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An Analysis of Violence in Teen Dating Relationships

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present their findings. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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Abstract

In an effort to better understand and prevent teen dating violence, this study examined the risk factors associated with teen dating violence as well as methods of intervention/prevention. Eight mental health practitioners who work with adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence or who work with teen dating violence prevention programs were interviewed regarding their experiences with these adolescents. Six themes were found from these interviews: (a) the prevalence of teen dating violence, (b) the negative effects of teen dating violence, (c) the risk factors of teen dating violence, (d) reasons victims stay in abusive relationships, (e) support systems for teen dating violence victims and perpetrators, (f) and methods of prevention and intervention. Comparison to previous research found that this study, overall, supported previous research regarding the importance of prevention and intervention programs based on minimizing risk factors due to the damaging effects of teen dating violence on adolescents' lives. Implications for social work policy, practice, and research are also discussed.

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An Analysis of Violence in Teen Dating Relationships

Teen dating violence is commonly thought of as physical violence against one's romantic partner, but actually teen dating violence covers a broader range of behaviors. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teen dating violence is defined as "physical, sexual, or psychological violence within a dating relationship" (2006, p. 532), and it is hazardous to the health and development of teens (Noonan & Charles, 2009). Teen dating violence can result in injury and even death for the victims (CDC, 2006). Further the CDC stated, "In addition to the risk for injury and death, victims of dating violence are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, unhealthy dieting behaviors, substance use, and suicidal ideation/attempts" (2006, p. 532).

Not only is an adolescent's physical well being at risk, but his or her psychological well being is also at risk (Noonan & Charles, 2009; Becker, Stuewig, & McCloskey, 2010). Adolescents who are victims of teen dating violence are more likely to develop mental health issues like depression (Banyard & Cross, 2008). According to Becker et al. (2010), adults who experience intimate partner violence "displayed higher levels of PTSD symptomalogy" (p.1711). Adolescents who have experienced teen dating violence in the past or present have more suicidal thoughts and struggle more with their education (Banyard & Cross, 2008). In addition, psychological abuse in a violent dating relationship has a devastating effect on a teen's self-esteem (O'Keefe, Brockopp, & Chew, 1986).

Teen dating violence is also a risk factor for intimate partner violence (IPV) in adulthood (O'Keefe et al., 1986). O'Keefe et al. (1986) stated, "Violence that occurs at an early stage of interpersonal development is a strong indication of the possibility of

violence in later adult relationships" (p. 468). According to Williams, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, and Laporte (2008), 13% of teens who are victims, perpetrators, or both will be involved in more than one abusive relationship within one year. O'Keefe et al. (1986), found that, of those, adolescents who identified themselves as being victims, perpetrators, or both of teen dating violence, only 12% of victims and 14% of perpetrators listed violence as being a reason to end a relationship. This belief highlights the cycle of violence that then leads into adulthood.

IPV is a serious issue as there are approximately 5.3 million IPV victimizations among women 18 and older every year (CDC, 2004). Of these victimizations, there are two million injuries and 1,300 deaths in the United States each year (CDC, 2006). Data gathered from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) found that yearly in the United States there are approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men who experience IPV in the form of physical assault alone (United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). In fact, out of all the violence that occurs against women, IPV is the most common with "64.0 percent of the women who reported being raped, physically assaulted and/or stalked since age 18" (United States Department of Justice et al. 2000, p. iv) identifying the perpetrator as a current or former intimate partner. The CDC (2010a) gathered data from 16 states in 2007 and found that there were 612 deaths in which the homicides were related to IPV. In addition, "503,485 women and 185,496 men are stalked by an intimate partner annually in the United States" (United States Department of Justice et al., 2000, p. 28).

Teen dating violence is prevalent; one in five teenagers will experience at least one form of dating violence before they turn 18 (CDC, 2006). According to O'Keefe et al. (1986), approximately one in three adolescents experience teen dating violence including psychological violence, while one in four adolescents experience physical violence. O'Keefe et al. (1986) also found that 50% of adolescents who had never experienced a violent dating relationship knew of another student who had experienced a violent dating relationship. Even with these high statistics, teen dating violence is thought to be underreported in the literature, with more teens experiencing teen dating violence than is actually reported (Jouriles, McDonald, Garrido, Rosenfield, & Brown, 2005).

Teen dating violence is an important societal issue. As such, social workers have an opportunity to be highly influential in the intervention and prevention of teen dating violence. Social workers can assist in identifying and intervening when adolescents are in violent relationships. They can work on the creation, implementation, and assessment of prevention programs. Social workers can also work to raise awareness of teen dating violence, educate the public and teens, and bring teen dating violence prevention programs to schools. In an effort to better understand and prevent teen dating violence, this study examines the risk factors associated with teen dating violence as well as methods of intervention/prevention. The following research question will be examined in this study: What risk factors contribute to teen dating violence and what intervention/prevention programs are effective in reducing/preventing teen dating violence?

Literature Review

Risk Factors

In order to prevent teen dating violence, one must first examine the different risk factors involved in teen dating violence. Prevention is, after all, reducing the likelihood that something will occur. Banyard, Cross, and Modecki (2006) found that the higher the number of risk factors the greater the likelihood of teen dating perpetration, and higher numbers of protective factors decreases the likelihood of teen dating violence perpetration. "When a composite of risk factors was used, for each additional risk factor present, odds of perpetration increased by 1.5 times" (Banyard et al., 2006, p. 1327). The risk factors examined in this literature review are gender, childhood abuse, interparental conflict, beliefs/attitudes/thoughts, age, school, fear, alcohol/drugs, depression, ethnicity, peer groups, SES, and social support.

Gender. While gender is a risk factor for teen dating violence, it is more complicated than labeling the victims as girls and the perpetrators as boys. Boys and girls are both victims and perpetrators (Banyard et al., 2006; Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004; Williams et al., 2008). In addition, one study found the majority of violent teen dating relationships to be mutually violent (i.e., each partner is violent towards the other) (Foshee & Gray, 1997). Foshee and Gray (1997) found that 14.3% of adolescents were victims only, 19.5% were perpetrators only, and 62% were both victims and perpetrators. Mutually violent dating relationships had more frequent, severe, and injury-causing violence than one-sided violent dating relationships (i.e., victim only or perpetrator only). In addition, they found mutually violent dating relationships to be reciprocal; if one partner initiated severe violence then the other partner reciprocated with severe violence (Foshee & Gray, 1997).

According to Banyard et al. (2006), boys are more likely than girls to be perpetrators of either physical abuse or sexual abuse or the combination of both with a total of 14.5% of boys and 9.8% of girls who are perpetrators. However, O'Keefe (1997) found that 43% of girls and 39% of boys reported using aggression against their dating partner. In addition, Foshee and Gray (1997) found that 26% of boys reported being victims of teen dating violence only compared to 8% of girls. The authors hypothesized that this difference may be due to underreporting by boys dues to societal stigma of boys hitting girls. Even so, several studies have found that boys and girls are almost equally likely to be perpetrators of teen dating violence (Banyard et al., 2006; O'Keefe et al., 1986; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999; Williams et al., 2008). According to Noonan and Charles (2009), girls are actually reported by both boys and girls to slap more than boys are to slap. O'Keefe (1997) found that girls reported more kicking, biting, slapping, hitting with a fist or with an object against their partners than boys. Boys reported using more sexual force against their partners than girls (O'Keefe, 1997).

Boys are found to be more threatening than girls because, when they resort to violence, they cause more damage than girls do (Hickman et al., 2004; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). O'Keefe et al. (1986) supported this idea and hypothesized that while girls are frequently perpetrators as much as boys, they tend to do less damage than boys. In addition, women over the age of 18 who were assaulted by their intimate partner or ex-intimate partner were more likely to be injured or severely injured than women who were raped or physically assaulted by other perpetrators (United States Department of Justice et al., 2000).

Wekerle et al. (2009) found that violent acts for both boys and girls are related to self-defense, with adolescent boys reporting their acts of violence as an attempt to prevent girl aggressive escalation. Girls reported their acts of violence specifically as being related to self-defense or standing up for themselves. According to O'Keefe (1997), boys reported initiating violence more than girls initiate violence, and girls reported that boys initiate violence more than girls. However, this finding is not statistically significant. It does warrant further investigation, as it seems to support the hypothesis that girls may be resorting to violence in self-defense or in retaliation. Overall, the majority of both boys and girls reported both members as responsible for initiating aggression (O'Keefe, 1997). Girls are also more susceptible to other forms of teen dating violence than boys. For example, girls experience more incidences of sexual abuse (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

Noonan and Charles (2009) reported that girls are often victims of sexual abuse/coercion due to the fact that girls feel pressure to engage in sexual acts with their boyfriends in order to stay together as a couple. The girls in this study stated that some boys might use "emotional manipulation" (Noonan & Charles, p. 1096) to get their girlfriends to engage in sexual acts. Emotional manipulation includes threats to break up with the girl, threats to spread rumors about her, or just being overly persistent. Banyard et al. (2006) found that boys (10%) more frequently engage in sexual coercion than girls (2.5%). Banyard and Cross (2008) found that 16.8% of girls reported being sexually abused whereas 9.4% of boys reported being sexually abused.

Boys and girls also differ in their responses to family violence. According to Foshee, Bauman, and Linder (1999), girls who were exposed to family violence (both

parent to child and interparental) had weaker attachments to their mothers. However, boys who were exposed to family violence not only had less attachment to their mothers, but they were also less committed to society sanctioned activities (e.g., graduating from high school, going to college) and believed less in general societal rules and norms (e.g., it is important to be honest). Foshee et al. stated that this gender difference could be caused by different socialization experiences for boys and girls. Girls are socialized by families and society to connect and bond with both families and society. Boys are not taught to be relationship focused by society, so the family would need to teach them the importance of relationships. If the family uses violence as a way to behave in its interpersonal interactions, then boys in that family will learn to use violence too (Foshee et al., 1999).

According to O'Keefe (1997), motivations for perpetrating teen dating violence differ for boys and girls. Both boys and girls reported anger being the number one motivator for aggressive behavior. For boys, the desire to control one's partner was the second highest motivator. Boys were significantly more likely than girls to use aggression to gain control over one's partner. For girls, self-defense was the second highest motivator. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to use aggression because of anger or in self-defense (O'Keefe, 1997). Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, and Bangdiwala (2001) also found that girls who respond destructively to anger are associated with teen dating violence perpetration.

For both boys and girls, greater conflict in one's dating relationship was a predictor of teen dating violence perpetration. In addition, for girls, being involved in a serious relationship was a significant predictor of teen dating violence perpetration

(O'Keefe, 1997). Girls who have friends who have been victims of teen dating violence are associated with being teen dating perpetrators. Not only that but when examining the same group one and a half years later, a predictive factor for girls to be teen dating violence perpetrators was to have friends who have been victims of teen dating violence (Foshee et al., 2001). However, being a previous victim of teen dating violence was the strongest predictor for perpetrating dating violence in both boys and girls, although it was stronger for girls than boys. Again, this could support the hypothesis that girls resort to violence out of self-defense or in retaliation. However, it is important to note that violent behaviors in the present could lead to more violence in the future (O'Keefe, 1997). Foshee and Gray (1997) found that adolescents involved in mutually violent relationships were more likely to have been victims of dating violence previously than adolescents involved in one-sided dating violence relationships.

According to Edelen, McCaffrey, Marshall, and Jaycox (2009), adolescent boys are slightly more accepting of girls resorting to violence in retaliation against boys than girls are accepting of it. In addition, girls are more accepting of boys retaliating. According to Edelen et al. (2009), this finding suggests that adolescents are more accepting of their partners than of themselves, based on the assumption that youth tend to identify with their own gender. Edelen et al. (2009) suggests that this bias could lead to underreporting of dating violence. The tendency to blame one's self for violence rather than to blame one's partner is a risk factor that should be addressed in prevention curriculum.

Overall, boys are exposed to more violence via communities and schools than girls. They engage in more physical fights and are more likely to be victims of parent-

child violence than girls. In addition, they use more drugs and alcohol and are more likely to find violence justifiable than girls. Girls are more likely to have interpersonal conflict than boys (O'Keefe, 1997). All of these factors could have an effect on the prevalence of teen dating violence perpetration.

