

Chapter 5

DATING VIOLENCE AMONG SEXUAL-MINORITY YOUTH (SMY) IN THE WESTERN WORLD

Martin Blais, Martine Hébert, Jesse Gervais
and Félix-Antoine Bergeron*

Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

ABSTRACT

While several studies have documented the prevalence of dating violence in the adolescent population, data remain scarce on sexual-minority youth (SMY). The most studied forms of dating violence are psychological/emotional, physical and sexual. Overall, dating violence estimates among SMY range from 8% to 89% for victimization and from 4% to 59% for perpetration. Psychological and emotional are the most prevalent forms of dating violence. Threats of outing by partners, a form of dating violence unique to SMY but rarely assessed, vary from 4% to 29%. SMY face the same risk factor as youth from the general population regarding dating violence vulnerability. However, heterosexism and minority stress contribute to increase SMY vulnerability to dating violence through internalized heterosexism and shame, sexual identity concealment, lack of external support and isolation within the relationship, reluctance to seek help because of fear of exposure, and reduced exposure to sexual-minority survivor role models. Dating violence prevention among SMY must take into account both general and SMY-specific risk factors. Providing tools to SMY to recognize and disclose dating violence, targeting specific protective and risk factors such as heterosexism and minority stress, increasing the capacities of sexual-minority communities, training domestic violence resources staff to sexual-minority specific issues are promising avenues for improving dating violence intervention among SMY.

Keywords: Dating violence, sexual-minority youth, heterosexism, internalized heterosexism, minority stress

* Corresponding author: Dr. Martin Blais, Department of sexology, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal, Canada, H3C 3P8, Tel: 1 (514) 987-3000 poste 4031, Email: blais.martin@uqam.ca.

INTRODUCTION

Rates of victimization in the context of intimate relationships are high among the general youth population (Foshee & McNaughton Reyes, 2012) and dating violence is now recognized as a significant public health concern (Baker, Buick, Kim, Moniz, & Nava, 2012; Blossnich & Bossarte, 2009; Carvalho, Lewis, Derlega, Winstead, & Viggiano, 2011; Welles, Corbin, Rich, Reed, & Raj, 2011). Data remain scarce, however, on dating violence among sexual-minority youth (SMY), such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youths. The invisibility or trivialization of intimate partner violence (IPV) and dating violence in sexual-minority communities may be fueled by factors such as general cultural taboos regarding IPV (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002) and same-sex relationships (Banks & Fedewa, 2012; Woodford, Luke, Grogan-Kaylor, Fredriksen-Goldsen, & Gutierrez, 2012), and by gender stereotypes such as “girls don’t hit other girls” or “only men are violent” (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Ristock, 2003). Moreover, well-accepted models suggesting that power differential is based on gender differences alone result in the belief that only females can be victims and only males can be perpetrators (Brown, 2008; Kaschak, 2001). As such, individuals involved in IPV are “double closeted”, as they are “entombed in both the same-gender identity and in their personal pain of abuse” (McClennen, 2005, p. 150).

This chapter pursues three main goals. First, we describe the Western scholarly literature regarding the prevalence of dating violence among sexual-minority youth (SMY). Second, we review the main risk factors for victimization and perpetration of dating violence among teenagers, and describe risk factors specific to sexual minorities. Third, we discuss issues and recommendations for dating violence prevention for SMY. We conclude by reviewing the major pitfalls in dating violence research among SMY, and make recommendations for future investigations.

