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Professionals' Application of Intersectionality with Marginalized Youth: Considerations for Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programming and Beyond

Bradley Kyle Daly, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Crooks, Claire, *The University of Western Ontario*

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Abstract

Marginalized youth disproportionality experience adverse outcomes such as increased rates of mental health issues and teen dating violence. Addressing their compounding concerns requires an approach that considers their interlocking marginalized identities and the oppressive systems impacting them. Intersectionality incorporates both elements, yet the literature on how frontline practitioners understand and apply this complex theory within their practice remains sparse. This integrated-article dissertation explored how professionals working with marginalized youth within various settings, including teen dating violence prevention contexts, understood and applied intersectionality. The first paper (chapter two) used group concept mapping to explore how 12 professionals applied intersectionality. Results yielded six distinct clusters: 1) organizational elements, 2) self-reflection and awareness, 3) values, beliefs, and actions, 4) considerations for creating an anti-oppressive and safe environment, 5) practices for person-centred care, and 6) promotion of self-reflection and personal development among youth. These findings illustrated organizational and individual factors related to applying intersectionality in practice and professionals' perspectives on how these approaches impact youth outcomes.

The second research paper (chapter three) drew from thematic analysis to explore how ten professionals working with marginalized youth in diverse community settings and implementing a healthy relationships program understood intersectionality. Further, this study sought to understand professionals' internal reflective processes when considering intersectionality in their practice. The following three main themes were identified: 1) understanding intersectionality as a framework, 2) professionals' self-reflection: examination of positionality, privilege, and continued learning, and 3) professionals' journey toward applying an intersectional approach. These themes capture professionals' diverse experiences grappling with intersectionality and offer practical considerations related to critical practice.

Finally, the third research paper (chapter four) utilized the same interviews from chapter three to explore how professionals apply intersectionality broadly within their work and, more specifically, within TDV prevention programming contexts. The following main themes were identified: 1) professionals' application of intersectionality, 2) intersectionality

in the context of teen dating violence prevention programming, and 3) benefits of an intersectional approach for youth. Together, the results from these studies highlight a variety of concrete strategies and considerations from professionals aiming to enact systemic change in the lives of marginalized youth through bridging theory and application.

Summary for Lay Audience

Youth with marginalized social identities often simultaneously experience multiple forms of structural oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism. Stemming from the impact of these oppressive systems, these youth disproportionately experience adverse outcomes, such as teen dating violence. Intersectionality is a framework for exploring how different aspects of a person's identity, such as their race, sex, and sexual orientation, interact with each other and shape experiences of oppression that lead to unique forms of marginalization. Since its emergence, intersectionality has been presented as an effective approach for understanding and addressing the interacting effect of oppressive systems; however, there is little research exploring how those working directly with marginalized youth understand and apply this concept within their work. This research explored how professionals working with marginalized youth within various settings, including teen dating violence prevention contexts, understood and applied intersectionality.

The first paper (chapter two) explored how 12 professionals applied intersectionality. Results yielded six distinct clusters: 1) organizational elements, 2) self-reflection and awareness, 3) values, beliefs, and actions, 4) considerations for creating an anti-oppressive and safe environment, 5) practices for person-centred care, and 6) promotion of self-reflection and personal development among youth. These findings illustrated organizational and individual factors related to applying intersectionality in practice and professionals' perspectives on how these approaches impact youth outcomes.

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Co-Authorship Statement

Brad Daly completed the following integrated-article dissertation with coauthors. Across the three manuscripts, Brad Daly conducted literature reviews, recruited participants, collected and transcribed data, led the data analysis, and produced the manuscripts. Dr. Claire Crooks provided research supervision and contributed to the study designs, data analysis, and manuscript preparation, while Dr. Linda Baker critically reviewed the manuscripts and provided editorial support. Study 1 was submitted for publication.

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Chapter 1

1   Introduction

Adolescence represents a critical time of transition whereby young people attain the necessary physical, emotional, social, and economic resources for adulthood. The development achieved during this period is predictive across various health variables throughout one's life (Patton et al., 2016). Unfortunately, a well-established reality within research and practice is that adverse health outcomes, such as teen dating violence (TDV), disproportionately impact youth with marginalized social identities, such as females, non-binary youth (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021), 2SLGBTQIA+ youth (Dank et al., 2014; Reuter, et al., 2015), Indigenous youth (Hautala et al., 2017), and ethnic and racialized youth (Kann, 2018). Despite this disturbing pattern, surprisingly little research explores the underlying systemic inequities contributing to these trends (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021, 2023; Viner et al., 2017). In comparison, there is abundant research on individual-level variables (e.g., individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours). This preliminary analysis fails to consider how overlapping systems of oppression (e.g., ageism, sexism, racism, and heterosexism) negatively impact marginalized youth and increase the stigma they already endure. Further, this reduced conceptualization has contributed to the deficit-focused lens (Russell, 2005; Viner, 2017) that has historically permeated how professionals working with marginalized youth are trained and practice throughout their careers.

Critical approaches have emerged to understand and address the structural inequities that marginalized youth contend with. As noted by Parker (2007), "where there is power, there is resistance, and . . . in every dominant practice, there are contradictions and spaces for us to work to challenge and change the existing state of affairs" (p. 2). Consistent with a social justice agenda, professionals often utilize critical perspectives to uncover how oppressive forces, operating at the systemic level, perpetuate injustice and harm, especially among marginalized populations. A critical approach that has accumulated considerable attention as a framework for academic inquiry and practical work with marginalized individuals is intersectionality.

Stemming from black feminist and antiracist discourses, intersectionality refers to the perspective that individuals hold multiple interlocking social identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity) that are inherently connected to systems of oppression (e.g., sexism, heterosexism, and racism). These social identities are associated with unique forms of privilege and oppression (Hankivsky, 2014; Warner, 2008). The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), who critiqued traditional approaches to examining inequity for focusing on only one aspect of identity and overlooking disadvantages simultaneously experienced at multiple axes of one's identity (e.g., being both female and black). Beyond its utility as an academic tool, intersectionality has increasingly been held as an innovative framework for policy development (Hankivsky et al., 2014) and as a general approach to practical work with marginalized populations in a variety of domains (Etherington & Baker, 2018; Heard et al., 2019; Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020). Nevertheless, despite well-founded arguments advocating for the application of intersectionality within practical domains, there remains a dearth of research exploring how professionals working directly with marginalized youth understand intersectionality and its role within their work. Unfortunately, this same gap exists within the field of TDV, despite similar calls to find ways to apply intersectionality within TDV prevention programming (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). The argument articulating intersectionality as a tool for addressing the systemic inequities marginalized populations face is strong. Still, it is necessary to gather front-line professionals' perspectives to satisfy the longstanding efforts dedicated to translating this complex theory into practice and fulfill its transformative potential within practice.

This dissertation explores how a diverse range of professionals working with marginalized youth in various contexts, including the development and implementation of TDV prevention programming, understand intersectionality and apply it in their work. This dissertation uses a three-article format to capture professionals' perspectives on intersectionality and their practical considerations for integrating intersectionality into their practice. The first research paper (chapter two) used a group concept mapping methodology to explore how 12 professionals involved with a TDV prevention program for marginalized youth applied intersectionality in their work. The second research paper (chapter three) drew from thematic analysis to explore how ten professionals working

with marginalized youth in diverse community settings and implementing a healthy relationships prevention program understood intersectionality. Finally, the third research paper (chapter four) utilized data from the same interviews used in chapter three to explore how professionals apply intersectionality broadly within their work and, more specifically, within TDV prevention programming contexts. Together, the results from these studies highlight a variety of concrete strategies and considerations from professionals' aiming to enact systemic change in the lives of marginalized youth through bridging theory and application.

1.1 Researcher Positionality

Undeniably, psychological science directly engages with human experience, yet the researcher's positionality is frequently disregarded or outright dismissed (Nzinga et al., 2018). Every researcher studying human experiences possesses life experiences that interact with and inevitably impact their research (Bourke, 2014). Comprehending our respective positions enhances our ability to contextualize our research and is thus required, especially when studying intersectionality (Sorrells & Sekimoto, 2016). As the first author and primary researcher on a paper about intersectionality, I am compelled to identify my positionality and the intersecting identities that have inevitably impacted my reception, interpretation, engagement, and articulation of this research project.

I am a white-identified, cisgender male and a Ph.D. student in school and child psychology. As someone born, reared, and educated primarily in Southwestern Ontario, Canada, during the early twenty-first century, the cultural formation that has impacted me most significantly is the European, primarily British and French, cultures. My ethnic background is a third-generation Welsh and fourth-generation Irish settler in Canada. In many ways, these labels are inadequate to situate me fully to every source I've engaged with and each participant and reader of this research study. However, it is essential to acknowledge that I occupy a location at the intersection of relative privilege and power: racial, gender, sexuality, and professional. I also possess identities that, in certain contexts, are not privileged such as my young age when working with families in clinical settings and my gender identity when in a psychology classroom. My interest in intersectionality as a framework for understanding TDV has developed through my

clinical work supporting marginalized youth. I do my best to situate my clinical practice within social justice and anti-oppressive approaches.

In acknowledging my potential biases, I cannot fully bracket them because I believe suspending how these identities have shaped my world entirely is impossible. To substantiate this assertion, Merriam (1998) explains that qualitative research is a process embedded with values, thereby rendering it incapable of fully accounting for the subjective biases that affect the research. However, I am informing the reader of the perspective through which I conducted the analysis by acknowledging my interpretive framework, positionality, and associated assumptions. Specifically, as explicated earlier, my positionality has inevitably influenced various aspects of this study's construction. These aspects include the approach used to review the existing literature, the nature of questions posed to participants during interviews, the interpretive and conceptual framework employed in analyzing the research, and the write-up of each element of this dissertation.

This introduction includes a brief overview of how the term marginalized youth is conceptualized in this dissertation. Next, theoretical perspectives on TDV, mainly developmental and ecological-related considerations, are outlined alongside a review of TDV programming. Following these sections, a case for using critical perspectives is presented, with intersectionality being argued as a practical approach for professionals aiming to apply a more critical lens to their work with marginalized populations. Finally, I describe the need for exploring professionals' views on intersectionality and its application within their work with marginalized youth, including within TDV prevention programming contexts.

1.2   Marginalized Youth

Adolescence is a life stage characterized by a transition period from childhood to early adulthood (Fasick, 1994). Although there is a lack of consensus about the exact age range, within this dissertation, adolescence refers to the stage of life between ages 10 to 17 (Steinberg, 2008). Many developmental milestones typically included in adolescence include transitions from elementary, middle, and high school, continued independence

from parents, and increased demands in social interactions with peers and adults. Marginalized youth is often used synonymously within literature and practice with vulnerable or high-risk youth. These terms can take different meanings depending on the approaches used to conceptualize the challenges youth face. Throughout this dissertation, marginalized youth are understood as being systemically subjected to ongoing and institutionalized disadvantage and exclusion due to aspects of their identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic status. This marginalization is perpetuated by systemic barriers that limit their access to resources, opportunities, and power. Further, these structural barriers reinforce and reproduce inequalities across various domains of life, including education, employment, health, and social services (Barr, 2019; Collins & Blige, 2020). As a result, systemically marginalized youth often face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination that intersect and compound their disadvantage, leading to adverse outcomes and experiences.

Within the literature, oppression is a term that is often used synonymously with marginalization and refers to "a form of structural violence that is manifested through the systemic subordination and exploitation of a non-dominant group by a dominant group" (Young, 1990, p. 41). Oppression operates on multiple levels, including individual, institutional, and cultural, and is perpetuated through social norms, policies, and practices that privilege the dominant group and disadvantage the non-dominant group. The process of oppression leads to unequal power relations between the groups, limiting the opportunities and resources available to the non-dominant group and perpetuating their subjugation (Freire, 2000; Hooks, 2014; Young, 1990).

1.3   Teen Dating Violence

A commonality among all participants in this dissertation was that they worked within TDV prevention programming contexts with marginalized youth. TDV is a form of intimate relationship violence that includes psychological, physical, and sexual violence between individuals in current or previous dating or sexual relationships during adolescence, and it is often reciprocal (CDC, 2021). TDV constitutes a serious public health concern, with recent estimates suggesting that the prevalence is between 20-30% among socially dominant youth (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021; Public Health Agency of

Canada, 2017; Wincentak et al., 2017) and even higher rates and more severe consequences among marginalized youth (Adhia et al., 2019; Dank et al., 2014; Exner-Cortens, 2021; Hautala et al., 2017; Kann, 2018). Since this dissertation seeks to produce tangible prevention and intervention strategies that can ultimately be applied while working with marginalized youth in various settings, including the TDV prevention programming context, a theoretical approach must be applied. This dissertation uses developmental and ecological systems approaches to conceptualize TDV and its implications.

1.3.1 Theoretical Perspectives for Understanding TDV

The etiology of an individual becoming violent toward their dating partner is complex and involves many factors. Many theoretical approaches over the past 50 years have gained empirical support. Throughout this period, subsequent theoretical approaches to understanding TDV have often improved upon original conceptualizations. Also, many theoretical approaches are not inherently in competition with each other. Instead, they complement each other and can be applied simultaneously to explain different aspects of this complicated and harmful relational experience (Rothman, 2018). Whether healthy or unhealthy, social interactions in dating relationships include a complex interplay of dynamics with multiple layers of context. As identified in Exner-Cortens (2014), research on TDV in the past three decades has mainly developed independently of literature on normative adolescent romantic relationships and, more broadly, on theoretical frameworks for adolescent identity development and psychosocial development. Identity formation/development sheds light on the etiology of TDV, and considering developmental theories of identity formation in adolescence will help researchers develop programming/interventions that connect with youth personally.

