



# Risk and Protective Factors for Adolescent Relationship Abuse across Different Sexual and Gender Identities

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## Abstract

Little is known about the characteristics and context of adolescent relationship abuse victimization across youth of different sexual and gender minority identities. This study sought to examine this in a national sample of 14–15-year-old youth. The sample comprised 3296 youth who reported having been in a relationship, of which 36% ( $n = 1197$ ) were exclusively cisgender heterosexual; 41% ( $n = 1,349$ ) cisgender sexual minority; and 23% ( $n = 750$ ) gender minority, the majority of whom were also sexual minority. More than half of all youth who had been in a relationship, dated or hooked up with someone had experienced some form of adolescent relationship abuse victimization. Gender minority youth, in particular transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth, were more likely to be victims of multiple types of adolescent relationship abuse compared to cisgender youth. Perpetrator gender varied for sexual and gender minorities and was more homogenous for cisgender heterosexual youth. Several factors were associated with adolescent relationship abuse for all youth, although alcohol use, and parental trust and communication emerged as particularly important for sexual and gender minority youth. Overall, findings address multiple gaps in the literature and contribute to the understanding of adolescent relationship abuse across different sexual and gender identities.

**Keywords** Adolescents · Victimization · Sexual Minority · Gender Minority

## Introduction

Adolescent relationship abuse is a significant public health problem. National estimates suggest that one in four females and one in ten males are victims for the first time before age 18 (CDC, 2020). It is associated with a range of negative outcomes, such as poor mental health, risky health behaviors, anti-social behavior, thoughts of suicide and revictimization of intimate partner violence in adulthood (CDC, 2020). Research suggests that sexual and gender minority youth are especially at risk for relationship abuse

(Johns et al., 2018). Yet, most of the research has centered on cisgender heterosexual youth and there is scarce knowledge on the characteristics of adolescent relationship abuse and its associated risk and protective factors across different sexual and gender minority identities. This study sought to address this research gap in a large sample of adolescents aged 14–15 years.

## Sexual and Gender Minority Youth and Adolescent Relationship Abuse

Sexual minority youth identify as lesbian; gay; bisexual; asexual or another non-heterosexual identity. Gender minority youth have a gender that is different than their sex assigned at birth (e.g., transgender; two-spirit; queer) (NIH, 2020). The prevalence rate of adolescent relationship abuse varies depending on the measures used, the type of abuse reported, and whether the numbers are reported in aggregate (Decker et al., 2018). Still, data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health show that about one in four sexual minority adolescents in recent (past 18 months) relationships report experiencing physical and/or psychological adolescent relationship abuse (Edwards et al., 2015).

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Gender minority adults face two to three times higher risk of physical and sexual interpersonal violence victimization compared with cisgender individuals (Peitzmeier et al., 2020). Increased rates may be attributed to unique risk factors such as stigma, discrimination, and social rejection that sexual and gender minority youth experience (Whitton et al., 2019a, 2019b). To inform the tailoring of prevention efforts, there is a need to examine risk and protective factors common to sexual and gender minority youth compared to cisgender heterosexual youth (Hequembourg et al., 2020). The following literature draws from the general knowledge on adolescent relationship abuse and how it may apply to sexual and gender minority youth.

### Adolescent Relationship Abuse Risk and Protective Factors

Dysfunctional family and peer relations, such as having witnessed spousal abuse, having violent peers, and using substances are often noted risk factors for adolescent relationship abuse (Park & Kim, 2018). Substance use has consistently been found to be higher among sexual and gender minority youth compared to cisgender heterosexual youth (Caputi, 2018). A relation between substance use and teen dating violence has been demonstrated for adolescents in general (Vagi et al., 2015), but a recent nationally representative study found that sexual minority youth had higher rates of substance use as well as higher rates of teen dating violence compared with their cisgender heterosexual peers (Rostad et al., 2020).

Conversely, protective factors such as parental support, positive parental monitoring, and social support from peers can buffer against adolescent relationship abuse (Hébert et al., 2017). Strong and healthy relationships with parents are protective in many ways that reduce the likelihood of establishing or tolerating abusive relationships, for example, by providing a model of communication and conflict resolution skills and also enhancing self-worth (Garthe et al., 2019). Further, in adolescence, peers become increasingly important as a source of support (Moore et al., 2015). A supportive social network may in turn protect against violent relationships (Park & Kim, 2018).

Research on protective factors for adolescent relationship abuse among sexual and gender minority youth are sparse (Hequembourg et al., 2020). The minority stress model posits that this group of youth face both internal (e.g., identity concealment) and external (e.g., discrimination and rejection) stressors, which not only increase one's risk for victimization, but also negatively impacts mental health and social relationships (Meyer, 2003). Family support has, in general, shown to be a protective factor in reducing negative outcomes for sexual minority youth (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006). A study examining protective

factors for adolescent relationship abuse found that family support was lower overall and did not offer the same protection relative to cisgender youth (Ross-Reed et al., 2019). The authors posit that supportive adult relationships may not be enough to overcome the multiple stressors gender minorities face, and that the support given might be conditional; meaning that certain aspects of their life may be supported, but other aspects are not, such as their gender minority identity (Ross-Reed et al., 2019). Moreover, sexual and gender minority youth may fear rejection and disapproval by family and peers because of their sexual or gender identity, thus increasing vulnerability to abusive relationships (Gillum, 2017).

More studies are needed to examine how protective factors operate in relation to adolescent relationship abuse for sexual and gender minority youth compared to cisgender heterosexual youth. Moreover, these protective factors should be examined alongside risk factors for a more comprehensive understanding of the most influential factors overall. Another limitation of the current literature is that many studies have focused on cisgender sexual minority youth and less on gender minority youth (Whitton et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Two additional gaps remain. First, although studies are starting to look at intersections or co-occurrence of adolescent relationship abuse types (Edwards et al., 2015), additional work is needed to delineate subgroups of sexual and gender minority youth by sex assigned at birth, in addition to a comparison group of cisgender heterosexual youth. Second, limited research has considered the gender of the perpetrator. Indeed, a review of interpersonal violence among sexual minority individuals found that only one in five studies inquired about the sex or gender of the perpetrator (Edwards et al., 2015), while a recent review on interpersonal violence among transgender individuals reported that no studies had examined the characteristics of the perpetrator (Peitzmeier et al., 2020). Perpetrator gender cannot be inferred based on sexual orientation of the victim, so this study extends the literature by including the perpetrator of the adolescent relationship abuse for each of the sexual and gender identities.