PREVALENCE OF DATING VIOLENCE

Disclosure of interpersonal violence such as dating violence is a complex process and youth may be reluctant to talk about such experiences to their peers, parents or teachers (Close, 2005; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Several studies have documented, however, the prevalence of dating violence in the general population of adolescents and scholarly data converge in attesting that a significant proportion of teenagers experience violence in the context of their early romantic relationships. Representative studies among the general adolescent population estimate that about a third of the students experienced some form of victimization in a romantic relationship over a 12 or 18-month period (Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper, 2001; Traoré, Riberdy, & Pica, 2012). In recent Canadian data, girls reported higher rates of psychological (27%) and sexual (15%) dating victimization compared to boys (respectively 17% and 5%), while boys were slightly more likely to experience physical dating victimization (13%) compared to girls (11%; Traoré et al., 2012). The NEXT Generation Health Study conducted in 2009-2010 revealed that boys and girls reported different rates of psychological and physical violence over a 12-month period: 40% of girls reported victimization and perpetration, while 27% of boys disclosed victimization and 19% reported perpetration (Haynie et al., 2013).

Data on SMY suggest that they experience higher rates of dating violence compared to heterosexual teenagers. Probabilistic school-based surveys from the United States of America (USA) showed that 8% to 40% of SMY experienced physical dating victimization over a 12-month period (Kann et al., 2011). Self-identified SMY were more likely to experience physical dating violence victimization compared to heterosexual youths, with few differences found among homosexual, bisexual and questioning youths. When taking into account partners' gender, SMY reporting partners from both genders were particularly at risk for physical dating violence.

Among SMY aged 12 to 21 years in same-sex relationships from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Halpern, Young, Waller, Martin, & Kupper (2004) estimated the rate of psychological dating violence at 21% and the rate of physical violence at 11% over an 18-month period. SMY females were more likely to report at least one form of dating violence compared to SMY males. Contrariwise, Martin-Storey (2014) found that SMY males were more likely to suffer from dating violence than SMY females when sexual orientation was assessed by sexual partners' gender. When sexual orientation was measured based on self-identification, bisexual females reported higher rates of dating violence than bisexual males while the opposite was true for questioning youths.

Dank, Lachman, Zweig, and Yahner (2014) assessed rates of various forms of dating violence victimization among self-identified heterosexual and SMY aged 12 to 19 years old. As in other studies, they found much higher rates of dating violence among SMY compared to heterosexual youth: psychological dating violence (59% in SMY vs. 46% in heterosexuals), physical dating violence (43% vs. 29%), and sexual dating violence (23% vs. 12%). SMY also reported higher perpetration rates of psychological dating violence (37% vs. 25%), physical dating violence (33% vs. 20%), and sexual dating violence (4% vs. 2%) compared to heterosexual youth, although the difference was not statistically significant for the latter.

Transidentified individuals have generally been neglected when studying dating violence. Dank et al. (2014) found higher rates of dating violence victimization among transidentified youths, with about 10% experiencing physical dating violence, and about 60% reporting psychological and/or sexual dating violence. Similarly, they reported higher rates of perpetration for physical (59%) and sexual (18%), but not psychological (29%), dating violence.

Threatening the partner with telling others about their sexual minority status (i.e. "outing" the partner) is an important and unique form of dating violence among sexual minorities (Duke & Davidson, 2009), although rarely taken into account. In a community sample, Freedner, Freed, Yang, and Austin (2002) found high rates of the threat of outing among self-identified bisexual youth (Males = 29%, Females = 13%) compared to self-identified homosexual youth (Males = 7%, Females = 4%).

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DATING VIOLENCE

In the last decade, several studies have documented risk factors associated with dating violence among adolescents as well as factors that are specific and unique to sexual minorities.

General Risk Factors for Dating Violence

Studies exploring possible risk factors associated with dating violence have assessed socio-demographics, individual (personal and interpersonal), environmental (family, peer group, community) and contextual factors related to the relationship itself (for a review, see Vézina & Hébert, 2007). The risk factors most strongly associated with dating violence for both boys and girls include childhood behavior problems, family conflict, parental violence, witnessing interparental violence, dropping out of school, a history of child sexual abuse, having peers who experience dating violence, deviant peer affiliation and other forms of violence and victimization such as physical intimidation by peers, relational aggression by peers, Internet harassment (both sexual and non-sexual), sexual harassment and bias-motivated attack (Banyard, Arnold, & Smith, 2000; DiLillo, Giuffre, Tremblay, & Peterson, 2001; Foshee & McNaughton Reyes, 2012; Hamby, Finkelhor, & Turner, 2012; Hébert, Lavoie, Vitaro, McDuff, & Tremblay, 2008; Wekerle et al., 2009).