A developmental perspective considers the developmental changes relevant to intimate relationships in adolescence, and a particular emphasis is placed on identity development due to its connection with intersectionality. An ecological systems approach considers how risk factors extending across multiple contexts of development, including, but not limited to, individual characteristics, family and peer relationships, and societal influences, interact to either promote healthy relationships or produce relationships

characterized by conflict and violence (Novak & Furman, 2016). A primary distinction between the two approaches is that a developmental perspective considers factors that create risk for all adolescents by the nature of their biological and social development, and an ecological model considers how larger systems interact to create a greater risk for certain adolescents.

Developmental Perspective. Several developmental processes contribute to increased vulnerability to violence in dating relationships. For example, during adolescence, the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for advanced reasoning, logic, and flexible thinking, is still developing. As a result, adolescents are more reliant on their amygdala, which contributes to increased emotionality (Chamberlain, 2008; Romeo, 2013). Also, changes associated with the transition from egocentric thinking contribute to adolescents experiencing intense social learning. For instance, ongoing internal pressure to belong, a growing sensitivity to peer regard, emerging skills in perspective-taking and self-disclosure all contribute to increases in negative relational patterns such as jealousy, in-group and out-group cliques, and awareness of rejection and vulnerability to power imbalances (Desjardins & Leadbeater, 2011; Laursen & Collins, 1994).

Further, adolescents have heightened emotionality and a reduced capacity to regulate their emotions compared to adults (Collins et al., 2009), lack experience using positive and mature communication skills such as negotiation (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999), and experience challenges seeking support from adults. Instead, they self-disclose to their peers, who often cannot provide adequate support during experiences of dating violence (Black et al., 2008). These well-established developmental processes create a unique risk for TDV perpetration and victimization. However, adolescent identity development is often a factor excluded from the literature examining the theoretical basis of TDV (Exner-Cortens, 2014). Identity formation and development shed light on the etiology of TDV, and many aspects of identity development and formation become essential and often develop within the context of adolescent psychosocial relationships.

Exner-Cortens (2014) argues that scholarship has reviewed theoretical frameworks for understanding TDV using theoretical perspectives to understand adult interpersonal

violence, such as attachment theory, feminist theory, and social learning theory. Although these theoretical frameworks help understand critical aspects of TDV, these frameworks largely exclude the developmental considerations related to identity development that are unique to adolescents and their experiences in dating relationships. Research on adolescent identity development can help explain and predict how dating violence develops and provide insight into how adolescents may experience TDV.

Identity exploration is a normative developmental process for all adolescents (Erikson, 1968). This period marks considerable growth in one's sexual identity formation stemming from the increased capacity for intimacy within relationships (Worthington et al., 2008). An important consideration in understanding identity development is that it neither begins nor ends with adolescence. Adolescence represents a period where physical, psychological, cognitive, and social development combines to create the capacity for genuine reflection into one's internal subjective experiences (Fasick, 1994). Further, in adolescence, individuals can better reflect on their childhood experiences, the broader societal context they are immersed in, their intentions and others' intentions, and the meaning they extract from their experiences. They ultimately use their understanding in these areas to create a pathway toward adulthood. In developing this pathway toward their adult identity, youth begin to explore and consciously commit to specific values, ideological stances, and vocational interests (Marcia, 1980).

Ecological Considerations. TDV is an outcome linked to complex cumulating risk factors within and across multiple contexts and levels (Connolly et al., 2010; Heise, 1998). The ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998) helps understand TDV because it considers how different systems interact to create multiple negative individual and societal circumstances that support this unhealthy relational pattern (Banyard et al., 2006; Foshee et al., 2001; Foshee et al., 2008). The ecological model of dating aggression includes a series of concentric circles of influence with three central interacting systems. These systems include the microsystem (e.g. attributes, behaviours, and attitudes of the adolescent, family and peer groups), the macrosystem (e.g. values, behaviours, and expectations of the community), and the exosystem (e.g. socio-demographic factors including ethnic and cultural group, recent

immigration status, family structure, socioeconomic disadvantage, and neighbourhood density). By accounting for variables across multiple levels of influence, developmental and ecological perspectives allow for an understanding of the many risk and protective factors contributing to TDV (Banyard et al., 2006; Foshee et al., 2001; Foshee et al., 2008).

TDV research suffers from a problem of repetition; that is, most research focuses on identifying protective and risk factors using quantitative methods (Cohen et al., 2018). While this approach has been helpful in designing universal TDV programming, there needs to be a deeper understanding of how marginalized youth experience and manage TDV (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023). My training in child psychology has illuminated how the field of clinical psychology has a longstanding history of being embedded in a deficit-focused perspective and lacks the use of critical perspectives. The dominant discourse is insufficient in addressing the overarching systems of oppression negatively impacting them.

The developmental and ecological models must adequately address why TDV disproportionately impacts marginalized groups. Suppose we rely on these models alone to understand complex social problems like TDV. In that case, we will conclude that individual-level deficits and factors within the individual's relationships, communities, and society are the primary contributors to risk instead of the structural oppression underlying each factor. The structural factors, being the inequitable power relations within a society, occur at a societal level yet are often experienced at the individual level. Thus, we must broaden our focus by understanding these issues at their foundation: inequitable social power based on aspects of identity and not simply stop at recognizing that particular identities experience more adverse health outcomes. This structural lens will help practitioners to target the root causes in prevention and intervention efforts by changing social beliefs and values that contribute to socially dominant groups garnering more power and privilege than socially disadvantaged groups.

1.3.2 TDV Programming

Effective universal prevention and targeted intervention programming each have their respective places in the broader comprehensive strategy to reduce TDV (Krug et al., 2002; Wolfe et al., 2003); however, not all universal programs, particularly those that are designed to be delivered in schools, are sufficient for youth most at risk or in need (Thornton et al., 2000). A recent review of gender-based violence prevention programs identified that most programs had been implemented and evaluated in school and post-secondary environments. However, practical prevention efforts among marginalized populations have been largely overlooked (Crooks et al., 2019). A more intensive, tailored TDV prevention program is recommended to address TDV among high-risk youth (Ball et al., 2012; Crooks et al., 2019; Wolfe et al., 2003).

Healthy Relationships Plus (HRP) Program. The HRP Program is a school or community-based, universal, evidence-informed program for youth aged 14-18. The HRP Program is designed to be implemented in a small group format and consists of 14 one-hour lessons. The HRP Program utilizes the same core principles as the Fourth R program, which is an evidence-informed, school-based program using a healthy relationships approach to the social and emotional development of youth (Crooks et al., 2015; Crooks et al., 2011; Wolfe et al., 2012; Wolfe et al., 2009). However, the HRP Program, designed for flexible delivery to reduce barriers to implementation, includes a greater emphasis on mental health and adds more extensive skill practice to high-risk-taking scenarios throughout 14 1-hour lessons (Exner-Cortens et al., 2019). The HRP Program is grounded in competence improvement (e.g., promoting communication skills), social resistance skills training (e.g., analyzing media portrayals of substance use), and enhancing self-efficacy related to social skills and planning behaviour.

The HRP Program uses a combination of health promotion and harm reduction strategies to target mental health, substance misuse, and bullying. It simultaneously aims to reduce TDV risk factors and enhance adolescent protective factors, such as healthy relationship skills, coping skills, help-seeking strategies, and positive mental health (Exner-Cortens et al., 2019; Townsley et al., 2015). The HRP Program has garnered evidence such as significantly lowering odds of physical bullying victimization after one year compared to

a control group, which was mediated by increased intention to seek help from a mental health professional (Exner-Cortens et al., 2019). Additionally, it has been found to decrease depression among youth who reported the highest levels of depression before participating in the HRP Program (Lapshina et al., 2018).

HRP-Enhanced Program. The HRP-Enhanced (HRP-E) was developed using trauma-informed and harm-reduction principles to meet the unique needs of high-risk youth involved in diverse settings such as alternative education, children's mental health services, child protective services, and the youth justice system (Crooks et al., 2018; Houston & Crooks, 2022). The HRP-E applies the same supportive small group format and delivery model used in the original HRP and covers similar content but includes two additional sessions (16 in total) and an emphasis on topics applicable to high-risk experiences of youth. The HRP-E has specific adaptations to meet the youth's needs that were identified during pilot work. Although each of these enhancements allows for an increased ability to support high-risk youth, further enhancements which integrate the notion of intersectionality and youth identity into TDV programming and, more generally, into work with marginalized youth are required to provide the most effective support to this population (Crooks et al., 2019; De La Rue, 2019; Exner-Cortens, 2014; Roberts et al., 2018). Often intervention and prevention programs do not address the reality that people are treated differently based on visible and invisible social identities. Our TDV programming for marginalized youth will likely fall short when we do not attend to this reality.

1.4   Critical Perspectives in Practice

Critical practice criticizes traditional approaches to working with marginalized populations for maintaining and reinforcing oppression and inequality by focusing on deficits and conceptualizing individual risk factors and marginalized identities as occurring independently (Mattsson, 2014; Overstreet et al., 2020). Utilizing a critical perspective while working with marginalized populations involves examining the nature and consequences of historical and systemic inequities between groups and advocating for structural change (Murphy, 2009). Generally, critical approaches within a given field posit that the respective discipline has, in some ways, historically neglected the

ecological, structural, social, cultural, and environmental contexts individuals are embedded in and has reduced the study of the human experience to individual-level factors. This intellectual and social movement, which is rooted in "Indigenous, critical, post-structural, feminist, queer, social constructionist, and postcolonial theoretical frameworks" (White, 2020, p. 205), was designed to challenge and subvert the status quo, which often serves to confer a structural advantage to some groups over others. The emphasis on how oppressive forces at a systemic level contribute to understanding violence among marginalized populations aligns with both the ecological model and intersectional perspective.

Some professional fields have a further developed critical lens than others. Most research on using critical practice and reflection in work with marginalized populations has been developed within social work practice. Still, critical practice and reflection can be applied across professions supporting marginalized communities. Critical theorists have argued that critical social workers and researchers should challenge inequality at a structural level by developing an awareness of the systemic oppression that impacts the marginalized populations with whom they work (Brookfield, 2009). In applying critical perspectives in practice, professionals are expected to advocate for structural change and support the development of critical consciousness among marginalized populations (e.g., the ability to critically examine historical, social, and political conditions related to marginalization; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Freire, 1970; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013).

1.4.1 Critical Perspectives in Psychology

Critical psychology examines how power and privilege among specific groups have perpetuated marginalization among other groups. Although critical approaches have been taken up in other professions, the field of psychology has been slow to take up the critical lens (Parker, 2007; Sabnis & Proctor, 2022). Critical psychology is grounded in critiques of mainstream psychology, namely that the discipline of psychology has historically neglected the ecological, structural, social, cultural, and environmental contexts and reduced the study of the human experience to individual-level factors. Critical psychology considers how mainstream health and wellness models are culturally

constructed, emerging from a response to historical practices such as reductionism and positivism. It examines systemic variables and historical methods that have provided power and privilege to specific groups and perpetuated marginalization among other groups. Critical psychology questions how historical practices have served to marginalize certain groups. For example, such historical practices include the psychoanalytic movement pathologizing the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and supporting methods such as conversion therapy; evolutional psychology supporting practices such as phrenology (a process that involves observing and feeling the skull to determine an individual's psychological attributes) and located differences between sexes as biologically unchangeable; intelligence testing reinforcing differences between ethnic groups. Further, critical psychology examines how social contexts such as historical colonialism, cultural genocide and resistance, and inter-generational trauma continue to impact certain marginalized groups and shape how mainstream treatment approaches understand individual experiences within these social contexts.

1.5   Intersectionality

In recent years, the idea of intersectionality has become more widely recognized and applied beyond its origins in feminist scholarship and activism. Intersectionality has been regarded as holding the potential to improve research and practice with marginalized populations. Theoretically, intersectionality has been presented as an innovative framework for scrutinizing power hierarchies and mechanisms that have the potential to generate and sustain systemic disparities (Almeida et al., 2019; Warner, 2008). Despite the widespread use of intersectionality, some scholars have raised concerns about its overuse as a buzzword (Davis, 2008) and the ambiguity regarding its definition and application (Nash, 2008). Further, scholarship inconsistently describes it as a theory, method, perspective, concept, paradigm, and framework (Heard et al., 2019). Understanding the origins of intersectionality is vital for advancing how it is currently applied in practice (Reid et al., 2012).

1.5.1 Roots of Intersectionality

The scholarly conversation regarding the inception of the intersectional framework lacks a precise point of origin (Cole, 2009; Grzanka, 2014); however, the initial understandings of intersectionality within North America are born out of Black feminist activism and scholarship (Lorde & Baldwin, 1984; Combahee River Collective, 1977). Mainly, these movements centred on criticisms of socio-political movements that argued that traditional forms of understanding identity and structural inequities focused too narrowly on single dimensions of oppression instead of considering their interacting affect.