Childhood abuse. Another significant risk factor associated with teen dating violence is childhood abuse. Emotional abuse during childhood is significantly attached to male dating violence perpetration and victimization and female dating violence victimization (Wekerle et al., 2009). In addition, Child Protective Services (CPS) youth are at a high risk for dating violence (Wekerle et al., 2009). According to Wolfe, Wekerle, Scott, Straatman, and Grasley (2004) childhood maltreatment is a risk factor for teen dating violence perpetration and victimization. Indeed, Foshee and Gray (1997) found that adolescents who experienced physical abuse were more likely to be involved in mutually violent relationships than either victim or perpetrator only relationships. Wolfe et al., (2004) speculated that youth who have been abused will likely develop trauma symptoms such as flashbacks, hyper vigilance, intrusive memories, and distressing reminders. These trauma symptoms are a mediator between child maltreatment and teen dating violence. In particular, girls with higher levels of anger-specific trauma symptoms were found to more likely increase their levels of aggression in their dating relationships over a period of one year (Wolfe et al., 2004).

For boys, childhood abuse was significantly correlated with attitudes justifying teen dating violence, trauma symptoms, and teen dating violence. This could imply that trauma symptoms and attitudes justifying teen dating violence are mediators between child maltreatment and teen dating violence for boys (Wolfe et al., 2004). According to

Hickman et al. (2004), childhood maltreatment increases boys' justification of violence and risk of teen dating violence. Foshee et al. (1999) found that boys who were hit by an adult were more likely to react aggressively to conflict. In addition, boys who have been hit by an adult have more positive expectations for the results of teen dating violence (e.g., my friends will approve of my involvement in dating violence) and were more accepting of teen dating violence. Foshee et al. (2001) also found that the mediators between being physically abused by an adult and teen dating violence perpetration were responding aggressively to conflicts, positive expectations of the results of dating violence, and an attitude of acceptance towards dating violence.

Foshee et al., (1999) found that girls who were hit by their mothers were positively associated with teen dating violence perpetration. Girls who were hit by their mothers were more accepting of teen dating violence than girls who had not been hit. In addition, girls who were hit by their mothers or an adult also had more aggressive responses to conflicts than girls who were not hit by their mothers or an adult.

According to Foshee et al. (1999), there was not an association between boys and girls who were hit by their dads and teen dating violence perpetration. However, the authors hypothesize that this could be due to a measurement error. This study assessed this variable by asking about father figures who were currently living in the same house as the adolescent. Therefore, if an adolescent was hit by his or her father, then the father moved out, their experience was not measured. However, that situation would have been accounted for with the variable of being hit by an adult. This variable was strongly associated with perpetration by both boys and girls (Foshee et al., 1999).

According to Banyard et al. (2006), being a victim of sexual abuse and being a victim of physical abuse was found to be predictive of teen dating violence perpetration. For boys, sexual abuse was found to be one of the most significant predictors of teen dating violence perpetration. “Sexual abuse victims were nearly 3 times more likely to self-report physical abuse perpetration, 21 times more likely to report sexual perpetration, and 4 times more likely to report either form” (Banyard et al., 2006, p. 1323). Physical abuse was related to perpetrating physical abuse only, but it increased the odds of physical abuse perpetration by 100% (Banyard, et al., 2006).

Interparental conflict. Witnessing interparental conflict has been linked with teen dating violence (Foshee, et al., 2001; Foshee & Gray, 1997; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O’Keefe et al., 1986). According to O’Keefe et al. (1986), 51% of adolescents who were exposed to interparental violence were also involved in an abusive dating relationship. Foshee and Gray (1997) found that adolescents who were involved in mutually violent dating relationships were more likely to report witnessing interparental violence than adolescents involved in one-sided violent dating relationships. Having parents who are divorced increased the odds of physical abuse perpetration by 70% (Banyard, et al., 2006). Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) found that boys who witnessed interparental conflict were linked with behaving aggressively in dating relationships. In addition, Foshee et al. (2001) found that boys who witnessed interparental violence were associated with increased risk for teen dating violence perpetration.

According to O’Keefe (1997), exposure to interparental violence was found to be a statistically significant predictor of teen dating violence perpetration for boys. By comparison, interparental conflict was not a predictive factor in increasing female

perpetration (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O'Keefe, 1997). One possible explanation for this gender difference is that girls who witness interparental conflict perceive aggression as harmful to the relationship whereas boys perceive conflict as a strategy to get what they want (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004). However, having parents who were divorced predicted teen dating violence perpetration (Banyard et al., 2006). In addition, Foshee et al. (1999) found that girls who were exposed to interparental violence were more likely to respond aggressively to conflict and were more accepting of teen dating violence than girls who were not exposed to interparental violence.

Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) found several mediators for the link between witnessing interparental violence and being perpetrators of teen dating violence for boys. Boys who witnessed interparental conflict were more likely to view aggression as an acceptable dating behavior. O'Keefe et al. (1986) speculated that one explanation for this is the belief that because the violent relationship endures, then a violent relationship is culturally acceptable. Foshee et al. (1999) found that boys who are exposed to interparental violence are associated with more aggressive responses to conflict. In addition, the mediators between interparental violence and teen dating violence perpetration were responding aggressively to conflicts, having positive expectations about the results of teen dating violence (e.g., my friends will approve of my participation in teen dating violence), and exuding an attitude of acceptance towards dating violence (Foshee et al., 1999).

According to Kinsfogel and Grych (2004), boys and girls who have homes with higher levels of interparental conflict reported having peer groups who were more likely to be verbally and physically aggressive with their dating partners than adolescents from

less conflictual homes. This could reflect that certain peer groups are more accepting of aggression in dating relationships; therefore, the members of that peer group engage in more aggression in dating relationships (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004).

Beliefs, attitudes, thoughts. Beliefs/attitudes/thoughts that justify violence are also a risk factor for teen dating violence. Several studies found a significant correlation between attitudes justifying teen dating violence and teen dating violence (Foshee et al., 2001; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O'Keefe, 1997; Wolfe et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2008). Williams et al. (2008) found that more accepting attitudes of teen dating aggression were associated with teen dating violence perpetration currently and recurrently. In addition, Foshee and Gray (1997) found that adolescents involved in mutually violent dating relationships were more likely to be more accepting of teen dating violence than adolescents involved in one-sided dating relationships.

According to Foshee et al. (2001), boys who reported believing teen dating violence was justified under certain circumstances are at a higher risk for teen dating perpetration. The circumstances the boys reported were if the girlfriend made him mad, if the girlfriend made him jealous on purpose, if the girlfriend hit him first, and if the girlfriend insults him in front of his peers. Foshee et al. (2001) also found that boys are at a higher risk of teen dating violence perpetration recurrence if they accept dating violence as a norm. In addition, Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) found that boys perceived aggression in a relationship as justifiable when they had been exposed to higher levels of interparental conflict. According to Foshee and Gray (1997), adolescents who are perpetrators only are more accepting of dating violence than adolescents who are victims

only. Even so, mutually violent couples were the most accepting of teen dating violence (Foshee & Gray, 1997).

According to Foshee et al. (1999), family violence and subsequent perpetration for girls and boys were mainly mediated by an accepting attitude towards dating violence and an aggressive response to conflict. In addition, female perpetrators had more positive expectations for the results of teen dating violence (e.g., my friends will approve of my participation in teen dating violence perpetration) and fewer negative expectations (e.g., the person will break up with me). Male perpetrators had the same mediators between family violence and subsequent perpetration, and they had few conflict-resolution skills (Foshee et al., 1999).

Edelen et al. (2009) found that, overall, boys are generally more accepting of violence than girls are accepting of violence. According to O'Keefe (1997), both boys and girls are more accepting of female-on-male violence. However, more boys are accepting of male-on-female aggression than girls are accepting of male-on-female aggression. Girls are more likely to be perpetrators when they believe that both male-on-female violence is unjustifiable and that female-on-male violence is justifiable (O'Keefe, 1997). Foshee et al. (2001) found that girls are more likely to become perpetrators if they accept dating violence as normal. This correlation between accepting attitudes of dating aggression and teen dating violence perpetration may be because those who believe their aggressive behavior is justified may have less reservations about acting on their impulses towards violence (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004). O'Keefe (1997) speculated it was because, in American culture, boys are taught that it is never okay to hit a woman and girls are taught to romanticize slapping men via the media.

Jouriles, Grych, Rosenfield, McDonald, and Dodson (2011) conceptualized beliefs/attitudes/thoughts into two categories: controlled and automatic thoughts. Controlled thoughts are thoughts that one is aware of, can reflect on, and have some control over. Automatic thoughts are thoughts that surface without thinking about it, and, oftentimes, one is not even aware of them (Jouriles et al., 2011). Jouriles et al. (2011) found that automatic aggressive thoughts are positively associated with current and future perpetration of teen dating violence. In addition, automatic thoughts and the perceived negative consequences of teen dating violence were associated with teen dating violence perpetration.

Automatic thoughts were positively associated while perceived negative consequences were negatively associated with teen dating violence (Jouriles, et al., 2011). Additionally, Jouriles et al. (2011) found that adolescents who both perceived negative consequences for teen dating violence and had aggressive negative automatic thoughts were not associated with teen dating violence perpetration. This shows that controlled thoughts can change the effect of automatic thoughts (Jouriles et al., 2011). Jouriles et al. (2011) also found that adolescents who both scored low in their perception of negative consequences of teen dating violence and who also had high levels of aggressive automatic thoughts were strongly associated with teen dating violence perpetration.

In addition, accepting attitudes were found to moderate the association between peer group and couple risk factors in predicting the recurrence of teen dating violence (Williams et al., 2008). Examples of peer group risk factors would be a peer group which is aggressive and delinquent. Couple risk factors cause conflict within a relationship or

negative incidents experienced in a relationship and may likely be transferred to subsequent relationships. Williams et al. (2008) stated, "the strong link between accepting attitudes, peer aggression and delinquency as precursors to both concurrent and recurrent aggression suggests a 'delinquency trajectory' that supports continuing aggression across different romantic relationships" (p. 629).

Age. Another risk factor associated with teen dating violence is age. For the purpose of this discussion, the age that dating begins is preteen to high school years (Noonan & Charles, 2009; Wolfe et al., 2003). As youth begin to date, the likelihood of dating violence is prevalent (Hickman et al., 2004). As teenagers get older, the risk for teen dating violence increases (Noonan & Charles, 2009; Banyard & Cross, 2008). According to the CDC (2010b), 9.1% of ninth grade male students reported being involved in teen dating violence compared to 11.5% and 11.4% of eleventh and twelfth grade male students. Banyard et al. (2006) found that for sexual abuse/coercion found that older students (15-16 year-olds) had higher rates of perpetration (8.7%) than younger students (11-12 year-olds, 0.0%). The positive correlation between age and teen dating violence could be caused, in part, by the additional freedoms that adolescents receive as they age. For example, older adolescents are able to drive which leads to less supervision (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

The middle school age students interviewed by Noonan and Charles (2009) stated they were just beginning to start dating, which places middle school students at a low risk for teen dating violence. Middle school age students cannot drive, lack money, and most relationships at this age last from only a few days to a few weeks (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

School. According to Banyard and Cross (2008), there was a correlation between teen dating violence and attitudes towards school. Higher rates of perpetration were related to lower attachments to school (Banyard et al., 2006). However, mental health concerns (i.e., depression and substance abuse) were found to also affect one's grades and one's desire to drop out, which complicates the relationship between dating violence and attitudes about school. The authors suggest that both social and educational challenges increase substance use, which increases the risk for teen dating violence (Banyard & Cross, 2008). Regarding exposure to violence in both schools and communities, O'Keefe (1997) found that these factors were not significant predictors of teen dating violence perpetration.

Fear. According to Schultz and Jaycox (2008), as adolescents develop they are experiencing new emotions, and they may lack the interpersonal skills to handle their new emotions and experiences. Violence becomes a factor when the interpersonal skills of manipulation and coercion are used by adolescents to cope with and control their own emotions and situations. In addition, prosocial behaviors, which one uses to obtain attention, affection, and care are lacking; therefore, an adolescent turns to aggression to experience these behaviors (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Manipulation and coercion can then create a relationship involving aversive behavior and fear: an abusive dating relationship (Schultz & Jaycox, 2008; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999).