Studies show that SMY are more vulnerable to most of these risk factors. Meta-analyses have found that SMY were more likely to report sexual abuse and parental abuse (Friedman et al., 2011) and substance use (Marshal et al., 2008). Retrospective studies conducted with adult samples suggest that sexual minorities are also more likely to report witnessing interparental violence (Andersen & Blosnich, 2013; Roberts, Austin, Corliss, Vandermorris, & Koenen, 2010). SMY also exhibit greater school difficulties, such as missing school because of fear (Friedman et al., 2011), unexcused absences and a lower sense of school belongingness (Robinson & Espelage, 2011), a lower intention to pursue any post-secondary education (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010) and, among male SMY, lower grades and higher course failure (Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007).

SMY-Specific Risk Factors for Dating Violence

Homonegativity is widespread globally and in several countries same-sex relationships are still illegal. Even in those parts of the world where homosexuality has been decriminalized, such as most of the Western world, same-sex relationships and gay marriages are still unrecognized under the law or heatedly debated (Kelley, 2001; Stulhofer & Rimac, 2009). This social and cultural environment characterized by heterosexism and homonegativity must be taken into account when considering the experiences of sexual minorities (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005).

Heterosexism is “an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community [...] manifested both in societal customs and institutions [...] and in individual attitudes and behaviors” (Herek, 1990, pp. 316–317). Heterosexism manifests itself at the cultural level through political, legal and religious systems that condemn same-sex sexual behavior and oppose legal recognition of same-sex couples or parents. Homophobia initially described an irrational fear, intolerance and hatred of homosexuality (Weinberg, 1972) or any negative feelings or thoughts about homosexuals or homosexuality (Bell, 1989). Today, both homophobia and homonegativity broadly describe prejudice and stigmatization based on nonconformity to cultural expectations regarding gender identity or sexual orientation, encompassing specific forms of gender and sexuality oppression such as biphobia, lesbophobia, transphobia,

transqueerphobia, etc. (conceptual and measurement issues are discussed in Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 1991; Herek, 1990; O'Donohue & Caselles, 1993).

Heterosexism and homonegativity impact both mainstream communities and LGBTQ communities. In mainstream communities, heterosexism and homonegativity may incur social tolerance, or apathy toward the challenges faced by the LGBTQ communities (Duke & Davidson, 2009), such as a higher vulnerability to victimization, the legal recognition of same-sex relationships or same-sex IPV. They send the message that non-heterosexual relationships are unwelcome, undervalued or illegitimate, contributing to their stigmatization and marginalization (Barrett & St. Pierre, 2013). In the social and cultural context of heterosexism and homophobia, sexual and gender nonconforming individuals experience minority stress, a chronic form of stress aroused by difficult social experiences such as stigmatization targeting their minority status (Meyer, 1995, 2003). While people who object to homosexuality on religious or cultural grounds may be unaware of the inadvertent detrimental effects that their views can have on sexual-minority individuals, these views still contribute to legitimate homophobic prejudices and behaviors.

Not only may SMY suffer from the same forms of victimization as the general youth population, but they also experience specific prejudice based on sexual orientation (Blais et al., 2013; Chamberland, Richard, & Bernier, 2013; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012). This includes exclusion, rejection, humiliation, damage to reputation, cyberbullying, physical violence, sexual harassment and coercion, threats or coercion to do things against their will, and vandalism of personal goods. Such heterosexism and homophobia increase the level of stress in sexual-minority individuals that affects their relationships.