The evolution toward intersectionality included the ideas of double jeopardy or multiple jeopardies. These approaches explain the cumulative nature of disadvantage and how disadvantage accumulates to shape the experience of marginalization for individuals with intersecting social identities (Beale, 1979; King, 1988). The additive model suggests that individuals with multiple intersecting identities experience distinct experiences of oppression and marginalization associated with each of their identities, which have a cumulative effect on the discrimination they encounter (Epstein, 1973). The interactive model suggests that an individual's social identities interact to create one unified identity. Depending on the social context, the particular social identities will be more or less pertinent (Crenshaw, 1991). One drawback of these perspectives is the presupposition that various types of oppression are distinct enough that individuals can isolate their encounters into constituent oppressions, making it possible for scholars to investigate cumulative and interconnected consequences (Moradi, 2016). Collins (2000) built upon the notion of intersectionality by introducing the matrix of domination to refer to how multiple sources of oppression interact and provided an organizing framework for what she referred to as intersectional (micro) and interlocking (macro) processes.

To address this identified drawback within additive and interactive models, Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to describe how legal frameworks that address only single axes of oppression fail to protect against the distinctive experiences of discrimination that result from the intersection of these forces. Specifically, Crenshaw explained that Black women's experiences were rendered invisible within the justice system and that although feminist and antiracist political advocacy had a critical role in

addressing sexism and racism, Black women face unique and overlooked forms of discrimination. Intersectional invisibility was introduced to refer to the phenomenon where individuals with subordinate intersecting identities are not fully recognized, depending on the social context, because society categorizes them based on their most relevant social identity (Purdie-Vaughns, & Eibach, 2008). An example of intersectional invisibility refers to the subordinate group being an ethnic minority when identifying as a part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Being a white, 2SLGBTQIA+ male is a qualitatively different experience than being an ethnic minority, 2SLGBTQIA+ female, and the marginalization faced by holding the social identity of being an ethnic minority and female is often made invisible in the majority of social contexts. This theory suggests that societies' predetermined frameworks for understanding 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals often fail to consider the nuances of other possible social identities that could be present and that inherently lead to greater oppression, marginalization, and discrimination. Additionally, individuals may ascribe to particular identities more than others for various reasons, which would affect their subjective, internal experiences or the meanings they associate with specific experiences.

1.5.2 Detailed Definition and Critiques of Approach

Intersectionality considers how multiple interlocking social identities combine to lead to unique forms of oppression, limited access to resources, and negative impacts on an individual's sense of power, resilience, and well-being (Crenshaw, 1991; Warner, 2008). From an intersectional standpoint, it is argued that those who are marginalized along multiple dimensions of identity experience the effects of interdependent oppressive systems. As such, more than limiting the understanding of oppression to a single axis of marginalization is required. Each person is subject to unique and complex social forces that interact and shape their experiences of oppression (Simon et al., 2022). Drawing from Hanskivsky (2014) and Murphy et al. (2009), Etherington and Baker (2018) developed a table to capture the main components included within the definition of intersectionality (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Key Components of Intersectionality (Etherington and Baker, 2018)

Multidimensionality and Mutual Constitution	• Individuals can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. • Individuals' lives are shaped by multiple and mutually constitutive factors.
Context	• Relations of inequality can change depending on the time and place. • Dimensions of inequality interact at the micro (individual), meso (group), and macro (societal) level.
Social inequality	• Unequal access to resources is shaped by interdependent systems of power (e.g., heterosexism, ableism, racism).
Disparities within groups	• The homogenization of disadvantage populations obscures intragroup differences.
Marginalization	• Interplay between social characteristics (e.g., gender, ability, and sexual orientation) shapes experiences of oppression and exclusion in society.
Social location	• Individuals simultaneously occupy multiple social locations (e.g., race, gender, and class) which are in themselves socially constructed.
Matrix of domination	• Experiences of domination are larger than and distinct from individual sociodemographic characteristics, varying by the intersection of social positions.

Note: Informed by Hanskivsky (2014) and Murphy et al. (2009)

Intersectional perspectives frame marginalization and opportunities as interlocking systems of oppression and privilege outside individuals (Godfrey & Burson, 2018). Rather than viewing an individual as inherently marginalized, intersectionality focuses on the marginalizing forces, such as racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. Dill and Kohlman (2012) distinguished between weak and strong approaches to intersectionality. The former focuses on examining multiple social identities without critiquing the

interconnectedness of systems of inequality and their co-constitution. In contrast, a strong intersectional perspective shifts the analysis from individual social identities to the systems of marginalization that produce inequitable social categories (Grzanka & Miles, 2016; Moradi, 2016). That is, intersectionality examines not the subjective experiences of being a White woman or a Black man but how the intersections of racism and sexism, for example, shape lived experiences. Shin et al. (2015) have advanced the existing conceptual framework by introducing a new category, "transformative intersectionality," which pertains to scholarship emphasizing social justice activism and promoting societal change.

There are plenty of thoughtful critiques of intersectionality in how it is understood and applied in research and clinical practice. One common critique is related to the use of an additive approach to understanding the influence of multiple identities (Bowleg, 2008; MacKinnon, 2013; Santos & VanDaalen, 2016) and the tendency to overlook the interacting effect of oppressive systems that produce a distinct experience of marginalization. Additionally, an identified conceptual concern with intersectionality is what Collins (2015) terms a "definitional dilemma," which is the tension between defining intersectionality too narrowly, resulting in the exclusion of certain marginalized identities, or too broadly, leading to a loss of coherence and significance. Intersectionality prioritizes analyzing how primary systems of privilege and oppression interconnect rather than requiring an exhaustive listing of all conceivable social identity permutations (MacKinnon, 2013). This definitional dilemma has proven to be a barrier among researchers and practitioners when determining which identities should be considered and prioritized within their work.

Additionally, scholars and practitioners have cautioned against the tendency to overlook sociohistorical knowledge to comprehend how systems of power and privilege have formed and continue to operate. By exploring the social, economic, and historical factors that have contributed to current inequities, scholars can better understand how different systems of oppression intersect and how they all relate to issues of privilege and power. (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). A lack of sociohistorical knowledge hinders individuals from critically examining and challenging the legitimacy of prevailing social injustice or

recognizing how various systems of marginalization intersect and contribute to unequal outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that without such knowledge, people may attribute social disparities to the innate characteristics of individuals rather than to structural, historical, or circumstantial factors (Cimpian & Saloman, 2014). As a result, they may be inclined to assign blame for inequities to individual shortcomings rather than recognizing the systemic nature of such issues.

1.6   Applying Intersectionality in Practice

Although intersectionality has been widely used as an academic tool for some time (Greene, 1994), it does not necessarily entail critical praxis or guarantee disruption and transformation of existing patterns of inequality (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Scholarship has argued the transformative potential of intersectionality in practice and provided suggestions for how it can be used as a practical tool by professionals working with marginalized populations (Collins, 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2016). It is posited that applying intersectionality in practice can support professionals in upholding their broader commitment to social justice by challenging inequity and enacting change to eliminate it. A suggestion for using intersectionality includes approaching work through a critical lens and engaging in critical reflection (Murphy, 2009). Evidence suggests that priming intersectional considerations can enhance individuals' intersectional thinking and contribute to more favourable attitudes towards individuals with multiple marginalized identities (Greenwood & Christian, 2008).

Mattsson (2014) proposed a step-based model for applying intersectionality by enhancing critical reflection. These authors argued that reflection without intersectionality could potentially reinforce oppression and injustice. The proposed model outlines how professionals can critically reflect on specific incidents and includes the following steps: identifying power relations operating within the incident; considering how the social worker, client, and organization contribute to reinforcing these relations; and exploring alternative understandings and actions that consider an intersectional approach (that is anti-oppressive and challenges existing power relations). Additionally, Moradi (2016) offered a range of reflective questions for clinicians aiming to integrate intersectionality into their practice. They suggested clinicians should examine what formulations of

intersectionality they use (e.g., additive, interactive, or unique manifestations), what outcomes they hope to achieve with their clients using this approach, and the language they use to discuss intersectionality with their clients. Next, to avoid overlooking identities that may be rendered invisible, it was suggested that clinicians consider what prototypes automatically come to mind and how they can broaden the range of experiences they consider when thinking about this minority identity. Last, in supporting clients with externalizing their difficulties, Moradi (2016) suggested that clinicians could consider how they support clients in identifying inequitable power dynamics and privileges as they relate to their identities. In doing this, clinicians could consider how their language reflects their conceptualization of client issues and understanding of identity. For example, does their language suggest that they understand their clients' challenges as attributable to individual characteristics (e.g., race) versus oppressive sociocultural systems (e.g., racism)? Likewise, does their language indicate that they view identity as static versus shifting based on context, structural, historical, and other power dynamics?

Related to direct clinical work, some research has explored how psychologists might apply intersectionality within their practices (Rosenthal, 2016) and school environments (Leandra et al., 2019; Proctor et al., 2017). These studies provided the following suggestions for psychologists aiming to apply intersectionality into their practice: engaging and collaborating with communities, addressing and critiquing societal structures, working together/building coalitions, attending to resistance and resilience, and teaching social justice curricula. Also, Proctor et al. (2017) indicated that school psychologists should understand intersectionality; develop an awareness of their own intersectional identities, encourage system changes; and be social justice advocates.

1.7   Summary

A critical approach that has accumulated considerable attention as a framework for academic inquiry and practical work with marginalized populations is intersectionality. An intersectional approach calls for professionals to widen their scope of practice to consider the existence of interlocking identities, the nuance of marginalization, and the disadvantage occurring at both the individual and societal levels. Although scholarship

has argued for the transformative potential of intersectionality across various fields, previous research has highlighted that professionals continue to grapple with understanding intersectionality and how it can be integrated into their practice (Gkiouleka et al., 2018; Heard, 2021; Heard et al., 2019). Further, the perspective of professionals working directly with marginalized youth in various settings, including TDV prevention programming contexts, remains unexamined.

Conceptualizations of TDV have historically focused on individual-level attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours; however, more recent research in this area has begun to locate the disproportionately high rates of TDV among marginalized youth to inequitable societal-level power relations (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021, 2023). A comprehensive approach to preventing TDV should extend beyond the traditional emphasis on individual factors and encompass an examination of the underlying societal inequities that contribute to the issue (Crooks et al., 2019). As such, it is imperative to address the root causes of TDV through critical approaches that account for broader social and cultural factors that give rise to violence in intimate relationships, such as intersectionality. Marginalized youth do not live single-issue lives, and addressing TDV requires putting intersectionality into practice (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018).

Using a three-article format, this dissertation explores how professionals working with marginalized youth in various settings, including TDV prevention programming contexts, understand and apply intersectionality within their work. The objective is to use group concept mapping and qualitative methods to provide thick descriptions of intersectionality and how it might be helpful in understanding and addressing health inequities experienced by marginalized youth, including the experience of TDV. The final chapter provides an analysis of how each of the three articles are connected and reviews the implications, limitations, and next steps. This dissertation serves as an essential step toward actualizing the promise of intersectionality within professional practice.

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Chapter 2

2   Professionals' Application of Intersectionality to Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programming with Marginalized Youth: A Conceptual Map

2.1   Introduction

Teen Dating Violence (TDV) is a form of intimate partner violence defined as abuse between two people in current or former dating and/or sexual relationships during adolescence (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Turner, 2012). It is often conceptualized to encompass psychological, including stalking, physical, and sexual violence by partners (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). TDV constitutes a serious public health concern in Canada and the United States, with estimates indicating that within the past 12 months, over one in three Canadian youth experienced and/or used physical, psychological, or cyber aggression within a current or former dating relationship (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021). Research has consistently identified that youth who hold marginalized identities[1] (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2020) experience TDV at disproportionally high rates compared to socially dominant groups and experience more negative, long-lasting, and detrimental consequences such as suicidal ideation and homicide (Adhia et al., 2019; Ali et al. 2015; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013; Reidy et al., 2017). That is, TDV disproportionately impacts marginalized groups such as females, non-binary youth (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021), 2SLGBTQIA+ youth (Dank et al., 2014; Reuter et al., 2015), Indigenous youth (Hautala et al., 2017), and ethnic and racialized youth (Kann, 2018). Yet, as Exner-Cortens (2021) identified, the majority of research on TDV attributes these disproportionate prevalence rates to individual (e.g., gender, Wincentak et al., 2017) or interpersonal (exposure to parental violence, Jouriles et al., 2012) risk factors instead of the considering the impact of oppressive systems such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, and ageism (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021; Farhat et al., 2015; Mercy & Tetn Tharp, 2015). TDV intervention and

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[1] Henceforth the term marginalized youth will be used as a short form to refer to youth who hold interlocking marginalized identities. However, these writers recognize that youth's identities have been marginalized by society and the larger systemic and structural oppression, domination, and discrimination that exist.

prevention programs do not address the reality that people are treated differently based on visible and invisible social identities, and marginalized youth do not live single-issue lives (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). Our TDV programming for marginalized youth will likely fall short when we do not attend to this reality.

2.1.1 Defining Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory, originating from black feminist and antiracist discourses, is often applied as an academic tool (e.g., theory and research paradigm) and as an approach for practical applications and critical praxis (Cho et al., 2013). Intersectionality considers how aspects of marginalized social identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity) overlap with systems of oppression (e.g., sexism, heterosexism, and racism; Etherington & Baker, 2018; Hankivsky, 2014; Murphy et al., 2009). The interconnection of social identities, and the associated systems of oppression, produce unique forms of disadvantage, limited access to resources, and negatively impact individuals' sense of power, resilience, and well-being (Crenshaw, 1991; Warner, 2008). The intersections of marginalized social identities combine to create qualitatively different meanings, experiences, and effects than when social identities are understood as functioning independently (Warner, 2008). Further, instead of understanding disadvantages using a unidimensional approach and a single-factor explanation, intersectionality posits that an individual's social location[2] can simultaneously be situated in both positions of power and privilege and positions of marginalization and oppression. Last, there are intragroup disparities within categories of social identities, and relations of inequality can change based on context; thus, dimensions of inequity interact at the individual, group, and societal level (Etherington & Baker, 2018; Hankivsky, 2014).