Schultz and Jaycox (2008) found that both boys and girls who reported not thinking about the act of violence that occurred were more likely to report feeling afraid. In addition, girls who were more accepting of aggressive acts done by boys towards girls were related to girls reporting fear in a dating relationship. Interestingly, girls who

reported that they would end the relationship should violence occur reported higher levels of fear than girls who would not end the relationship.

Boys who reported not thinking about the violent incidences were more likely to report feeling afraid in the context of a dating relationship. Overall, boys reported more fear than girls except on the items of sexual coercion and sexual force. A factor among boys who reported higher levels of fear was embarrassment. Boys and girls differed in types of fearful situations and how they experience fear. For example, boys may be more afraid of social embarrassment than of physical harm while girls are more afraid of being sexually harmed (Schultz & Jaycox, 2008).

Alcohol/drugs. Another predictor that was significant for both boys and girls was alcohol/drug use (Banyard et al., 2006; Foshee et al., 2001; O'Keefe, 1997). This could be partially related to alcohol's ability to lower one's inhibitions against aggressive behavior, or it could be a way adolescents justify their use of violence (O'Keefe, 1997). In addition, Foshee et al. (2001) found that alcohol use was predicative of female teen dating violence perpetration a year and a half later. They also found that girls who are in eighth and ninth grades that use alcohol were at a higher risk for becoming dating perpetrators than girls who use alcohol when they are older. For boys, alcohol/drug use was one of the most significant factors related to teen dating violence perpetration (Banyard et al., 2006).

Depression. Higher rates of perpetration were related to depressed mood (Banyard et al., 2006). According to Foshee et al. (2001), depressed affect is associated with female dating violence perpetration. Banyard et al. (2006) found that, for girls, the most significant correlate of teen dating violence perpetration was a depressed mood. In

addition, Banyard et al. (2006) found a link between depression and victimization for girls. Depression may be a risk factor for girls to be either victims or perpetrators. While depressed mood was not significant for boys, boys did show a trend towards depressed mood being significant for teen dating violence perpetration (Banyard et al., 2006).

Ethnicity. Ethnicity was found to be a risk factor for teen dating violence (Foshee et al., 2001; Noonan & Charles, 2009; O'Keefe, 1997). African Americans and Latinos were found to be at a greater risk for teen dating violence perpetration than Caucasians or Asian Americans (O'Keefe, 1997). According to Foshee et al. (2001), the risk of teen dating violence perpetration occurring frequently is higher for adolescents from minority groups than their majority group peers (i.e., white). Noonan and Charles (2009) found that African American adolescents were more likely to hear about or see teen dating violence than Caucasians. According to Watson, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, and O'Leary (2001), 60% of African American adolescents, 47% of Caucasian adolescents, and 41% of Hispanic adolescents reported being victimized. Youth who identify as Native Americans or "other" were more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of teen dating violence than their peers (Coker et al., 2000). However, Harned (2002) did not find a connection between teen dating violence and ethnicity. In fact, she found that all individuals are at risk regardless of their race.

According to Watson et al. (2001), gender difference emerged after factoring in ethnicity. Fifty-seven percent of girls reported victimization and 37% of boys reported victimization. When examined closer, the only ethnic group that actually showed significant gender differences was Hispanic. Fifty-nine percent of girls reported victimization while 32.3% of boys reported victimization. However, regarding the

frequency of violence, there was not a significant difference for ethnicities (Watson et al., 2001).

Watson et al. (2001) also found that, for Hispanics and Caucasians, there were gender differences in how adolescents responded to aggression. Hispanic or Caucasian girls were more likely to cry in response to aggression than Hispanic or Caucasian boys. Hispanic boys were more likely to do nothing in response to aggression than Hispanic girls (Watson et al., 2001).

Peer groups. Boys with friends who have aggressive and delinquent behaviors are at a greater risk of being involved in aggressive dating relationships (Foshee et al., 2001; Noonan & Charles, 2009; Williams et al., 2008). According to Williams et al. (2008), peer behavior such as talking negatively about their partner, may reinforce aggressive behaviors. Foshee et al. (2001) found that boys who have friends who are perpetrators of teen dating violence are at a greater risk for teen dating violence perpetration currently and recurrently.

In a study conducted by Noonan and Charles (2009), boys between the ages of 11 and 14 reported that there is limited support from their peers for treating their girlfriends well. Boys who treat girls well were thought of as “not manly” (p. 1092). The authors hypothesize that this is because boys who do not have girlfriends may be jealous because their friend does not spend as much time with them. They may also be jealous because their friend has a girlfriend when they do not. In addition, boys reported being afraid that their girlfriends would try to control or manipulate them if they treat them well (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

Girls between the ages of 11 and 14 know and seem to accept that boys do not receive support from their peers to treat their girlfriends well. Girls are more supportive of their female friends who treat their boyfriends well. Some girls did report feeling jealous, but, overall, they spoke well of girls who treated their boyfriends well (Noonan & Charles, 2009).

Regarding girls who are perpetrators, Foshee et al. (2001) found that girls who have friends who are teen dating violence perpetrators are associated with teen dating violence perpetration. Physically fighting other girls and bringing a weapon to school are also associated with teen dating violence perpetration for girls (Foshee et al., 2001).

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status (SES) has not been found to be significant for teen dating violence or perpetration (Foshee, et al., 2001; O'Keefe, 1997). Foshee et al. (2001) measured SES by asking adolescents their mothers' education levels, which is a very limited measurement of SES, therefore, findings may not be reliable. Even so, there is very little literature available that examines the potential relationship between SES and teen dating violence**.**

Social support. A weak social support system is a risk factor for teen dating violence. According to Banyard and Cross (2008), the greater one's perception of feeling supported by his or her support system, the greater the likelihood for positive outcomes. Higher rates of perpetration have been found to be related to "lower perceived parental monitoring, and perceived lower maternal and paternal support…. lower perceived neighborhood monitoring, lower perceived neighborhood support… and lower sense of social responsibility" (Banyard et al., 2006, p. 1323).

However, social support systems seemed to have different effects for victimized girls versus nonvictimized girls. A good social support system (i.e., parents and neighborhoods) lowered the risk of suicidal thoughts for sexually abused girls compared to girls who were not abused. Neighborhood support was more influential in decreasing the risk of substance use, suicide, and low grades for girls who had been victimized versus girls who had not. Contrary, neighborhood support seems to be more influential for girls who have not been abused to have better attitudes regarding school versus girls who have been abused (Banyard et al., 2006).

For boys, a support system (parents and neighborhoods) was a protective factor for increasing grades but not for protecting against teen dating violence perpetration or victimization. This study has shown the lack of knowledge existing about what contributes to resiliency for boys (Banyard & Cross, 2008). Further examination on this topic is important.

Intervention and Prevention

School-based. School-based teen dating violence intervention/prevention curriculum has oftentimes used a primarily didactic approach focused on addressing specific skills and knowledge to oppose aggressive behavior. These interventions are primarily focused on identifying the different means and signs of dating violence and self-examination of one's own attitudes and beliefs regarding dating violence (Foshee et al., 1998).

According to Wekerle and Wolfe (1999), there are several advantages to having school-based intervention/prevention programs. Convenience of location, space, administration, and supportive staff who can provide support and follow-up with students

are some of the advantages. In addition, the program can avoid labeling adolescents, and the stigma that comes with labeling (Farrell, Meyer, Kung & Sullivan, 2001; Wolfe et al., 2003). Due to school-based intervention/prevention programs being attended by all students, facilitators are able to reach an important population: peers of teen dating violence victims and perpetrators. According to Ocampo, Shelley, and Jaycox (2007), adolescents are more likely to rely on friends or family for support and advice rather than school staff, nurses, counselors, or lawyers. Therefore, targeting all students is important for intervention/prevention programs (Ocampo et al., 2007; Watson et al., 2001). Ocampo et al. (2007) advocated teaching peers how to recognize abusive behaviors and what to do if teen dating violence happens to a friend. In addition, they emphasized training adolescents to be peer counselors so that adolescents involved in abusive dating relationships can have a peer for communication purposes. Adolescents can develop trust and experience comfortable feelings as they develop a relationship (Ocampo et al., 2007).

Having a school-based intervention/prevention program could also be a disadvantage due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the likelihood that some students will treat the topic with ridicule and insensitivity. Therefore, students may not feel safe in the environment. The general school-based format is to have a group facilitator and guest speakers in a mixed interactive and didactic format. In addition, some school-based intervention/prevention programs also focus on social action (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999).

Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) found changes in attitudes concerning teen dating violence and behaviors in hypothetical situations for adolescents who participated in school-based intervention/prevention programs. These changes lasted through a short-term assessment, but it is unknown whether or not they were lasting changes. In addition,

perpetration rates also decreased, however, victimization rates were not affected. Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) advocated for programs to focus on more protection and avoidance skills for victims. Short-term evaluations of school-based teen dating violence intervention/prevention programs were positive, but, due to limitations in measurement, experimental design, and follow-up,Q long-term evaluations were lacking (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999).

Community-based. Wolfe et al. (2003) studied the Youth Relationships Project, (YRP) which is a community-based intervention/prevention program. They chose adolescents with histories of childhood maltreatment as the population. This population was examined due to research suggesting a connection between childhood maltreatment and aggression in peer and dating relationships (Foshee, 1999; Foshee & Gray, 1997; Wekerle et al., 2009; Wolfe et al., 2004). Adolescents who have histories of maltreatment oftentimes have difficulty in identifying the emotions and intentions of others. Specifically, they tend to believe that others do things purposefully to hurt them when it may have been an accident (Wolfe et al., 2003). YRP is designed to not only prevent aggression/abusive behavior but to also promote healthy relationships. Its goal is to teach adolescents to use nonviolent communication techniques and to make informed decisions regarding their dating relationships. Compared to other programs, it is based on building adolescents' strengths and competencies instead of an intervention specifically targeting adolescents who are already perpetrating teen dating violence (Wolfe et al., 2003).

YRP has three components. They are to educate and raise awareness of abuse and power dynamics, to develop skills in identifying and implementing positive problem solving techniques as alternatives to violence, and to engage adolescents in social action

(Wolfe et al., 2003). A man and a woman lead each group, and it is interactive. Adolescents visit local agencies, complete community social action projects, listen to guest speakers, watch videos, and participate in group discussions. For this project, the YRP program was located in local youth centers, and it consisted of 18 sessions over four years. The average age of participants was 15 (Wolfe et al., 2003).

Wolfe et al. (2003) found a decrease in the frequency and severity of abusive behavior in participants of YRP when compared with controls. However, adolescents in both the control and prevention/intervention groups experienced a decrease in perpetration and victimization over time. Even so, participants in the prevention/intervention group's rates of perpetration and victimization decreased faster than the control group's rates. Emotional distress also decreased for both groups, but again it decreased quicker for adolescents in the intervention/prevention group. One hypothesis that was not validated was that adolescents in the intervention/prevention group would show growth in their relationship skills. The authors hypothesized that this is due to a lack of sensitivity in the measurement tools. Even with the overall positive outcomes of this study, findings are not generalizable due to the specificity of the population (i.e., only adolescents with histories of childhood maltreatment).

Community-based intervention/prevention programs are at both an advantage and a disadvantage. Community-based intervention/prevention programs are challenged due to lack of space, transportation, and adolescents' view of being "treated" because they have a problem and the stigma that comes with that (Farrell et al., 2001; Wolfe et al., 2003). However, they are more likely to offer a safe space for adolescents to discuss and learn about teen dating violence (Wolfe et al., 2003).

Teen dating violence has numerous risk factors ranging from adolescents' identities (e.g., gender) to their environments (e.g. peer groups). While teen dating violence is unpredictable, it is important to examine these risks factors in order to examine the factors that can be decreased by intervention/prevention programs. According to Williams et al. (2008), there is not a risk threshold that adolescents cross and then become either victims or perpetrators. Rather, the more cumulative risk factors one has the greater the risk that one will become involved in teen dating violence. Adolescence is a time of change and growth with numerous opportunities available. Adolescents who become victims, perpetrators, or both of teen dating violence are stifled in their development and the potential social, emotional, and physical effects are detrimental (Coker et al., 2000). It is important to examine risk factors because it will inform intervention/prevention programs, which will likely reduce incidences of teen dating violence.