### Current Study

To address the lack of knowledge on the characteristics of adolescent relationship abuse and its associated risk and protective factors across different sexual and gender minority identities, the current study aims to compare frequencies of adolescent relationship abuse types, number of types of exposures, and perpetrator relationship across different sexual and gender identities (Aim 1), and to compare risk and protective factors for adolescent relationship abuse within and between various sexual and gender identities

(Aim 2). This will be examined in a large sample of adolescents, aged 14–15 years.

## Methods

The data were derived from the Growing up with the Media (GuwM) study, which is a national, longitudinal study that was designed to study the emergence of sexual violence in adolescence and its continuation into young adulthood. The first cohort of 1586 10–15-year-olds was recruited in 2006. Findings from this study suggested that 15–16 years of age is a pivotal time period for the emergence of SV. The first cohort only comprised 323 youth who were 15 years of age or younger. To further the knowledge of how SV emerges in adolescence and to increase the number of victims surveyed at younger ages when the behaviors are likely to emerge, a new cohort youth 14–15 years of age were recruited. This second cohort of 4163 youth aged 14–15 years was recruited in 2018–2019, and it is this second, cross-sectional cohort that is analyzed here.

A waiver of parental permission was granted for participants under 18 years of age, primarily because requiring parental consent could potentially place youth in situations where their sexual experiences and/or sexual attraction could be unintentionally disclosed to their parents. In some families, this could pose physical or emotional danger for the child. A waiver also is necessary to avoid fatal sampling bias in the sexual and gender minority sample that would occur by only including those who are out to their parents (Cwinn et al., 2020). The study protocol met the requirements for 45 CFR 46.116(f) and 45 CFR 46.408(c). Appropriate mechanisms were in place to protect the children, such as localized referrals to mental health supports. The protocol was reviewed and approved by Pearl Institutional Review Board.

Eligible criteria were defined as: youth 14–15 years old, residing in the U.S, being able to read and respond to the questionnaire in English or Spanish, and being able to provide informed assent. Youth were primarily recruited through neutral online ads on Instagram and Facebook that did not refer to the survey focus, e.g., “Have your voice be heard”. Individuals who were interested were linked to the secure survey website after clicking on the online advertisement. The first page provided a description of the study along with the contact information for study staff, followed by a screener page to determine eligibility, and subsequently an assent form for eligible participant to indicate their willingness to participate in the survey before being directed to the main survey (more details about the study procedure can be found elsewhere). Forty youth were recruited using addressed based sampling methods, which was a recruitment methodology that was piloted and deemed not to be feasible before social media was utilized.

Given emerging literature suggesting that sexual and gender minority youth are more likely to be involved in violence (Johns et al., 2018), they were oversampled. The sample size was identified based upon feasibility defined by finances and timeframe. Participants were incentivized \$15, either as a check or an Amazon gift card, for completing the survey.

## Measures

Three types of adolescent relationship abuse (ARA) were assessed: sexual, physical and emotional (Foshee, 1996). To reflect the dynamic relationships that adolescents have within and beyond committed partnerships, those who reported ever having a boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, or having dated or hooked up with anyone were asked questions about relationship abuse.

### Sexual adolescent relationship abuse

This included sexual assault, attempted rape, rape and coercive sex and was defined as answering affirmative to one or more of the following items: (1) “ever kissed, touched, or made you do anything sexual when you did not want to” (sexual assault), (2) “tried, but was not able, to make me have sex when I did not want to” (attempted rape), (3) “made me have sex when I did not want to” (rape), and (4) “I gave in to sex when I did not want to” (coercive sex) (Cronbach’s alpha 0.82). A follow-up question asked about the most recent perpetrator. Those who indicated it was a boyfriend/girlfriend were coded as having experienced sexual ARA.

### Physical adolescent relationship abuse

This was defined as anyone having ever done the following things to the respondent on purpose: (1) Damaged something that belonged to you, (2) Scratched or slapped you, (3) Slammed or held you against a wall, (4) Tried to choke you, (5) Pushed, grabbed, kicked, shoved, or hit you, (6) Threw something at you, (7) Physically twisted your arm or bent your fingers (Cronbach’s alpha 0.85).

### Emotional adolescent relationship abuse

This was defined as answering affirmative to at least one of the following items: (1) Would not let you spend time with other people or talk to someone you might be attracted to, (2) Made you describe where you were every minute of the day, (3) Did something just to make you jealous, or (4) Put down your looks or said hurtful things to you in front of others (Cronbach’s alpha 0.72).

Given that there was also an interest in the intersection of experiencing these different types of dating violence, a

variable to indicate whether the youth reported experiencing one, two or three types of dating violence were created.

### Sexual gender minority (SGM) identity

Defined as anyone who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, queer, pansexual, asexual, other or unsure), and/or who did not exclusively identify as cisgender male or female (e.g., Female-to-Male (FTM)/Transgender Male/Trans Man, Male-to-Female (MTF)/Transgender Female/Trans Woman, Genderqueer/non-binary/pangender, or Other). These categories were further divided into *cisgender sexual minority youth*; defined as anyone who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual, and *gender minority youth*; defined as anyone who did not exclusively identify as cisgender male or female; gender minority females at birth were labeled *transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth*, while gender minority males at birth were labeled *transgender girls and non-binary youth assigned male at birth*. *Cisgender heterosexual* was defined as anyone identifying as exclusively heterosexual and cisgender male or female.

To compare cisgender and gender minority youth, cisgender sexual minority youth and cisgender heterosexual youth were combined into one group labeled *cisgender youth*.

### Perpetrator relationship and gender

For physical and emotional adolescent relationship abuse, a follow up question asked about; *How many of these people have ever done these things to you; (1) Boyfriends, (2) Girlfriends, (3) Boys I hooked up with or dated, but not as boyfriends, (4) Girls I hooked up with or dated, but not as girlfriends*. If a person reported that one or more people did these things for a category (e.g., boyfriends) this perpetrator type was reported. As a person could have multiple perpetrators, the categories overlap. For sexual violence, the follow-up question only applied to the most recent victimization incident, and did not specify whether the perpetrator was a girlfriend/boyfriend, or a boy/girl they hooked up with or dated, but rather if it was a *boy, girl or a non-binary individual*.

### Protective factors

**Relationship with parents** This was assessed as “*parental monitoring*”: (1) “Does this person know where you are when you are not at home”, (2) “Does this person know who you are with when you are not at home” (“*parental monitoring*,  $r = 0.60$ ), and “*trust and communication*” and was measured by asking the respondents how often: (3) “Do you feel that this person trusts you”, (4) “If you were in

trouble or were sad would you discuss it with this person”, (5) How well would you say you and this person get along? (*trust and communication*, Cronbach’s alpha 0.74), The response format was on a 5-point scale ranging from “never” (1) to “all of the time” (5). Higher scores indicate better relationship with parents (Finkelhor et al., 2000).