Although data on dating violence among SMY remain scarce, both theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on sexual-minority adults contribute to the identification of 5 main mechanisms through which heterosexism increases the vulnerability of SMY to dating violence: (1) internalized heterosexism and shame, (2) sexual identity concealment, (3) lack of support and isolation within the relationship, (4) reluctance to seek help and (5) reduced exposure to sexual-minority survivor role models.

Internalized heterosexism and shame: Heterosexism and homonegativity convey negative messages toward non-exclusive heterosexuality, same-sex relationships and sexual minority lifestyles. The process of internalizing these negative messages and the resulting self-loathing of sexual-minority people related to being a sexual minority person (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008) is called “internalized homophobia”, “internalized homonegativity” or “internalized heterosexism” (for a historical overview, see Szymanski et al., 2008). Internalized heterosexism increases the likelihood of both IPV victimization and perpetration (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Carvalho et al., 2011; Edwards & Sylaska, 2013; Stephenson, Rentsch, Salazar, & Sullivan, 2011). As internalized heterosexism is associated with lower self-esteem (Blais, Gervais, & Hébert, 2014), isolation and shame about sexuality (Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012), it may lead SMY to believe that they are somehow defective and deserve to be abused (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005). From the perpetrator’s perspective, IPV may be an attempt to deal with the internal conflict related to sexual minority status through externalization (Mendoza, 2011). As Allen and Leventhal (1999, p. 78) argued, sexual-minority dating violence perpetrators “have at their disposal the weapons of their own and their partner’s internalized oppression to help erase their partner’s sense of pride”.

Internalized heterosexism is also associated with factors that have been linked to IPV and dating violence. Examples of potential mediators in this relationship are substance use and

abuse (Klostermann, Kelley, Milletich, & Mignone, 2011; Lewis, Milletich, Kelley, & Woody, 2012), psychological distress (Szymanski, Chung, & Balsam, 2001; Szymanski & Chung, 2002), relationship satisfaction (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005) and stress (Otis, 2006). In Balsam and Szymanski's (2005) study, relationship satisfaction fully mediated the impact of internalized homophobia on IPV in women's same-sex relationships. Individuals with higher internalized heterosexism experience more distress, discord on sexual-minority specific issues with their partner or substances to cope with stress, all of which can lead to IPV. As they also report lower levels of social support and connection to the LGBT community (Herek, Cogan, Gillis, & Glunt, 1997; McGregor et al., 2001; Szymanski et al., 2001), they are also deprived from a protective factor against dating violence (Wright, 2012).

Sexual identity concealment: Knowing that one's identity is devalued and potentially exposed to hostile talk and attitudes leads to a fear of being outed and stigmatized (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Accordingly, the degree of SMY outness or concealment about their sexuality can have multiple impacts on dating violence vulnerability. The stress of staying closeted can negatively affect the quality of same-sex relationships and exacerbate other relationship problems such as IPV (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Ossana, 2000). Carvalho et al. (2011) suggested that individuals with higher stigma consciousness are more likely to be involved in a violent relationship and to keep the abuse silent. The abuser may also threaten to disclose their closeted partner's sexual orientation to others, including family members and friends (Duke & Davidson, 2009). Peers may play a crucial supportive role during adolescence and the more there is at stake for closeted SMY (for instance, fear of losing peer support), the more likely they can be to tolerate abuse from their partner. As sexual identity integration and acceptance is a developmental process that takes time, the younger the SMY, the more vulnerable they can be to internalized heterosexism and sexual identity concealment.

Edwards and Sylaska (2013) also found that sexual identity concealment was significantly and positively related to physical perpetration of same-sex partner violence. Some studies, however, did not reveal a significant relationship between outness and IPV among sexual-minority adults (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Carvalho et al., 2011). Balsam and Szymanski (2005) suggested that a discrepancy between, or discord over partners' level of outness may be the crucial element influencing the relationship rather than outness itself.