The purpose of this research paper was to examine the risk factors associated with teen dating violence as well as methods of intervention/prevention. In the following section, I describe the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

I conducted this research project through social learning theory and strength-based perspective lenses. These two frameworks helped shape and focus my work.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1977) described social learning theory as a type of learning which occurs within an individual's social environment. One type of learning that occurs within a social context is observational learning. The concept behind observational learning is

that people learn by observing others' actions and the consequences to their actions (Bandura, 1977). For example, if a child has to take a time out because he or she broke a plate, then that child's sibling would learn that if he or she breaks a plate then he or she will also have to take a time out. This in turn will affect his or her behavior.

According to Bandura (1977) modeling is a way of learning in which the model shows the modeler how to behave. Modeling is reinforced in multiple ways. One way is by the model. He or she may praise the modeler for copying his or her behavior thus reinforcing the behavior. Another way modeling is reinforced is by a third person. For example, a child may be copying his or her sibling's table manners and then a parent praises the child, which again reinforces polite table manners. A third way modeling is reinforced is by the behavior itself. The person may be practicing a behavior he or she observed being modeled and the behavior is in itself rewarding which reinforces the behavior. The fourth way modeling is reinforced is called vicarious reinforcement. Vicarious reinforcement is when the model receives praise/reinforcement for his or her behavior, and the observer then displays the same behavior (Bandura, 1977).

The main way social learning theory is applicable to teen dating violence is through witnessing interparental violence. Social learning theory proposes that through observational learning, adolescents observe that the "consequence" of violence is that it helps the parent get what he or she wants. Through modeling, adolescents then learn to view intimate-partner violence as an acceptable way of interacting with others, especially with their romantic partners. In addition, if teens have friends who are violent, they are shown that the "consequence" of violence is getting what they want and the behavior is reinforced through the approval of their friends.

Strengths-based Perspective

The strengths-based perspective focuses on identifying and building on a person's positive qualities such as talents, competencies, personal characteristics (e.g., perseverance, sense of humor, loyalty), values, and hopes. In addition, it examines the resources one has such as oneself, family, friends, and community. The strengths-based perspective helps individuals identify their own strengths and gives them the ability to see themselves as strong, capable people, which in turn motivates them to act as such (Saleebey, 1996).

The strengths-based perspective is useful in examining teen dating violence because it focuses on teen's strengths and abilities. This approach empowers teens who are victims to leave abusive relationships and build on their strengths to overcome the damage caused by the abuse. In addition, it also empowers teens who are perpetrators or involved in mutually violent relationships to believe that they can find different, effective methods of communication and getting what they want. In the following section, I describe the methodology of this research project.

Methodology

Research Design

For this project, I used a qualitative research design. According to Monette, Sullivan, and DeJong (2008), qualitative research is about understanding people's experiences. It gives researchers a depth of knowledge about individuals' subjective experiences. It is not simply about discovering what people think, do, or feel, but it is about understanding the meanings people attach to their thoughts, actions, and feelings. It is an attempt to fully understand the context surrounding individuals' experiences

(Monette et al., 2008). Numerous quantitative studies have been conducted on teen dating violence, but there is not a lot of research which captures the subjective experiences of people who work with teen dating violence victims and perpetrators.

Sample

For this research project, I interviewed eight mental health practitioners who work with adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence or who work with teen dating violence prevention programs. I used convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling procedures. Convenience sampling involves recruiting participants who are readily available to the researcher (Monette et al., 2008). For this study, I talked to mental health practitioners who I already know and researched agencies that work with teen dating violence victims and perpetrators to obtain potential participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria (Monette et al., 2008). The criteria for the participants of this research project was to be a mental health practitioner who works with adolescents who are involved with or at risk of becoming involved with teen dating violence. Snowball sampling involves finding a few participants and then letting them lead the researcher to more participants (Monette et al., 2008). For this research project, I talked to my supervisor to see if he knew any practitioners who met the necessary criteria. Then I used public contact information to call or email these potential participants. I also asked participants if they could forward my email regarding my research project information to other practitioners with the instructions for them to contact me if interested. See Appendix A for the email sent to recruit participants. In addition to the above sampling methods, I was in contact with an agency to assist with recruitment. See Appendix D for the agency consent letter.

Protection of Human Participants

In order to protect the participants, IRB approval was sought for this research project. A consent form was created by the researcher according to IRB standards and approved by the course instructor (see Appendix B for the consent form). This consent form consists of a brief description of the study, why the participant was chosen, basic procedures of the study, the risks and benefits of participating, procedures to maintain confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study, contact information, and signature of consent for participation in the study. This consent form was signed and dated by the participant as well as the researcher before the interview began. The course instructor and research committee also approved the interview questions as a means of further protecting the participant. In addition, research records were kept in a locked file in my office. The researcher and the research assistant had access to the research records. The audio recordings of all the interviews were destroyed in June 2012.

Data Collection

To collect data for this study, a semistandardized interview was used. The interview questions were grounded in a review of the existing literature on teen dating violence. The interview consisted of 11 open-ended questions, which asked the participants to describe their personal backgrounds, the prevalence of teen dating violence, the negative effects of teen dating violence, the age range of abusers and victims, the risk factors associated with teen dating violence, reasons why teens stay in abusive relationships, support systems teens have, effective methods of intervention, different prevention/intervention programs their organizations offer, how their background influences their work, and if there is anything else they would like to share

(see Appendix C for a complete list of the interview questions). The interviews were completed in the participants' offices, and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

For this project, I used content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic approach to the examination of data in which one looks for themes, similarities, and word repetition. These themes, similarities, and word repetitions allow the researcher to make an interpretation of the data (Berg, 2009). I chose content analysis as the type of data analysis plan because it fits well with the research design and the research question.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had several strengths. The interview questions that were asked to the participants were grounded in a review of the existing teen dating violence literature. This allowed the researcher to make comparisons from the findings of this study to the findings of previous studies. An audio recording was used for accurate interviews and accurate transcriptions of the interviews. Another strength of this study was that, due to its design, the researcher was able to ask follow-up and clarification questions of the participants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences which minimized misunderstandings.

This study had several limitations. The first limitation was that only eight participants were interviewed which limits the generalizability of this study. In addition, this study consisted of only one interview per participant that was approximately only 30-60 minutes long. To increase the generalizability of this study, the researcher could have interviewed more participants or interviewed the existing participants multiple times over a specific time period. In addition, the sampling technique was not random which further

decreased generalizability. Future studies should also include interviewing adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence or who have friends who are involved in teen dating violence to gain more perspectives than just the clinicians'. In addition, future studies could examine teen dating violence among same sex couples.

Findings

In the following section, I will report the findings of this research project. After completing the interviews, I identified six main themes. These themes are (a) the prevalence of teen dating violence, (b) the negative effects of teen dating violence, (c) the risk factors of teen dating violence, (d) reasons victims stay in abusive relationships, (e) support systems for teen dating violence victims and perpetrators, and (f) methods of prevention and intervention. In order to protect my participants' confidentiality, they will be called Participants A-H.

Prevalence

Three participants reported that the prevalence of teen dating violence depends on how one defines teen dating violence. For example: what is the definition of abuse, what is the definition of dating, etc. Participant F reported, "Teen dating violence, five years ago nobody was using that language." Additionally, all of the participants reported that, oftentimes, teens are unclear on what is an abusive dating relationship. Despite the problems of those definitions, the participants reported that the greatest trouble with the definition is that verbal and emotional "violence" often is overlooked. For example, participants C and H reported that adolescents do not consider verbal and emotional abuse to be actual abuse, so they would not self report themselves as being in an abusive dating relationship. According to Participant C, "again the verbal/emotional abuse piece,

a lot of kids don't recognize it as abuse until you label it for them." However, Participant A reported that emotional and verbal violence is the most common type of violence found in teen dating relationships, and it can be just as devastating if not more so than physical violence.

Despite uncertainties over definitions all participants reported that teen dating violence is prevalent. As Participant C stated, "I hate to use the word 'very' but it's prevalent, it's there." Participant F stated that it is "extremely prevalent" and we are only hearing the "tip of the iceberg." Three participants reported that research says the prevalence is 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 teens are in or have been in a violent dating relationship. Participant D reported that it is as common as domestic abuse and that 41% of teens identified knowing someone who has been hurt in a violent dating relationship. Participant D went on to state that 1 in 7 boys reported being physically hurt by a romantic partner. According to Participant H, "current numbers say 1 in 3 and I would venture to say that it's probably more than that inclusive of the emotional and power and control dynamic." The only outlier was Participant E who reported that the statistics of 1 in 3 students being involved in teen dating violence seemed "a bit high."

Negative Effects

Participants reported that the negative effects of teen dating violence are both wide and varied and can have long term effects. Participant H stated, "it impacts young people throughout their lifespan." Some of the negative effects are increased drug and alcohol use, lower academic performance, sexual coercion, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, increased sexual risk taking behaviors, increased risk of pregnancy, abortions, miscarriages, and the accompanying psychological and emotional turmoil. These

negative effects can be long term or even life long. For example, if a girl becomes pregnant by her abusive boyfriend and then keeps the baby that will drastically change her life. Or if a victim lets her grades drop in school that can negatively impact her chance of getting into the college that she wants to get into. Participant F discussed the cycle of abuse and how victims will get out of an abusive relationship only to get right back into another one. Participant F gave the example of a victim who was in an abusive dating relationship in middle school and then when she went to high school her reputation of being a "safe victim" followed her, so that she ended up in another one. In addition, Participant E reported that many times perpetrators do not "grow out of it. They may be a perpetrator as a youth and they remain a perpetrator as an adult."

Participants discussed how either victims never knew the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship or their idea of what is healthy or unhealthy has been altered due to their experiences with dating violence. Unhealthy ways of relating become the norm for these adolescents. Participant E reported, "there's a lot of unhealthy behaviors that have become normalized… borderline stalking has become somehow glamorized." Further, Participant E reported that being connected all the time via internet, cell phones, etc. "has become a way to show somebody how much you care, not that the behaviors is something that crosses the line." Participant G reported that many adolescents think, "if everybody's doing it, it's okay to do, it's acceptable to do." In addition according to Participant D, romantic relationships in one's teenage years are formative for how his or her romantic relationships will be in the future. According to Participant H, teen dating violence can perpetuate "an ongoing pattern of abuse throughout their lives." Further, Participant D stated that if adolescents learn violence,

manipulation, control, jealousy, etc. during the course of one dating relationship then that is likely how they will interact in their next relationship without intervention.

Another negative effect of teen dating violence that participants B and G reported is that victims struggle with managing all of their other relationships. Participant B stated, "it [teen dating violence] has an impact on their ability to have a healthy relationship with their family system, with their peer group." Participant G reported that victims' relationships with their families are harmed because there is a lack of trust and because they are learning negative ways of relating to people. Participant G stated, "[teen dating violence] effects the family of the teenager, especially when they are noticing differences and the teen isn't being forthcoming with what's going on and the family's left to wonder." In addition, victims become isolated from their friends and some even become ostracized from their peer groups. Teen dating violence has the potential to effect teens relationships with everyone, even the community. Participant H stated, "that the impact [of teen dating violence] effects our entire community, that when young people don't feel safe, when they can't have healthy relationships, and learn how to be in relationships."

Shame, embarrassment, and secrecy for both perpetrators and victims of both genders can be a negative effect of teen dating violence. Regarding the shame, embarrassment and secrecy part of teen dating violence, Participant B reported, "even kids who engage in the perpetrator part… the regret the shame that comes with losing control and not being able to really openly talk about that… and now they are trying to break the cycle." In addition, shame and embarrassment is a significant negative effect for boys who are being abused by girls.

The word “self-esteem” or similar phrases was found 17 times in the data related to the negative effects of teen dating violence for victims. Six participants reported that lower self-esteem is a negative effect of teen dating violence. Participant C reported, “I’ve seen kids who are super confident and excel in school, and it just literally starts to change their entire life…. Their confidence level starts to break down… because of one person’s demeaning, degrading comments.” Participant G reported that oftentimes victims due to their low self-esteem don’t think they can do any better, that “this is the best they are going to get.”