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[2] An individual's social location is defined as the combination of individual social identities including such as age, gender, race, culture, immigration status, occupation, social class, economic status, education, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location.

2.1.2 Applications of Intersectionality

Intersectionality emphasizes locating individuals' identities within the various systemic contexts that historically and presently continue to contribute to their systemic domination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Suggestions for applying critical practice/reflection to youth work include having professionals working with youth whose identities have been marginalized advocate for structural change and support the development of critical consciousness among youth (e.g., the ability to critically examine historical, social, and political conditions related to marginalization; Freire, 1970).

2.1.3 Applying Intersectionality to Understand and Address TDV

Decades of research exploring the etiology of TDV has concentrated on individual-level risk factors. The application of intersectionality can support professionals in recognizing how categories of social identity and the associated systems of oppression may contribute to TDV. The complex interplay of marginalized social identities critically impacts how TDV is understood and addressed by researchers and clinicians and how it is experienced and managed by marginalized youth (Roberts et al., 2018). Despite recent scholarship calling for the application of intersectional approaches in work with marginalized populations across diverse settings (Almeida et al., 2019; Etherington & Baker, 2018; Rosenthal, 2016), it remains overlooked in TDV prevention programming.

Current TDV programming focuses on fostering healthy relationships through education, engagement, and utilizing youth's strengths (Crooks et al., 2019). It also aims to develop skills that bolster healthy relationships, such as effective communication, self-regulation, coping skills, and help-seeking strategies (De La Rue et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). The implementation of universal school-based TDV prevention programs steadily increases and has shown to be effective (Crooks et al., 2019) by simultaneously targeting risk behaviours and promoting protective factors. Some universal programming has been adapted to better meet the unique needs of high-risk youth in diverse settings. For example, the Healthy Relationships Plus (HRP)-Enhanced program integrated trauma-informed and harm reduction approaches and included higher risk scenarios, specific modules on safety planning and sexual exploitation, and more positive mental health

strategies built into sessions (Chiodo, 2017; Kerry, 2019). However, TDV programming for marginalized youth rarely addresses the compounding layers of burdens due to intersecting marginalized social identities, which further marginalizes the most vulnerable youth in the community (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018).

An exception to this trend is the HRP for LGBT2Q+ youth. This program integrates intersectionality into its sessions by including a range of topics related to identity and expression invalidation, stigma, prejudice and discrimination, and internalized oppression (Lapointe & Crooks, 2018). Youth participating in the HRP for LGBT2Q+ youth within the context of Gay Straight Alliances have indicated that the program helped to validate and affirm their identities and expressions (Lapointe & Crooks, 2018). Given that intersectionality remains excluded from most TDV programs for marginalized youth (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018), it is necessary to understand how professionals relate to intersectionality and apply it within their work. Further, a range of factors impacts the delivery of youth programming within complex community settings, such as professionals' experiences and training background and the modifications required to meet the diverse needs of youth (Cwinn et al., 2022). These factors may influence how professionals apply intersectionality within their practice. By drawing upon professionals' experience and expertise, the objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of professionals implementing a TDV prevention program to better understand if they apply intersectionality into their work with marginalized youth and if so, how they apply it. Given that many professionals delivering youth TDV programming work within a range of roles and contexts and have varying professional training backgrounds, this study seeks to learn about how professionals apply intersectionality within TDV programming and, more broadly, within their respective roles supporting marginalized youth.

2.2 Methods

This paper used group concept mapping (GCM) to develop a conceptual framework for perspectives and practical strategies professionals use to apply intersectionality in their work with marginalized youth. GCM includes qualitative and quantitative aspects (Kane & Trochim, 2007). GCM entails collecting data by having participants brainstorm or

generate ideas based on a focused prompt designed by researchers. Next, participants individually structure ideas by sorting them into thematic groups based on their conceptual similarity and assigning them a name.

Researchers then apply multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analyses to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. Through these analyses, a two-dimensional visual point map is created that represents relationships among the individual ideas and creates multiple solutions of clusters based on the proximity of items. Researchers select a cluster solution based on conceptual fit. Inspired by Moreno and Jelenchick (2013), this current study added an additional step whereby participants provided feedback to improve the conceptual map and elaborated on individual ideas and the key clusters to provide more detailed descriptions of the GCM findings.

2.2.1 Participants

The data were collected using a purposeful sampling of professionals from a partnership between a university research team and community agencies serving marginalized youth in a TDV context throughout Southwestern Ontario. Professionals were involved with the program development, training, or implementation of a healthy relationships/dating violence prevention program for youth. Professionals included Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers working within community mental health, child protection, youth criminal justice, newcomer support settings, Graduate Students in Psychology, Post-Doctoral Research Associates, and University research team staff. Across these community agencies, 34 individuals were invited to participate (six from the university research team and 28 from community agencies). A total of 12 professionals participated.

The mean age of the participants was 36.17 (SD=8.22), and the majority identified as Caucasian. Ten participants identified as female, one as male, and one as genderqueer/non-conforming. Most participants (over half) had over ten years of experience working with marginalized youth. Participants recognized the importance of an intersectional lens (i.e., 16.7% rated it as important, and 83.3% rated it as very important), and the majority of participants found it either slightly difficult (50%) or not

difficult at all (16.6%) to apply into their work. The institutional Research Ethics Board approved all study procedures (appendix A).

Table 2: Demographics Characteristics

	n	%
Age	12	36.2 (M)
Gender		
Female	10	83.3
Male	1	8.3
Non-conforming	1	8.3
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	11	91.6
South Asian	1	8.3
Years working with marginalized youth		
More than 10	9	75
Between 6 and 10 years	2	12.5
Between 1 and 5 years	1	6.25
Prior experience with HRP-E		
Worked in a community agency where HRP-E was being implemented	3	27.3
Participated in HRP-E training	3	27.3
Facilitated 1 group	1	9
Facilitated 2 or more HRP-E groups	4	36.4
Importance of applying intersectionality into work		
Not important at all	0	0
Slightly important	0	0

Moderately important	0	0
Important	2	16.7
Very important	10	83.3
Difficulty of applying intersectionality into work		
Very difficult	1	8.3
Difficult	1	8.3
Moderately difficult	2	16.6
Slightly difficult	6	50
Not difficult at all	2	16.6

2.2.2 Data Collection

The following steps comprise the data collection components: preparation, generation, and structuring (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim & Kane, 2005).

Step 1: Preparation. The preparation phase involves developing a focused prompt related to the issue being examined, which can be used to brainstorm and structure tasks to follow. The focused prompt for this study was "How do you bring intersectionality into your work with marginalized youth?"

Step 2: Generation (Brainstorming). The goal of the generation step is to engage participants in a brainstorming activity to generate a comprehensive list of statements related to the prompt with both breadth and depth (Trochim & Kane, 2005). The initial brainstorming activity was a group discussion at the university research team's bi-annual Partners Day, where 25 professionals participated in a quality improvement exercise related to intersectionality. A series of small and large group discussions allowed professionals to engage in in-depth dialogue. Professionals were not provided with the definition of intersectionality during the brainstorming phase. Following the initial brainstorming session, researchers compiled a preliminary list of statements. Additional statements were sent to this researcher from individuals unable to attend the Partner's Day and integrated into the initial list of statements. Responses were combined to create a

unique set of statements, and all statements were independently reviewed and refined by two researchers. The refinement process included removing redundant or unclear statements, merging related statements, and editing statements to broaden or specify specific items (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Last, researchers added additional statements based on the prompt based on their own knowledge of intersectionality and its application related to their own clinical experiences.

Step 3: Structuring (Sorting and Rating). Statements were uploaded to an online survey database called Qualtrics. All partners collaborating with the university research team and the research team staff/graduate students were invited to participate in the sorting and rating activities. Upon consenting, participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire before beginning the sorting and rating activity. Participants were instructed to review the statements, sort them into meaningful groups based on how similar in meaning or theme they were to one another and name each grouping (See appendix B for demographic questionnaire and sorting and rating activity).

2.2.3 Data Analysis

GCM data were analyzed using the Group Wisdom software and followed the GCM step model, including representation and interpretation (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim & Kane, 2005).

Step 4: Representation. The representation stage aims to apply quantitative methods to design a visual point map of individual items drawn from the sorting and rating data (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The visual point map was generated through multidimensional scaling analysis, a statistical method that sorts similarities (or distances) between data points by assigning a spatial coordinate to each participant statement. The visual point map represents the degree of separation between statements based on conceptual similarity frequency. This process resulted in a two-dimensional visual point map that presents statements frequently sorted together by participants as being closer together on the visual point map. The rating activity data were used to understand each statement's perceived importance within the overall conceptual framework. Next, hierarchical cluster

analysis was applied using the multidimensional scaling data to group the individual statements on the visual point map into clusters of statements.

Step 5: Interpretation. During this final step of the GCM data analysis, researchers evaluated the structural hierarchy of the visual point map, discussed the relations among each cluster, and determined the optimal number of clusters using their combined knowledge of intersectionality. Upon completing the interpretation stage and based on participant feedback during the initial brainstorming and generation of statements phase (Step 2), the researchers decided that undertaking participant member checking and collecting qualitative feedback on the statements/clusters would allow for a more in-depth and representative exploration of the research topic.

2.2.4 Collection and analysis of qualitative feedback

Step 6: Participant Member Checking and Qualitative Feedback. To conclude the data analysis, this study drew from Moreno et al. (2013), who recruited a small sample of participants for 'interpretation sessions.' Similarly, this study used an interview format to conduct short interpretation interviews with a sample of ten professionals (six of these participants had also participated in the sorting and rating task, and four participants were professionals working with marginalized youth in diverse community settings). There were two purposes for this member checking and qualitative feedback step: 1) to review cluster groupings and labels and 2) to gain qualitative feedback on how the conceptual map could have been improved and how the ideas could be extended. The epistemological stance most closely aligned with these two purposes include positivism and social constructionism; positivism was used for reviewing the results, and social constructionism was used in relation to the additive data participants offered to provide further explanations on the research topic (Harvey, 2015).

Member checking refers to the process where research data is taken back to participants who become actively involved in checking and confirming a data set's results and elaborating on categories (Birt et al., 2016). This validation strategy is essential for enhancing rigour, validity, and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, pg. 314). Although group concept mapping is a hybrid of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the researchers ultimately determined that providing participants with an opportunity to review the data and offer elaborations would be useful in gaining an in-depth understanding of a complex and nuanced research topic.

A total of ten participants provided qualitative feedback to extend the findings. Participants were selected based on their interest in participating in a separate research study. The individual interviews were completed at the beginning of an independent qualitative project to understand how professionals apply intersectionality using a critical lens to their work with marginalized youth. However, only participant feedback related to the group concept mapping sorting and rating task/clusters was included in this current study.

The procedure included a member checking of the group concept findings and qualitative feedback. At the beginning of the individual interviews, this researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and an overview of the group concept mapping methodology with participants. During this stage, this researcher presented the visual point map and all statements in each cluster. Next, participants were asked to provide suggestions for the cluster groupings, labels, and statements within each cluster. For example, participants were asked to comment on which aspects of the visual point map and individual statements within each statement they felt were missing or underrepresented and aspects that were overrepresented (See appendix C for semi-structured interview guide with GCM questions).

Data yielded from participants were collated by the researchers, and participant feedback related to each cluster of the concept map was sorted into three separate categories 1) confirmations of cluster groupings and labels, 2) disconfirming voices/criticisms of concept map and statements, 3) suggested elaborations for improving the concept map. Upon compiling these data, the researchers reviewed participant qualitative feedback and summarized the main findings related to answering the study's research question.

