

Peer and Teen Dating Violence Among LGBT Youth: Correlates With Anxiety & Suicidal Behaviors

Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D.
Professor, Educational Psychology
Edward William Gutgsell & Jane Marr Gutgsell Endowed Professor

Gabriel J Merrin, Ed.M.
Tyler Hatchel, M.S.

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

espelage@illinois.edu; dlespelage@gmail.com

www.dorothyespelage.com

Twitter: DrDotEspelage



Peer Victimization & Dating Violence among LGBTQ Youth

- Peer victimization, bullying, and other forms of youth violence are common in U.S. schools (Robers, Zhang, Morgan, & Musu-Gillette, 2015).
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, and transgender youth (LGBTQ) often experience elevated levels of peer victimization when compared to their non-LGBTQ peers (D'Augelli et al., 2005; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Espelage, Birkett, Aragon, & Koenig, 2008; Robinson & Espelage, 2012).
- According to the 2013 National School Climate Survey, including a nationally representative sample of 8,854 students in grades 6 – 12 from over 3,200 school districts across the U.S., 74% of LGBT youth reported being verbally harassed in the past year (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014).



Peer Victimization & Dating Violence among LGBTQ Youth

- Substantial empirical evidence illustrates the prevalence of victimization among LGBTQ youth, and these experiences have concerning consequences.
- Pathways linking sexual orientation/gender expression and mental health issues are potentially shaped by various forms of victimization.
- Many studies have found that LGBTQ youth are at a significant higher risk for suicidal ideation and behavior (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Marshal et al., 2011; Ybarra, Mitchell, Kosciw, & Korchmaros, 2015).



Minority Stress and Mental Health

- Minority stress model - understand why LGBTQ individuals present with higher rates of adverse outcomes (Meyer, 1995, 2003), like an increased prevalence of suicidality (Meyer, Frost, & Neshad, 2014).
- Minority stress has been conceptualized as strain arising from the social position of LGBTQ individuals as a stigmatized, disadvantaged, and oppressed group in society (Meyer et al., 2014).
- The combination of stigma-related stressors with typical daily stressors offers a helpful framework that explains the health disparities ever-present among LGBTQ youth.



LGBTQ Youth & Teen Dating Violence

- Most of the literature on minority stress and victimization among LGBTQ youth has focused on bullying and peer victimization specific to their identity (i.e., homophobic teasing).
- Scholars have started to expand their conceptualization of victimization by examining TDV among LGBTQ youth (Luo, Stone, & Tharp, 2014; Martin-Story, 2015; Reuter, Sharp, & Temple, 2015).



Incidence of TDV Among Sexual Minorities

- Lou, Stone, & Tharp (2014): Sexual Minority Youth (SMY) have greater odds of physical dating violence victimization (PDVV) versus non-SMYs.
- Reuter, Sharp, & Temple (2015): Sexual minority adolescents reported higher rates of both TDV perpetration and victimization, and this finding persisted across 2 years for perpetration but not victimization.
- Martin-Storey (2015): Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (N = 12,984), a regionally representative sample of youth ages 14–18. Results generally supported a higher prevalence of dating violence among sexual minority youth.



Sexual Minority Voices about TDV (Gillum & Di Fulvio, 2012)

- Focus groups were conducted as part of a larger study that surveyed 109 sexual minority youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years.
- Participants identified four main themes contributing to dating violence among same-sex couples:
 - homophobia (societal and internalized);
 - negotiating socially prescribed gender roles;
 - assumed female connection;
 - other relationship issues (e.g., mismatch, different communication styles)



Hypotheses

1. We hypothesized that LGBTQ youth would report higher rates of peer victimization and teen dating violence victimization than their non-LGBTQ peers.
2. We hypothesized that between-person and between-school peer victimization and TDV victimization would be associated with higher rates of anxiety and suicidality for all youth.
3. Finally, we hypothesized that between-person and between-school peer victimization and TDV victimization would exacerbate the relation between LGBTQ identification and rates of anxiety and suicidality respectively.