In addition, victims oftentimes feel powerless and eventually that breeds a sense of apathy. According to Participant B, “cognitive distortions about deserving to be mistreated… and continued exposure [to dating violence] normalizes that in their own brain, and they have a difficult time demanding better for themselves.” They stop advocating for themselves or believing that they deserve better. Participant G reported that victims “get in that habit of treating me bad so next time around I expect that treatment.”

In addition, seven participants reported that teens’ mental health is adversely affected. Participant E likened the negative effects to symptoms of PTSD and reported difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, change in eating patterns as some of the negative effects of teen dating violence. In addition, depression, suicidal ideation or completion, self-injurious behavior, anxiety, or eating disorders can either be a direct result of teen dating violence or can be exacerbated by it. Participant C reported:

> A lot of these [cutting, eating disorders, self harm, suicidal ideation, depression] will intensify when they’re in that unhealthy relationship. So if those things were

> on the edge and they were pretty much maintaining, it seems like some of those really come out in the forefront.

While all of these negative effects are serious, the most serious of all negative effects of teen dating violence is homicide. According to Participant D, "last year I think there were five girls under the age of 20 who were murdered by their partners" in Minnesota alone. According to Participant H, in Minnesota 12 homicides occurred in the past 18 months related to teen dating violence for people under the age of 21.

Participant E reported that the negative effects for perpetrators of teen dating violence are similar to the negative effects for victims. For example, some of the negative effects reported were lower grades, increased drug and alcohol use, and sexual risk taking behaviors.

Risk Factors

Participants C, D, and G reported that it is impossible to predict whether or not someone will become a victim or perpetrator of teen dating violence. Participant G stated, "I see people that are very different that are in very similar situations…. There's no magic checklist that you can go down and say this person's going to become abusive, this person is going to be abused." Participant C reported that some perpetrators are:

> in the system already as far as having probation officers and a lot of that kind of thing as well. Although on the other hand there are some kids who are the captain of the football team and are the shining star at school and nobody has any idea.

Participant D reported that while teen dating violence can happen to anyone, "there are some things that make us maybe less safe than others." Participants A, B, and E reported that the risk factors for teen dating violence perpetrators and victims are

similar. In this study, teen dating violence risk factors are divided into the following eight categories: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) family, (d) individual characteristics, (e) self-esteem, (f) friends, (g) society/community, and (h) drugs/alcohol.

Gender. Seven participants believed that usually victims are girls and perpetrators are boys. However, six participants reported that boys can be victims and girls can be perpetrators. Participant B stated, "that's a little bit more difficult for people to accept because society doesn't really typically see males as victims." Participant B, Participant C, and Participant G reported that since society does not typically see boys as victims, it's not socially acceptable for a boy to admit he's a victim of teen dating violence. Participant B stated, "I don't think with boys we necessarily have an absence of that [boys who are victims of teen dating violence] but it's much more difficult socially for them to acknowledge that." Participant B also reported that male victims receive a lot of pressure from their friends to "tough it up, suck it up. 'You're going to let someone push you around?'" Participant G reported that boys roll their eyes and girls laugh when they hear about boys who are victims of teen dating violence. In addition, participants B and G reported that teen dating violence victimization is underreported for boys.

Both genders can be either physically or emotionally/verbally abusive or both; however, five participants reported that girls who are perpetrators tend to be more emotionally/verbally abusive than physically abusive. Three participants reported that boys are more likely to be physically abusive than girls. Participant H reported that girls who hit do so in order to embarrass or humiliate their boyfriends, not to physically damage them. In addition, Participant H reported that if they are trying to physically hurt them, it tends to not be as serious of an injury as, "the impact of violence is substantially

worse from boys." Participant C stated, "the intensity level seems to go up with male perpetrators." Participant G reported that girls who are perpetrators are not taken as seriously as boys who are perpetrators.

Age. Participant B stated, "to have those relationships [dating relationships] at an earlier age…. leads to victimization at an earlier age and perpetration at an earlier age." Three participants reported that adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence are generally between the ages of 14-21. However, three participants reported that it could happen to girls who are in middle school. In addition, girls who are victims in violent dating relationships tend to be younger and boys who are perpetrators tend to be older according to three participants. Participant A and Participant C reported that in some cases girls who are victims are minors dating adult men who are the perpetrators. However, Participant A, Participant C, and Participant G, reported that the victim and perpetrator can also be the same age and Participant G reported that the girl victim could be older than the boy perpetrator too.

Family. Another risk factor for teen dating violence involves the adolescent's family. Five participants reported that adolescents who come from abusive families are at a greater risk for teen dating violence victimization. Five participants reported that this may be because they never learned what healthy relationships look like because violent and abusive ones were modeled for them by their parents – violence is the familiar, normal pattern of behavior. In addition, Participant D reported that adolescents who grew up in a "family with domestic violence, they're more likely to perpetrate it… their rates of aggression are maybe higher and maybe there's an acceptance of it as normal." According to Participant D, "They [adolescents] are getting messages from their parents

from day one that their parents are not even probably conscious that they're giving them." Participant A reported:

> they [girls who are victims] do things that are destructive to themselves and to the relationship in a way that sort of [they] know will get some sort of reaction out of their boyfriend then that is similar to the way their parents react, in a violent way. I just see that a lot. It's just destructive and it's not even a conscious thing they are doing. It's just a pattern of behavior that has existed for them over time, and they don't know how to do it any differently.

In addition, if a parent is in an abusive relationship, it can be difficult for him or her to help his or her child if he or she is also in an abusive dating relationship. According to Participant B, "parents have difficulty protecting their kids when they see their kids engaged in those unhealthy relationships because they too are engaged in those unhealthy relationships." Participant B also reported that kids who have poor attachment histories from parents who are not "consistently attuned to their emotional needs" put adolescents at a greater risk for teen dating violence victimization or perpetration.

Friends. Another risk factor of teen dating violence is one's friends. Participant G stated, "that comes up quite a bit where a victim will maybe not hang out with the best friends, friends who promote disrespect or who… accept it" and that can be a risk factor. In addition, isolation from friends and others is a risk factor. Participant D reported that adolescents when they first start dating someone "tend to isolate themselves from other friends…. So they end up being isolated in their situation… so if I break up with this guy then I don't have any friends." Further, when adolescents get involved in an abusive

relationship, “Their abuser tends to isolate them from friends and family and resources and activities” separating them from the support they need to leave the relationship.

Individual characteristics. There are certain individual characteristics that may cause individuals to be more at risk for being involved in teen dating violence. Participant A stated that girls who do not advocate for themselves very well, girls who aren’t “very good at figuring out that these guys are being aggressive”, and girls who lack assertiveness are at a greater risk for becoming victims of teen dating violence. Participant C reported that adolescent girls could oftentimes identify the abusive relationships that their mothers have but cannot identify them in their own lives. Participant C reported one reason for this is because “It’s too close to them.” Further, Participant D reported that adolescents who are connected and doing well in school might still become victims of teen dating violence; however “they’re more likely to have resources also when it happens.”

Participant D reported that in comparison, adolescents who are not well connected, do not have resources or know how to access resources are more at risk. Additionally, Participant D reported that an adolescent who is “technology illiterate or not very savvy” may be more at risk for becoming a teen dating violence victim because he or she does not know how to access online resources or because he or she “gets into trouble on the internet.” In addition, Participant B reported that adolescents who have abandonment or attachment issues are at a higher risk for becoming victims of dating violence.

Regarding perpetrators, Participant A reported that previous abuse, neglect or being bullied causes boys to seek “some sort of control themselves.” In addition,

according to Participant A, there may be a "biological component of impulsivity and quick to anger" that is a risk factor for becoming a perpetrator as well as "issues of perception and misperception… like cognitive distortions" that cause a perpetrator to be suspicious and jealous of his or her dating partner. Participant C reported that some boys are "afraid they are going to become perpetrators so they don't date…. They're afraid they're going to repeat what they've seen or they've even started to notice some of those behaviors in themselves."

Self-esteem. Participants reported low self-esteem was also a risk factor. However, a couple participants disagreed. Participant D stated, "I think no teenager has really good self-esteem. Most of us are neurotic, and unsure, and not confident, and self-loathing when we're 15, 16, 17 and so I don't know if that's necessarily a risk factor." In addition, Participant H reported that we should not focus on improving self-esteem as a method of prevention. Participant G reported that it is hard to identify if low self-esteem is a negative effect of teen dating violence or if adolescents experienced low self-esteem before the violence started; therefore, it would be considered a risk factor.

Society/community. There are characteristics of one's society/community that can also put one at risk for teen dating violence. Participant B reported that "systems that don't intervene early when there are insights of red flags" and having a community that is uneducated and unaware of teen dating violence facts are risk factors. Participant D stated that "people not understanding… dating violence and how to deal with it very effectively is a type of risk factor."

In addition according to Participant D, "media really glamorizes violence against women, condones it, exaggerates it…. The images and messages we take away from

media are that this is kind of cool. It's very dramatic and it's very passionate." All participants reported that teen dating violence has become normalized. Participant D reported that there is "an acceptance of it as normal." Participant G stated, "the more it's happening the more I'm noticing students who really don't think it's that big of a deal because it happens a lot and they have that mindset of 'well… if everybody's doing it, why is it wrong?'" Participant F reported that normalization of teen dating violence is about:

> how we talk about it as a society…. there's so much permission for it. There's so much misconception that our work is about clearing up those myths…. There're so many efforts in the media to normalize abuse that the challenge for us is getting kids to understand the long-term consequences, the life changing consequences, about being a victim and a perpetrator.

Drugs/Alcohol. Four participants reported that drugs and alcohol are also risk factors for involvement in teen dating violence. According to Participant C:

> I see a lot of drug and alcohol use with the kids and again they will [say] it wasn't his fault because he was high…. They will justify all of the their behaviors whether they are giving into abuse or perpetrating the abuse due to their drug or alcohol use.

Participant D reported that alcohol and drugs will inhibit adolescents' judgments so that they are not only getting "into a situation that we [they] might not have gotten into if we [they] hadn't been drinking." but that also "the person who is perpetrating it's [his or her] judgment is impaired" as well. Participant H also reported that when talking to adolescents, they reported that alcohol and drugs are a risk factor for teen dating violence.

Reasons Victims Stay in Abusive Relationships

All participants reported that victims generally stay in abusive relationships. In response to the question of "do teens stay in abusive relationships and if so why?" Participant F stated, "Yes absolutely they do… By the time they come in, they've got months of victimization." According to Participant D, "81% of girls who report being physically hurt by their boyfriends continued to date that partner…. Very few girls leave their boyfriends just because you [they] are being beat up." Participant G stated:

> my assumption before this was victims would want help. Victims would want to move forward and say "please help me. I need help." And the unwillingness of that and how strongly they will defend the person that's abusing them was a big surprising fact for me when I first started working here.

However, this is not true for all victims. Participant C stated, "Some leave, some stay" and Participant G reported "there's people who don't put up with it and are done with it and then there's people that absolutely stay." Participant G also stated that while people do leave abusive relationships, "the majority of the people that I work with, it takes more than once before they finally kind of end the situation for good." Overall, participants reported three reasons why adolescents remain in abusive relationships: (a) internal factors, (b) perpetrator factors, and (c) social factors.

Internal factors. Seven participants reported love as a reason for victims to stay in abusive relationships while two participants reported that love is the main reason that victims stay in abusive relationships. Participant C stated, "And the love, I love them. I'd say that's the main reason for most of them" to stay in an abusive relationship. Participant E reported that one boy she talked to who was not a victim or a perpetrator said, "you

think you really love that person, and you think you can change that person, and you end up getting abused, but you stay there because you think it's love." Adolescents either love their partner or think they love their partner, so they do not want to leave him or her even though their partner is abusive.

Three participants reported that another reason victims stay in abusive dating relationships is because it is familiar to them. Participant H stated, "They may assume that the violence or the abuse is a normal part of relationships." Participant B stated that there is "comfort in pathology." Participant A reported that many victims think, "I don't know anything besides this kind of fighting or verbal abuse or physical. I don't know anything different." Adolescents assume it is a normal part of a relationship if that is what they are use to in their own families.