Lack of support and isolation within the relationship: Same-sex couples often lack cultural or external validation and support for their relationship (Clarke, Burgoyne, & Burns, 2013; Connolly, 2004). This might result from hiding their relationship, internalized heterosexism –which impairs the ability to make significant connections with other sexual-minority individuals (Balsam, 2001), or from not receiving social affirmations that they should stay together (Duke & Davidson, 2009). Thus, sexual minorities often depend on their partners for information on the LGBTQ culture (Ristock, 2003) and have to rely on their partner as their sole source for support and validation (West, 2002).

As West (2002) observed, while a sense of fusion may serve as a buffer against adverse experiences outside the relationship, it may impair the sense of independence within the relationship and transform disagreements into threats of rejection. For example, in Gillum and DiFulvio's (2012) study, participants in same-sex relationships stated that when the "assumed connection" was not present, tension may arise and lead to violence. For the victims, dependence on their perpetrators can make it more difficult to leave the abusive relationship. For the perpetrators, isolation within the relationship can create a situation of heightened emotional intensity and conflict that may lead to episodes of dating violence.

Reluctance to seek help: Reluctance to seek help is often reported among victims of abusive relationships. The ability to seek help is sustained or impaired by individual, interpersonal and sociocultural factors (Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, & Weintraub, 2005). Specific factors have been identified as crucial among sexual minorities. At the individual level, internalized heterosexism, sexual identity concealment, and stigma anticipation can fuel the fear of being exposed (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005) and not taken seriously (Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012).

At the interpersonal level, anticipated or experienced homophobic revictimisation by service providers and law authorities and the fear of being outed, either by the partner as retaliation or by the service providers as a consequence of seeking help, may prevent SMY from seeking services and support (Duke & Davidson, 2009; Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012). For SMY, reporting dating violence to authorities can result in having to disclose their same-sex relationship to their parents (Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012).

In close-knit communities, community members often know one another and couples often share the same friends (Duke & Davidson, 2009). This proximity can pose several obstacles to seeking help, including relationship breakups threatening the circle of friends, the difficulty for survivors to convince their friends that a mutual friend or member of their own community is abusive and the insistence of friends that there must be visible indications of abuse (e.g., bruises; (Duke & Davidson, 2009). For example, Hassouneh and Glass (2008) reported how describing female intimate violence as a “cat fight” reflects the view that women’s violence is less serious and dangerous than men’s, resulting in friends witnessing violence without taking it seriously.

At the cultural level, agencies, programs and laws have been described as inadequate in addressing sexual-minority specific issues. Surveying professionals affiliated with domestic violence prevention and/or intervention networks in Los Angeles (USA), Ford, Slavin, Hilton, and Holt (2013) noted low levels of staff training on sexual-minority IPV, failure to assess clients’ sexual orientation or gender identity at intake, and agency/program policies or practices inattentive to LGBTQ-specific needs. Guadalupe-Diaz and Yglesias (2013) found that while LGB residents of Central Florida (USA) have legal protection under domestic violence law, their survey participants described the law to be non-inclusive, heterosexist or unresponsive to same-gender domestic violence.

Reduced exposure to sexual-minority survivor role models: Despite the increasing visibility of sexual-minority issues and same-sex relationships in the public sphere (Adam, 2003; Chamie & Mirkin, 2011; Fassin, 2001; Liebler, Schwartz, & Harper, 2009), this coverage has done little to challenge hegemonic heteronormative definitions of marriage (Liebler et al., 2009). Living in a heterosexist environment can pressure sexual minorities to maintain a positive image of same-sex relationships for the prospect of future acceptance into society (West, 2002). This can fuel denial of domestic violence by community members, activists, perpetrators and victims to protect the community image (Duke & Davidson, 2009; West, 2002). In this context, sexual-minority survivor role models are still mostly invisible. Balsam and Szymanski (2005) suggested that the reduced visibility of same-sex relationships and exposure to role models may create a sense that victimized partners lack other options, making the victim more likely to tolerate abuse from their partner.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION FOR SMY

