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Teen Dating Violence Prevention for Queer and Questioning Youth

By

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Abstract

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a prevalent problem among queer and questioning youth, yet research on TDV has not addressed how best to serve this population and current prevention programs do not directly target this population. This literature review compiles information on current TDV prevention programs recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); risk factors for TDV among queer and questioning youth; and social factors that indicate what type of prevention methods may be the most helpful for queer and questioning youth. These risk factors and social factors are then compared to the current TDV prevention programs recommended by the CDC. Through this paper, I advocate for the use of peer-involved prevention that is supported by trusted adults who have been trained in understanding the nuances of TDV among queer and questioning youth.

Teen Dating Violence Prevention for Queer and Questioning Youth

Background

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a prevalent occurrence that takes a large toll on the well-being of our youth. A meta-analysis from 2017 found that 20% of teenagers reported experiencing physical TDV and 9% of teenagers reported experiencing sexual TDV (Wincentak et al., 2017). While the rate of TDV in the general population of teenagers is much too high, researchers have found that queer youth and questioning youth are at an even higher risk for TDV than their heterosexual peers (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2009; Dank, Lachman, Zweig, & Yahner, 2014; Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor, & Kann, 2020). A national survey of high schoolers found 25.8% of queer male respondents, 29% of queer female respondents, 35.7% of male questioning respondents, and 29.4% of female questioning respondents reported experiencing either sexual TDV victimization, physical TDV victimization, or both (Olsen et al., 2020). As in heterosexual populations, dating violence has detrimental effects on queer and questioning youth's mental health, physical health, and satisfaction with life (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2009). The toll that TDV takes on queer and questioning youth can be so damaging, that it can lead to suicidal ideation and behavior (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2012; Smith, 2020).

Despite the high rates of TDV among queer and questioning youth, along with the adverse effects of TDV on the wellbeing of youth, this population has been largely overlooked in current TDV prevention programs and research. The prevalence and detriment of TDV among queer and questioning youth warrants TDV research and prevention programs that specifically target this population. Through this literature review, research is compiled about current TDV prevention programs recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); risk factors for TDV among queer and questioning youth; and social factors that illustrate possible prevention methods that may be particularly helpful for queer and questioning youth.

The risk factors and social factors gathered from current literature are then compared to current TDV prevention programs. These factors indicate that peer-involved prevention that is supported by trusted, well-trained adults is most likely an effective method of TDV prevention among this population. The comparison of risk factors and social factors for queer and questioning youth with current prevention programs also shows that the TDV prevention needs of this population could be fulfilled by adapting current TDV prevention programs. While terms vary throughout the studies gathered for this literature review, in this paper the term ‘queer youth’ will be used to describe adolescents and young adults in middle school through college who self-identify with any sexual identity other than straight or who have had non-heterosexual sexual encounters. ‘Questioning youth’ will refer to adolescents and young adults who are unsure of their sexual identity.

Current Prevention Methods

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides recommendations for current prevention programs for teen dating violence (CDC, n.d.-a). These current preventions include Dating Matters, Green Dot, Coaching Boys into Men, Shifting Boundaries, Safe Dates, Second Step, and Bringing in the Bystander. While none of these prevention techniques are specific to queer youth, they represent the current methods being used in the general prevention of TDV. Reviewing these current prevention programs provides a baseline to compare to the specific needs of queer youth in TDV prevention, which will be discussed and compared later in this paper.

Dating Matters

Dating Matters, created by the CDC, aims to reduce risk factors for TDV on individual, relationship, and community levels. Their target population is 6th-8th graders, but Dating

Matters also provides information and programming for parents, as well as training for teachers. Through Dating Matters, middle schoolers are educated about healthy relationships, healthy ways to cope with emotions, communication, conflict resolution, and sexual violence. Through education and activities—such as performing plays and creating posters—Dating Matters works towards changing social norms in an effort to create healthier relationships (CDC, n.d.-b).