Another reason cited by six participants as a reason adolescents stay in abusive relationships is because adolescents don't want to be alone. It is better to be with someone, even if they are abusive, than to be with no one. Participant B stated, "something's better than nothing. Familiar's better than unfamiliar, it's better to be connected than disconnected even if the connection is a painful one." Participant D stated, "I think sometimes there's settling for unhealthy relationships just to be with somebody, just to say 'I have a boyfriend.'"

According to Participant B, another reason adolescents stay in abusive relationships is that some of the victims are "vulnerable to experiencing abandonment and they may feel some guilt and responsibility for being a victim." Participant B and Participant E reported that they may feel like leaving would be abandoning the other person or they may be afraid of being abandoned themselves due to their past experiences. In addition,

Participant B reported that attachment difficulties and abandonment issues make them afraid to fail at a relationships and so to "disengage from an abusive relationship would be a failure."

Participant F reported that some victims feel the need to "rescue" their partners. Along with this "need to rescue" comes a justification of their partners' abusive actions as reported by three participants. Participant F stated:

> they can justify and rationalize his behavior. They can tell me all about how he grew up and how his mom was, how his dad abandoned him and there's domestic abuse in the family that he's seen and somebody mistreated him. I mean they can go through the whole litany of what makes him like he is.

Participant C reported that adolescents think things like, "They didn't intend to hurt me." Participant G reported that adolescents make statements such as "I kept convincing myself, 'well they said they're sorry, it would never happen again,' so I wanted to believe them." According to Participant G, "I think people want to believe that 'I'm sorry' and want to believe the flowers and the text messages are genuine."

Another part of "rescuing" involves an attempt on the part of the partner to "love" them into changing. Four participants reported that adolescents stay because they believe that if they can just love them enough, their love will change them. Participant C reported that adolescents think, "If I love them enough I can fix them and they won't hurt me anymore." Participant F reported that adolescents think that "If I just love him enough, if I'm just good enough, if I'm just patient enough, he's going to see the light and stop mistreating me."

The final internal reason adolescents stay in abusive dating relationships according to Participant D, Participant F, and Participant H is that one's safety is bartered for other things. Participant H stated that for adolescents, "being part of a particular crowd is more important than being safe sometimes even." For example, Participant D reported:

> Our safety is not always important to us as it should be. It's not always as important as having a really cool boyfriend or the way that he makes us feel or the things that he gives us or the things that she does.… There are things that are more important than my safety.

Perpetrator factors. Four participants reported that one reason victims stay with their abusers is that the perpetrators of teen dating violence convince the victims that no one else would ever want them. Participant C stated that the "abusers do a very good job with messing with their [victims'] minds as far as 'you're not gonna get anybody better than me.'" Participant E stated that "they've been told that nobody else will love them" by the perpetrator. Further, Participant G reported that even if a victim does leave the perpetrator, the perpetrator will sometimes use manipulation in order to get his or her victim to return to him or her. Participant G stated, "I've seen a lot of manipulation, the flowers, the 'let me take you out to eat', 'come over we'll hang out', public displays of affection, cute text messages." Participant G also clarified that the perpetrator is not always intending to be manipulative but sometimes sincerely wants that person back, and after a while, old habits resurface so they return to the former, abusive relationship.

Participant C and Participant D reported that another way perpetrators convince victims to stay with them is through the use of threats. These threats can be directed at the

victim, at the perpetrator or at people the victim care about. Participant D reported that the most dangerous time for a victim is when he or she tries to leave the relationship as the violence often escalates at that point. According to Participant D, "Most girls who are killed by their violent partners are killed at the point of breaking up." Participant C reported that perpetrators oftentimes tell their victims "I'll hurt you worse if you leave me. No one's going to believe you, they're going to believe me." Participant C stated, "their [the victim's] dating partners have threatened to hurt or kill themselves if they leave them." In addition, Participant D reported that perpetrators may "…threaten other people who help you or that you [are] connected with."

Social factors. According to five participants, another reason adolescents stay in violent dating relationships is due to social pressure, specifically the pressure from one's peers. Participant C stated, "especially with teens, their peers are very important. They spend the majority of their lives at school, and if you are ostracized at school, it gets to be a very lonely and a very difficult place." Participant C reported that sometimes the victim is the one ostracized, not the perpetrator. Further, Participant G stated, "they might have outside pressures from friends.… There's a break up and all of a sudden there's a division. People are on his side, people are on her side.…There's a lot of outside pressures and struggles and worries." According to Participant A and Participant D, sometimes adolescents are too embarrassed to ask for help from others because they are worried about what their peers will think of them.

Another social pressure for adolescents to stay in abusive dating relationships is if they have a baby with their partner. Participant C reported that some victims think, "I have a child with this person so I have to make it work." According to Participant H,

"they can feel very socially pressured to stay in these relationships especially if they are teen moms and if they are struggling in different areas of their lives." Further, Participant H stated:

> Girls in particular who were living a lifestyle that mimicked adult life were more inclined to stay. So girls who were living with the boyfriend, had a child by the boyfriend, really taking on some of those adult roles…. You become a pseudo family so to speak and it's harder to leave those kinds of situations.

Support Systems

According to six participants, whether or not adolescents involved in teen dating violence have support systems depends on the specific adolescent. Participant C stated, "So as far as support systems, some kids have them, others don't and other don't trust them." The participants in this study discussed six different sources of support: (a) family, (b) school affiliated adults, (c) other adults, (d) friends, and (e) anonymous support. The participants also discussed that while there are supports available to adolescents, there are barriers to accessing those supports.

Family. Six participants reported that family members can be a crucial support system for teens involved in dating violence. Participant H reported that adolescents are supported by "family, obviously, first and foremost. [Family] can be a great support system if the family members are at a point where they are able to be supportive to that teen." Participant B stated, "Some teens feel supported by family systems or parts of their family systems." Participant A discussed how even if the parents are not very supportive, "girls' aunts [are] sometimes really important to them" and are a source of support.

School-affiliated adults. Six participants reported that adolescents involved in dating violence may be supported by school-affiliated adults. Participant A stated, "counselors, school psychologists, teachers, those people can be supportive as well." Participant G stated, "teens have support at school…. Students oftentimes have to reach out to counselors and teachers rather than vice versa so I get the impression a lot of times from students that they don't think that people at school are really there for them." Additionally, Participant F stated that when she talked to students, "it was across the board that kids were saying" they would not trust anyone at school to support them if they were involved in teen dating violence. Students told Participant F that they were afraid that if someone in the school knew, they would tell their parents and then the students wouldn't have any control over what would happen next. Participant F stated:

> Last thing they [adolescents] wanted was for their parents to make a scene…. Kids in school are afraid that their parents are going to find out before they're ready for them to…. And [then] they lose control of what's going to happen.

Other adults. Five participants reported that adults who are not family or school-affiliated can also be a support for adolescents involved in teen dating violence. Participant B stated, "Kids have talked about feeling supported by… outpatient mental health providers, clergy, mentors." Participant C stated, "I know the church has been a big support for some of my students." Participants also reported that sometimes it is easier for adolescents to confide in adults who are not a part of the school. According to Participant C, "sometimes they [adolescents] feel safer talking to someone who isn't directly connected to the school." Participant H reported that:

> young people need strong support systems from their families, but they also really need to feel attached to people outside of their family. Sometimes as much as a parent… really cares about a person, it's still difficult for them to open up and talk about their problems with the people that are closest to them… or somehow there's going to be some ramifications. Really providing young people with adults outside of their family, we know is really important.

Friends. Six participants reported that adolescents' friends are important sources of support. In fact, Participant D stated, "most often their greatest sources of trust are with other teens." Participant C stated, "a lot of kids really depend on each other. We'll see a lot of kids taking each other in, let somebody sleep in their car that night, or let somebody in their window of their house." Participants reported some concerns over adolescents seeking advice and support from other adolescents because as Participant G stated, "I think these teens have good intentions of helping their friends… but I don't know that they have the capacity to really give solid advice."

Anonymous support. Five participants reported that adolescents use different sources of support while protecting their anonymity. Included in this are online resources and crisis lines. Regarding online resources, Participant D stated, "that's where kids go to get help now…. They use the internet, they google things, they go to websites." Regarding crisis lines Participant D stated, "there is a national teen dating hotline…. From two in the afternoon until midnight it's staffed by other teenagers so it's peer counselors" which is another source of support for adolescents. Participant C stated, "I think sometimes kids having access to the anonymity… can be helpful for removing some barriers for adolescents to seek services." However, Participant G stated, "when I

talk about our crisis lines… most kids are like 'I couldn't do that. I couldn't call crisis lines….' In my experience they've tended to kinda go more towards somebody that they can tangibly speak to and see."

Barriers. While there are support systems available to adolescents, Participant G stated, "I think there are sometimes barriers, at least perceived barriers, to students getting that help or seeking that help." Participant B reported, "I think their success with utilizing them [support systems] seems to be pretty low. I don't think a lot of times they have confidence in support systems' ability to enter in a meaningful sort of way." Participant C stated:

> as far as support systems, we assume everyone has someone to go to and talk to. And there are also kids who put their trust in someone and that trust was broken or the outcome wasn't what they expected…. "When I did try to get help it didn't work so now I'm not gonna tell anybody stuff that's happening to me," so even if they do have people they could tell, they feel they have been betrayed by the system or no one supported them.

Participant H stated, "It's hard to make sure that every kid in the school has access to the resources and knows everything that's available to them."

Prevention/Intervention

According to participants, prevention and intervention is important in helping adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence. According to Participant C, "I think prevention and intervention is really a key to how we can, at some point, hopefully start decreasing these numbers. If we can get people to recognize the unhealthy relationship

before it gets too far," we will see a decrease in the prevalence of teen dating violence. Participant F stated:

> In the funding world, prevention is a dirty word. Nobody wants to fund prevention because you just don't know that you're going to see anything from it. In this field, prevention is key… and we have to change the mindset that says prevention is a waste of dollars because we're raising a generation of males and females that are accepting violence as common.

Participants reported that there are both school-based and non school-based prevention and intervention services available. Participants also discussed specific areas of prevention and intervention to focus on when working with adolescents. In addition, participants reported that parents can be sources of prevention and intervention. Another important feature of teen dating violence prevention and intervention that participants discussed is community focused prevention and interventions. Participant F stated, "there's a lot of education and awareness that needs to happen in schools and in communities, and in parents and with kids so that they begin to understand that is something that services are available to help them with."

School-based services. Different agencies have different prevention programs in schools, but according to participants, some common methods of delivering these programs/presentations to adolescents is through interpersonal relationship classes, youth issues classes, child development classes and health classes. Participant G reported that because health class is mandatory, "we focus a lot on the health classes." Participant A reported that since health classes occur approximately in seventh and eleventh grade, education about teen dating violence oftentimes arrives too late. Regarding this,

Participant G stated, “there’s some pretty critical areas in there between” those grades, sixth and tenth grade for that school district. Participant D stated that prevention programs have professionals come to schools to talk about “what their [adolescents’] resources are, what their [adolescents’] options are, what warning signs are, how to help a friend, how to help yourself, those types of things.” Participant D also reported, “we talk about dating violence, we talk about prevention, we talk about safety.” Participant G stated:

> I try to make my presentations as engaging as possible to create awareness but not just create awareness but give them concrete, “if you feel like you need help with this, these are some resources. This is how you‘d find those resources”.

Participants also discussed school-based services that do not operate strictly in the format of classroom presentations at school. For example, Participant C stated, “We are doing support groups and one-on-one intervention in all of the high schools that we are at.” Participant G reported that they work with schools to help make the school safe for victims who are still going to the same school as their perpetrator. In addition to educating adolescents in a regular school setting, Participant B reported that day treatment programs have completed units on dating violence, and Participant E reported giving presentations to General Education Development (GED) or Alternative Learning Center (ALC) groups.

