. 2009).

Despite the study's limitations, the current findings help us to better understand the extent of dating violence and abuse experiences among LGB youth. These findings further support the need for prevention and intervention efforts specifically designed to address the needs and vulnerabilities LGB youth and transgender victims of dating violence. The school context might be particularly important in assisting youth; for example, Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig (2009) found that when a school's climate is perceived to be positive, it can serve as a buffer against the bullying of LGBT youth. Thus, having a counselor at the school who is trained on how to identify signs of dating violence and how to handle such incidences (e.g., when to report, whom to report and how to report), particularly among LGB youth, would be key to addressing this issue. Additionally, because LGB victims of teen dating violence and abuse are more likely to seek help and advice than heterosexual youth, particularly from friends, schools might consider creating peer-led groups to build awareness around the issues of teen dating violence—which would help create a comfort-level for victims to report such abuse. These groups can be coordinated by local Gay-Straight Alliance Networks or by Parents, Families, Friends, and Allies

of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people chapters to assist LGB youth who are victims of teen dating violence.

The current study's findings also lead directly to suggestions for future research endeavors. Many questions still remain about the context of LGB youths' particular vulnerability to teen dating violence and abuse and how race might further increase vulnerability for LGB and transgender youth, as well as the associated risk and protective factors of such youths' victimization and perpetration, and the consequences of such experiences. Longitudinal research is needed to examine these issues, and to explore the help-seeking behaviors of both LGB and heterosexual victims. Such research particularly should focus on the reasons certain victims of teen dating violence and abuse choose not to report incidents or seek help, so as to inform educational efforts to address all victims' needs. Of specific note should be identifying the coping mechanisms of youth who do not seek help from others.

In conclusion, this study is the first step in examining what types of dating abuse LGB youth fall victim to and/or perpetrate. We found that dating LGB youth were at higher risk for physical, psychological, and cyber dating victimization, compared to heterosexual youth, and that transgender and female youth were at greater risk of all forms of victimization than male youth. Further research is needed to better understand what specific role sexual orientation and gender identity play in these types of abuse, what places LGB and transgender youth at risk for this abuse, and what the consequences of such abuse are. Knowing this information would help with the development of prevention and intervention programming specifically targeted to LGB and transgender youth to provide them with the skills and help that they need to reduce the likelihood that they will fall victim to teen dating violence and abuse.

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Table 1:
Sample Characteristics, by Sexual Orientation

	Total[1] % (N=3,745)	LGB youth % (N=229)	Heterosexual youth % (N=3,475)	χ^2
Sexual orientation				3,704.00***
Heterosexual	93.8	0.0	100.0	
Lesbian	0.4	6.6	0.0	
Gay	0.1	1.7	0.0	
Bisexual	3.7	59.4	0.0	
Questioning	0.7	11.8	0.0	
Queer	0.3	4.4	0.0	
Other	1.0	16.2	0.0	
Age				0.003
12-15	46.7	46.7	46.5	
16-19	53.3	53.3	53.5	
Gender				142.25***
Male	47.2	26.6	48.6	
Female	52.3	68.6	51.2	
Transgender	0.5	4.8	0.1	
Race/Ethnicity				72.39***
Caucasian/White	73.7	53.5	75.2	
African American/Black	5.0	10.5	4.7	
Hispanic/Latino(a)	8.2	8.3	8.1	
Asian American	2.2	3.1	2.1	
Native American	0.7	2.2	0.6	
Mixed Race	10.2	22.4	9.4	
Parent(s) highest education				26.31***
College or higher	54.4	39.3	55.6	
High school or less	18.3	28.4	17.7	
Don't know/missing response	27.3	32.3	26.6	
Live with				64.78***
Both biological parents	64.0	50.7	65.1	
One biological parent	29.1	33.6	28.7	
Partner/friends	0.8	4.4	0.5	
Other	6.2	11.4	5.6	

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[1] Includes youth who were in a current or recent relationship. Valid, non-missing data on measures in this table were present for 98 to 100 percent of respondents, except as noted for parent(s) highest education. One percent (N=41) of youth in a relationship did not report their sexual orientation; these youth are included in the Total but missing from the LGB and Heterosexual columns.

Table 2:
Prevalence of Dating Violence and Abuse and Bullying Experiences, by Sexual Orientation

	Total[1] % (N=3,745)	LGB youth % (N=229)	Heterosexual youth % (N=3,475)	χ^2
Dating violence and abuse victimization				
Physical dating violence	29.9	42.8	29.0	22.16***
Psychological dating abuse	47.2	59.2	46.4	13.75***
Cyber dating abuse	26.3	37.2	25.7	13.72***
Sexual coercion	13.0	23.2	12.3	22.58***
Dating violence and abuse perpetration				
Physical dating violence	20.5	33.2	19.7	22.74***
Psychological dating abuse	25.7	36.6	25.1	13.86***
Cyber dating abuse	11.8	18.4	11.5	9.16**
Sexual coercion	2.6	4.1	2.4	2.47

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[1] Includes youth who were in a current or recent relationship. Valid, non-missing data were present for 95 to 99 percent of respondents. One percent (N=41) of youth in a relationship did not report their sexual orientation; these youth are included in the Total but missing from the LGB and Heterosexual columns.