Victimization in the context of romantic relationships has been linked to several pervasive consequences on mental, physical as well as sexual health in youth. Examples of such outcomes are post-traumatic stress and dissociation symptoms, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, poorer educational achievements and unprotected sexual activities (Ackard, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008; Brown et al., 2009; Howard, Debnam, Wang, & Gilchrist, 2012), among SMY (Gillum & DiFulvio, 2014; Hipwell et al., 2013). The high prevalence of dating violence and its negative outcomes have motivated the implementation of several prevention initiatives. The following section provides a brief overview of dating violence prevention programs designed for the general youth population and highlights the SMY-specific issues to be considered.

DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

Prevention programs are often described as either based on a universal approach or a selective approach. Universal prevention programs are mostly conducted in school settings and aim to change attitudes and reduce myths related to dating violence (Vézina & Hébert, 2007). A recent meta-analysis of 38 studies selected from strict methodological criteria shows no convincing evidence that the programs reduce dating violence or that they improve the attitudes, behaviors, and skills of the participants (Fellmeth, Heffernan, Nurse, Habibula, & Sethi, 2013). The results only showed a slight increase in participants' knowledge concerning dating violence and relationships. Still, promising programs share characteristics such as an ecosystemic framework, the involvement of several actors (parents, other significant adults, schools, and community organizations), practitioner training, a longer duration of the curriculum and a variety of strategies (poster contests, theatrical plays), including activities aimed at parents. Such programs are associated with changes in behaviors, dating violence norms, gender-role norms, and awareness of community services (Foshee et al., 2004).

Issues for the Prevention of Dating Violence among SMY

Dating violence prevention initiatives designed for SMY must also include the following features: a) raising awareness, b) targeting LGBTQ-specific protective and risk factors, c) building community capacities, d) making available LGBTQ-specific resources and services, and e) promoting inclusivity and sensitivity among domestic violence resource staff.

Raising awareness: The sexual-minority community needs to be specifically targeted for prevention efforts regarding IPV, given that they may not recognize dating violence as an issue that concerns or relates to them and consequently may not recognize the signs of violence in their relationship (Kulkin, Williams, Borne, de la Bretonne, & Laurendine, 2007). Furthermore, it is important to dispel harmful stereotypes in same-sex relationships, define healthy relationships and raise awareness about the warning signs of IPV, particularly among those who are new to same-sex relationships (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia, & Shi-

Thornton, 2006; Ristock, 2003). Publishing articles about same-sex IPV in bulletins, newsletters or community web sites can contribute to these goals (Turell, Herrmann, Hollander, & Galletly, 2012).

Targeting LGBTQ-specific protective and risk factors: SMY should be supported in identifying and recognizing the negative impact of heterosexism on their life and in becoming empowered to fight the heterosexist culture and the negative stereotypes about sexual minorities (Szymanski, 2005). Interventions should aim at developing a sense of personal and social power and promote egalitarian relationships (Szymanski, 2005) as well as building skills to handle conflicts and to seek help (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Professionals should support SMY in their coming out process, help them identify the potential gains and costs of disclosing their sexual orientation, and work with family members to accept and support LGBT youth (Crisp & McCave, 2007).

Building community capacities: To increase the community response to sexual-minority dating violence, it is necessary to change norms regarding conflict management and the use of violence among same-sex partners, build capacities within LGBTQ communities and reinforce collaborative ties with external domestic violence resources (Bornstein et al., 2006; Kulkin et al., 2007; Todahl, Linville, Bustin, Wheeler, & Gau, 2009; Turell et al., 2012). Strategies such as facilitating connection to, and responsibility for, each other's neighbors (Todahl et al., 2009) or visiting community leaders to discuss IPV incidents (Turell et al., 2012) can help build what Todahl et al. (2009) called "cooperative protection" among community members. Community leaders need to be proactive in implementing such initiatives.