Non school-based services. Not only are there services for adolescents in schools, but non school-based services are also available for adolescents. Participant G stated, “we don’t just work in schools, we partner with some treatment facilities in the area, some juvenile lockup facilities as well.” Participant A reported that there are

organizations that have therapists who work "specifically with victims of sexual and physical abuse." Participant F works for an organization in which "we do direct service, we do face to face counseling for victims of teen dating violence."

Parents. According to four participants, parents can play an important role in the prevention/intervention of teen dating violence. Participant G stated, "At the teenage age, parents are very important in their life even if it's probably fairly rocky with most teens at times." According to Participant B, "A lot of times you need to assess the quality of the relationship between the parent and the kid to be able to determine how active that parent can be" in the prevention/intervention of teen dating violence for his or her child.

According to participants, parents oftentimes do not know a lot about teen dating violence and how to help their child if they experience teen dating violence. Participant G reported that there is a "huge number of parents who had no idea if their kids should even be worried about this at the high school age, or they said they shouldn't be worried about it. 'It's not a big deal.'" In contrast, Participant F stated "parents are trying desperately to figure it out, but I think that a lot of things are being kept from parents so they don't understand how serious things are until it gets really out of control." According to Participant B, parents need to know answers to questions like, "How do you help your child with an unhealthy relationship?" or "How do you help your child when you think they're being too controlling?" Further, Participant B stated, "I don't know that information really gets to parents in an educational sort of way." Participant G reported that "there needs to be help and resources for parents of teens going through it; how to recognize warning signs, how to, you know, go about talking to your kids about this issue." In order to support parents, Participant D stated:

> we are developing and using educational pieces to use with parents, to talk to parents, to talk to parent groups – about how to keep their kids safe, how to talk to them about this, how to listen to them about this, and how to deal with the problem.

Additionally, Participant D reported that adolescents learn from their parents how to treat each other and "what relationships are all about." Further, Participant D reported that, therefore, programs for parents need to help parents "to sort of look at the man in the mirror or the relationship in the mirror and think about what message I've been giving my kids about relationships because those are important messages."

In addition, participants reported that parents should make themselves available as a resource for their children. According to Participant D:

> parents should certainly look for warning sings, talk to their teens but more importantly listen to their teens…. talking about it in the first place conveys that you will talk about it…. They feel that you are someone they can talk to."

Participant B stated, "You always hope that a parent will, when they see something not good for their kids, that the parent will intervene in whatever way needs to happen to disrupt that." However, Participant B continued and reported that adolescents "don't always tolerate those good ideas that adults have."

Areas of prevention and intervention to focus on. All participants reported that teaching adolescents the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships is an important part of prevention/intervention. Participant B stated, "sometimes the majority of your interventions and support will be… from psychoeducational point of view in helping kids understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships."

Participant C reported that, "especially with the middle school work that we're doing, we are trying to get kids to see what healthy looks like because it's not always role modeled in their family, or on T.V., or in the music they listen to." Participant A stated that adolescents need to be educated on "what to look out for in relationships that might be leaning towards dating violence or knowing the thing you have to look out for in yourself that might lead to dating violence." Participant C stated that a goal is "trying to help them find a new normal and not justify their behaviors based on their family dynamics."

Participants also discussed the importance of simply talking to adolescents about teen dating violence. According to Participant C, "it's being able to have some conversations, to ask someone, and to talk about it.… the sooner that you can start having those conversations with students the better." Participant E stated, "I really think conversations, and not just one conversation, has to continually happen." According to Participant H, "really being able to have conversations with the young people in our lives about it often and early, to really teach those healthy relationship development skills" is an important part of prevention/intervention.

In addition, participants discussed how important it is for adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence to know that they have options. Participant G stated, "I think the best that people and schools and parents can do is just make sure that students know the options out there." According to Participant H, "Once the problem has started, it's important for the young women to realize that they have options, and for young men to realize that they have options." Participant F stated:

> I can go to a high school and see a kid and intervene you know right there giving them some information, some options…. Whatever it is that they're worried about

> we can answer those questions with good information. Information is power. The more we can go in and tell them accurate information, the better off they are so they can make some decisions.

Participant C stated:

> Letting them know that there's intervention. Letting them know that there is someone who will help them and support them…"how would you intervene? Let's come up with 5, 10, 15 things that you could possibly do" so the hope is if or when they are confronted with it, that they have some options and they're not thinking "what do I do now?".

Participants discussed the importance of raising an adolescent's self-esteem as an important prevention/intervention strategy. Participant F stated, "I think if we are gonna get ahead of this, I think that's where the prevention is – is doing work with teenagers around self-esteem and reminding girls that there are things to do in their lives." Further, Participant F reported that there needs to be a:

> more orchestrated prevention approach of working with from a lot of different places in a girl's life to build self-esteem, to build a sense of awareness, to build self-respect, to build confidence, so that girls have a better foundation and umm more skills, more knowledge.

According to Participant B, "A lot of times you have to build a kid up before they are willing to disengage from those unhealthy relationships."

However, Participant H stated, "For the victim, I think it's important for us to not focus on self-esteem which is something that we've done historically to say 'Well if she

just felt better about herself than she wouldn't get into these relationships.'" Rather, Participant H stated that we should:

> really focus on how she became a high risk. Did she not have the support at home that she needed? Does the school not recognize the problem? Where did somewhere in the system fail her? Those to me are the most important both prevention and intervention strategies, to really be able to acknowledge where the mistake happened and then to help her to recover.

Participants reported that another prevention/intervention strategy is to empower adolescents involved in teen dating violence. Participant B stated that it is important "to give them a sense of success and empowerment, whether that be through extracurricular or faith-based experiences. Whatever works with giving them a sense of purpose and kind of a moral compass." Further, Participant B stated it is important:

> for them [adolescents] to feel more capable, more competent, less dependent, and really empower them to attend to and pursue meeting their emotional needs from a variety of interactions and relationships; not to stay focused so exclusively typically on that one relationship that kind of consumes.

Participants also discussed the importance of validating the experience for adolescents; that the violence is real and that the relationship is important. According to Participant A, "I think first and foremost, it's [effective methods of intervention] just validation that something actually happened and feeling like they're believed and trusted." Participant H stated that adults tend to think adolescents' dating relationships are "simple"; that they are not very serious. Participant E stated, "I think a lot of times

teens still get the reaction of 'you're just a kid, this isn't a real relationship, it can't be that serious, just get over it.'" However, Participant H stated:

> But in the moment it's very real for them [adolescents]. It's a very serious relationship, they're going to be with this person forever, is sometimes is the way that they're thinking about it. And so, as adults, it's important for us to not minimize those feelings.

Changing adolescents' beliefs and values regarding themselves is another prevention/intervention strategy discussed by participants. Participant B stated that practitioners need to identify whether or not there are "inconsistencies in what their [adolescents'] core beliefs are in how people should be treated and then what they tolerate for themselves and then what's at the core of that." Further, Participant B stated that practitioners should "help them [adolescents] identify a value system and shift their value system as far as what they deserve." Participant A stated that an effective intervention strategy is "cognitive restructuring, especially if there are distortions about what happened, beliefs about self that are untrue, negative thoughts that reduce self-esteem."

According to participants, some other effective methods of prevention/intervention are to give adolescents coping skills, broaden their support systems and make them less comfortable with unhealthy relationships. Participant B reported that, with older adolescents especially, it is effective to give them "some coping skills so they can kind of tolerate that dissonance in looking at what they've currently got in relationships and what they really want." According to Participant F, part of the work Participant F's organization does is to "broaden her [the victim's] support system….

Broadening their scope of who they think they can talk to." Participant B stated, "Part of the work we hope to do with kids is to help them be less comfortable with being in abusive relationships… and giving them some insight into what hooks them into those relationships."

Participant C and Participant H also discussed some prevention and intervention strategies specifically focused on working with perpetrators. Participant H stated:

> I think it's important for us as adults to know that just because a young person makes bad decisions doesn't make them a bad person. That they need consequences for their behavior if they perpetrated, but they do not necessarily need to be made to feel like there's no recovery…. there's got to be some kind of recovery method for a batterer. There's got to be some learning process. And yes they need to feel the consequences; they need to know that their behavior was unacceptable, but I think that that's a big part of the intervention process for batterers.

According to Participant C, perpetrators who are able to "self identify is probably one of the biggest things for them." Further, Participant C stated that when perpetrators can say "'I recognize this and I can make a change because I do recognize it' and so just trying to give them hope" is an important strategy when working with perpetrators.

Community prevention/intervention. According to participants, working with communities to help prevent and intervene in teen dating violence is an important part of their work. Participant C stated, "I think that's when prevention and intervention works its best, is when everybody kind of comes together." According to Participant F, "I think as a society we haven't really figured out the best way of providing support to these kids,

victims and perpetrators, so that we can get ahead of it rather than trying to get behind it." Further, Participant F stated:

> I think that there needs to be a lot of dialogue in our community… what it is, where are the supports, how does it impact kids, how does it impact families, how do we get ahead of it? I mean that's the community discussion that needs to happen.

The participants discussed the various community prevention/intervention work that they do. For example, Participant C stated, "we've got community intervention advocates that are out talking all over the community." Participant D stated, "we talk to community members about dating violence, and how to keep kids safe in general, how to make our communities safe, and how to take this problem seriously because it is a serious problem." In addition, Participant C reported that agencies provide summer programming where they run safety camps in which they talk about healthy friendships for kids starting in second grade. In addition, they "hang out" in mobile home park communities to "make connections with kids so when the school year starts, we've got that resource going." Further, Participant C's organization collaborates with students to organize community projects around the topic of teen dating violence. Participant D's organization has a "collaboration with the domestic abuse project… and they provide counselors for group and individual work with kids that come in through the shelter and through our work with women in the communities."

Discussion

Overall, the findings of this study are supported by the prior literature. Among these findings, notable areas include: (a) gender, (b) childhood abuse, (c) attitudes (d) alcohol/drugs, (e) depression, (f) support systems, and (g) prevention programs.

Gender

Regarding gender, participants reported that both girls and boys are victims and perpetrators just as Banyard et al. (2006), Hickman et al. (2004), Noonan and Charles (2009), O'Keefe et al. (1986), O'Keefe (1997), Wekerle and Wolfe (1999), and Williams et al. (2008) found. In addition, Banyard et al. (2006) found that boys tend to be more likely than girls to be physically or sexually abusive. Participants from this study also reported that boys tend to be more likely than girls to be physically or sexually abusive. In addition, participants reported that boys are more threatening than girls because when boys are violent, they cause more damage than girls; this finding echoes the works of Hickman et al. (2004), O'Keefe et al. (1986), and Wekerle and Wolfe (1999).

The findings of the current study do not all align with previous works. One gender-related finding that differed between this study and previous studies regarded physical aggression. Foshee and Gray (1997) and O'Keefe (1997) found girls to be more physically aggressive than boys, however, all participants in this study reported that boys are more physically aggressive than girls. This discrepancy could be due, in part, to underreporting by boy-victims, which was discussed by participants from this study and by Foshee and Gray (1997) and O'Keefe (1997).

Childhood Abuse

Childhood abuse was reported as a predictive factor for teen dating violence, perpetration, and victimization in several studies (Banyard et al., 2006; Foshee & Gray,

1997; Foshee et al., 1999; Foshee et al., 2001; Hickman et al., 2004; Wekerle et al., 2009; Wolfe et al., 2004). Interparental conflict was also reported to be a predictive factor for teen dating violence, perpetration, and victimization in several studies (Foshee & Gray, 1997; Foshee et al., 1999; Foshee, et al., 2001; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O'Keefe et al., 1986). Participants from this study did not discuss child abuse and interparental conflict separately, rather, they discussed general violence in the home. Participants reported that violence in the home, whether domestic abuse or child abuse, is a risk factor for both teen dating violence perpetration and victimization. Participants from this study, along with prior researchers (Foshee et al., 1999; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O'Keefe et al, 1986), discussed how growing up in a violent home may normalize the use of violent behavior for adolescents. Therefore, adolescents are more likely to commit acts of violence in dating relationships and allow others to commit acts of violence toward them.