Participants

- 11,797 students from High Schools from Dane County
- Sex:
 - 51% Female
 - 49% Male
- Age
 - Median = 16 years
- Sexual Orientation
 - Straight = 93%
 - LGBTQ = 7%
- Race
 - White = 74%
 - Black = 5%
 - Asian = 5%
 - Latino = 5%
 - Other = 11%



Measures

- Demographics
 - Sex assigned at birth,
 - Race (White, Black, Asian, Latino, and Other)
 - Age
 - Sexual Orientation (straight/heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, questioning, other)
 - Gender Identity (male, female, transgender)
- Teen Dating Violence
- Anxiety
- Suicidality
- Peer Victimization



Measures – Teen Dating Violence

- **Four items assessed teen dating violence victimization:**
“During the last 12 months, how many times did someone you were dating or going out with do the following”
 - (1) Called you names or put you down?
 - (2) Kept you from spending time with friends or family?
 - (3) Threatened to hurt you?
 - (4) Forced you to have sexual contact?
- Response options were (1) Yes, (0) No.
- Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .67 in this study.
- Higher scores indicated greater TDV victimization.



Measures – Peer Victimization

- **The four-item self-report University of Illinois Victimization Scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001) was used to assess peer victimization.**

Students were asked if the following happened in the last 30 days:

- (1) “Other students called me names”
- (2) “Other students made fun of me”
- (3) “Other students picked on me”
- (4) “I got hit and pushed by other students.”

Response options ranged from 0 through 3: “Never”, “1 or 2 times”, “3 or 4 times”, “5 or more times.”

- The construct validity of this self-report measure has been maintained and scores are comparable to peer nominations of victimization (Espelage & Holt, 2001).
- Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .85 in this study.
- Higher scores indicate more self-reported victimization.



Measures – Anxiety

- **Three items assessed anxiety.** Students were asked “In the past 30 days, how often have you . . .”
 - (1) “Felt nervous, anxious or on edge,”
 - (2) “Have not been able to stop or control worrying,”
 - (3) “Felt problems were piling up so high that you could not handle them.”

Response options ranged from 0 through 3: “Not at all”, “Sometimes”, “Often”, “Always.”
- Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .89 in this study. Higher scores indicated greater rates of anxiety.



Measures – Suicidality

- **Two items were used to briefly measure suicidal ideation and behavior:**
 - (1) “During the past 30 days, have you seriously thought about killing yourself?”

Response options ranged from 0 through 3: “No”, “Yes, but rarely”, “Yes, some of the time”, and “Yes, almost all of the time.”
 - (2) “During the past 12 months, have you attempted to kill yourself?”

Response options ranged from 0 through 3: “No”, “Yes, one time”, and “Yes, more than one time.”
- These two items were combined ($r = .60$).
- Higher scores indicated more suicidality.



Analytic Plan

- Fitted a taxonomy of multilevel models using SAS 9.3
- Model fit was assessed using reductions in -2 Log Likelihood, AIC, and BIC fit statistics.
- Between person variables (grand mean centered) were added to the model as level 1 predictors
- Between group variables (group mean centered) were added to the model as level 2 predictors
- Random effects were tested for intercepts
- Interaction terms were then added
- Age, Gender, and Race were also added to the model as a level-1 predictors



Results

- Null model
- Calculated intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) (Snijders & Bosker, 2012) $\rho = \sigma^2_0 / (\sigma^2_0 + \sigma^2_\epsilon)$
 - **1.2%** of total variance in anxiety lied between schools
 - **2.1%** of total variance in suicidality lied between schools
- Analysis for data that is multilevel in structure needs to account for nesting



Means and Standard Deviations for Predictor & Outcome Measures by LBGQ and non-LBGQ Youth

	LBGQ (n = 761) M (SD)	Non-LBGQ (n = 11,033) M (SD)	Significant Mean Differences
Between-Person Measures			
Peer Victimization	.708 (.918)	.315 (.554)	p < .001
Teen Dating Violence	.206 (.322)	.066 (.174)	p < .001
Between-School Measures			
Peer Victimization	.345 (.061)	.340 (.064)	p = .060
Teen Dating Violence	.080 (.025)	.075 (.018)	p < .001
Dependent Variables			
Anxiety	1.65 (.935)	.968 (.803)	p < .001
Suicidal ideation and attempts	.523 (.759)	.089 (.318)	p < .001



Means and Standard Deviations for Predictor & Outcome Measures by Transgender, and non-Transgender Youth