2.3 Results

During the generation (brainstorming) phase, 56 statements were generated by participants. A range of cluster solutions, between 5 and 8[3], were applied; the cluster solution with 6 clusters represented the data most accurately and created the Cluster Rating Map (Figure 1). The multidimensional scaling analysis included eight iterations and demonstrated a low-stress value of 0.2588, which indicates a good fit and is within the acceptable range (Rosas & Kane 2012). Specifically, having a stress value within the acceptable range (below 0.28) verified that participants sorted statements in a similar manner (Rosas & Kane, 2012). While completing the sorting and rating task, participants provided names for the clusters. The following names were chosen for the cluster map: 1) Organizational Elements 2) Self-Reflection and Awareness 3) Values, Beliefs, and Actions 4) Considerations for Creating an Anti-Oppressive and Safe Environment 5) Practices for Person-Centred Care 6) Promotion of Self-Reflection and Personal Development Among Youth.
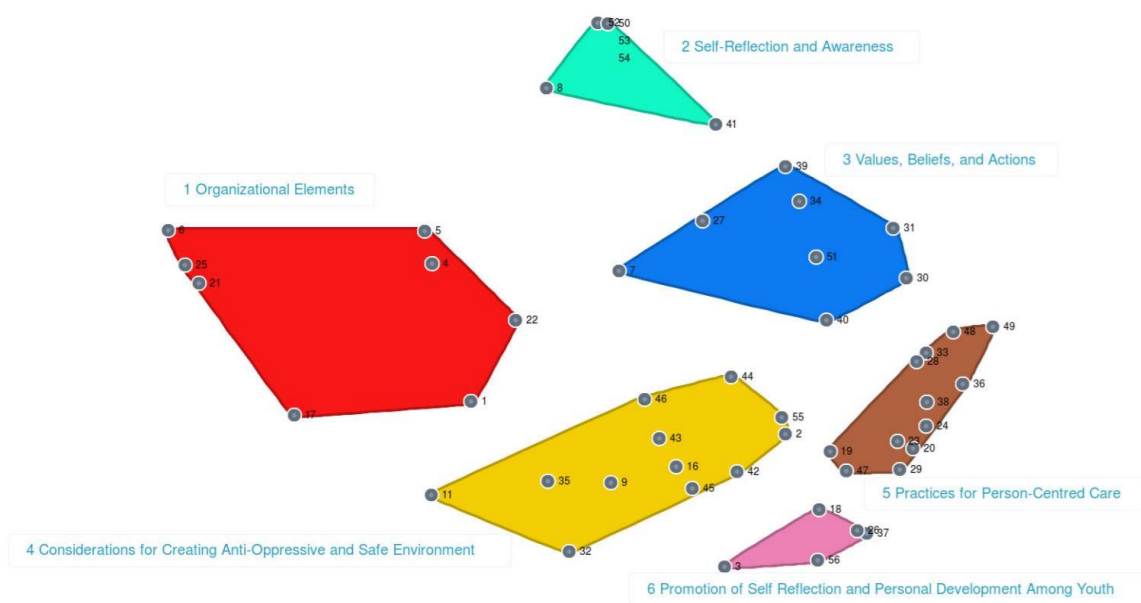
Figure 1: Cluster Rating Map

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[3] An upper limit of 8 was selected because a quick visual scan showed that from 9 clusters onwards, highly similar clusters were being split

Table 3 illustrates the individual statements, their corresponding bridging value for within the cluster, and the average bridging value for each cluster. Bridging values, ranging from 0 to 1, reflect the degree to which participants grouped individual statements with other statements. Higher bridging values indicate that the statement was more often sorted with statements across the entire map. In contrast, lower bridging values suggest that the statement was more often grouped with other statements very close to it. Additionally, the 56 points on the cluster map (Figure 1) are spatially represented, meaning that the distances between each point represent how consistently individual statements were sorted together (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Table 3: Statements and Bridging Indices for Each Cluster

	Cluster	Bridging
	Organizational Elements	**0.86**
1	Shift conversations from "at-risk populations" to "at-risk conditions"	0.98
4	Recognize settings where certain identities face elevated levels of discrimination and stigmatization	0.88
5	Recognize common stigmatizing labels and forms of discrimination associated with certain identities	0.89
6	Collaborate with colleagues to think about destigmatizing and non-discriminatory strategies to support youth	0.79
17	Consider barriers to participation (such as transportation, work hours, childcare needs)	1.00
21	Recognize importance of intersectionality in organization's vision	0.77
22	Recognize the impact of environment on youth's identity expression	0.90
25	Recognize organizational biases	0.71
	Self-Reflection and Awareness	**0.53**
8	Consider how my identity/lived experience may unintentionally stigmatize youth	0.68
41	Avoid making assumptions about youth	0.84
50	Recognize my own social identities	0.41
52	Recognize my own biases	0.42

53	Recognize my privileges	0.41
54	Engage in self-reflection	0.41
	Values, Beliefs, and Actions	**0.80**
7	Demonstrate an awareness of identity-related power dynamics	0.89
27	Advocate for youth	0.91
30	Be empathetic toward youth	0.69
31	Be non-judgemental with youth	0.76
34	Be willing to learn from youth	0.82
39	Practice humility	0.83
40	Use inclusive language with youth	0.65
51	Appreciate diversity in youth's lived experiences	0.87
	Considerations for Creating Anti-Oppressive and Safe Environment	**0.69**
2	Utilize a talking stick to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak without being interrupted	0.56
9	Offer land acknowledgement prior to starting work with youth	0.69
11	Prepare an identity-safe space by using resources or signifiers e.g. LGBT2Q+ stickers or Indigenous feather	0.96
16	Ensure program examples include a variety of identities (e.g., in role plays)	0.66
32	Engage youth in conversations about intersectionality	0.99
35	Provide a welcoming space	0.75
42	Consider youth's multiple identities	0.61
43	Consider youth who may be excluded	0.66
44	Use a culturally relevant framework with youth	0.61
45	Provide a safe and consistent physical space for youth	0.61
46	Use a trauma-informed approach	0.66
55	Provide an inclusive/accepting environment for youth	0.54
	Practices for Person-Centred Care	**0.58**
19	Avoid assigning identities to youth based on physical characteristics	0.55
20	Allow youth to self-pronoun at each session	0.55

23	Respect how youth understand/express their identities	0.56
24	Respect where youth are at in their process of identity formation	0.59
28	Validate youth	0.56
29	Invite youth to share their identities	0.55
33	Build rapport with youth	0.56
36	Promote open dialogue among youth	0.60
38	Encourage youth to be themselves	0.58
47	Incorporate youth's lived experiences	0.55
48	Actively listen to youth	0.59
49	Be flexible in approaches used to support youth	0.70
	Promotion of Self-Reflection & Personal Development Among Youth	**0.62**
3	Support youth in understanding strengths within marginalized identities	0.70
18	Support youth to explore identities by facilitating peer-to-peer learning	0.56
26	Support youth in exploring their identities	0.54
37	Provide opportunities for youth to express their identities	0.55
56	Promote self-understanding among youth	0.73

2.3.1   Organizational Elements

The first cluster, organizational elements (bridging value = 0.86), included eight statements containing organizational factors that promote an intersectional perspective. Mainly, this cluster identified overarching philosophies that individuals and agencies may adopt to apply an intersectional perspective. Sample statements from this cluster included "recognize importance of intersectionality in organization's vision" and "collaborate with colleagues to think about destigmatizing and non-discriminatory strategies to support youth."

Qualitative Feedback. Interview participants discussed organizational elements as essential for addressing structural inequities and facilitating professional development. Further, participants explained that the accuracy of an organization's understanding of the systemic inequities that impact the youth they support not only determines the support

they provide but may also prevent unintentional harm to clients and inadvertent reinforcement of oppressive structures. To improve this cluster, select participants identified more specific and detailed organizational components that need to be attended to. For example, they identified the need for statements related to an organizations policy, procedures, values, training, hiring standards, leadership structure, workplace culture, interaction with community/other organizations, physical structure, and ability to recognize/address systemic factors impacting the youth they work with.

2.3.2 Self-Reflection and Awareness

The second cluster, self-reflection and awareness (bridging value = 0.53) included six statements reflecting how professionals may examine their internal processes, impacting their professional work. Statements within this cluster broadly encompass critical reflection, or the practice of considering how one's own social identities, experiences, biases, and privileges, may influence their work with youth. Sample items from this cluster included "consider how my identity/lived experience may unintentionally stigmatize youth" and "recognize my privileges."

Qualitative Feedback. Although professionals generally agreed with the importance of these statements, they emphasized the need for a structured reflecting process. A structured reflecting process was suggested to evaluate hidden biases and challenge one's internal processes that may unintentionally reinforce systemic inequities and cause harm to youth. One statement relating to an action-oriented approach includes "avoid making assumptions about youth." Professionals later commented that consistent with a social justice framework, self-examination must build awareness of internal processes and lead to meaningful action.

2.3.3 Values, Beliefs, and Actions

The third cluster, values, beliefs, and actions (bridging value = 0.80) included eight statements related to standards of practice and tenants that professionals hold as essential components when applying an intersectional perspective in their work with youth. This cluster involved statements reflecting general values and beliefs that may have a more universal, foundational, and individual-level focus on supporting youth. For example,

statements illustrating these values and beliefs include "be empathetic toward youth," "be non-judgemental with youth," and "appreciate diversity in youth's lived experiences." In contrast, select statements in this cluster, such as "demonstrate an awareness of identity-related power dynamics" and "advocate for youth," appear to have a critical component and aim to support youth at a more social/systemic level.

Qualitative Feedback. Participants expressed that professionals must understand that self-examination of professional values and beliefs is an ongoing process requiring continued learning and perspective development. Several participants communicated that the onus should not be on the youth to educate professionals. Instead, the professionals should assume the initiative in building their understanding and skills, for example, attending professional development and learning from colleagues. One participant commented that the values and beliefs provide the framework for the work professionals do with youth and can help to situate their work within the broader socio-cultural context of oppressive systems.

Additionally, participant feedback indicated that combined with developing a critical consciousness, there must be action and that a theoretical understanding of intersectionality must translate to tangible and achievable goals to address systems of dominance and subjugation. However, this praxis must be tempered with clinical judgement to ensure that professionals' values, beliefs, and actions are not causing harm to clients and unintentionally reinforcing systemic oppressions they aim to address. Taken together, participants emphasized the necessity of having a theoretical framework that guides their professional values, beliefs, and actions and situating their work within the overarching context of the social realities that young people live within.

2.3.4 Considerations for Creating an Anti-Oppressive and Safe Environment

The fourth cluster, considerations for creating an anti-oppressive and safe environment (bridging value = 0.69), included twelve statements containing both general approaches and concrete strategies for creating anti-oppressive and safe environments while working with youth. Statements more consistent with establishing and maintaining anti-oppressive environments included "ensure program examples include a variety of identities (e.g.,

role plays)," "engage youth in conversations about intersectionality," and "consider youth who may be excluded." In contrast, statements that aligned with creating a safe environment included "provide a safe and consistent physical space for youth," "use a trauma-informed approach," and "provide an inclusive/accepting environment for youth."

Qualitative Feedback. Participants explained that many of the anti-oppressive and safety-related considerations within this cluster need to be contextualized within various therapeutic factors such as the youths' lived experience, their presenting concerns, and the contextual/situational factors such as the format of service delivery, e.g., individual services versus group-based programming. Thus, professionals should rely on their previous experience, understanding of the client population, and their clinical judgment to determine appropriateness. Further, youth response to these considerations should be used to inform and guide approaches during continued services, and professionals must be comfortable shifting their practices based on youth response. Lastly, participants discussed that professionals should be aware of how their social location may impact their clients and that a professional-client "fit" may determine the effectiveness of anti-oppressive and safety-related considerations.

2.3.5 Practices for Person-Centred Care

The fifth cluster, practices for person-centred care (bridging value = 0.58), included twelve statements about providing individualized care and spoke to the interpersonal skills for allowing youth to feel supported and respected. Approximately half of the statements were related to foundational interpersonal skills such as "validate youth," "build rapport with youth," and "actively listen to youth." Additionally, several statements focused on identity-related considerations such as "avoid assigning identities to youth based on physical characteristics," "respect where youth are at in their process of identity formation," and "invite youth to share their identities." These practices provide a valuable framework for discussing social identities and their overlap with different forms of privilege, systems of oppression, and disadvantage that shape youth's experience and their access to resources.

Qualitative Feedback. Participants noted that statements identified as being foundational interpersonal skills should be used universally with all youth. Still, while discussing the identity-related statements, participants indicated that "language matters," especially when working with youth who have been oppressed and marginalized. Thus, professionals must demonstrate flexibility in adjusting their approaches to correspond with their client's needs, lived experiences, and social location. Last, participants indicated that interpersonal skills must be firmly grounded in an anti-oppressive philosophy and applied in a manner that considers and addresses the systemic inequities that marginalized youth face.

2.3.6 Promotion of Self-Reflection and Personal Development Among Youth

The sixth cluster, promotion of self-reflection and personal development among youth (bridging value = 0.62), included statements directly related to youth outcomes. The focus of this cluster included professionals' hopes for youth outcomes when they apply an intersectional perspective in their work. Primarily, statements in this cluster are related to how professionals may facilitate the reflective process among youth, support a greater understanding of their social identities, and provide opportunities for youth to share their identities with professionals and peers. Sample items from this cluster included "support youth in exploring their identities" and "support youth to explore identities by facilitating peer-to-peer learning."

Qualitative Feedback. One participant indicated that when a professional enacts the statement entitled "support youth in understanding strengths within marginalized identities," they must use a validating approach and avoid minimizing a youth's experience of experiencing marginalization. Multiple participants expressed the importance of allowing youth to connect the personal, or their own experiences, with the political, being the larger systemic issues that impact, thus, supporting youth in building an intimate understanding of the systems of power within society. Consistent with this point, participants discussed that youth must understand that the disparities they experience have a social element and are the consequence of larger systemic inequities, not exclusively related to individual-level deficits. Participants emphasized that professionals must allow youth to take the lead to ensure they are not teaching youth

about their identities. Instead, professionals should allow youth to express their identities in a manner that is congruent with their experience. Last, participants highlighted that professionals should support youth in identifying with collective experiences of oppression and empower youth to use their voices to advocate for their needs.