Attitudes

Several studies reported a positive correlation between endorsing attitudes justifying teen dating violence and involvement in teen dating violence (Foshee & Gray, 1997; Foshee et al., 1999; Foshee et al., 2001; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; O'Keefe, 1997; Wolfe et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2008). Participants reported that often victims and perpetrators have attitudes and beliefs that justify and normalize the use of violence in relationships. However, this differs from the results of a study done by Foshee and Gray (1997) who found that adolescents who are perpetrators only are more accepting of dating violence than adolescents who are solely victims. Participants did not make a distinction between victims and perpetrators; this may be because most of the participants

in the present study only work with clients who are victims, rather than perpetrators, of dating violence.

Participants reported that another potential cause of endorsing attitudes and beliefs that justify the use of violence in relationships is glamorization of violence by the media. This corresponds with O'Keefe (1997) who found that both boys and girls are more accepting of female-on-male violence. O'Keefe (1997) speculated this relationship occurred because, in American culture, boys are taught to never hit a woman and girls are taught to romanticize slapping men via the media. Participants did not discuss whether boys or girls are more accepting of female-on-male violence; rather, they discussed the general acceptance of any type of violence by adolescents due to the glamorization of violence by the media.

Alcohol/Drugs

Participants also reported that the use of alcohol and drugs was a risk factor for involvement in teen dating violence, echoing results of several studies (Banyard et al., 2006; Foshee et al., 2001; O'Keefe, 1997). O'Keefe (1997) and participants from this study suggested that adolescents use alcohol and drugs to justify their use of violence. In addition, O'Keefe (1997) stated that the positive correlation between teen dating violence and alcohol use could also be due to lower inhibitions caused by alcohol use. Participants reported lowered inhibitions as a moderating factor in the positive correlation between drugs/alcohol and teen dating violence perpetration.

Depression

Studies conducted by Banyard et al. (2006) and Foshee et al. (2001) found that depression was correlated with teen dating violence. Participants in the present study

labeled depression as both a risk factor and a negative effect of teen dating violence, along with several other mental health issues. Further, participants in the current study stated teen dating violence has the potential to increase the severity of any mental health issues present in the victim. For example, if an adolescent is already depressed, his or her depression will worsen as a result of his or her involvement in teen dating violence.

Support Systems

According to participants, support systems were crucial in helping adolescents avoid or leave violent dating relationships. This corresponds with Banyard and Cross (2008), who found that the greater a person's perception of support by his or her support system, the greater the likelihood for positive outcomes.

The present study does not entirely coalesce with prior literature on the relationship between teen dating violence and support systems. In a study conducted by Banyard et al. (2006), researchers found that support systems were more helpful for girls who were already victims than for preventing violence to girls who were not yet victims. However, participants in the present study reported that support systems were important in preventing teen dating violence. In addition, Banyard and Cross (2008) found that support systems comprised of parents and neighborhoods were not a protective factor for boys who would become teen dating violence perpetrators or victims. In the current study, however, participants reported that parents, family members, and other adults were crucial support systems in the prevention and intervention of teen dating violence for adolescents. These assertions should be taken with caution as participants in this study generally had limited experience working with boys who are either victims or perpetrators.

Prevention Programs

According to Foshee et al. (1998), prevention programs focus on identifying methods and indicators of teen dating violence, along with self-examination of one's own attitudes and beliefs regarding dating violence. Participants in the present study also discussed similar pillars of prevention programs, emphasizing the importance of teaching adolescents the difference between healthy and unhealthy platonic and romantic relationships. A few participants discussed their involvement in non-school-based prevention/intervention programs; however, participants' employment was focused primarily on school-based prevention programs.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had several strengths. Questions in the participant interview were grounded in a review of the existing teen dating violence literature. This allowed the researcher to make comparisons from the findings of this study to the findings of previous studies. An audio recording and transcription process were incorporated to ensure accuracy of the data. Further, the design of this study allowed the researcher to ask follow-up and clarification questions of participants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. In addition, the researcher was able to interview participants who had a wide variety of experiences and expertise. As the sample included participants from several different agencies, with different curriculum and methodologies, it can be inferred that results can be generalized across mental health practitioners.

However, accompanying its strengths, this study contains some potential limitations. Although participants came from diverse backgrounds, the sample was comprised of eight participants and acquired via convenience sampling, which may limit

its generalizability. Further, most of the participants worked primarily with girls who were the victims of teen dating violence; thus, answers had a tendency to focus on these two characteristics (e.g., girls, victims), limiting the generalization of these findings to mental health workers who work with a similar clientele. In future studies, it may be beneficial to include a larger random sample of participants who work with a variety of individuals. In addition, only one 30-to-60-minute interview was conducted per participant. To increase the internal reliability of the participant's answers, future research may incorporate multiple interviews of each participant over a specific time period. Finally, to allow for a variety of responses, the interview questions did not ask participants to specifically address the questions for both victims and perpetrators, rather, it asked about adolescents involved in teen dating violence. This methodological limitation caused some ambiguity in interpretation of the participant's response; at times it was unclear whether the participants were talking about victims of teen dating violence, perpetrators of teen dating violence, or both.

Implications

Clearly, research regarding teen dating violence has important implications for the social work profession. Specifically it has implications in three areas: (a) policy, (b) practice, and (c) research.

Policy. Information gathered in this study has the potential to influence organization, school, and state policies. For example, information regarding the alarming prevalence of teen dating violence may increase funding of prevention programs by administrators and policy makers. As was evidenced in this study, education and mental health services delivered through such programs have the power to prevent adolescents

from becoming either victims and or perpetrators of teen dating violence. Thus, developing or expanding current programs may help provide mentors to teenagers navigating difficult life situations, ultimately providing a protective factor against teen dating violence.

The results of this study can be applied to tailor teen dating violence prevention/intervention programs for maximum effectiveness. Since teen dating violence generally occurs between the ages of 14-20, intervention resources should be concentrated in high schools, rather than in middle schools. However, early prevention programs may be beneficial at the middle school level, ensuring these students establish an early knowledge base, allowing them to better form healthy dating relationships. These early programs should focus on identifying early signs of teen dating violence in one's own relationships as well as in one's friends' relationships. In addition, prevention programs could extend as early as elementary school, emphasizing the difference between healthy and unhealthy dating relationships.

In addition to addressing student factors, teen dating violence prevention programs could be modified to incorporate parent education. Parents are highly influential in an adolescent's development and can be an excellent source of teen dating prevention or intervention for an adolescent. Inclusion of this population in prevention programs can build-up a naturally occurring support for teenagers, should they become involved in dating violence.

Practice. The findings from this study also have implications for mental health practice. Mental health practitioners who work with adolescents should be mindful of the signs and symptoms of adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence. It is

important that they are able to recognize the signs of teen dating violence in order to best assist the adolescent in getting desired help and distance from the situation. In addition, this study exposes the limitation of services available to perpetrators. Mental health practitioners who are in schools, discussing and educating teens about teen dating violence, tend to only work with victims, in part, because victims are generally more likely to seek help. However, prevention programs and interventions are needed for perpetrators as well. They need effective methods of interventions to help them believe they can change and stop their own cycle of violence.

Research. Further research can increase the understanding of teen dating violence, providing for better prevention programs and aid those who are or have experienced this circumstance. Related studies should explore the motivations of abusers, which may increase the effectiveness of prevention programs targeted at this demographic. For example, if many abusers abuse because they cannot control their anger, then anger management classes may be an effective prevention program.

Another potential research study could focus on sexual abuse, examining the existence of "accidental abusers." For example, when teens are first beginning to date, they are often embarrassed about it or eager to please their partner. Miscommunication could play a role in sexual abuse, as the victim may not make it clear enough, due to embarrassment, that he or she did not consent to the sexual activity. Further research could investigate whether miscommunication may lead to "accidental" abuse.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study, the literature regarding teen dating violence could be bolstered by exploring the experience of adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence. Future studies should interview adolescents who are involved in

teen dating violence. In addition, since friends play a significant role in the lives of adolescents, researchers may gain valuable information by assessing the friends of adolescents who are involved in teen dating violence. Finally, this study did not examine teen dating violence between same sex-couples. As there is a general paucity of research addressing this population, future studies are necessary to address the clinician and adolescent perspectives on same-sex teen dating violence.

In conclusion, teen dating violence is a serious and prevalent issue facing today's adolescents. As is evidenced in this study, gender, childhood abuse, attitudes, alcohol/drugs, depression, support systems, and prevention programs all play an important role for adolescents who are victims and perpetrators of teen dating violence. Clearly, although much has been done in the field, much is still needed.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jennifer Uttech and I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Catherine Marrs Fuchsel at the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University working towards my Master of Social Work degree. I am conducting a research project regarding teen dating violence. I am interested in learning about the risk factors and methods of prevention and intervention. I hope that what I learn from this study will help social workers and service providers who work with adolescents to more effectively prevent and intervene in teen dating violence situations.

I am inviting the participation of mental health practitioners from this agency who work directly with adolescents who have experienced teen dating violence or who work towards preventing teen dating violence. Participation would consist of one 45 to 60 minute interview. I will set up the time and day for the interview depending on what works best for you. The interview will be audio-taped and findings from it will be published in my clinical research project.

Please carefully consider assisting me in my research project.

If you have any questions please contact me at

Thank you,

Jennifer Uttech

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating teen dating violence. This study is being conducted by Jennifer I. Uttech under the direction of Professor Catherine Marrs Fuchsel in the Master of Social Work Program at St. Catherine University. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because of your experience working with adolescents who are involved with or at risk of becoming involved with teen dating violence. Please read this form and ask questions before you decide whether to participate in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to learn about teen dating violence risk factors and methods of prevention and intervention. Approximately 8 people are expected to participate in this research.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed one time for approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will consist of 11 questions designed to examine the risk factors associated with teen dating violence as well as methods of intervention/prevention. The interview will be audio taped. I will set up the interview at a convenient time and location for you. I will then be including this data in my findings, and it will be published in my clinical research project.

Risks and Benefits:

The study has minimal risks. The main risk is that it may bring to mind unpleasant memories from your professional or personal experience. However, it will be focused on your professional work only.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that could identify you will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable.

I will keep the research results in a password protected computer and/or a locked file cabinet in my office and only I, my research assistant (Julie Young), and my advisor will

have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by June 2012. I will then destroy all original reports, audiotapes, and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with St. Catherine University in any way. You can refuse to answer any question during the interview if you choose. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships, and no further data will be collected.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Jennifer Uttech. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, 651-690-6146, will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact John Schmitt, PhD, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time and no further data will be collected.

_____

I consent to participate in the study and I agree to be audio taped.

_____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background: age, where grew up, schooling, previous job experience, current job description, etc.
2. In your experience, how prevalent is teen dating violence?
3. What are the negative effects of teen dating violence?
4. What have you observed related to the gender and age of perpetrators and victims of teen dating violence?
5. What are risk factors for teen dating perpetrators and victims?
6. Do teens stay in abusive relationships and if so, why?
7. What kind of support systems do teens have?
8. What are effective methods of intervention regarding teen dating violence?
9. What prevention/intervention programs does your organization have available for teens involved in dating violence?
10. How do you feel your background/history has influenced your work and views on teen dating violence?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX D

AGENCY LETTER OF COOPERATION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Institutional Review Board
St. Catherine University
St. Paul Campus
2004 Randolph Avenue
St. Paul, MN. 55105

We have agreed to help Jennifer Uttech in recruiting research participants for her research project. Jennifer Uttech's research project will be a study that examines the risk factors and methods of prevention and intervention for teen dating violence. She will be interviewing mental health practitioners from this agency who work directly with adolescents who have experienced teen dating violence or who work towards preventing teen dating violence. Participation will consist of one 45 to 60 minute interview. The interview will be audio-taped and findings from it will be published in her clinical research project without individual identifiers. The only people who will have access to these audio-tapes is Jennifer Uttech and her research assistant. Audio-tapes will be destroyed in June 2012.

In addition, we will assist in the recruitment process by talking to potential participants about the opportunity to participate in the research project. We will give the participants the name, phone number, and email address of Jennifer Uttech in order for the participants to inquire about the study and for Jennifer Uttech to answer any questions they may have. Jennifer Uttech will make it clear to potential participants that they are free to refuse to participate in her research project and that this will not affect their relationship with this agency. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at

_____.

Sincerely,

_____ _____
Signature and Title Date

_____ _____
Print Name Date