	Transgender (n = 197) M (SD)	Non-Transgender (n = 11,597) M (SD)	Significant Mean Differences
Between-Person Measures			
Peer Victimization	1.09 (1.28)	.328 (.565)	p < .001
Teen Dating Violence	.371 (.428)	.070 (.179)	p < .001
Between-School Measures			
Peer Victimization	.337 (.054)	.341 (.064)	p = .420
Teen Dating Violence	.078 (.022)	.075 (.019)	p < .034
Dependent Variables			
Anxiety	1.61 (1.15)	1.00 (.819)	p < .001
Suicidal ideation and attempts	.782 (1.05)	.105 (.345)	p < .001



Results – Anxiety Multilevel Model

Intercept	2.03*** (.021)	1.43*** (.097)	1.09*** (.093)	1.08*** (.092)	1.09*** (.092)
Age		.024*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)	.031*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)
Female		.327*** (.015)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)
Black		-.016 (.034)	-.021 (.032)	-.026 (.032)	-.026 (.032)
Asian		.087* (.036)	.092** (.034)	.088** (.034)	.087** (.034)
Latino		-.008 (.034)	-.001 (.032)	-.006 (.032)	-.007 (.032)
Other		.002 (.006)	-.007 (.023)	-.009 (.023)	-.009 (.023)
Transgender		.339*** (.059)	-.063 (.057)	-.062 (.057)	.022 (.060)
LGBQ		.590*** (.031)	.414*** (.030)	.410*** (.030)	.504*** (.036)
BP Peer Victimization			.299*** (.013)	.299*** (.013)	.312*** (.014)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.523*** (.040)	.523*** (.040)	.579*** (.044)
BS Victimization				.569* (.214)	.571* (.210)
BS Teen Dating Violence				.512 (.731)	.441 (.719)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					-.086* (.036)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					-.292** (.106)

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



Results – Anxiety Multilevel Model

Intercept	2.03*** (.021)	1.43*** (.097)	1.09*** (.093)	1.08*** (.092)	1.09*** (.092)
Age		.024*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)	.031*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)
Female		.327*** (.015)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)
Black		-.016 (.034)	-.021 (.032)	-.026 (.032)	-.026 (.032)
Asian		.087* (.036)	.092** (.034)	.088** (.034)	.087** (.034)
Latino		-.008 (.034)	-.001 (.032)	-.006 (.032)	-.007 (.032)
Other		.002 (.006)	-.007 (.023)	-.009 (.023)	-.009 (.023)
Transgender		.339*** (.059)	-.063 (.057)	-.062 (.057)	.022 (.060)
LGBQ		.590*** (.031)	.414*** (.030)	.410*** (.030)	.504*** (.036)
BP Peer Victimization			.299*** (.013)	.299*** (.013)	.312*** (.014)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.523*** (.040)	.523*** (.040)	.579*** (.044)
BS Victimization				.569* (.214)	.571* (.210)
BS Teen Dating Violence				.512 (.731)	.441 (.719)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					-.086* (.036)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					-.292** (.106)

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



Results – Anxiety Multilevel Model

Intercept	2.03*** (.021)	1.43*** (.097)	1.09*** (.093)	1.08*** (.092)	1.09*** (.092)
Age		.024*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)	.031*** (.006)	.032*** (.006)
Female		.327*** (.015)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)	.363*** (.014)
Black		-.016 (.034)	-.021 (.032)	-.026 (.032)	-.026 (.032)
Asian		.087* (.036)	.092** (.034)	.088** (.034)	.087** (.034)
Latino		-.008 (.034)	-.001 (.032)	-.006 (.032)	-.007 (.032)
Other		.002 (.006)	-.007 (.023)	-.009 (.023)	-.009 (.023)
Transgender		.339*** (.059)	-.063 (.057)	-.062 (.057)	.022 (.060)
LGBQ		.590*** (.031)	.414*** (.030)	.410*** (.030)	.504*** (.036)
BP Peer Victimization			.299*** (.013)	.299*** (.013)	.312*** (.014)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.523*** (.040)	.523*** (.040)	.579*** (.044)
BS Victimization				.569* (.214)	.571* (.210)
BS Teen Dating Violence				.512 (.731)	.441 (.719)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					-.086* (.036)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					-.292** (.106)