2.4 Discussion

This study aimed to design a conceptual map illustrating how professionals implementing a TDV prevention program apply intersectionality in their work with marginalized youth. Drawing on the expertise of a diverse range of professionals, researchers identified six domains related to various approaches and concrete strategies for applying intersectionality to TDV prevention work with marginalized youth. To improve the validity and gain a deeper understanding of the findings, all participants were asked to provide member checking of the conceptual map and qualitative feedback related to how the findings could be improved and extended. This study emphasized TDV programming for marginalized youth due to participants' shared experiences with a healthy relationships/dating violence prevention program, but the findings suggest that participants interpreted the prompt more broadly. As a result, the statements generated pertain to how TDV programming can incorporate intersectionality, how preventionists can apply intersectionality to TDV program delivery, and, more generally, how individual professionals can apply intersectionality within the broader scope of their work with marginalized youth. Participants identified essential considerations related to how organizations and individual professionals may incorporate intersectionality (e.g., Clusters 1-5). The final cluster (Cluster 6) included statements related to positive youth outcomes.

Organizational Considerations. Participants discussed their organizations as being an important sites for applying intersectionality and creating meaningful systemic change. Organizational capacity to recognize interlocking marginalized identities and identify biases and practices contributing to adverse outcomes for marginalized youth was identified as being important. Although the recognition of interlocking marginalized identities is in and of itself important, intersectionality aims to challenge inequity and enact change to eliminate it, thus upholding the broader social justice change agenda

(Collins, 2020). During the qualitative feedback, participants expressed that enacting change to eliminate inequities or engaging in tangible and meaningful praxis is complex and challenging but is intrinsically linked to the application of intersectionality. The literature consistently demonstrates difficulties associated with translating intersectionality from theory to concrete practice or interventions (Gkiouleka et al., 2018; Heard, 2021; Heard et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2016); however, a large percentage of participants rated intersectionality as being either slightly difficult (50%) or not difficult at all (16.6%).

Suggestions for improving organizational capacity to accomplish this initiative align with participants' statements, including concrete policy and procedures, intersectionality training, and inter and intra-agency collaboration (Almeida, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2020). Applying intersectionality in the organizational context relies on creating a democratic deliberation process and an organizational atmosphere that supports professionals to relate to one another in ways that recognize and account for their own intersecting identities and lived experiences (Rosenthal, 2016). Previous research on embedding intersectionality into an organizational culture signals the importance of political activism, relationality, solidarity, dialogue, and creating a coalition of collective learners and problem solvers (Almeida, 2013; Almeida et al., 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2020). Specifically, moving away from the traditional model of individual learners toward a culture of collective learners can be crucial in creating a space where colleagues feel comfortable and supported in addressing systemic initiatives (Almeida, 2019).

Tangible initiatives identified in the literature that expand on the findings of this current study include: promoting critical reflection among staff using case examples that analyze multiple intersecting identities, complexities of lived experiences, and intervening effects of power, privilege, and oppression (Almeida, 2019); creating open lines of communication and centring the voices of individuals most affected by issues (The Opportunity Agenda, 2017); resisting neoliberal pressures to focus on productivity and individual causes of social inequality exclusively; and invest in initiatives that address more prominent systemic factors affecting marginalized populations (Collins, 2020; Rodriguez et al. 2016).

Lastly, creating intersectional policy is vital for organizations aiming to develop interventions targeting systemic power dynamics at an institutional level (Almeida, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Manuel, 2007); however, implementation remains challenging (Rodriguez, 2016). One significant barrier to implementing intersectional policy identified in the literature is that policy implementation is likely subject to the very processes and structures it is designed to disrupt (Manuel, 2007). Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA; Day et al., 2020; Hankivsky et al., 2014) is an intersectional method to analyze policy and consider complex social and political contexts. IBPA may be appropriate in supporting organizations in applying intersectionality at an institutional level.

Individual Professional Considerations. Clusters 2 to 5 focus on individual professionals' reflexivity, their approaches to frame their work, and their actions to support marginalized youth. During the qualitative feedback, participants expressed that their engagement in self-reflection and awareness must include intentionality and indicated that a structured reflective process is necessary for examining one's practice. The literature emphasizes that an integral aspect of applying intersectionality into practice is proper critical reflection and inquiry to inform critical praxis (Collins, 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2020). Differentiating between basic reflective and critical practices is essential to applying intersectionality into practice (Gould & Baldwin, 2004). Basic reflective techniques aim to close the gap between theory and practice by evaluating practice (Fook, 1996). In contrast, critical reflection is centred on challenging dominant power structures, which is most aligned with intersectionality (Fook, 1999). Drawing from a reflective approach to critical analysis (Agger, 1998), Fook (2002) designed a model to support social workers in uncovering assumptions they may hold related to power relations and structures, to examine how they may have a role in power relations and structures, and to explore how they are implicated in structural issues, such as violence, impacting the marginalize populations they work with.

The internal processes of professionals, namely their engagement in self-reflection and awareness paired with meaningful action or praxis, are the crux of applying an intersectional approach. However, a core tension within academia and practice is that

professionals tend to view intersectionality as either inquiry or praxis instead of seeing the interconnections and synergy between the two (Collins, 2020). Participants identified a series of statements related to values, beliefs, and actions, which they discussed as being either universal or critical in their functional application (cluster three), considerations for creating an anti-oppressive environment (cluster four), and practices for person-centred care (cluster five). In each cluster, qualitative feedback indicated that personal and professional self-examination and general self-awareness are integral in the application.

Developing a theoretical understanding and the capacity to apply intersectionality was viewed as an ongoing process by participants, which is seen as an essential framework for the continued application of intersectionality into practice (Mountain & Calvo-Gonzalez, 2019). Literature confirms the utility of an ongoing process and highlights how 'situation intersectionality' can be used to understand contextual differences producing particular relationships of oppression and discrimination (Nayak & Robbins, 2019).

Youth Outcomes. Cluster 6 presents a collection of statements related to youth outcomes, most centred around exploring and expressing youth identities and supporting youth in this reflective process. Adolescence is a pivotal time for youth to develop their identities, and intersectionality is vital to identity development. Primarily, intersectionality is an essential aspect of youth identity development because research has demonstrated that adolescent identity development differs as a function of gender (McLean & Breen, 2009), race and ethnicity (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008), and sexual identity (Saewyc, 2011). Despite intersectionality's focus on marginalized identities and systemic oppression, recent research has highlighted the benefit of using a combined resilience or strength-based perspective and intersectionality when working with marginalized youth (Njeze et al., 2020).

Despite one participant's qualitative feedback highlighting the potential negative impacts of using a validating approach when engaging in challenging conversations related to strengths and marginalized identities, the statements and qualitative feedback from participants underlines how resilience and strength-based approaches can be used to

practically apply intersectionality. A strategy for framing this work can be positive youth development (PYD), which is an approach often used to emphasize the strengths and potential that youth possess rather than focusing on their deficits (Damon, 2004). Engaging youth in sensitive conversations related to intersectionality, such as examining their own interlocking marginalized identities and the role of systemic oppressions, professionals must use sound clinical judgment. Furthermore, when these conversations occur within the context of TDV prevention programming, several considerations and adaptations, many of which broadly fall within the purview of trauma-informed support, must be prioritized (Cwinn et al., 2020; Kerry, 2019; Li et al., 2021).

2.4.1 Limitations and Next Steps

The main limitations of this study were related to the GCM methodology and the participant sample. First, the limitations of the GCM methodology were associated mainly with its inability to capture the critical and structural aspects of intersectionality. GCM is useful in making complex networks between ideas to provide a general overview of constructs; however, it does not provide an in-depth analysis of complex topics. This is due, in part, to its reliance on initial short statements generated by participants at the outset of the data collection (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Rosas, 2017). Some statements provided by participants during the generation phase alluded to the critical components inherent in applying an intersectional approach; however, consistent with an aim of this study, many statements were practical in nature and presented overlaps with person-centred and trauma-informed practices. Also, related to the GCM methodology, some clusters included multiple ideas. Although these clusters fit within the same general conceptual categories, a limitation of GCM is that the clusters or categories may not be neat and orderly.

One source of potential sample bias is that fewer than half of those invited participated. An additional limitation was the substantial diversity in participants' professional backgrounds. The study included Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, Psychologists, Graduate Students in Psychology, and Researchers working in various settings, including community mental health, child protection, youth criminal justice, and newcomer support settings. All participants had a plethora of experience and expertise in

supporting marginalized youth in various capacities, and the conceptual map produced stable and reliable clusters. Participant experience varied in many ways, including their direct experience working with marginalized youth, the approaches used to support youth, the size and mandate of their organizations, and their position within their respective organizations. Doing intersectional work that takes difference seriously means engaging professionals with different identities in diverse fields, and the researchers see this as a strength of this study (Collins & Bilge, 2020). However, a limitation related to the participant sample was that this study did not include a diverse sample in terms of the lived experience of marginalized identities and didn't examine the intersectional identities of participants. For example, the demographic information collected indicated that 83.3 % of the participants identified as female and 91.6% as Caucasian.

Furthermore, although all participants were involved with TDV prevention programming, their involvement and previous experience working within TDV contexts varied. Thus, their responses and qualitative feedback likely extended beyond their work strictly within the TDV context. Last, participants understanding of intersectionality varied substantially, which speaks to the definitional dilemma among practitioners and scholars identified in past literature studying intersectionality (Collins, 2015). Despite being perhaps an indication of where professionals in practice are at with their understanding of intersectionality, claims of this magnitude cannot be made due to the small sample size and extend beyond the aim of this current study.

2.4.2 Conclusion

Actionable solutions to TDV remain unlikely if this relational and societal issue is addressed through a singularly focused perspective (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). Applying intersectionality as critical praxis requires the views of frontline professionals who have practical experience implementing social justice initiatives and solving complex social problems. This current study engaged a group of diverse professionals supporting marginalized youth in the context of TDV prevention programming. Although research on intersectionality has grown substantially over the past decade (Collins, 2020), practitioners are still grappling with applying this complex theory to practice (Gkiouleka et al., 2018; Heard, 2021; Heard et al., 2019). This ongoing

challenge was clearly reflected in both the statements generated and qualitative feedback provided by participants. In summary, intersectionality can be used as a mechanism for social change in several ways, such as being a tool for identifying marginalized identities and recognizing their interactive and cumulative impact, examining the nature and consequences of systems of social inequality, and addressing practices and policies that continue to perpetuate the oppression these groups face (Murphy, 2009). This study identified strategies and clusters that are important for supporting practice from an intersectional lens. However, there is a need for further scholarship on how frontline practitioners can put this critical theory into action.

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Chapter 3

3   Critical Perspectives of Intersectionality Among Professionals' Working with Marginalized Youth

3.1   Introduction

Addressing adverse health outcomes among marginalized youth in community settings requires understanding their interlocking identities and the systems of oppression impacting them daily. Although there is tremendous diversity in the lives of marginalized youth, there is also considerable overlap in that they often do not live single-issued lives. Thus, a singularly focused lens is insufficient for working with marginalized youth and intersectionality can be a valuable approach to understanding and addressing the compounding social and systemic factors that underly adverse outcomes.

3.1.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) posits that rather than conceptualizing social identities as functioning independently and the whole person as simply being a sum of their individual identities, it is essential to understand identity as a series of interacting and overlapping identities that garner various levels of privilege and oppression based on socially constructed hierarchies embedded in systems, structures, social norms, and histories (Hankivsky, 2014; Warner, 2008). Intersectionality offers a framework for understanding the systemic power, privilege, and oppression impacting marginalized individuals through social, political, and economic realities because of their identities. Practically, intersectionality can be used to understand the complexities of lived experience along multiple hierarchies and how power relations do not function as mutually exclusive entities but rather intersect to affect individual and collective experiences.

Holding multiple marginalized social identities predicts not only inequitable adverse outcomes such as increased mental health issues (Sapiro & Ward, 2022); problematic substance use (Eisenberg et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2020); teen dating violence (TDV) victimization and perpetration (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021); poorer educational attainment (McMullen , 2011; Sullivan et al., 2021) and increased physical health problems (Felitti

et al., 1998; Petruccelli et al., 2019), but also creates different responses from the larger society, which reinforces social inequalities (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Despite a consensus that marginalized youth experience higher rates of adverse outcomes with more severe and long-lasting impacts, the compounding influence of systemic inequities remains understudied (Viner, 2012). For example, much of the research on marginalized youth is positioned within a deficit-based framework (Russell, 2005). Although the multitude of risk and protective factors outlined in past literature has allowed for identifying individuals at the most significant risk of adverse outcomes, the systemic factors contributing to these outcomes remain largely overlooked.

Recent research has utilized an intersectional approach to understanding adverse outcomes among marginalized youth. The next logical step is to study how professionals working with marginalized youth understand this complex theory and wrestle with the concepts to integrate it into their practice. In theory, applying intersectionality should provide researchers and practitioners with a lens to explore how interlocking identities at a micro level reflect multiple, interacting forms of structural inequality at macro levels of society (Bowleg, 2012). Although a plethora of scholarship on intersectionality argues its utility, there remain concerns that, at a concrete level, intersectionality is not understood or appropriately applied by professionals working with marginalized populations (Siddiqui & Thiara, 2019).

3.1.2 Intersectionality in Practice: Critical Applications

Intersectionality is concerned with bringing about a conceptual shift in how practitioners understand social categories, their relationships with each other, and the underlying structural advantages and disadvantages that contribute to an individual's experience (Hankivsky et al., 2014). Almeida et al. (2019) argue that an intersectional lens supports individuals in decoding various forms of oppression and allows professionals to embody structural change by challenging and resisting the effects of privilege and power within their own lives and the lives of others. Although critical praxis, or actions directed toward disrupting existing patterns of inequality, is an integral component of intersectionality, research to date has focused mainly on its application as a research and academic tool (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Intersectionality provides a conceptually sound framework for

understanding societal-level drivers of oppression and privilege; however, the development of practical approaches remains an ongoing challenge, especially for those professionals working directly with marginalized populations (Hankivsky et al., 2014). In other words, translating this theory into practice remains a relatively unexplored area, especially with marginalized youth.