Green Dot

Green Dot targets dating violence by training bystanders to intervene in situations that could lead to violence, as well as working to shift community norms. This program provides age-appropriate training in schools from kindergarten through college. The Green Dot program starts in elementary school with a strong focus on bullying. In middle school, Green Dot promotes identity development and begins to introduce dating violence. During high school, students delve deeper into dating violence through a variety of group and individual activities. All levels of school faculty members and trusted adults in high schoolers' lives (such as parents and coaches) are also engaged for this age group. At the college level, Green Dot incorporates bystander action with systemic changes. Green Dot has also been adapted to meet the specific needs of various demographics and organizations. For example, adaptations of Green Dot have been used in the Air Force, Native American and Alaskan communities, South African communities, and women's trade organizations (Alteristic, n.d.).

Coaching Boys into Men

Coaching Boys into Men utilizes the existing relationship between young athletes and their coaches to change norms—especially for young, male athletes—in an effort to target TDV. Through this program, coaches learn how to talk to their teams about peer violence and dating violence. Subjects that coaches address with their teams include respect, consent, coercion, and

violence. Through Coaching Boys into Men, athletes receive peer support from their team members, as well as mentorship from their coaches (Coaching Boys into Men, n.d.).

Shifting Boundaries

Shifting Boundaries targets dating violence, peer violence, and sexual harassment for middle schoolers in 6th and 7th grade. The program provides a curriculum about these forms of violence, as well as promotes bystander action. The Shifting Boundaries program includes an activity in which students create a “hot spot” map of potentially dangerous places in their school, which is shared with the school faculty. Shifting Boundaries also provides TDV training for school personnel (National Institute of Justice, 2012).

Safe Dates

Safe Dates focuses on TDV education for middle school students and high schoolers, but also provides programs for counselors, after-school programs, faith-based programs, and crisis centers. Safe Dates includes a ten-session curriculum that defines abuse and addresses why people engage in abuse behaviors; promotes peer support and bystander action; and educates students on gender stereotypes, coping with anger, communication skills, and sexual assault. During these sessions, students also perform plays about dating abuse and create posters. Information on TDV is also provided for parents (Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, n.d.).

Second Step

The Second Step program provides a social-emotional curriculum for pre-K to 12th grade. During this program, students have age-appropriate opportunities to learn about empathy, emotions, self-talk, stress management, values, identity development, future planning, bullying, harassment, and healthy relationships. This program also includes at-home materials for parents to talk about with their teenagers (Second Step, n.d.).

Bringing in the Bystander

Bringing in the Bystander is a TDV program specifically for college students. This program focuses on promoting the idea of community responsibility and teaching students to engage in effective bystander action. The curriculum for Bringing in the Bystander focuses on education about TDV, creating empathy for TDV, and using roleplay to teach students effective ways to step in as a bystander (National Institute of Justice, 2011).

Methods

For this literature review, studies relevant to queer TDV were found through a search on EBSCOhost using the search terms “teen dating violence AND (LGBTQ or lesbian or gay or homosexual or bisexual or transgender or homosexual or queer or sexual minority).” An expander was used on equivalent subjects to LGBTQ, since there are a plethora of labels currently used as labels for the queer community. The same search was run on PsychInfo but no additional relevant results were found. Another search was run on EBSCOhost to gather information on TDV prevention, using the search terms “teen dating violence AND prevention.” Relevant articles from these EBSCOhost searches were reviewed. From these articles, risk factors and social factors that were relevant to the prevention of TDV among queer and questioning youth were noted. During this process, two populations within queer youth who were particularly at risk for TDV stood out. These target populations included queer youth who experience bullying and queer youth who are unsure of their sexual identity. Two main forms of prevention for queer youth also emerged: peer-involved prevention and supporting roles for adults. The next sections of this paper will lay out the research that advocates for using these two main supports, as well as describe what these prevention methods could entail in order to target queer youth.