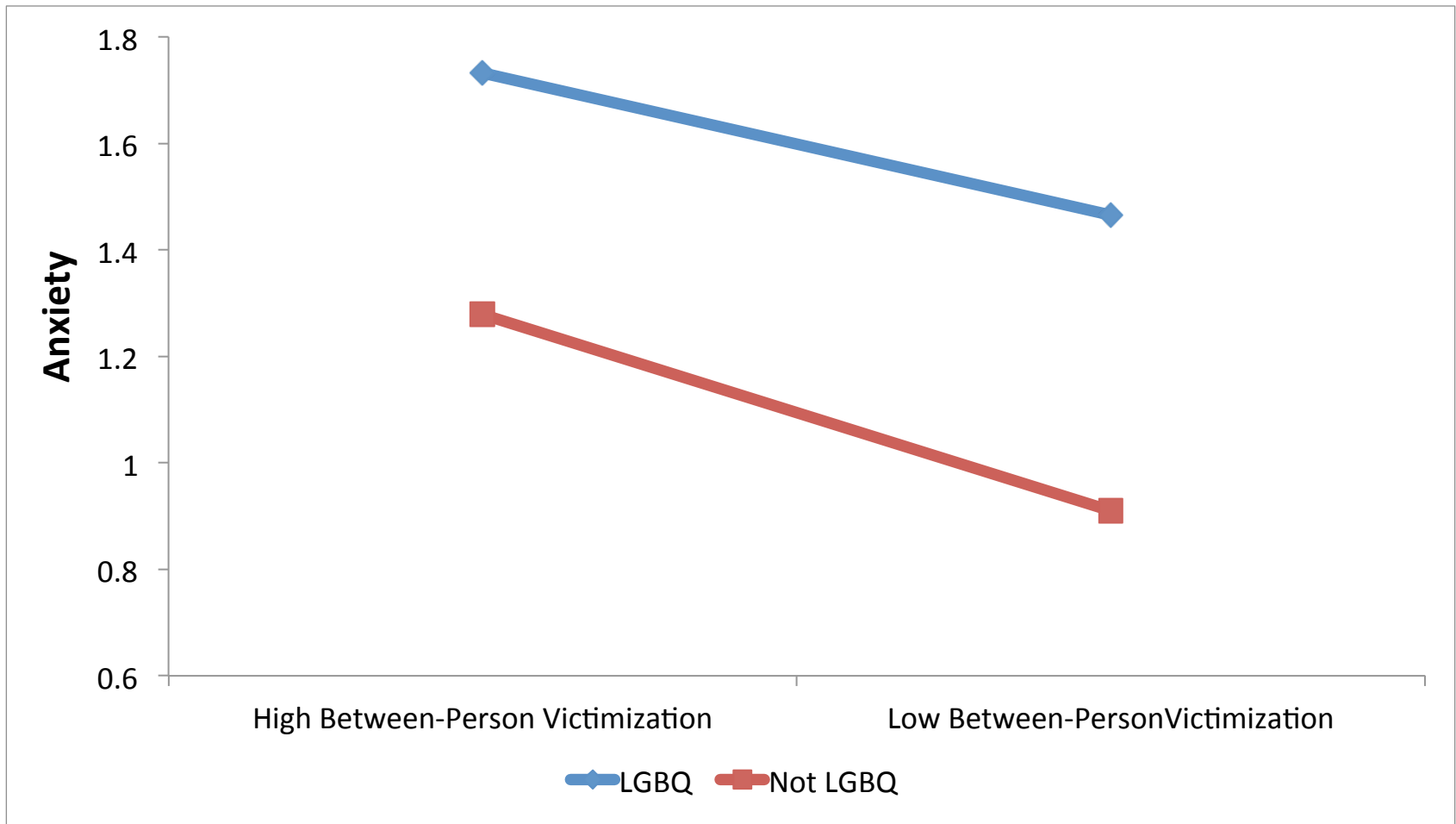
*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