Although sparse, previous research demonstrates that the practical application of intersectionality has been most apparent in practices that are grounded within praxis (Collins, 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2016), such as public health, education, psychology, social work, and criminal justice (Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020). A major theme identified within the body of research exploring the practical application of intersectionality is the potential benefits of developing critical consciousness (Heard et al., 2019; Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020). Critical consciousness includes critically examining historical, social, and political conditions related to marginalization, recognizing systems of oppression reinforcing these conditions, and acting to counter this system (Freire, 1970). Although some research has identified the overlaps and potential benefits of combining intersectionality and critical consciousness to guide social justice initiatives (Heard et al., 2019; Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020), there remains a gap related to how professionals may understand these concepts and their pathways to incorporating it within in their work with marginalized youth. Etherington and Baker (2018) provided an overview based on existing research on applying intersectionality in practice. They identified best practices for integrating intersectionality into work with children exposed to intimate partner violence. These authors identified the importance of professionals' reflexive capacity (accounting for children's multiple social identities) and defining the problem/incident and underlying assumptions they may hold. Additionally, the authors indicated that organizational policies that view populations as homogenous and maintain inequalities between different groups of children must be identified. Further, organizations may also apply an intersectional approach through intersectional solidarity (Ellison & Langhout, 2020), intersectional cultural humility (Buchanan et al., 2020), and establishing coalitions (Cole, 2008).

Despite the call to apply intersectionality to work with marginalized populations, there remains a lack of research exploring the perspectives of professionals working directly with this population. Most studies identifying the need for intersectionality in work with marginalized populations offer theoretical suggestions that are not based on data. Thus, these studies fail to capture how professionals working within diverse fields understand intersectionality and their experience considering its applicability within their work with marginalized youth. The main objective of this study was to investigate how professionals from a range of disciplines and training backgrounds implementing a healthy relationships program with marginalized youth within community settings understand intersectionality. Further, this study also aimed to understand professionals' internal reflective processes when considering intersectionality within their work and their pathway to application.

3.2   Methods

This paper used an adapted version of grounded theory called thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative approaches provide an opportunity to generate complex and rigorous insights into the research questions being explored (Creswell, 2013). A grounded theory approach was used to study participant experiences applying intersectionality instead of understanding intersectionality as a theory. Thematic analysis is not bound by a particular theoretical approach. It affords researchers flexibility in various domains, including theoretical/interpretive lens, research question, sample size, data collection, and data analysis. Thematic analysis has shown to be effective with projects with both small and large data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2017), and given the size of this study's sample, data saturation or developing a substantive theory were not primary aims.

This study employed an epistemological perspective of social constructivism and an ontological perspective of relativism to interpret the data. According to social constructivism, knowledge is socially created through the interaction between the researcher and the study participants (Schwandt, 2003). The interpretation of each participant's reality is not evaluated in terms of absolute truth, but rather in relation to their level of knowledge and sophistication. Relativism asserts the existence of multiple

subjective realities, allowing for various interpretations of an individual's lived experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.2.1 Participants

Participants were invited to participate based on their involvement with the program development, training, or implementation of a healthy relationships/dating violence prevention program for youth. Participants had connections to the program as facilitators, administrators, researchers, or graduate students conducting related research (refer to Table 4 for participants' professional experience). The primary researcher purposefully sampled professionals from a partnership between a university research team and community agencies serving marginalized youth throughout Southwestern Ontario. I am a member of the university research team, and participants were known to me. Professionals included social workers, child and youth workers working within community mental health, child protection, youth criminal justice, newcomer support settings, post-doctoral research associates, university research team staff, a public health nurse, and a university professor. A total of 12 professionals were invited to participate; 10 consented to participate and were interviewed. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Upon gaining informed consent and providing their name and email address on Qualtrics, participants were contacted to schedule a one-on-one virtual interview. In the email to schedule interviews, the primary researcher included the interview protocol, a 2-page summary sheet outlining important concepts (i.e., social identities, systems of oppression, multiple marginalized identities, youth identity development, and intersectionality as it relates to TDV among marginalized youth; appendix C), and data from a group concept mapping study conducted by the primary researcher (clusters and statements). Six of the 10 participants in this current study participated in the group concept methodology to explore how professionals apply intersectionality (see chapter two of this dissertation).

The interview protocol included the following three aspects: demographics, member checking for the previous group concept mapping study (which is outside the scope of

this paper; see chapter two), and a semi-structured interview. This study focused on the findings from the semi-structured interview section of the protocol (see appendix D). Some questions related to TDV specifically and most of the results pertaining to TDV are presented within chapter four of this dissertation. Although the demographic information is inextricably linked to participants' understanding and application of intersectionality, I chose not to include this information for several reasons. First, due to the small sample size, the demographic information would not be sufficient to articulate meaningful differences across participants and would likely compromise their anonymity; thus, the collected demographic information was primarily used for descriptive purposes. Additionally, detailing participant demographics would reduce their identities to mere categories, which would be insufficient in capturing the nuance within their respective social locations. Within the sample, there was considerable diversity among participant identities, and their personal experiences of marginalization and privilege are reflected in the results. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended prompts lasted between 46-73 minutes and averaged 56 minutes (SD =8.71). Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, this researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. The six phases of analysis included: 1) Familiarization with the data, 2) Generating initial codes, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes 6) Writing up. Inspired by the rigorous coding methods found within grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thematic analysis was used to identify, organize, and understand common participant experiences and was chosen for its flexibility. At varying analysis phases, an open and axial coding method and a constant comparative approach were applied. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding refers to "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (p. 61). Axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories" (p. 96). The constant comparative approach involved

continual attempts to pull information from the transcripts to provide insight into the categories being explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The authors worked collaboratively during most stages of data coding, including reviewing transcripts and codes. Several processes were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). For example, to enhance the validity and reliability of the results, the research team interviewed a range of professionals working in various settings supporting marginalized youth (transferability), audited codes and debriefed all findings (credibility). The first author also completed a reflexive journal to keep a self-critical account of the research process (dependability and confirmability). The research team focused on data that illuminated the professionals' actions, philosophies toward work, reflective practices, and pathways toward adopting an intersectional perspective. These data emerged through professionals' work experience and ways intersectionality was critically applied, thus addressing the research question: how do professionals use an intersectional framework to bring a critical lens to their work with marginalized youth?

Table 4: Professional Experience of Participants

	n	%
Years Working with Marginalized Youth		
More than 15 years	1	11.1
Between 10 and 15 years	5	55.6
Between 6 and 10 years	3	33.3
Prior Experience with HRP Research and Programming		
HRP Researcher	1	11.1
Participated in HRP-E Training	2	22.2
Facilitated two or more HRP-E Groups	6	66.7

In this section, the results are presented by summarizing the main themes and exploring them through participant verbatim quotes and interpretive explanations, which capture the essence of the main theme. Also, I provide analytic narratives that describe the data,

give an interpretation of the data, and link the data to the overarching research question. Corresponding with each main theme, I present the subthemes and explore the various dimensions of each to provide an in-depth analysis of the data. Each main theme, subtheme, and category is discussed in the results section.

3.3   Results

Three main themes and eight subthemes were identified during the data analysis: 1) Understanding intersectionality as a framework, which included five subthemes, 2) Professionals' self-reflection-examination of positionality, privilege, and continued learning, which included two subthemes and 3) Professionals' journey toward applying an intersectional approach, which included four subthemes. Table 5 outlines the three main themes and the associated subthemes.

Table 5: Main themes, sub-themes, and categories related to participants understanding and pathway toward applying intersectionality

Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories

Main Themes	Subthemes	Categories
1. Understanding Intersectionality as a Framework	A) Definition	Oppression and power based on social locations
	B) Reasons for perceived importance	Meeting the needs of populations needs Addressing Systemic Oppression Avoiding Harm
	C) Youth interlocking identities	Complexity of youth identity Identity exploration and expression (nuance and salience)
	D) Intersectionality and negative outcomes	Contributing factors and interpretation Teen dating violence Impact of systemic oppression on negative outcomes (including TDV)

	E) Marginalized youth's experience accessing resources and systemic barriers	Reduced help-seeking Minimal support and resources Lack of trust Systemic barriers
2. Professionals' self-reflection: examination of positionality, privilege, and impact on work	A) Positionality and privilege	Self-reflection and awareness of positionality Privilege and implication in violence
	B) Impact of positionality and privilege on work	Self-reflection to benefit youth Applying personal identities in work Recognizing their own personal experience with marginalization and how it contributes to their work
3. Professionals' journey toward applying an intersectional approach	A) Multi-layered systemic issues necessitating use of intersectional approach	Gaining an understanding of youth experiences and systemic issues Learning directly from the experiences of marginalized youth
	B) Continued training and professional development	Approaches to continued training Academic training Criticisms of academic training Critical consciousness and praxis
	C) Engagement with community	Pursuit of learning opportunities in diverse settings Influence of social justice movements on awareness of intersectionality
	D) Independent learning	Reading Training and professional development

3.3.1 Main Theme 1: Understanding Intersectionality as a Framework

The identified subthemes captured within understanding intersectionality as a framework included definition and understanding; reasons for perceived importance; youth interlocking identities; intersectionality and negative outcomes; marginalized youths' experience accessing resources, and systemic barriers. This main theme encapsulates

professionals' understanding of intersectionality and its relation to marginalized youth, including its importance in practice.

Subtheme 1A: Definition. There was variability in how participants defined intersectionality. On one end, a small minority of the sample struggled to grasp essential components of the definition, such as the notion of compounding systems of oppression connecting to an individual's interlocking identities. However, most participants appeared to at least understand the primary features of intersectionality. Based on this portion of the data set, one category was identified: oppression and power based on social locations.

Oppression and power based on social locations. Participants offered definitions of intersectionality, highlighting vital components such as an interaction between marginalized and non-marginalized identities, social locations garnering both advantages and disadvantages and systems of oppression. Lisa's quote illustrates these aspects and captures the systemic elements contributing to an unequal distribution of privileges and disadvantages.

> "My understanding of intersectionality is kind of acknowledging the
> multiple social locations that we all experience and how certain minority
> identities come together and compound oppression. Right. So, there are
> various ways through social interactions, but mostly through systemic
> factors like policy and institutional factors that bring about privileges to
> some and disadvantage to others." (Lisa)

Notably, some participants expressed how power and privilege can be relationally based on contextual elements and how factors such as group dynamics may influence individuals' sense of power and privilege.

> "Power and intersectionality are rooted in systems of oppression. But I also
> think power and privilege are very relational, so it shifts. So, I think there
> are ways to have people recognize when you may be in a position of

privilege in relation to others and when might you feel like, oh, I really don't have that privilege in relation to others?" (Tess)

Subtheme 1B: Reasons for perceived importance. Throughout interviews, participants described several reasons why they find intersectionality necessary. Stemming from these descriptions, three categories were identified: meeting the populations' needs, addressing system oppression, and avoiding harm.

Meeting the populations' needs. Youth presenting challenges and intersecting identities influenced participants' decision to apply intersectionality. Participant quotes sorted within this category outlined how they understood the interacting effects of various risk factors co-existing within the lives of marginalized youth. In the excerpt below, Alyssa details her experience working with youth in the justice system. She noted the many barriers across their ecosystems, including systemic factors. Oliva also indicated that upon looking at your "audience," professionals must apply intersectionality and mentioned that it sometimes becomes an "automatic" approach.

"I work with justice-involved youth, and typically speaking, justice-involved youth experience multiple barriers. So, we're not talking about one person who's been referred to me for some reason. We know that young people who often commit crimes come from dysfunctional families who are also facing impoverished situations, sometimes racialized, stigmatized, or marginalized for other reasons. So, we usually deal with several different identities of the youth. So, intersectionality is paramount in this type of work because you don't want to stick these kids in one box." (Alyssa)

Participants also indicated that professionals might mistakenly assume that a group of marginalized youth is homogenous and that an intersectional lens is critical in avoiding these assumptions and developing a more nuanced understanding of the youth they are working with. Kendra highlights the interacting influence of systemic oppression and provides an example of how the experience of teen dating violence holistically when working with individuals with marginalized identities.

"intersectionality allows us to see that these oppressions intersect to shape

people's experiences based on the identities they hold. And so, experiencing

dating violence as a black girl needs to be considered holistically and not

just in terms of being black versus white or a girl versus the boy, but like

what does it mean to actually be a black girl in the world and how does that

shape your experience of dating violence?" (Kendra)

Addressing systemic oppression. There was variability in participant responses related

to the critical nature of intersectionality. Notably, to varying degrees of specificity, most

participants indicated that intersectionality is vital for addressing systemic oppression

within their work. In the quote below, Amy discusses how researchers and practitioners

are beginning to understand the experience of teen dating violence within a broader lens,

focusing less on individual risk factors and more on the systemic factors contributing to

this negative outcome.