Target Populations within Queer Youth

Within queer youth, who are already more likely to experience TDV, there are two target populations of queer youth who experience an even higher likelihood of being involved in TDV. The first target population is queer youth who experience bullying—especially those who experience sexual harassment and those who face peer victimization throughout many aspects of their lives. The second target population includes youth who are questioning or unsure of their sexual identity. While TDV prevention for queer and questioning youth is important for all youth in this population, special attention should be paid to these sub-groups.

Pearlman and Dunn (2016) conducted a study on bullying and dating violence using data from the Rhode Island High School Risk Behavior Survey. Through their analysis, Pearlman and Dunn found a co-occurrence of bullying, homophobic teasing, and dating violence. Queer students were found to be among the most likely groups to experience one or more of these types of peer victimization. These results show the relevance of bullying, as well as its connection to TDV, among queer youth. Due to the relevance of social norms with bullying and TDV, Pearlman and Dunn advocate for prevention programs that target “underlying patriarchal and heteronormative social norms” (p. 45). Hequembourg et al. (2020) expand upon this co-occurrence of TDV and bullying among queer youth. Hequembourg et al. disseminated surveys and follow-up surveys to 800 participants in Erie County, New York, who were between the ages of 13-15 years old. The participants were asked about their experiences of bullying, sexual harassment (including homophobic teasing), and dating violence. The survey indicated that queer participants were more likely than heterosexual participants to experience all three types of peer victimization. While bullying itself was not found to be a predictor of TDV, sexual harassment was found to be a significant predictor of TDV.

The work of Semenza (2021) adds the factor of poly-victimization into the co-occurrence of bullying, sexual harassment, and TDV. Semenza utilized the data from the Urban Institute's 2011-2012 survey titled "Technology, Teen Dating Violence and Abuse, and Bullying in Three States" in order to study poly-victimization. The Urban Institute's survey assessed the rates of cyberbullying, in-person bullying, physical dating violence, psychological dating violence, and online dating violence among 5,647 7th-12th graders attending school in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Semenza's analysis of this data concluded that youth who have experienced four or five types of victimization are significantly more likely to perpetrate all three types of TDV, in comparison to youth who experienced three or fewer types of victimization. Semenza suggests that the connection between poly-victimization and TDV is due to youth perpetrating TDV as a coping mechanism for the strain of facing victimization in multiple areas of a youth's life. While Semenza's study is not specific to queer youth, the work of Pearlman and Dunn (2016) and Hequemburg et al. (2020) indicate that queer youth are in a high-risk category for all types of peer victimization, which likely increases their risk of facing poly-victimization. Semenza (2021) demonstrates that targeting queer and questioning youth who are being bullied not only addresses the co-occurrence of bullying and TDV victimization found by Pearlman and Dunn (2016) and Hequemburg et al. (2020), it also targets youth who have been victimized and are, in turn, at a higher risk of perpetrating TDV themselves.

The second sub-group of queer youth that is particularly at risk for TDV are youth who are still figuring out their sexual identity. Youth, of all sexualities, who are unstable in their sense of identity tend to conflate their identity development and experimentation with their dating relationships, which can lead to unhealthy dating behaviors. When youth are focused on their own identity development, they are less focused on shared intimacy goals, which are needed to

foster closeness and trust in relationships. Identity development also often involves experimenting with various risky behaviors—including interpersonal aggression—which can spill over into dating relationships (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). As seen in the work of Bruce et al. (2015) and Higa et al. (2014), positive identity development and sexual identity development, are especially important factors in the well-being of queer youth. Olsen et al. (2015) demonstrates that the importance of identity development among queer youth may also translate into higher rates of TDV among questioning youth.

Bruce et al. surveyed 200 queer male youth from Chicago, who ranged from 16-24 years old. The survey consisted of questions about concealment stress, positive identity development, social support, symptoms of depression, internalized homophobia, and experiences of stigma. Through path analysis, Bruce et al. found that positive identity development decreased negative factors for young queer men, such as internalized homophobia. These results indicate that healthy identity development can be a positive and protective factor for queer men. Higa et al.'s work on positive and negative factors in the lives of queer youth also suggests that identity development is particularly important for this population.