Table 3:
Prevalence of Dating Violence and Abuse and Bullying Experiences, by Gender Identity

	Total[1] % (N=3,745)	Male youth % (N=1,768)	Female youth % (N=1,956)	Transgender youth % (N=18)	χ^2
Dating violence and abuse victimization					
Physical dating violence	29.9	35.9	23.9	88.9	93.53***
Psychological dating abuse	47.2	44.2	49.7	58.8	12.18**
Cyber dating abuse	26.3	23.3	28.8	56.3	20.95***
Sexual coercion	13.0	8.8	16.4	61.1	84.01***
Dating violence and abuse perpetration					
Physical dating violence	20.5	14.4	25.5	58.8	82.21***
Psychological dating abuse	25.7	18.8	31.7	29.4	76.14***
Cyber dating abuse	11.8	9.3	13.9	35.3	26.86***
Sexual coercion	2.6	3.9	1.2	17.6	41.352***

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[1] Includes youth who were in a current or recent relationship. Valid, non-missing data were present for 94 to 99 percent of respondents. Three youth in a relationship (0.1%) did not report their gender identity; these youth are included in the Total but missing from the Male, Female, and Transgender columns.

Table 4:
Help-Seeking Behavior Among Teen Victims, by Sexual Orientation

	Total %	LGB victims %	Heterosexual victims %	χ^2
Dating violence and abuse victims	(N=2,220)[1]	(N=164)	(N=1,988)	
Sought help	8.6	17.9	7.9	17.17***
Sought help in one day of incident	3.6	7.6	3.2	
Sought help after first incident	3.5	10.3	2.9	

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[1] Valid, non-missing data were present for 89 percent of respondents. One percent (N=24) of victims did not report their sexual orientation; these youth are included in the Total Victims but missing from the LGB and Heterosexual columns.

Table 5:
Life Factor Differences between LGB and Heterosexual Physical Dating Violence Victims Derived from Bivariate Comparisons

	Total [1] %/Mean (N=1,110)	LGB victims %/Mean (N=98)	Heterosexual victims %/Mean (N=1,000)	χ^2 or t-value
Controls				
State ID				13.56***
New York	34.7%	31.6%	34.9%	
Pennsylvania	39.8%	51.0%	38.8%	
New Jersey	25.5%	17.3%	26.3%	
Gender				80.52***
Male	56.5%	34.7%	58.7%	
Female	42.2%	55.1%	40.9%	
Transgender	1.3%	10.2%	0.4%	
White	67.4%	45.9%	69.7%	22.97***
Live with both parents	60.3%	51.0%	61.1%	3.79†
Age	15.77	15.91	15.76	0.99
School Performance				
Attend school every day	91.7%	81.3%	92.7%	14.97***
Grades				30.85***
As and Bs in school	51.9%	46.8%	52.2%	
Bs and Cs in school	45.8%	42.6%	46.2%	
Ds and Fs in school	2.3%	10.6%	1.5%	
Parental Involvement				
Closeness to primary parent	2.93	2.82	2.93	-0.77
Frequency of communication with primary parent	5.89	5.99	5.89	0.24
Frequency of activities with primary parent	6.10	5.49	6.16	-1.53
Risk Behaviors				
Frequency of drug use in last 30 days				
Alcohol use	3.25	4.52	3.11	2.34*
Marijuana use	3.58	3.75	3.56	0.31
Serious drug use	2.83	7.58	2.38	2.32*
Number of delinquent behaviors in last year	1.32	1.96	1.26	3.18***
Sexual activity – any in lifetime	70.1%	88.1%	68.3%	14.34***
Psychosocial Adjustment (in last 7 days)				
Frequency of depressive symptoms	4.38	6.31	4.19	3.13**
Frequency of feelings of anger/hostility	3.88	5.57	3.71	3.14**
Frequency of feelings of anxiety	2.71	4.10	2.58	2.84**
Social Interactions				
Hours per day on cellphone	5.88	6.16	5.86	1.05
Hours per day on computer	2.83	3.75	2.74	3.54**
Frequency of prosocial activities	48.03	48.32	47.89	0.16
Positive relationship quality (mean frequency)	2.50	2.45	2.51	-0.91

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[1] Valid, non-missing data were present for 85 to 100 percent of respondents. One percent (N=12) of victims did not report their sexual orientation; these youth are included in the Total Victims but missing from the LGB and Heterosexual columns.

Table 6:
Life Factor Differences between LGB and Heterosexual Physical Dating Violence Victims Derived from Multivariate Regression Model

	β	S.E.	p	Exp(β)
New York (reference)				
Pennsylvania	0.004	0.323	0.990	1.004
New Jersey	-0.593	0.407	0.146	0.553
Male (reference)				
Female	-0.718	0.287	0.012	0.488
Transgender	1.783	0.817	0.029	5.948
White	-0.999	0.281	0.000	0.368
Live with both parents	0.016	0.281	0.953	1.017
Age	0.046	0.105	0.663	1.047
As and Bs in school	-0.555	0.287	0.054	0.574
Bs and Cs in school	0.567	0.640	0.375	1.764
Ds and Fs in school (reference)				
Number of delinquent behaviors in last year	0.192	0.069	0.005	1.211
Sexual activity – any in lifetime	0.807	0.382	0.035	2.241
Frequency of depressive symptoms	0.064	0.024	0.008	1.067
Hours per day on computer	0.134	0.057	0.018	1.144
CONSTANT	-3.545	1.666	0.033	0.029
Nagelkerke R-square		0.187		

† p<.10 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

Valid, non-missing data were present for 886 of the 1,110 physical dating violence victims (79 percent).