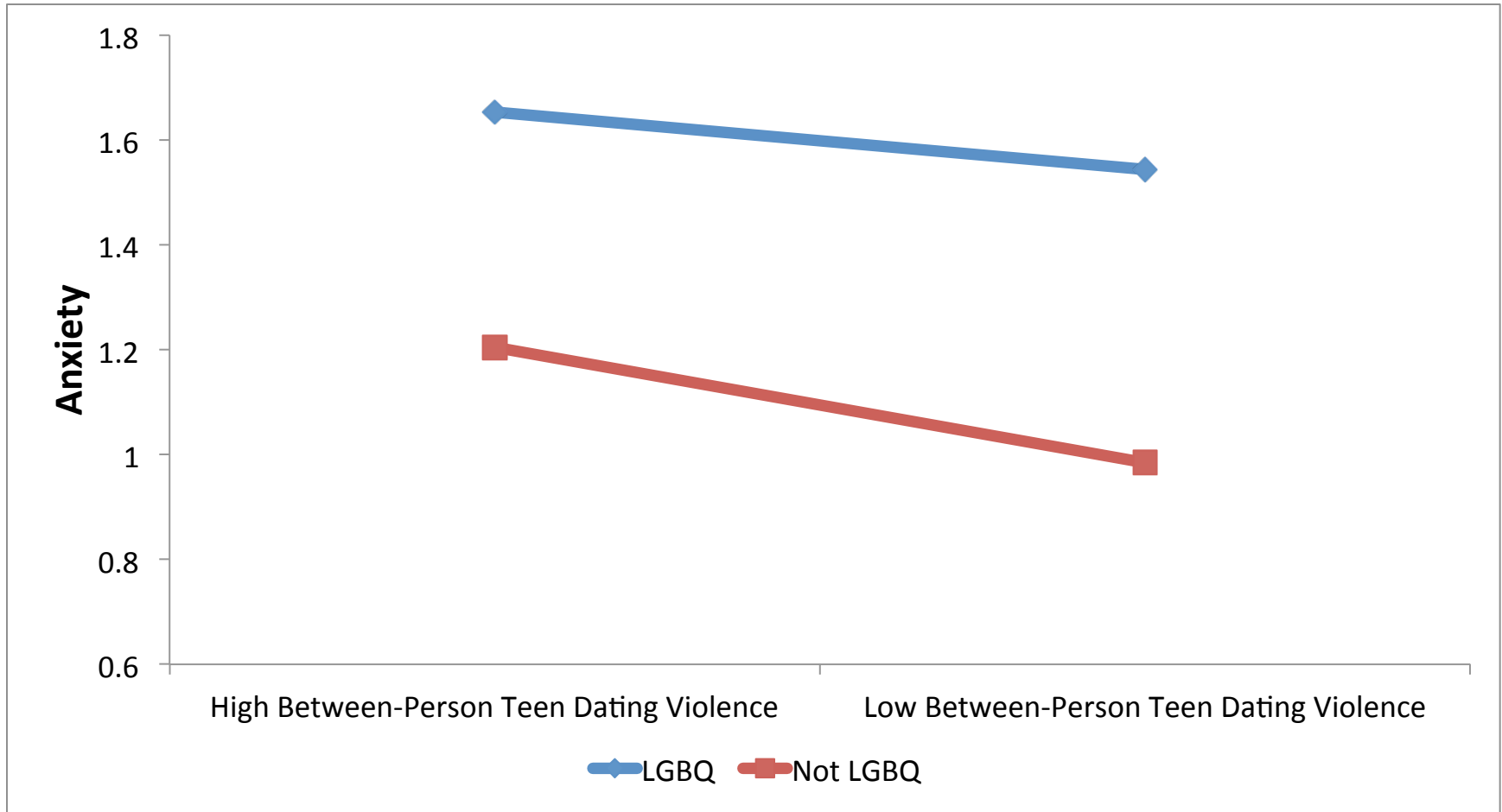
Between-Person Peer Victimization and LGBTQ Identity



Simple Slopes: LGBTQ: $\beta = .23$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$; Non-LGBTQ: $\beta = .31$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$.



Between-Person Teen Dating Violence Victimization and LGBTQ Identity



Simple Slopes: LGBTQ: $\beta = .29$, $SE = .10$, $p < .003$; Non-LGBTQ: $\beta = .58$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$