**Social support** This was measured with the eight following items: (1) There is a special person who is around when I am in need, (2) There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows, (3) I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me, (4) My friends really try to help me, (5) I can count on my friends when things go wrong, (6) I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows, (7) There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings, (8) I can talk about my problems with my friends. The response options ranged from (1) Very strongly disagree to (7) Very strongly agree (Zimet et al., 2012). Average mean scores were calculated and the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.95.

### Risk factors

**Witnessing spousal abuse** This was assessed by asking: “Have you ever, in real life, seen or heard one of your parents get hit, slapped, punched, or beat up by your other parent, or by their boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner?” With the response options of “yes” and “no” (Hamby & Grych, 2013).

**Seen/heard about a peer being a victim or perpetrator of physical dating violence** Defined as an affirmative response to at least one of the following questions: “Have you ever, in real life, seen or heard one of your friends get hit, slapped, punched or beat up by their boyfriend, girlfriend, someone they are dating or hooking up with?” Or “Have you ever, in real life, seen or heard one of your friends hit, slap, punch or beat up his or her boyfriend, girlfriend, someone they are dating or hooking up with? With the response options of “yes” and “no” ( $r = 0.94$ ) (developed by the authors).

**Recent alcohol use** This was assessed by asking teens who reported ever drinking alcohol: “During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?”, with values ranging from 0 to 30 (Kann et al., 2014). Respondents who reported at least 1 or more days of drinking alcohol the past 30 days were coded as 1, while youth who did not report drinking the past 30 days were coded as 0.

**Sociodemographic variables** These included racial background (White, African-American or Black, Mixed Racial

Background or Others), ethnicity (Hispanic), parental income and father's and mother's education.

## Statistical Analyses

Stata, version 14 was used for all analyses (StataCorp, 2015). Respondents were not able to proceed without selecting a response option; "Decline to answer" is thus considered missing in this study. The participants were also given encouraging messaging throughout the survey which may have enhanced survey completion. As a result, no variable had more than 4.15% decline to answer. These were coded as 0 for the categorical variables, assuming that if it was not recalled, it was most likely not retained, and as the mean for continuous variables, with two exceptions: for racial background, "decline to answer" was coded as "Other race", and for parental education, it was coded as "Do not know mother's/father's education. Chi-square analyses and mean comparisons were used for the descriptive analyses. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons across sexual and identity sub-groups also were conducted. Next, logistic regression models estimated the odds ratios for independent variables by sexual and gender identities for adolescent relationship abuse, adjusting for sociodemographic variables and process variables (i.e., self-reported dishonesty in completing the survey, and not being alone when completing the survey). The following models were estimated for *within* and *between* comparisons: *within* comparisons: (1) cisgender heterosexual youth (victims v. non-victims), (2) Cisgender sexual minority youth (victims v. non-victims), (3) Gender minority youth (victims v. non-victims.) *Between* group comparisons: (4) Cisgender sexual minority vs. Cisgender heterosexual victims, and (5) Gender minority vs. Cisgender (both heterosexual and sexual minority) victims.

## Results

The majority of gender minority youth also were sexual minority (97%). As such, this study could not stratify these youth by their sexual identity. For the sake of parsimony, this group is subsequently referred to as gender minority although most are also sexual minority youth.

### Sociodemographic Characteristics by Sexual and Gender Identities

There were few sociodemographic differences across victimized youth based upon their sexual and gender minority status (Table 1). That said, more cisgender heterosexual youth in the study sample reported having a father with higher education and had lower prevalence of low income compared to cisgender sexual minority and gender minority

youth (father's education: ( $X^2(6, n = 2004) = 16.25, p = 0.012$ ), low income: ( $X^2(2, n = 2004) = 44.63, p < 0.001$ ) (data not shown in table). Girls had higher odds of adolescent relationship abuse (ARA) compared to boys among cisgender heterosexual (OR: 1.47, 95% CI: 1.16–1.85), among cisgender sexual minority youth (OR: 1.31, 95% CI: 1.05–1.64) and among gender minority youth (OR: 2.20, 95% CI: 1.40–3.43).

### Frequencies of Adolescent Relationship Abuse

Of the total sample of 14–15-year-olds ( $N = 4163$ ), 80% ( $n = 3332$ ) reported ever having been in a relationship, dated or hooked up with someone. More than 6 in 10 of these youth (60.6%) experienced some form of ARA victimization. Specifically: 39.4% ( $n = 1314$ ) reported no ARA, while 31.2% ( $n = 1040$ ) had experienced one form of ARA, 20.8% ( $n = 692$ ) had experienced two types and 8.6% ( $n = 286$ ) had experienced three types of ARA.

### Adolescent Relationship Abuse Types and Number of Types of Exposures by Sexual and Gender Identities

Table 2 lists the types of ARA victimization experienced across youth sexual and gender minority status ( $n = 3296$ ), as well as the perpetrator type for each of the forms of abuse. Emotional abuse was the most common type, and sexual abuse the least common type, of adolescent relationship abuse victimization for all youth. Gender minority boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth had the highest frequency of any ARA compared to all other youth, with over two-thirds having experienced some form of ARA victimization.

Transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth were more likely to have experienced multiple types of ARA and were three times more likely to experience three types of abuse compared to cisgender heterosexual boys (12% compared to 4%,  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 1). In general, both cisgender heterosexual and cisgender sexual minority youth were more likely to have experienced one type of ARA victimization. In general, gender minority youth were more likely to experience two or three types of ARA compared to cisgender youth ( $X^2(2, n = 1946) = 19.69, p < 0.001$ ).