Higa et al. (2014) conducted focus groups and individual interviews with 68 queer youth, questioning youth, and “straight allies” from Washington state. These focus groups and interviews were designed to identify the positive and negative factors in the lives of queer and questioning youth that impact this population's well-being. One of the generally positive factors found was identity development. As some participants pointed out, a healthy sense of identity may look different for queer youth but it is still an important part of wellness. For example, flexibility in labels that queer youth use to describe themselves or labels that are more nuanced (such as pansexual or queer), may not seem to indicate a stable sense of identity to the outside

observer, but this flexibility and nuance allows queer youth to have a sense of control over their identity and the way others view them. Overall, participants reported that identity development and an ability to self-identify with labels have a positive impact on the wellness of queer youth.

Olsen et al.'s analysis (2015) of the nationally conducted 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) demonstrates the connection between positive identity development and TDV, especially among young men. The YRBS was conducted among 9th-12th graders across the United States and included questions on sexual identity, as well as the occurrence of physical and sexual TDV victimization. Olsen et al. found that 35.7% of young men who were unsure of their sexual identity reported TDV victimization, compared to 25.8% of young, queer men and 8.3% of young, heterosexual men. These results indicate that male questioning students are significantly more likely to experience TDV victimization than queer or heterosexual students. Overall, the work of Bruce et al., Higa et al., and Olsen et al. indicates that identity development is particularly important for the well-being of queer and questioning youth, and also impacts the rates of TDV victimization among youth who are not yet stable in their identity. The extremely high rates of TDV among young men who are unsure of their sexual identity demonstrates a need for special attention to be paid to this population within the larger work of TDV prevention for queer and questioning youth.

Peer-Involved Prevention

Research on TDV among queer and questioning youth shows that peer involvement may be an especially important aspect of TDV prevention for this population. Peer-involved prevention can take many forms. Some of these forms of peer-involved prevention include engaging generalized peers in changing norms (such as school-wide TDV prevention programs) or targeting a specific group of peers to change the norms within that community or support

network (such as TDV prevention programs in a queer organization). In this section of the paper, I advocate for peer-involved prevention on a large scale to change norms in schools and broader society, but I also promote the use of specific peer-involved prevention to target the support networks of queer youth. For example, queer youth may benefit from TDV prevention training within a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) program that is already active in a school, where queer youth already have formed a social support network that can be leveraged for TDV prevention. The following research shows that using peer-involved prevention can be important for making queer youth feel comfortable reaching out for help when they experience TDV. In addition, peers and support networks can be either a positive or negative influence on queer youth's involvement in TDV, which demonstrates the importance of creating healthy support networks for queer youth that promote healthy relationships.

Dank and et al.'s research shows that queer youth are more comfortable reporting their experiences of TDV with their friends, rather than with adults in their lives (2014). Dank et al. conducted a survey about TDV at ten middle schools and high schools in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, all of which have ongoing anti-bullying and TDV prevention programs. When the data between heterosexual and queer students were compared, they found that only 8% of heterosexual participants who experienced TDV reached out for help, while 18% of queer participants who experienced TDV reached out for help. While the rates for seeking help are relatively low, the results from this population of students demonstrate that queer youth are more likely to seek help for TDV, but the researchers note that queer youth are much more likely to reach out to friends, rather than adults. This propensity to reach out to friends is further explained by the distrust many queer teens feel with adults and institutions, as is further explored by Higa et al. (2014).