Results – Suicidality Multilevel Model

Intercept	1.13*** (.012)	1.29*** (.043)	1.18*** (.041)	1.18*** (.040)	1.17*** (.040)
Age		-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.011*** (.002)
Female		.007 (.006)	.022*** (.006)	.021*** (.006)	.020*** (.006)
Black		.006 (.015)	.003 (.014)	-.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)
Asian		.013 (.016)	.016 (.015)	.013 (.015)	.014 (.015)
Latino		.002 (.015)	.006 (.143)	.003 (.014)	.004 (.014)
Other		-.006 (.011)	-.011 (.010)	-.013 (.010)	-.014 (.010)
Transgender		.478*** (.027)	.256*** (.025)	.256*** (.025)	.088*** (.027)
LGBQ		.364*** (.014)	.272*** (.013)	.269*** (.013)	.069*** (.017)
BP Peer Victimization			.105*** (.006)	.105*** (.006)	.089*** (.006)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.395*** (.018)	.396*** (.018)	.326*** (.019)
BS Peer Victimization				.041 (.066)	.045 (.071)
BS Teen Dating Violence				1.02*** (.233)	1.07*** (.248)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					.090*** (.016)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					.283*** (.049)

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



Results – Suicidality Multilevel Model

Intercept	1.13*** (.012)	1.29*** (.043)	1.18*** (.041)	1.18*** (.040)	1.17*** (.040)
Age		-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.011*** (.002)
Female		.007 (.006)	.022*** (.006)	.021*** (.006)	.020*** (.006)
Black		.006 (.015)	.003 (.014)	-.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)
Asian		.013 (.016)	.016 (.015)	.013 (.015)	.014 (.015)
Latino		.002 (.015)	.006 (.143)	.003 (.014)	.004 (.014)
Other		-.006 (.011)	-.011 (.010)	-.013 (.010)	-.014 (.010)
Transgender		.478*** (.027)	.256*** (.025)	.256*** (.025)	.088*** (.027)
LGBQ		.364*** (.014)	.272*** (.013)	.269*** (.013)	.069*** (.017)
BP Peer Victimization			.105*** (.006)	.105*** (.006)	.089*** (.006)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.395*** (.018)	.396*** (.018)	.326*** (.019)
BS Peer Victimization				.041 (.066)	.045 (.071)
BS Teen Dating Violence				1.02*** (.233)	1.07*** (.248)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					.090*** (.016)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					.283*** (.049)

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



Results – Suicidality Multilevel Model

Intercept	1.13*** (.012)	1.29*** (.043)	1.18*** (.041)	1.18*** (.040)	1.17*** (.040)
Age		-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.013*** (.003)	-.011*** (.002)
Female		.007 (.006)	.022*** (.006)	.021*** (.006)	.020*** (.006)
Black		.006 (.015)	.003 (.014)	-.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)
Asian		.013 (.016)	.016 (.015)	.013 (.015)	.014 (.015)
Latino		.002 (.015)	.006 (.143)	.003 (.014)	.004 (.014)
Other		-.006 (.011)	-.011 (.010)	-.013 (.010)	-.014 (.010)
Transgender		.478*** (.027)	.256*** (.025)	.256*** (.025)	.088*** (.027)
LGBQ		.364*** (.014)	.272*** (.013)	.269*** (.013)	.069*** (.017)
BP School Risk			.087*** (.005)	.087*** (.005)	.068*** (.006)
BP Peer Victimization			.105*** (.006)	.105*** (.006)	.089*** (.006)
BP Teen Dating Violence			.395*** (.018)	.396*** (.018)	.326*** (.019)
BS School Risk				.017 (.024)	.029 (.026)
BS Peer Victimization				.041 (.066)	.045 (.071)
BS Teen Dating Violence				1.02*** (.233)	1.07*** (.248)
BP Peer Victimization *LGBQ					.090*** (.016)
BP Teen Dating Violence * LGBQ					.283*** (.049)