Making available LGBTQ-specific resources and services: In the design of prevention material and media approaches, using representations and pictures of same-sex couples, posting LGBTQ friendly symbols (such as the rainbow flag), and relying on non-heterosexual or gender neutral vocabulary is recommended (Duke & Davidson, 2009; Todahl et al., 2009). Organizations should also increase the availability and accessibility of LGBT-specific services, such as 24-hour hotlines, legal advocacy, counseling, shelters and safe housing for LGBT people, etc. (Bornstein et al., 2006; Duke & Davidson, 2009; Ford et al., 2013).

Promoting inclusivity and sensitivity among domestic violence resource staff: Inclusivity and sensitivity may promote the disclosure of victimization by SYM (Kulkin et al., 2007). Practitioners must learn to create a safe space for survivors of same-sex dating violence and for SMY in various stages of the coming out process, being careful not to re-victimize or reinforce the stigma they already experience (Crisp & McCave, 2007; Duke & Davidson, 2009). To achieve this goal, training programs should aim at developing a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and tools unique to the LGBT communities (Duke & Davidson, 2009; Todahl et al., 2009). Inclusivity and sensitivity should be promoted by using non-heterosexist language (e.g., partner instead of boyfriend/girlfriend; Duke & Davidson, 2009) and avoiding dichotomies such as "us and them", "victim (women)/perpetrator (men)" or "passive/active" (Duke & Davidson, 2009; Ristock, 2003; Todahl et al., 2009). To achieve such goals, resources must be developed and professionals from all types of agencies on LGBT dating violence must be trained (Ford et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

Violence within SMY romantic relationships is an important issue. Overall, dating violence among SMY ranges from 8% to 89% for victimization and from 4% to 59% for perpetration, psychological/emotional being the most reported form and the sexual form being the least prevalent. Threats of outing by partners, a form of dating violence unique to SMY but rarely assessed, vary from 4% to 29%. While SMY face the same risk factor as youth from the general population regarding dating violence, heterosexism and minority stress contribute to increase their vulnerability through internalized heterosexism and shame, sexual identity concealment, lack of external support and isolation within the relationship, reluctance to seek help, and reduced exposure to sexual-minority survivor role models. Promising avenues for improving dating violence prevention and intervention among SMY have been identified, such as providing tools to SMY to recognize and disclose dating violence, targeting LGBTQ-specific protective and risk factors such as heterosexism, building the skills of sexual-minority communities, making available sexual-minority-specific resources and services, and promoting inclusivity and sensitivity among domestic violence resource staff.

While empirical reports provide relevant information as to the specific challenges experienced by SMY youth, existing studies present shortcomings. Issues related to sampling and representation need to be considered, as several studies rely on small or non-probabilistic samples, precluding the possibility of exploring the specificities among SMY. Some sexual-minority groups, such as bisexual youth and those questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, are particularly understudied, yet potentially facing increased vulnerability to dating violence because of the specific stressors they face (e.g. biphobia, transphobia). Providing a more comprehensive account of the diversity of experiences among SMY through larger, probabilistic samples will support designing better intervention and prevention initiatives for SMY subgroups.

Several measurement issues were also identified, some precluding cross-study comparisons. First, sexual orientation assessment varies considerably across studies. Some studies consider partners' gender, while others pinpoint self-identification or sexual attraction. Second, studies exploring dating violence derive prevalence estimates from different definitions, measures and time frame (e.g. 12 or 18 months). Third, in most studies, threats of outing, the sole form of dating violence specific to SMY, are not assessed. Finally, the potential impacts of social stigma and prejudice on victimization reporting and denial need to be assessed.

While scholarly reports have begun to ascertain the issues confronting SMY in romantic relationships and possible victimization, clearly future investigation is needed to better understand dating violence in SMY. Hopefully, the next decade will see a clear research agenda unfold and the design and implementation of intervention and prevention services that can adequately address the needs of SMY.

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