Through focus groups and interviews, Higa et al. (2014) categorized the positive and negative factors in queer and questioning youth's lives that impact the well-being of this population. While factors such as identity development, peers, and involvement in the queer community were found to be positive factors for the majority of queer and questioning youth, factors such as family, school, religious organizations, and community/neighbors were found to be negative factors in the majority of queer and questioning youth's lives. Higa et al. note that the factors that queer and questioning youth were more likely to have negative associations with, were the same people and institutions that youth are expected to go to for support. Within the context of TDV, and in conjunction with the work of Dank et al. (2014), this research points to queer and questioning youth being less likely to reach out to normally trusted adults, due to the discrimination they face at home, at school, in religious organizations, and within their wider communities and neighborhoods.

Beyond providing a comfortable environment for reporting, peers can also influence the occurrence of TDV among queer youth—indicating another reason that peers should be involved in TDV prevention. Jones and Raghavan (2012) research how queer college students' experiences of dating violence are affected by their support networks. This study surveyed 57 queer undergraduates, who were paired with 57 heterosexual undergraduates. Each of the pairs was deemed demographically similar. Surprisingly, Jones and Raghavan's results did not align with previous research that has shown a correlation between male participants' dating violence perpetration and the perpetration of dating violence by members of the male participants' support networks. This was true of straight and gay men in the study. Interestingly, however, there was a significant correlation for lesbians. As the rates of dating violence perpetration increased among the men in lesbians' support networks, lesbians were more likely to also perpetrate dating

violence. Lesbians were also more likely to experience sexual coercion if their female social supports had experienced sexual coercion. Jones and Raghavan suggest that same-gender modeling between lesbians and their female social supports might be enhanced because they are more likely to not only be the same gender, but to also hold the same sexual identity—as many lesbians' female friends are also lesbians. Jones and Raghavan also discuss the way lesbians, in particular, tend to be hesitant to speak out about dating violence because they fear anti-queer groups will use this as negative propaganda. The researchers suggest that the fear of talking candidly about dating violence within their community has kept lesbians from sufficiently supporting each other in regards to dating violence. This phenomenon leads Jones and Raghavan to advocate for targeting social support networks as part of dating violence prevention for young queer people, especially lesbian support networks.

Finally, proactive bystander action within the support networks of queer youth may be a valuable form of TDV prevention within this population. Banyard et al. (2020) surveyed students at 25 New England high schools about bystander action, with an emphasis on proactive bystander action and empathy. The study found that students who are at risk for TDV victimization themselves—including female students, queer students, and students that experience symptoms of depression—are more likely to take proactive bystander action. These findings demonstrate that students who are at risk for TDV victimization themselves, such as queer youth, feel more empathy for TDV and are more likely to attempt to prevent TDV. Due to these results, Banyard et al. advocate for TDV prevention training within peer groups as a means of changing norms within their social circles and increasing proactive bystander action.

While the findings of Jones and Raghavan (2012) indicate that queer youth's social support networks can be negatively influential in the occurrence of TDV among queer youth,

Barnyard et al.'s findings indicate that peers in these support networks can also be an asset in TDV prevention. Because queer peers within queer youths' support networks already possess increased empathy for TDV, due to their own risk for TDV victimization, they have an increased potential to be proactive bystanders within their peer groups. The task at hand for adults who are involved in the effort to prevent TDV among queer and questioning youth is to help foster healthy support networks for queer youth. With the support of adults, members of healthy, queer support networks should be able to turn their own risk for TDV into a motivator to engage in proactive bystander action, rather than letting their TDV experiences become the norm within their community. The next section of this paper will delve into the ways that adults can support peer-involved prevention for TDV among queer and questioning youth.

Roles for Adults

While peer-involved prevention is an important way for queer youth to feel comfortable talking about their TDV experiences, as well as an integral component of changing the norms within queer youths' support networks, peer-involved prevention also requires the involvement of trusted adults who are educated in the nuances of TDV among queer and questioning youth. In their literature review about prevention and intervention for TDV among queer youth, Anater and Dion (2019) promote the involvement of school personnel in working to change norms throughout their schools to make queer youth more comfortable in general. They also advocate for school psychologists to become better versed in helping queer youth navigate healthy relationships. Anater and Dion suggest school psychologists could conduct individual and group counseling that focuses on teaching queer youth healthy ways to deal with conflict in their relationships and helping queer youth develop a positive sexual identity.