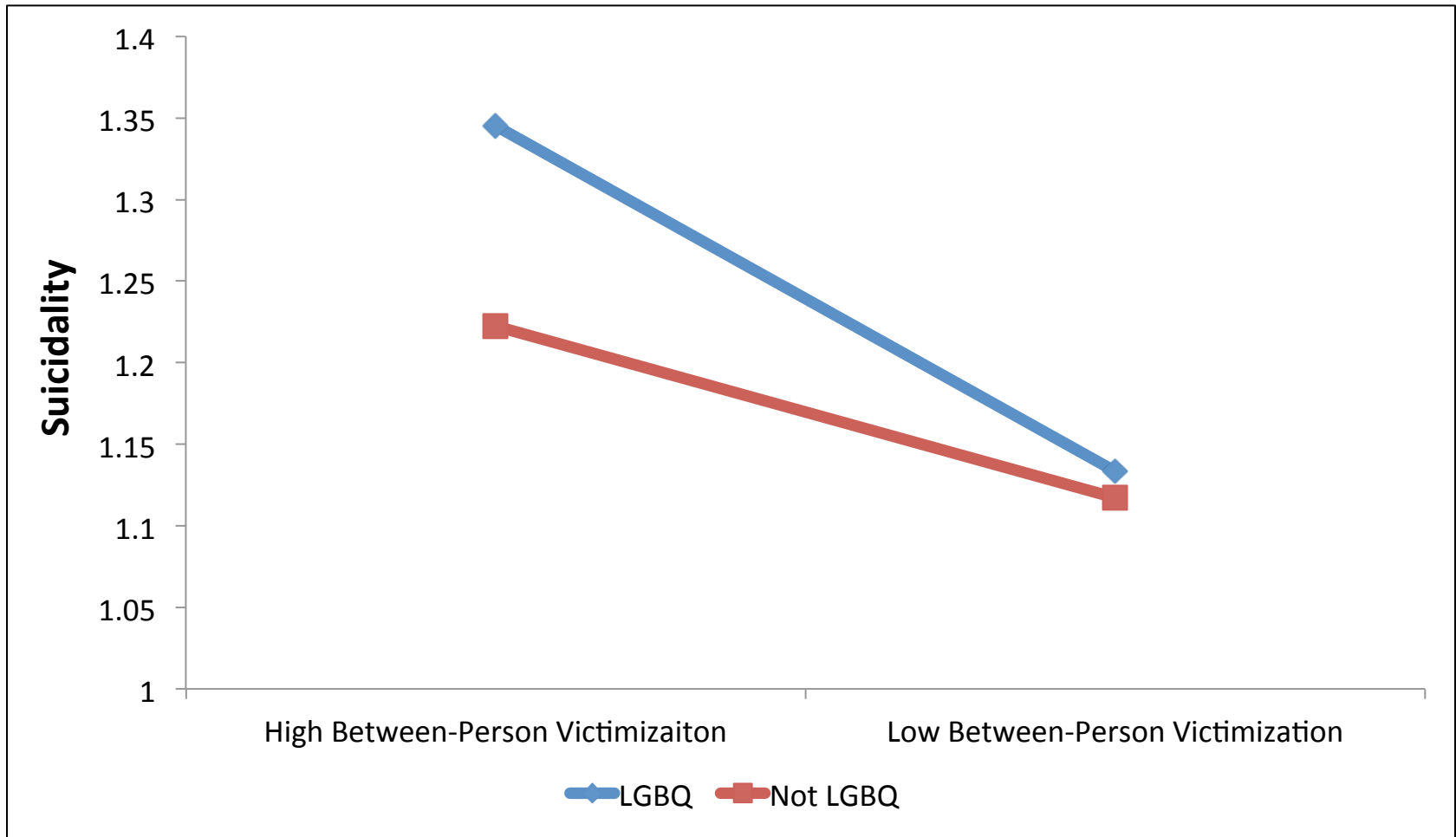
*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001



