Background

• Up to 40% of high school students experience teen dating violence (TDV) involving physical, sexual, or psychological abuse (Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011)

• In order for prevention efforts to be successful, multiple levels of a person’s social-ecological environment must be reached (Nation et al., 2003)
  – Four levels: person, relationship, community, and societal (Offenhauer and Buchalter, 2011)
  – Lack of research about community- and societal-level TDV risk factors

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Human Capabilities Approach

- Provides a framework of how the social environment enables individuals to live full human lives (Sen, 2009)

- Provides a framework to conceptualize what and how social-ecological factors influence TDV

- Evidence suggests that capabilities moderate the effect relationship violence has on functioning (Pyles & Banerjee, 2010)

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Life and physical health</th>
<th>8. Freedom from economic and non-economic exploitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Love and care</td>
<td>9. Shelter and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mental well-being</td>
<td>10. Leisure activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bodily integrity and safety</td>
<td>11. Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social relations</td>
<td>12. Time-autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Participation</td>
<td>13. Mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education</td>
<td>14. Religion and identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
(Biggeri et al., 2006)
Research Questions

• Can a human capabilities approach help us understand how social-ecological factors influence TDV?

• Do youths and adults differ in their views on TDV in ways that might have implications for TDV programming?

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Interviews with students, parents, and school personnel from a racially, socioeconomically diverse high school in the Southeastern United States

Focus groups:
- 21 9th graders
- 16 10-12 graders
- 10 parent/teachers

One-on-one interviews with 11 adults

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results

• Youth and adults both included physical, emotional, and sexual violence in their definitions of TDV

• Participants deemphasized school climate concepts in favor of the capabilities approach

• Both youth and adults reacted to all capabilities presented (based on Biggeri et al., 2006)

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Life and Physical Health

- Person level physical outcomes were discussed
- Both youth and adults noted that TDV damages physical health directly, or indirectly by damaging mental health
- Adults believed that due to hormones, high school males were less likely to be able to be physically healthy

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Love and Care

- Relationship level factors were discussed
- Both youth and adults discussed that love and care relationships form the basis for learning relationships and are a source of guidance
  - Both youth and adults discussed school employees as possible guiders
    - Adults noted that there is difficulty with drawing a line
  - Adults discussed importance of parents and influence of media
  - Youth talked about friends as source of love and care
- Both youth and adults discussed girls having too many love and care responsibilities

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Person level psychological and physiological factors were discussed. Both youth and adults saw the relationship between low self-esteem and TDV victimization as circular. Youth believed that TDV was a sign that perpetrator wasn’t ready for a relationship. Adults believed that teens were not capable of mental well-being and emotional maturity. Both youth and adults thought the maturity gap between boys and girls could contribute to TDV.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
All four levels of the social environment were discussed.
Both youth and adults believed that teens are overexposed to violence both at home and in the media, increasing TDV tolerance.
Adults believed that girls become vulnerable because of the size difference.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Both youth and adults believed that the perpetrator’s peer group could make the dating partner more vulnerable. Adults believed that TDV could be used to gain social standing. Male youth said that victimization would make them feel like less of a man. Adults looked to social media as a possible cause because of the potential for miscommunication and the inability to escape social interaction.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Community level factors were discussed.
Both youth and adults believed that feeling controlled in some parts of life could lead teens to want to control other aspects.
Adults believed that teens have too much influence in their personal life and that this lack of guidance is a cause of TDV.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Education

- Person, relationship, and societal level influences were discussed
- Youth said that TDV damaged educational performance
- Both youth and adults believed that youth were uneducated about healthy relationships
  - Youth were especially concerned with the media as a source of negative relationship role modeling

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Freedom from Economic and Non-Economic Exploitation

- This prompt was omitted, but both youth and adults discussed non-economic exploitation.
- Societal and community level influences were discussed.
- Both youth and adults were concerned about media portrayal of women and exploitation through social media.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Community level factors were discussed
Both youth and adults believed that teens might stay in an abusive relationship because of lack of other shelter and that teens repeat behaviors from their home environment

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Community and societal risk factors were discussed

Both youth and adults believed that there is a lack of healthy leisure activities available to teens

Adults were concerned about alcohol and drug use

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Respect

• Relationship and community level factors were discussed
• Both youth and adults thought TDV perpetrators could be trying to gain respect and saw TDV as a cause of lost respect

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Time-Autonomy

- Youth have autonomy with social media, which can have drawbacks when basic protections are lacking

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Results: Mobility

- Community level risk factors were discussed
- Youth saw lack of mobility as a risk because of restricted choices
- Adults saw mobility as the danger because of inadequate supervision

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Community and societal risk factors were discussed
Both youth and adults believed that religious teachings could contribute to TDV, especially in patriarchal religions
Both youth and adults viewed TDV as restricting identity development

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Adults and youth were similar in understandings of how social-ecological factors at all 4 levels influence TDV.

Main areas of difference:
- Perceived detrimental influences of substances abuse: youth did not discuss substance abuse.
- Perceived detrimental influences of mobility: youth saw mobility as strength, adults as threat.
- Adults saw youth behavior as determined by circumstances, while youth spoke in terms of limited choices.

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
Implications for Practice

• The capabilities approach can help with devising multi-level prevention intervention

• Prevention practitioners could identify risk factors that correlate with the most pressing needs among specific groups

• Youth need quality social relations with adults

(Whitaker & Savage, 2014)
References


Prepared by H Goldstein (2014)