While direct services by school psychologists could be positive for queer youth, there are also opportunities for adults to more subtly support healthy mindsets about relationships in social support networks that already exist for queer youth. Many adults are already in roles that can be leveraged to support peer-involved prevention. These roles include facilitators of already existing school or community-based queer support groups, school personnel of all levels who engage with queer peer groups, or staff at residential homes, for example. In order to sufficiently fill these roles though, adults involved in TDV prevention among queer and questioning youth need to understand the legitimacy of TDV experiences among queer and questioning youth, as well as the nuances in TDV among this population.

Two factors that prevent adults, particularly school personnel, from fulfilling these roles are their lack of training and their plethora of other work responsibilities. Edwards et al. (2020) conducted focus groups with 22 school personnel from New Hampshire, including counselors, nurses, social workers, and teachers. During these focus groups, the researchers facilitated conversations about the school personnels' comfort level and ability to address TDV within their schools. The school personnel discussed feeling unprepared to deal with TDV due to a lack of training, as well as feeling like they were too overwhelmed with their other work responsibilities to be able to give TDV adequate attention. Edwards et al. suggest that school personnel undergo training that addresses specific tactics for TDV interventions, as well as provides general education on TDV. They also reiterate the importance of all school personnel receiving training about TDV. This would allow school personnel to support each other, as well as prepare all personnel in case a student is only comfortable talking to a specific faculty member. The following studies provide significant factors that adults should be educated in while undergoing training in queer TDV prevention.

When adults who are involved in TDV prevention for queer and questioning youth are trained, they first and foremost need to understand diverse sexualities and take queer relationship dynamics seriously. Bermea et al. (2018) conducted a series of interviews with staff at a residential foster care home for teen mothers. The interviewers focused their conversations on the romantic and sexual relationships that young women at the home had with other women. While many of these young women were currently in same-sex relationships, their history of having children with men overshadowed the staff's ability to take their current same-sex relationships seriously. In general, the staff did not understand the young women's fluid sexualities and, in turn, did not view the dating violence within their current same-sex relationships seriously. While the religious background of the residential foster care home may have contributed to the staff's views of the young women's relationships, the study does bring to light the importance of adults' understanding of queer relationships and sexual fluidity when addressing TDV among queer and questioning youth.

Another nuanced factor of TDV among queer and questioning youth that adults who are involved in prevention should be trained to understand and address is the occurrence of perpetration and victimization for both partners. In an extensive literature review about TDV, Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) discuss the differences seen in the dynamics of dating violence among youth versus the dynamics of intimate partner violence among adults. TDV often involves a general coercive and violent dynamic, but it is not until adulthood that separate perpetrator and victim roles fully develop in relationships. While Wekerle and Wolfe's literature review was not specific to queer youth, the work of Dank et al. (2014) shows that the obscured lines between the roles of perpetrator and victim in TDV are also acutely relevant among queer youth.

Dank et al.'s 2014 survey of middle schoolers and high schoolers, which was previously discussed in the peer-involved prevention section, found an overlap of perpetration and victimization roles among queer youth. In this survey, TDV was divided into the categories of physical dating violence, psychological dating abuse, cyber dating abuse, and sexual coercion. Dank et al. compared the rates of perpetration and victimization of these four types of TDV among various demographic groups within their participants. The demographics that were analyzed included gender and sexuality. Dank et al.'s study found that while there were differences in the specific types of TDV experiences among different demographic groups, there was also a large overlap between perpetration and victimization. For example, they found that female participants were the second most likely group to experience victimization from psychological, cyber, and sexual TDV, but they were also the second most likely group to engage in the perpetration of physical, psychological, and cyber TDV. This was also true for queer youth and was particularly notable for transgender participants. Transgender participants reported the highest rates of victimization in all TDV categories, but they were also the most likely to engage in the perpetration of physical, cyber, and sexual TDV. The findings of Dank et al. (2014) indicate that the perpetration and victimization of TDV are nuanced, especially among transgender youth, which can be partially explained by Semenza's (2021) work on polyvictimization—discussed in the Target Populations section of this paper. Because the dynamics of TDV are different for teenagers than they are in adult relationships, this nuance should be explicitly addressed during trainings, as it may not be intuitive for adults involved in the prevention of TDV among queer and questioning youth.