### Perpetrator Relationship and Gender Across Different Sexual and Gender Identities

For physical and emotional ARA victimization, the perpetrator was more often a partner than someone youth had hooked up with or dated. The majority of cisgender heterosexual boys and girls reported that a girl or boy,



**Table 1** Sociodemographic characteristics for adolescent relationship abuse by sexual and gender identities, *N* = 3296

	Cisgender heterosexual			Cisgender sexual minority			Gender minority		
	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 505) % ( <i>n</i> )	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 692)	Unadjusted OR <sup>a</sup> CI (95%)	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 532)	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 817)	Unadjusted OR <sup>b</sup> CI (95%)	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 255)	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Unadjusted OR <sup>c</sup> CI (95%)
Age (mean, SD)	14.60 (0.49)	14.65 (0.48)	1.26 (0.99–1.57)	14.64 (0.48)	14.64 (0.48)	1.01 (0.80–1.26)	14.59 (0.49)	14.60 (0.49)	1.02 (0.75–1.39)
Female sex at birth	51.68 (261)	61.07 (422)	<b>1.47 (1.16–1.85)</b>	53.11 (282)	59.78 (486)	<b>1.31 (1.05–1.64)</b>	82.35 (210)	91.11 (451)	<b>2.20 (1.40–3.43)</b>
Racial background									
White*	69.11 (349)	70.95 (491)		64.10 (341)	66.83 (546)		69.41 (177)	68.48 (339)	
African-American or Black	7.92 (40)	4.77 (33)	<b>0.59 (0.36–0.95)</b>	6.58 (35)	5.63 (46)	0.82 (0.52–1.30)	4.71 (12)	1.62 (8)	<b>0.35 (0.14–0.87)</b>
Mixed Racial Background	9.11 (46)	11.27 (78)	0.20 (0.82–1.78)	16.17 (86)	15.30 (125)	0.91 (0.67–1.23)	15.69 (40)	19.19 (95)	1.24 (0.82–1.82)
Others	13.86 (70)	13.01 (90)	0.91 (0.65–1.28)	13.16 (70)	12.24 (100)	0.89 (0.64–1.25)	10.20 (26)	10.71 (53)	1.05 (0.63–1.87)
Ethnicity									
Hispanic or Latino	18.02 (91)	20.66 (143)	1.18 (0.88–1.59)	20.30 (108)	23.01 (188)	1.17 (0.90–1.53)	15.29 (39)	18.99 (94)	1.30 (0.86–1.95)
Parent income									
Lower than the Average	18.81 (95)	18.50 (128)	0.98 (0.73–1.31)	18.81 (95)	18.50 (128)	<b>1.39 (1.08–1.79)</b>	28.24 (72)	35.35 (175)	1.39 (1.00–1.93)
Mother's education									
Completed High school or less*	25.74 (130)	29.91 (207)		31.20 (166)	31.58 (258)		33.33 (85)	31.31 (155)	
Completed or attended some College/University	48.32 (244)	45.52 (315)	0.81 (0.61–1.07)	44.74 (238)	46.14 (377)	1.09 (0.79–1.31)	46.67 (119)	50.10 (248)	1.14 (0.81–1.61)
Completed or attended Graduate School	14.46 (73)	17.77 (123)	1.06 (0.73–1.52)	18.05 (96)	15.54 (127)	0.85 (0.61–1.18)	13.33 (34)	10.91 (54)	0.87 (0.53–1.44)
Do not know the mother's education	11.49 (58)	6.79 (47)	<b>0.51 (0.33–0.79)</b>	6.32 (32)	6.73 (55)	1.11 (0.69–1.78)	6.67 (17)	7.68 (38)	1.22 (0.65–2.30)
Father's education									
Completed High school or less*	30.30 (153)	31.36 (217)		30.45 (162)	38.19 (312)		29.41 (75)	36.57 (181)	
Completed or attended some College/University	39.60 (200)	37.72 (261)	0.92 (0.70–1.21)	36.47 (194)	34.64 (283)	0.76 (0.58–0.99)	40.39 (103)	36.77 (182)	0.73 (0.51–1.05)
Completed or attended Graduate School	12.28 (62)	16.33 (113)	1.28 (0.88–1.86)	18.98 (101)	12.36 (101)	<b>0.52 (0.37–0.73)</b>	11.76 (30)	10.10 (50)	0.69 (0.41–1.17)
Do not know the father's education	17.82 (90)	14.60 (101)	0.79 (0.56–1.12)	14.10 (75)	14.81 (121)	0.84 (0.59–1.18)	18.43 (47)	16.57 (82)	0.72 (0.46–1.13)

\*Reference category in unadjusted logistic regression analyses. Bolded numbers indicate *p* < 0.05

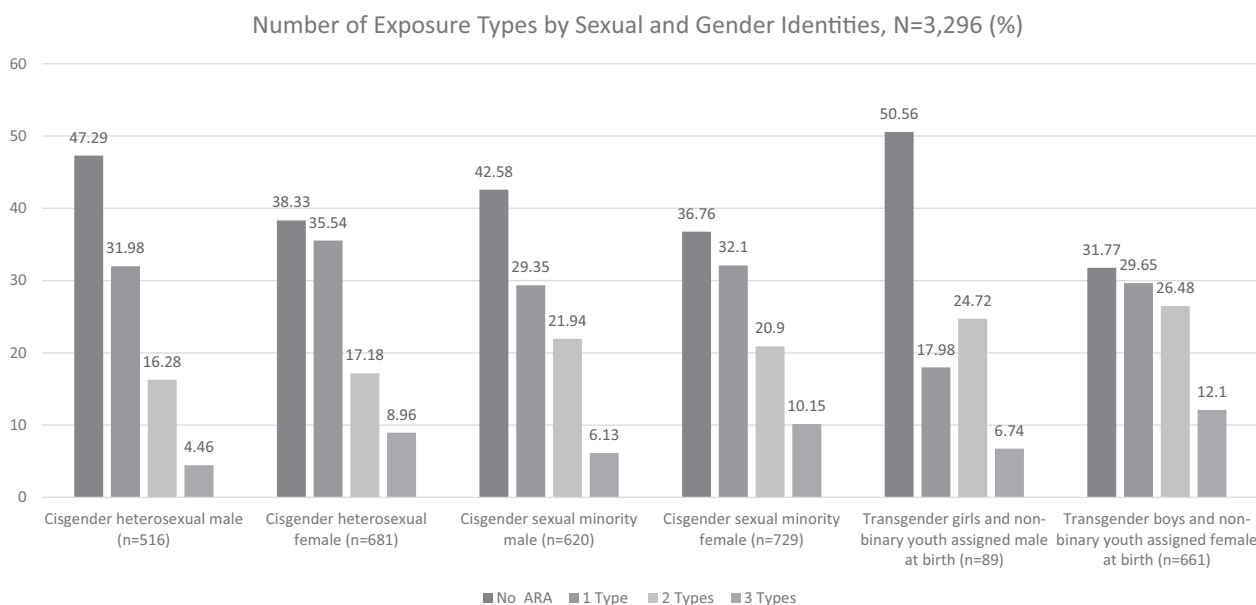
<sup>a,b,c</sup>Significant differences between the groups are listed in superscript letters for each group

**Table 2** Overview of Emotional-, physical- and sexual relationship abuse and perpetrator types by sexual and gender identities, *N* = 3296