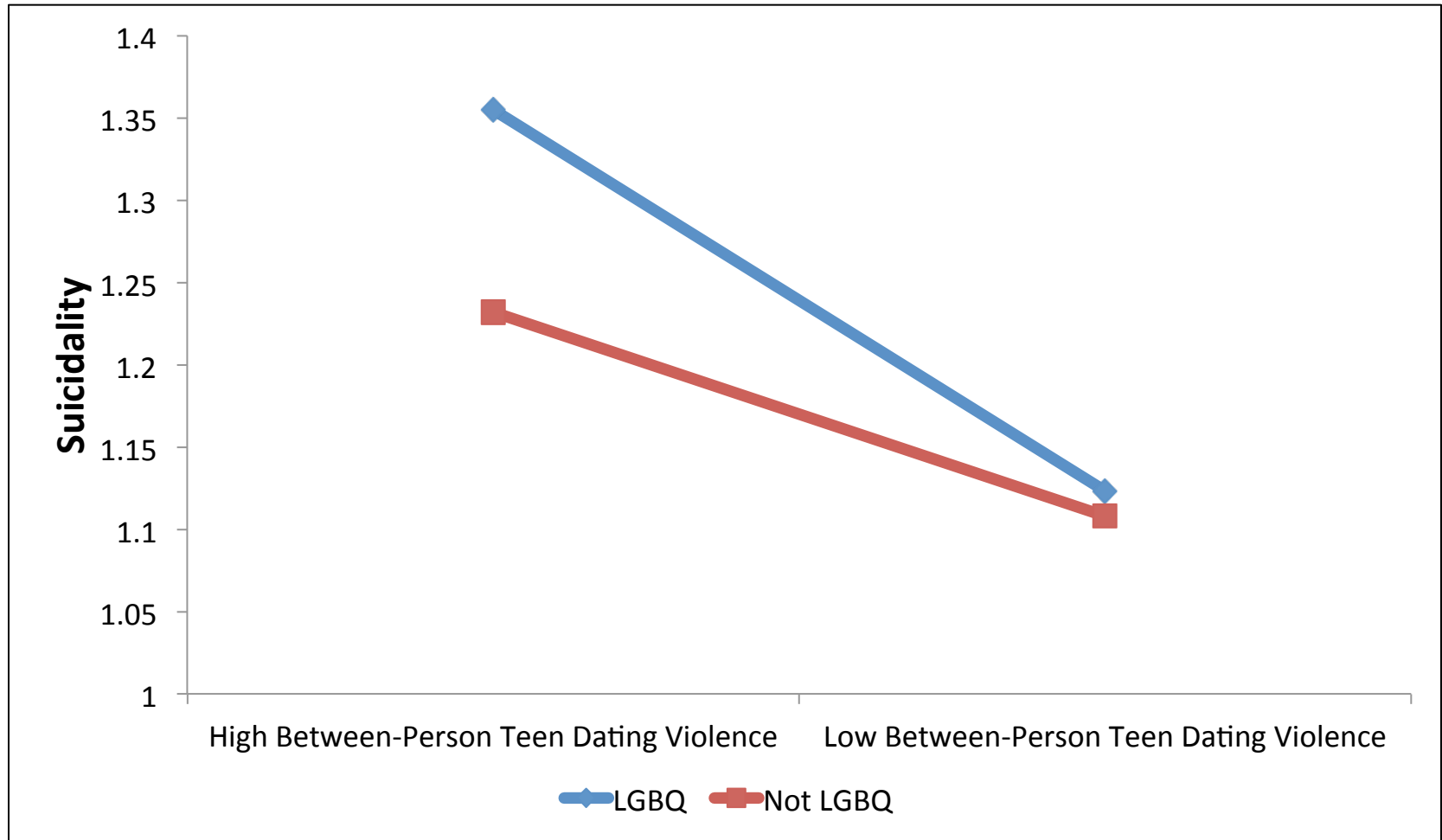
Between-Person Peer Victimization and LGBTQ Identity



Simple Slopes: LGBTQ: $\beta = .18$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$; Non-LGBTQ: $\beta = .09$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$



Between-Person Teen Dating Violence Victimization and LGBTQ Identity



Simple Slopes: LGBTQ: $\beta = .61$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$; Non-LGBTQ: $\beta = .33$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$.



Discussion

- Our findings support minority stress theory - LGBTQ youth reported greater levels of anxiety, suicidality, and peer victimization.
- TDV experiences appeared to moderate the associations between sexual orientation and mental health outcomes.
- LGBQ youth who reported higher rates of TDV had significantly more mental health issues than LGBQ peers who reported lower rates of TDV.
- LGBTQ youth also reported greater TDV victimization, adding to a growing body of literature demonstrating that LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk for this form of violence (Dank et al., 2014; Lou et al., 2014; Martin-Story, 2015; Reuter et al., 2015).



Implications

- These findings indicate that prevention programs need to address multiple forms of victimization (e.g., peer and dating) and should pay particular attention to the experiences of LGBTQ youth.
- Prevention programs should try to minimize language that marginalize and stigmatize these youths (Espelage, 2016)
 - Currently the majority of bullying and peer victimization prevention programs ignore this language



Implications

- No TDV prevention programs consider violence within the context of non-heterosexual relationships or gender nonconformity in a comprehensive manner
- Discussions should take place among LGBTQ youth support groups or clubs like gay-straight alliances (GSAs).