When adults adequately understand and connect with queer youth, they can be invaluable sources of support for queer youth. The potential for positive adult involvement is shown in Reed

et al.'s study of mentorship relationships with young black men who have sex with men (YBMSM) (2019). This study consisted of interviews with 169 YBMSM from the ages of 13-24 years old who reside in Michigan. Interestingly, 95.8% of this population of young Black men reported having a mentorship relationship with at least one adult in their life. These results drastically differ from the study by Higa et al. (2014)—previously discussed in the peer-involved prevention section—in which the predominantly White, queer, youth participants from Washington state reported mostly negative experiences with adults that heterosexual youth normally turn to for support. While Reed et al.'s results were somewhat similar to Higa et al. in the way that the mentors of YBMSM were rarely school personnel, they found that two-thirds of YBMSM reported family members being mentors, which drastically differed from the results from Higa et al. (2014). This discrepancy in results between Higa et al. and Reed et al. demonstrates the importance of race, culture, and location in research on TDV among queer and questioning youth—which will be discussed further in the Discussion section of this paper. While these results may differ between different demographics within queer and questioning youth, Reed et al.'s work still indicates the potential for adult support roles for adults who connect with and understand queer and questioning youth. During the interviews, YBMSM reported that their mentors were active in “promoting identity development, enhancing cognitive skills, and promoting social and emotional growth” (Reed et al., 2019, p. 969). These factors closely align with the needs of queer youth that I found were relevant to the prevention of TDV. In conjunction with the training and understanding that Bermea et al. (2018) and Edwards et al. (2020) advocate for, Reed et al. show the potential for adults to be better mentors and, by extension, better facilitators for peer-involved prevention.

Discussion

Current prevention programs address some of the risk factors and social factors that I have identified throughout this paper, but there are still dimensions of TDV prevention that these prevention programs, as well as future programs, could consider in order to more directly address the needs of queer and questioning youth. The table below shows the risk factors and social factors for queer and questioning youth that current prevention programs address, based on my preliminary research.

| | <i>Dating Matters</i> | <i>Green Dot</i> | <i>Coaching Boys into Men</i> | <i>Shifting Boundaries</i> | <i>Safe Dates</i> | <i>Second Step</i> | <i>Bringing In the Bystander</i> |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bullying | X | X | NE* | X | | X | |
| Identity Development | | X | NE | | | X | |
| Peer-involved Prevention | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Training for School Faculty and/or Parents | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Understanding of obscured perpetrator and victim roles | | | | | | | |
| Understanding of sexual fluidity | | | | | | | |
| Mentorship | | | X | | | | |

* NE - Implied but Not Explicit

None of the current TDV prevention programs recommended by the CDC explicitly advertise using a framework that understands the obscured perpetrator and victim roles that are seen throughout TDV and are particularly relevant for queer and questioning youth (Dank et al., 2014). It is possible that this dynamic is understood and less explicitly addressed, though.

Unsurprisingly—since none of these programs directly address queer and questioning youth—none of these programs mention incorporating an understanding of sexual fluidity into the trainings for school faculty and parents. Shown by the work of Bermea et al. (2018), understanding sexual fluidity is an important component to working with queer youth and could be added to the training curriculum for programs that want to address TDV among queer youth.