	Cisgender heterosexual		Cisgender sexual minority		Gender minority		<i>P</i> value
	Boys <sup>a</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 516) % ( <i>n</i> )	Girls <sup>b</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 681)	Boys <sup>c</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 620)	Girls <sup>d</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 729)	Transgender girls and non-binary youth assigned male at birth <sup>e</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 89)	Transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth <sup>f</sup> ( <i>n</i> = 661)	
Lifetime Emotional ARA (any)	<b>42 (215)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>53 (362)<sup>a,c</sup></b>	<b>49 (306)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>55 (404)<sup>a,c</sup></b>	<b>44 (39)<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>59 (390)<sup>a,c</sup></b>	<0.001
Boyfriend*	0.93 (2)	81.77 (296)	51.96 (159)	65.84 (266)	48.72 (19)	61.54 (240)	
Boy hooked up with or dated, but not as boyfriends*	0.93 (2)	40.33 (146)	37.25 (114)	27.48 (111)	26.21 (11)	22.31 (87)	
Girlfriend*	83.26 (179)	2.76 (10)	48.04 (147)	42.57 (172)	53.85 (21)	55.64 (217)	
Girl hooked up with or dated, but not as girlfriends*	38.14 (82)	2.21 (8)	20.59 (61)	19.31 (78)	15.38 (6)	18.97 (74)	
Lifetime Physical ARA (any)	<b>23 (120)<sup>b,f</sup></b>	<b>18 (123)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>24 (152)<sup>b,f</sup></b>	<b>24 (177)<sup>b,f</sup></b>	<b>26 (23)</b>	<b>31 (205)<sup>a,b,c,d</sup></b>	<0.001
Boyfriend	0.83 (1)	78.86 (97)	38.16 (58)	58.76 (104)	26.09 (6)	55.61 (114)	
Boy hooked up with or dated, but not as boyfriends	0.83 (1)	40.65 (50)	24.34 (37)	31.64 (56)	30.43 (7)	20.49 (42)	
Girlfriend	80.00 (96)	1.63 (2)	52.63 (80)	29.94 (53)	47.83 (11)	51.71 (106)	
Girl hooked up with or dated, but not as girlfriends	31.67 (38)	1.63 (2)	21.71 (33)	11.86 (21)	26.09 (6)	14.15 (29)	
Most Recent Sexual ARA** (any)	<b>13 (67)<sup>b,c,d,f</sup></b>	<b>25 (174)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>18 (110)<sup>a,b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>25 (181)<sup>a,f</sup></b>	<b>18 (16)<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>29 (191)<sup>a,c,d,e</sup></b>	<0.001
Boy	0	99.38 (160)	77.77 (80)	79.31 (138)	50.00 (8)	52.17 (96)	
Girl	100 (60)	0.62 (1)	20.56 (22)	20.11 (34)	50.00 (8)	26.09 (48)	
Non-binary perpetrator for SV	0	0	4.67 (5)	0.57 (1)	0	21.74 (40)	
Any ARA	<b>53 (272)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>62 (420)<sup>a,c,e</sup></b>	<b>57 (356)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>63 (461)<sup>a,c,e,f</sup></b>	<b>49 (44)<sup>b,d,f</sup></b>	<b>68 (451)<sup>a,c,d,e</sup></b>	<0.001

\*Only reported for “ever” physical and emotional ARA: Since multiple incidents are reported, the numbers are overlapping and not mutually exclusive

\*\*For SV ARA, only the gender of the perpetrator for the most recent event was reported, including non-binary perpetrator, 37 declined to answer. Significant pairwise comparisons are listed in superscript letters for each group, e.g Cisgender boys experienced significantly lower rates of emotional ARA compared to Cisgender heterosexual girls (b), Cisgender sexual minority girls (c), and Transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth (f). Bolded numbers indicate *p* < 0.05.



**Fig. 1** Number of exposure types by sexual and gender identities

respectively, was the perpetrator for each of the ARA victimization types, while for the sexual and gender minority youth, the pattern was more varied.

Among cisgender sexual minority girls, most reported that a boy was the perpetrator across all ARA victimization types. Among cisgender sexual minority boys, a girl was most likely to be the perpetrator for physical ARA, whereas a boy was most likely to be the perpetrator for sexual ARA victimization.

Non-binary perpetrators were only included as a response option for sexual ARA, where more than one in five transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned females at birth reported their perpetrator to be non-binary.

### Risk and Protective Factors for Adolescent Relationship Abuse Within and Between the Different Sexual and Gender Identities

Bivariate analyses indicated that youth who experienced ARA victimization reported fewer concurrent protective factors and more risk factors compared with non-victimized youth within all sexual and gender identities (Table 3). Profiles of cisgender sexual minority and gender minority youth were generally similar with one exception: Gender minority youth reported lower levels of parental trust and communication ( $F(1312) = 26.66, p < 0.001$ ).

For the multi-variate logistic regression analyses, both within and between cisgender sexual and gender identity differences are presented in Table 4. Among cisgender heterosexual youth, the odds of adolescent relationship abuse decreased as one's positive relationship with parents

improved. On the other hand, witnessing spousal abuse, and having seen/heard about a peer being a victim or perpetrator of physical dating violence were each associated with increased odds of exposure to adolescent relationship abuse. Witnessing peer physical dating violence also increased the odds of adolescent relationship abuse for both cisgender sexual minority and gender minority youth, while parental monitoring decreased the odds of abuse. In addition, alcohol use led to more than two-fold odds for ARA for SGM youth.

For between group differences, parental trust and communication served as a protective factor for adolescent relationship abuse for both cisgender sexual minority youth and gender minority youth compared to violence exposed cisgender heterosexual youth and cisgender youth (cisgender heterosexual and cisgender sexual minority youth) respectively. No other factors discriminated between different groups of victims.

### Discussion

Sexual and gender minority youth are especially at risk for relationship abuse (Johns et al., 2018). Still, most of the research has focused on cisgender heterosexual youth and there is little knowledge on the characteristics of adolescent relationship abuse and its associated risk and protective factors across different sexual and gender minority identities. This study sought to address this research gap in a large sample of adolescents aged 14–15 years, by examining frequencies of adolescent relationship abuse types,



**Table 3** Bivariate risk and protective factors for ARA within sexual and gender identity, *N* = 3296

	Cisgender heterosexual			Cisgender sexual minority			Gender minority+		
	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 505)	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 692)	Unadjusted OR <sup>a</sup> CI (95%)	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 532)	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 817)	Unadjusted OR <sup>b</sup> CI (95%)	Non-victims ( <i>n</i> = 255)	Victims ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Unadjusted OR <sup>c</sup> CI (95%)
<i>Protective factors (mean, SD)</i>									
Social support	5.48 (1.41)	5.43 (1.37)	0.97 (0.89–1.05)	5.43 (1.41)	5.29 (1.41)	0.93 (0.86–1.01)	5.55 (1.34)	5.34 (1.38)	<b>0.88 (0.79–0.99)</b>
<i>Relationship with parents:</i>									
Parental monitoring*	4.40 (0.67)	4.22 (0.77)	<b>0.69 (0.59–0.82)</b>	4.34 (0.67)	4.14 (0.79)	<b>0.69 (0.59–0.80)</b>	4.26 (0.69)	4.06 (0.83)	<b>0.72 (0.58–0.88)</b>
Trust and communication	3.60 (0.77)	3.33 (0.77)	<b>0.63 (0.54–0.73)</b>	3.30 (0.79)	3.14 (0.81)	<b>0.78 (0.68–0.89)</b>	3.08 (0.78)	2.89 (0.89)	<b>0.78 (0.65–0.93)</b>
<i>Risk factors % (n)</i>									
Witnessing spousal abuse	11.49 (58)	21.39 (148)	<b>2.07 (1.51–2.91)</b>	17.86 (95)	28.27 (231)	<b>1.81 (1.38–2.37)</b>	18.04 (46)	29.09 (144)	<b>1.86 (1.28–2.71)</b>
Seen/heard about a peer being a victim or perpetrator of physical dating violence	11.88 (60)	20.23 (140)	<b>1.88 (1.36–2.61)</b>	10.34 (55)	25.95 (212)	<b>3.04 (2.21–4.18)</b>	11.37 (29)	29.29 (145)	<b>3.23 (2.09–4.97)</b>
Alcohol use**	13.47 (68)	20.09 (139)	<b>1.61 (1.18–2.26)</b>	10.71 (57)	24.11 (197)	<b>2.65 (1.93–3.64)</b>	10.98 (28)	24.65 (122)	<b>2.65 (1.70–4.13)</b>

Bolded numbers indicate *p* < 0.05

\*The higher score, the better relationship with parents

\*\*One or more days of having at least one drink of alcohol for the past 30 days

<sup>a</sup>Cisgender non-sgm non-ARA is the reference category

<sup>b</sup>Cisgender sexual minority non-ARA is the reference category

<sup>c</sup>Gender minority non-ARA is the reference category. +Most gender minority youth are also sexual minority youth (97%). We do not stratify by sexual identity because the *n* is too small

**Table 4** Adjusted Logistic Regressions for Risk and Protective Factors for ARA to examine *within and between differences* for Sexual Gender minority Identities,  $N = 3296$ 

	Differences among victimized and non-victimized youth <i>within</i> sexual and gender identities				Differences among victimized youth <i>between</i> sexual and gender identities	
	Cisgender heterosexual victims ( $n = 692$ ) vs. non-victims ( $n = 505$ )	Cisgender sexual minority victims ( $n = 817$ ) vs. non-victims ( $n = 532$ )	Gender minority victims+ ( $n = 495$ ) vs. non-victims ( $n = 255$ )	Cisgender sexual minority heterosexual youth ( $n = 692$ )	Cisgender sexual minority ( $n = 817$ ) vs. Cisgender heterosexual youth ( $n = 1509$ )	Gender minority+ ( $n = 495$ ) vs. Cisgender heterosexual and sexual minority youth ( $n = 1509$ )
<i>Protective factors</i>						
Social Support (mean, SD)	0.99 (0.90–1.08)	0.97 (0.88–1.05)	0.92 (0.81–1.04)	0.97 (0.89–1.05)	1.06 (0.99–1.15)	
Relationship with parents*: (mean, SD)						
Parental monitoring	<b>0.81 (0.67–0.97)</b>	<b>0.74 (0.62–0.88)**</b>	<b>0.78 (0.61–0.98)</b>	0.99 (0.86–1.15)	0.87 (0.75–1.00)	
Trust and communication	<b>0.72 (0.60–0.85)**</b>	0.93 (0.79–1.08)	0.93 (0.76–1.14)	<b>0.78 (0.68–0.90)**</b>	<b>0.66 (0.58–0.77)**</b>	
<i>Risk factors</i>						
Witnessing spousal abuse	<b>1.68 (1.18–2.39)*</b>	1.28 (0.95–1.72)	1.43 (0.95–2.16)	1.10 (0.85–1.42)	0.81 (0.62–1.05)	
Seen/heard about a peer being a victim or perpetrator of physical dating violence	<b>1.57 (1.11–2.21)*</b>	<b>2.71 (1.94–3.80)**</b>	<b>2.69 (1.70–4.24)**</b>	1.23 (0.96–1.59)	1.27 (0.98–1.64)	
Alcohol use**	1.18 (0.84–1.65)	<b>2.24 (1.60–3.13)**</b>	<b>2.20 (1.38–3.53)**</b>	1.15 (0.88–1.49)	0.96 (0.74–1.26)	

Bolded numbers indicate a significant  $p$  value: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.001$

\*The higher score, the more parental monitoring and better communication and trust with parents

\*\*One or more days of having at least one drink of alcohol for the past 30 days. Adjusted for sex at birth, racial background, ethnicity, parent's education and income. +Most gender minority youth are also sexual minority youth in the current study (97%). We do not stratify by sexual identity because the  $n$  is too small

number of types of exposures, and perpetrator relationship across different sexual and gender identities (Aim 1), and by comparing risk and protective factors for adolescent relationship abuse within and between various sexual and gender identities (Aim 2).

### Adolescent Relationship Abuse Types and Number of Types of Exposures by Sexual and Gender Identities

More than half of all youth who had been in a relationship, dated or hooked up with someone had experienced some form of adolescent relationship abuse victimization. Across all sexual and gender identities, emotional abuse was the most common type, and sexual abuse, the least common type. Earlier research on adolescent relationship abuse specifically among sexual and gender minority youth mainly focused on physical abuse (Edwards et al., 2015), although in recent years researchers have increasingly accounted for multiple types of abuse (Longobardi & Badenes-Ribera, 2017). The current findings underscore a high rate of emotional abuse, even among adolescents as young as 14 and 15 years old. Although not measured in the current study, emotional abuse that targets trans-specific vulnerabilities (e.g., misgendering, exploiting insecurities linked to social stigma, threatening to “out” them) to maintain power and control of the victim may be particularly harmful for gender and sexual minority youth (Peitzmeier et al., 2020). Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of ensuring that dating abuse support are gender inclusive and accessible to youth across sexual and gender identities.