Only Coaching Boys into Men had a mentorship component in their program. Although mentorship is not a necessity for queer TDV programs, it can be a valuable asset to queer and questioning youth. This is seen in the work of Reed et al. (2019), in which mentors provide support in identity development, as well as cognitive, social, and emotional growth for queer and questioning youth. Green Dot and Dating Matters were the only programs that had an explicit identity development component to their programs, although the mentorship aspect of Coaching Boys into Men implies that the athletes in the program would receive some support in identity development. As identity development, and particularly sexual identity development, is an important factor for queer and questioning youth, it could be beneficial for more prevention programs to include programming that supports identity development and facilitates mentorship.

The majority of the current prevention programs address bullying and provide training for school faculty and/or parents, both of which are important for working with queer and questioning youth. In order to directly target queer and questioning youth, though, the training for school faculty and parents should include specific information on understanding queer youth's relationships and the nuances that may be present in TDV among queer youth—such as sexual fluidity and obscured perpetrator and victim roles. Notably, all of the current TDV prevention programs recommended by the CDC use some form of peer-involved prevention. This is mostly seen in the form of encouraging bystander action and working to change social

norms within schools and the wider community. This use of peer-involved prevention is promising for queer youth and could be more directly implemented in queer spaces.

Interestingly, Green Dot and Safe Dates have both adapted their programs to work for various populations. Green Dot has been adapted for use in multiple cultures and organizations, such as the Air Force, Native American and Alaskan communities, South African communities, and women's trade organizations. Safe Dates also has programs for unique organizations, such as faith programs and crisis centers. These adaptations raise the idea of adapting current prevention programs for queer clubs and organizations. While there are changes that would need to be made to any of these programs to be used in queer-specific spaces, each of the programs does have components that are already useful for this population. TDV prevention programs for queer and questioning youth do not need to be made from scratch, but this at-risk population deserves to have prevention programming that is adapted to address their needs.

More research on TDV among queer and questioning youth is also needed to effectively create or adapt TDV prevention programs for this population. First of all, studies should be conducted on the effectiveness of current prevention programs on queer and questioning youth. While this paper compares the needs of queer and questioning youth to those addressed by current prevention programs, it is still unknown how effective these programs truly are for this population. Secondly, studies are needed that are specific to questioning youth and the effect of identity development on TDV for this population. While research suggests that healthy identity development could mitigate the risk of TDV among questioning youth, it has not been directly studied. Finally, future research should include diverse, national data. The majority of the studies about queer and questioning youth that I found throughout my research were conducted in New England, which is predominantly White. Culture, demographics, and location can change the

needs of queer and questioning youth—as was seen with the different types of relationships queer and questioning youth had with adults found in Reed et al. (2019) with Black participants in Chicago versus Higa et al. (2014) with mostly White participants in Washington state.

Conclusion

Through the examination of current literature on TDV among queer and questioning youth, this literature review identified factors that are particularly important to TDV prevention among this population. Two main target populations within queer youth were identified. Queer youth who have experienced bullying and sexual harassment, especially within multiple areas of their life, were notably more likely to experience TDV, both in perpetration and in victimization. Queer youth who are unstable in their identity are also significantly more at risk for experiencing TDV. Special attention should be given to these two target populations within the larger framework of TDV prevention for queer and questioning youth.

While researching risk factors and social factors that are specifically relevant to TDV among queer and questioning youth, two components stood out as being particularly important to TDV prevention among queer and questioning youth. The first component is the use of peer-involved prevention. Peer-involved prevention can be used to make queer and questioning youth feel more comfortable talking about their TDV experiences. It also takes advantage of the influence that pre-existing peer support networks have on queer and questioning youth's experiences of TDV. The second important component of TDV prevention among this population involves the support of adults who are trusted by queer and questioning youth, and who are well-trained in the nuances of TDV among this population. With further research on the effectiveness of current prevention methods among queer and questioning youth, as well as the

addition of more diverse studies, TDV prevention programs specific to queer youth can be adapted from current prevention programs or created independently.

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