Gender minority youth were more likely to experience multiple types of adolescent relationship abuse victimization compared to cisgender youth. Transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth had the highest likelihood of any form of adolescent relationship abuse victimization as well as multiple types of victimization: Over one-third experienced two or all three types of victimization, highlighting the breadth of the abuse experienced. This is in alignment with previous research that reported transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth are at particular risk of adolescent relationship abuse (Martin-Storey, 2015). A recent study utilizing the same sample analyzed here (*manuscript submitted for publication*) found that transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth were the most likely group to be poly-victims. This aligns with emerging research on this group, which suggest that gender minority youth, especially transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth, may be particularly at risk for experiencing poly-victimization because of the systemic discrimination that is enacted against them for not conforming to the hegemonic

gender binary system (Sterzing et al., 2017). Lower levels of social support, and higher levels of stigma and exclusion from both the cisgender heterosexual community and the cisgender sexual minority community may increase their vulnerability to victimization (Sterzing et al., 2017).

### Perpetrator Relationship and Gender Across Different Sexual and Gender Identities

Across all sexual and gender identities, the perpetrator was more often a partner than someone the adolescent had hooked up with or dated. That is not to say that violence did not occur in these less committed relationships, however. Additionally, the patterning of perpetrator gender was largely consistent within sexual and gender identity: Most cisgender heterosexual boys and girls reported that a girl or boy, respectively, was the perpetrator for each of the adolescent relationship victimization types. Most cisgender sexual minority boys reported that a boy was the perpetrator for sexual adolescent relationship abuse, but girls were more frequently the perpetrators of physical adolescent relationship abuse. Most perpetrators of emotional adolescent relationship abuse for both cisgender sexual minority girls and boys were boys. The same was true for transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth, whereas for transgender girls and non-binary youth assigned male at birth, both boys and girls were perpetrators. Adolescent health professionals would do well to not assume the gender of the perpetrator based upon a youth’s sexual and/or gender identity. Future research could examine whether relationship dynamics are impacted by the sexual and gender identities of the people involved in the relationship (e.g., two cisgender gay boys; a cisgender heterosexual boy and a cisgender heterosexual girl) and level of relationship commitment (e.g., a hook up versus a committed relationship).

This finding adds to a growing body of research challenging traditional gender expectations, revealing that girls are not more likely than boys to experience physical dating abuse, and further that girls are more likely than boys to perpetrate physical abuse in early adolescence (Ybarra et al., 2016). In the current study, among cisgender heterosexual youth, boys were in fact more likely than girls to have experienced physical abuse victimization. Further, across both groups of cisgender boys—heterosexual and sexual minority—who were victims of physical relationship abuse, female perpetrators were more common than male perpetrators. Although, it is important to note that physical violence perpetrated by girls are often less severe and less likely to cause injury (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Future work might consider whether and how expectations based on stereotypes about gender and sexuality might perpetuate relationship abuse across groups. For example, in a recent

pilot study of an adapted Safe Dates prevention program, one of the adaptations for sexual and gender minority youth considered how “expectations that a partner will behave in a stereotypically “masculine” or “feminine” way may foster abuse” (Wesche et al., 2021). This stems from queer theory, which posits that the altering of the boundaries between masculine and feminine may cause a violent police functioning towards gender minority youth to conform to the hegemonic gender binary system (Sterzing et al., 2017).

Among cisgender sexual minority girls, the majority, across all adolescent relationship abuse types, reported that a boy was the perpetrator. This complement prior work highlighting that bisexual women are more often victimized by male than female partners (Messinger, 2011). As bisexual girls were only a subgroup of the sexual minority group (also included gay/lesbian, questioning, queer, pan-sexual, asexual, other or unsure), future work should delineate by sexual minority identities to explore whether this finding applies to all these identities. Given the younger sample in the current study, future work should further explore these findings in developmental context. Specifically, for sexual and gender minority youth, younger adolescents who may not “be out” yet and thus may be more vulnerable to victimization (e.g., by being threatened by a partner to be “outed”). On the other hand, having disclosed may lead to additional risk factors, such as discrimination and stigma that may in turn increase the risk for adolescent relationship abuse (Edwards, 2018).

In this study, non-binary perpetrators were only included as a response option for sexual adolescent relationship abuse; one in five transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female sex at birth reported having a perpetrator who was non-binary, although youth of other gender and sexual identities did not. There is a limited understanding of non-binary perpetrators in the context of adolescent relationship abuse (Peitzmeier et al., 2020). Although a recent study of gender minority youth assigned female at birth found that gender minority status of the partner did not pose unique risk for interpersonal partner victimization (Whitton et al., 2019a, 2019b), this is clearly an understudied topic that merits further inquiry. Overall, the variation of perpetrator gender for the different sexual and gender minority youth may be commensurate with prior work underscoring that discordance between sexual identity, romantic attraction and sexual behavior in adolescence is common in early adolescence (Ybarra et al., 2019). Further, given that the sexual minority category comprised both gay and bisexual youth, variability in perpetrator gender was expected to differ. Future work might consider delineating between the different categories of sexual minority youth to explore whether choice of partner, dating partner or hook-up reflect normative behaviors to explore sex and/or attractions with someone of a particular gender, partner availability, or

pressure to conform to the expectations of a heteronormative society.

### **Risk Factors for Adolescent Relationship Abuse Within and Between the Different Sexual and Gender Identities**

Several factors associated with increased risk for relationship abuse victimization were noted. Although having friends involved in violence has been found to be a risk factor for adolescent relationship abuse in general youth samples (Mumford et al., 2017), no studies that the authors are aware of have examined this in relation to sexual and gender minority youth specifically (Edwards et al., 2020). In the current study, having witnessed a peer being a victim or perpetrator of physical dating violence was significantly related to adolescent relationship abuse victimization among cisgender heterosexual youth, as well as among cisgender sexual minority and gender minority youth. The associations between witnessing parental violence for cisgender heterosexual youth and peer violence for victims vs. non-victims for adolescent relationship abuse across all groups may be explained, in part, by the Social Learning Theory which posits that interactions are in large part, modeled by observations of close individuals, such as parents and friends (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Thus, having parents who portray violence as an acceptable behavior may shape the child’s subsequent relationships. As peers become increasingly more important during adolescence, having friends involved in dating violence may further model relationship abuse as normative behavior (Shorey et al., 2018). This argument may also explain why social support did not serve as a protective factor for youth in this study; support may not be as protective if the group also normalizes or overlooks abuse.

A factor that stood out uniquely for victims among cisgender sexual minority youth and among gender minority youth was alcohol use, which increased the odds of relationship abuse victimization two-fold. Although previous research has found that alcohol use tends to be higher among sexual and gender minority youth (Bränström et al., 2016), likely as a way to cope with minority stressors (Dyar et al., 2019), studies examining the relationship between alcohol use and adolescent relationship abuse for sexual and gender minority youth have been mixed. Some studies have found that alcohol use does not explain the higher rates of adolescent relationship abuse among sexual and gender minority youth (Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2017), while others indicate that alcohol and substance use at least partially account for higher victimization rates (Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2016). Additional research is needed to examine such questions pertaining to the role of alcohol use in the etiology of adolescent relationship abuse for sexual

and gender minority youth, e.g., whether they are more vulnerable to relationship abuse because of their higher rates of alcohol abuse compared to cisgender heterosexual youth. Further, understanding whether the abuse occurred when the victim had been drinking or was intoxicated could further contextualize findings.

### Protective Factors for Adolescent Relationship Abuse Within and Between the Different Sexual and Gender Identities

A good relationship with caregivers was associated with lower odds of adolescent relationship abuse across all comparisons. Among cisgender heterosexual youth, both parental trust and communication and parental monitoring was protective and among cisgender sexual minority youth and gender minority youth, parental monitoring buffered against relationship abuse. Furthermore, when examining between group differences, parental trust and communication were associated with lower odds of relationship abuse among victimized cisgender sexual minority youth compared to cisgender heterosexual youth; and for gender minority youth versus cisgender youth. Few studies have focused on the protective role of parents in relation to adolescent relationship abuse. A study, examining the protective role of parental involvement for adolescent relationship abuse victimization among sexual and gender minority youth compared to cisgender heterosexual youth, did, in contrast to this study's findings, not find parental involvement to be significantly related to adolescent relationship abuse (Dank et al., 2014). This study examined between group differences however, while the current study also examined within group and between group differences. Thus, the current study contradict previous findings that family support may not offer the same protection relative to cisgender youth (Ross-Reed et al., 2019), as it highlights that parental trust and communication was protective for both sexual and gender minority youth victims of adolescent relationship abuse, despite considering multiple risk factors. This finding aligns with the argument that strong and healthy relationships with parents are protective in many ways that reduce the likelihood of establishing or tolerating abusive relationships, for example, by providing a model of communication and conflict resolution skills and also enhancing self-worth (Garthe et al., 2019). Moreover, it may protect against the multiple minority stressors these youth experience, which may in turn lower the risk of adolescent relationship abuse.

### Limitations

The understanding of risk and protective factors for adolescent relationship abuse is limited by the cross-sectional

nature of the current study. For example, alcohol use may increase one's risk for adolescent abuse victimization or it may be used to cope with one's feelings about being abused. Future studies should therefore expand on the current study with longitudinal designs. Recent work has explored identity abuse that occurs in some relationships among sexual and gender minority youth (e.g., threatening to "out" a partner); this type of abuse was not captured in the current study (Dyar et al., 2019). It is therefore possible that the study underestimated the prevalence of adolescent relationship abuse for sexual and gender minority youth specifically. Similarly, neither sexual nor gender identity is a monolith. Future work should endeavor to examine dating abuse within sexual identities (e.g., gay versus bisexual) and gender identities (e.g., non-binary versus transgender). Finally, non-binary gender was only included as a response option for sexual victimization. Including it as an option for physical and emotional abuse would have further illuminated how common these types of abuses are being enacted by non-binary people as well.

### Implications

To provide a foundation for preventive interventions, the question has been raised as to whether risk and protective factors operate consistently across youth sexual and gender identities (Edwards et al., 2020). Future work should explore risk factors unique to the sexual and gender minority youth such as stigma and discrimination; as well as protective factors, such as pride. Indeed, a burgeoning area of research is beginning to explore such factors guided by the Minority Stress Framework (Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2021). In addition, more research is needed about the bidirectionality and co-involvement in adolescent abuse perpetration and victimization (Badenes-Ribera et al., 2016). For example, recent work suggests that transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth are as likely to be perpetrators as victims of interpersonal violence, suggesting the possible role of internalized stigma and disempowerment associated with identity concealment (Whitton et al., 2019a, 2019b). This area remains understudied.

Given the varied patterning of the gender of the perpetrator for youth of different sexual and gender identities, practitioners should be careful not to assume the sexual and gender identity of youth who disclose data abuse victimization—especially based upon the perpetrator's gender; nor can perpetrator gender be assumed or inferred by the victim's sexual and gender identity. This is especially important for counselors and formal support providers given that sexual and gender minority victims may be *more* likely to seek help relative to cisgender heterosexual counterparts (Scheer & Baams, 2019). This is an important



consideration across service contexts, particularly for those providing anonymous online support through hotlines (Mathieu et al., 2020). For example, in online chats, the gender of the perpetrator may be revealed through pronouns whereas victim gender may not be readily ascertained. Inaccurate assumptions about victim gender or sexual orientation could harm rapport and discourage future seeking efforts.

## Conclusion

Despite the increased risk of adolescent relationship abuse among sexual and gender minorities, most studies have centered on cisgender heterosexual youth and its associated risk and protective factors. The present study fills this gap by finding characteristics and contextual factors that are unique and similar across subgroups of sexual and gender identities. Emotional abuse was the most common form, and sexual abuse, the least common form of adolescent relationship abuse for all youth. Gender minority youth, particularly transgender boys and non-binary youth assigned female at birth, were more likely to experience multiple types of victimization. Perpetrator gender varied within sexual and gender minority subgroups in ways that may challenge current gender-based assumptions: Among cisgender heterosexual youth, boys were more likely than girls to have experienced physical relationship abuse victimization, and among cisgender sexual minority boys who were victims of physical relationship abuse, female perpetrators were more common than male perpetrators. Witnessing peer violence associated with adolescent dating abuse across sexual and gender identities. While alcohol use, and parental trust and communication emerged as particularly important factors for sexual and gender minority youth. This work provides an important foundation for both researchers and practitioners working to ameliorate or prevent adolescent relationship abuse across all sexual and gender identities.

**Authors' Contributions** IFS conceived of the study, led the design and interpretation of the data, performed the statistical analysis, and drafted the manuscript; MLY conceived of the larger study, and led its design and coordination, participated in the design and interpretation of the data, and helped draft the manuscript; KG participated in the design and interpretation of the data, and helped draft the manuscript; and KJM participated in the design and interpretation of the data, and helped edit the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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**Data Sharing and Declaration** The datasets analyzed during the current study are not publicly available but collaboration on analyses is possible on reasonable request.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

**Ethical Approval** The study is in compliance with Ethical Standards. The study was approved by Pearl Institutional Review Board.

**Informed Consent** All participants provided informed assent before participating in the study.

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