"It (intersectionality) helps us locate that root causes of dating violence are

at a societal level. So, for example, the cause is racism, not race, if we see

disproportionality high rates of TDV among racialized youth. I think that,

first and foremost is super critical because the field is now about 30-35

years old. Really for most of that time, it has focused very heavily on

individual-level factors and some interpersonal level factors and a tiny

smattering of neighbourhood, but not until very recently has it been taken up

with this idea, and it's still quite fringe. I think that there are these larger

structural oppressions that are actually driving what we see at the individual

level. And then the second part that intersectionality brings is that, of

course, these oppressions intersect to shape people's experiences based on

the identities they hold…..We have not been super effective in preventing

dating violence. And I think a large part of that is we're not taking into

account these larger root causes in our work." (Kendra)

Avoiding harm. Participants expressed the reduction and avoidance of harm as vital to

working with marginalized youth. Professionals explained the role of personal values and

beliefs and their intrinsic relation to professionals' ethical duty not to cause harm. In the quote below, Amy expressed how intersectionality can be used to ensure youth are provided with space to express themselves and suggests that professionals may become active participants in reinforcing systems of oppression if they cannot prioritize youths' experiences within their work.

> "it's the most important approach to working with youth. Otherwise, at any point in time, the work we do with other people or just interacting with others can be harmful if you're not taking an intersectional approach. I think it's more likely that your work will be harmful and perpetuate systems of oppression. So being able to approach work with youth with an intersectional lens to prioritize voices and know when to step back, which I find is sometimes a harder thing for people to do with youth, is to step back and not teach to youth and let them talk." (Amy)

Amy described more specific situations that could be harmful to marginalized youth and how professionals may navigate these conversations to avoid relying on youth to be teachers to adults they encounter. Amy's reflections highlight the clinical judgement required when navigating the nuances of identity-related conversations.

> "constantly trying to have those conversations with youth can bring up things that they weren't ready to talk about, identities they weren't ready to explore or things that aren't a big part of them… You also want to avoid having them teach you about their experiences." (Amy)

Subtheme 1C. Youth interlocking identities. As a part of understanding intersectionality as a framework, participants provided comments related to youth identity. Throughout the interviews, participants offered many reflections on youth identity; however, there is a particular emphasis on various aspects of youth identity that were coded within this subtheme. Namely, three categories were identified: complexity of youth identity, internalized identity, and identity exploration and expression (nuance and salience).

Complexity of youth identity. Participants described youth identity as complex in that professionals had to consider many factors when working with marginalized youth. Holly noted that marginalized youth had complex lived experiences of oppression and injustice due to their interlocking identities and detailed the many contributing factors, including age, ethnicity, gender and sexual identities, migration journeys, family history, and collective experiences within their communities. Some participants noted that their work with marginalized youth taught them about the complexities of their experiences.

"I think I saw how it got very complicated, like when people had multiple intersecting identities. For an international student who also identifies with LGBT2Q+ community and who's also kind of working all the time because financially they're supporting their family from back home and there's so many vulnerabilities and then so many risks to of seeking the services to bring justice if you have been harmed" (Kelsey)

"I didn't think about the complexities of what it's like to live racialized or in a world that doesn't necessarily treat everyone the same" (Emily)

Identity exploration and expression (nuance and salience). Participants commented on youth identity development and described the nuance and salience of youth identity expression. Several participants noted that youth are discovering themselves and explained how identity changes and shifts over time based on contextual factors, including being in a relationship with each other. Tess noted that organizations working with youth with a shared identity might develop biases and that individual professionals may have blind spots in their practice, primarily related to systemic factors.

"an organizational bias or even for staff bias might be assuming that everyone is already working with a group where we think there's sort of commonality and there might be on some really large level, but we can ignore some of the intersections that are crucial within that population and maybe also don't see the privileges or power that we carry. So, we might seem like, oh, you know, I'm a Muslim woman. They're Muslim. And so, you know, we have a lot in common. And so, we can sort of gloss over

some of those, the key intersectionalities that really structure power and privilege in different ways. So, I think that's really important." (Tess)

Additionally, Tess discussed how professionals must develop an awareness of how power dynamics can become more or less salient depending on the environment. She elaborated that developing awareness supports professionals in understanding how youth may navigate particular spaces.

"in our day-to-day recognizing how we move through different spaces and how we may feel more vulnerable or more empowered in particular spaces or have more power in certain spaces." (Tess)

Last, participants discussed the nuances within identity expression and alignment with felt identities among the 2SLGTBQIA+ community. Lisa expressed that some individuals fail to acknowledge that 2SLGTBQIA+ youth are unique despite sharing an identity and indicated that some professionals struggle to recognize the co-existence of multiple identities and the nuance and salience that exists within identity expression. Among participant responses, Lisa and Amy provided examples of how youth may relate to particular identities, illustrating the depth of identity alignment and expression. Further, these quotes highlight the importance of not relying solely on categories to influence work; the emphasis should be on youth experience.

"for example, there are black men who are gay or queer. And instead of like using the term gay, they use same-gender loving. So, they're reclaiming or refuting the dominant white way of being gay. Or, for example, when you were thinking about Indigeneity and sexual and gender diversity, as we talked about before, we have 2-spirit. There are all these ways of being where you think about race and you think about sexuality and or gender. And those are just two facets. Right." (Lisa)

"a youth was like, I don't think being gay is a big part of my identity. Like, I don't really want it to be the main thing. So then [it is not helpful] to have a long conversation about the systems of oppression surrounding gay youth

when it's not something they're thinking about constantly or experiencing constantly." (Amy)

Subtheme 1D. Intersectionality and negative outcomes. Quotes within this theme capture participants' reflections on how intersectionality and identity are related to adverse outcomes among marginalized youth. This theme includes the following three categories: contributing factors and interpretation, teen dating violence, impact of systemic oppression on negative outcomes (including TDV).

Contributing factors and interpretation. Participants identified detailed factors contributing to adverse outcomes in the first category. For example, Alyssa indicated that individuals with marginalized identities face disproportionately high poverty rates and, by extension, violence and abuse. Lisa also provided an example of intersectionality and violence, detailing her experience working with a youth who was black, a sexual minority, and living in a rural context. These two examples illustrate the layering effect of marginalized identities and how these contribute to more severe adverse outcomes.

> "I think many marginalized identities face much more poverty, specifically Indigenous and Black youth in Canada. So, they face a lot of different types of violence, right? Poverty comes with its own bag of tricks. So higher rates of violence, inter familial violence, and higher rates of abuse in homes" (Alyssa)

Participants also offered interpretations for these disproportionately adverse outcomes among marginalized youth, including considering systemic factors. Kendra provided a thorough explanation of how her research is beginning to interpret disproportionately high rates of teen dating violence among marginalized youth through anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks versus interpretations that have traditionally been used which emphasize individual-level factors

> "we're just about to publish the first national dating violence prevalence in Canada like an epidemiological study. But we took that up in terms of examining correlates from a structural and intersectional lens. Now, we

couldn't always look at intersections because we didn't have the [statistical] power, but that is the framing of the work. And so that changes what kind of theories and explanations you give. But, if you see that racialized youth are reporting more perpetration, for example. And then in our work with program evaluation, it changes in how we consider outcomes. So, we have a paper on racialized youth looking at intersections between race and gender within a gender transformative program and really taking that up through the lens of critical race theory as opposed to more individual-level explanations that I think developmentalist would typically use. So, it gets taken up in different ways, but it is the consistent frame on all of our work." (Kendra)

Teen dating violence. One of the adverse outcomes identified and described in detail by participants was TDV. Participants described individual and systemic factors contributing to high prevalence rates throughout their interviews. Based on her experiences, Kelsey speculated that a contributing factor for higher rates of TDV among marginalized youth is a lack of education. Specifically, she commented that while providing counselling in a halfway house, she learned that some youth are not explicitly taught how to be in a healthy relationship and, through their experiences, may not have learned essential skills in preventing TDV, such as assertive communication and boundary setting. In the quote below, Kendra indicates that rates of TDV are higher among marginalized youth, but importantly, she locates this pattern at a structural level.

"any systematic review you look at is going to tell you that youth who are marginalized because of an aspect of their identity, be it sexuality, gender, especially non-binary trans, and racial identity, experience overall more dating violence. And so, I think the question is why? And for a long time, as I was saying, that has been about individual developmental frameworks or other things. And so, to me, the answer is these larger structural oppressions" (Kendra)

Kendra also explained that marginalized youth may use violence to regain power and control. Further, she stated that TDV is related to the disempowerment and internalized marginalization they experience daily and that youth do everything they can to manage the marginalization the experience.

> "like the other theory that is driving me is Michael Unger's work on resilience, where he talks about youth finding whatever way they can to navigate to resilience, to regain power. I guess my overall theory is that this [TDV] is a way for people who have been disempowered at a societal level to start to regain power and control in their life. And we know that violence is used for that across contexts. So why not in dating violence?" (Kendra)

Related to outcomes, participants discussed how marginalized youth face inequitable forms of justice. For example, Kelsey shared that the justice system often fails to consider the intersecting risk factors contributing to an individual's involvement in dating violence. Instead, she explained, they are blamed for their actions without being provided opportunities to describe their experience, thus lacking a voice in legal proceedings.

Impact of systemic oppression on negative outcomes (including TDV). The final category within the Intersectionality and Negative Outcomes subtheme includes how systemic oppression contributes to adverse outcomes, including TDV.

Participants identified a range of different systems which create inequitable conditions for marginalized populations, such as colonialism, sexism, and racism. They made the inherent connection between identities and these social injustices. They provided detailed accounts of how these "isms" compound and described how these oppressive systems are often discussed and understood in isolation of each other versus considering the interacting effect that intersectionality posits. For example, Lisa indicated that Indigenous peoples in Canada are oppressed through culture, race, religion, sexual, and gender identity. Tess and Emily discussed how prejudice and discriminatory views toward racialized and Indigenous young women have contributed to a vulnerability to dating relationships and places them at risk of alienation, mental health issues, and problematic substance use. Also, Sam made an important point about systemic oppression and

identity. "It's not the identity you're holding, but rather the identity that others hold about you." (Sam)

Additionally, participants identified the effects of intergenerational trauma among marginalized youth within various systems. For example, Emily commented how involvement in children's services is a marginalized identity within itself and is often an identity that extends across generations. Sam outlined the intergenerational transmission of trauma and violence among newcomer populations, the impact on economic opportunities, and their ability to navigate social systems. Other participants commented on the newcomer experiences and how violence may be used to problem-solve and regulate and noted that these patterns are often accepted and shared across generations. Sam articulated how cultural norms, including forms of systemic oppression, may be passed across cultures.

> "you're going to get intergenerational transmission of trauma. There will be
> relationship violence modelled, and there will be different cultural norms
> around what's acceptable and what's not acceptable" (Sam)

Last, participants shared how systemic oppressions manifest in the lives of marginalized youth and how it impacts their access to opportunities and resources. Kendra described this interacting effect and suggested that TDV preventative programming should focus on the violence site.

> "there are a number of other factors like xenophobia and ableism. There's
> lots of different factors. But to me, the question revolves around power,
> identity, youth resilience, and how all those things get tied together. Then,
> regarding outcomes, we know dating violence isn't good for your health.
> And so, if you're more likely to experience dating violence, be around
> dating violence. It's not surprising, unfortunately, on the other end, that
> you're also more likely to experience adverse outcomes. It's at the site of
> violence where we need to work to prevent those adverse outcomes from
> manifesting and then thinking about all of that in terms of opportunities and
> resources" (Kendra)

Subtheme 1E: Marginalized youths' experience accessing support/resources.
Intersectionality encompasses how systems of oppression influence marginalized
populations' access to services and limit their resources. This subtheme focuses on
professionals' perceptions of marginalized youths' experience accessing support. Based
on participant responses, four categories were identified: reduced help-seeking, minimal
support and resources, lack of trust, and systemic barriers.

   Reduced help-seeking. Participants described how marginalized youth are less likely
to access support, know where to go for support, and feel less worthy of receiving
support. Tess reflected that 2SLGTBQIA+ youth and dynamics related to their help-
seeking may increase their risk of TDV.

> "I think if you're from a community where sexual or LGBT communities are
> already marginalized and shamed, that creates vulnerability as well. I think a
> lot of things may happen in those relationships may happen in secrecy. And
> so, what are some of the dynamics there? Even if you're finding yourself in
> a relationship, you may be unable to reach out for support or be open about
> that. And that also can create particular dynamics with potential abuse"
> (Tess)

   Minimal support and resources tailored to needs. Participants commented that
marginalized youth often experience isolation based on their racial, sexual, and cultural
identities and discussed how these interlocking identities impact their access to tailored
support. Participants indicated there are inequitable spaces for marginalized youth, such
as 2SLGTBQIA+ youth. Emily noted that marginalized youth might not have stable
family relationships, which further contributes to their vulnerability.

> "Many teens are involved with us because they are not accepted by their
> families and need to leave and are more vulnerable. So how it all kind of ties
> back to teen domestic violence is you've got a whole bunch of young people
> who are out here already marginalized, already a little bit disadvantaged by
> their lack of resources, lack of stable family structure quite often, and are
> not well connected with school, dealing with racism and so forth." (Emily)

Additionally, Sam outlined how families and individuals in the community may treat youth with marginalized identities based on their prejudices, which impacts the support they may receive within these environments.

> "a gay teen boy who comes from a Jamaican background where there's a lot of homo-negativity and homophobia. Even if they don't see themselves as gay, even if they don't hold that identity themselves, and even if they don't see themselves as Black or Jamaican, if they bring a boy home, there's still a good chance they're going to get assaulted by their parents. If they go to a convenience store with the hoodie, there's still a good chance that somebody will be watching to see if they're shoplifting. It's less about them holding the identity and more about how other people in the world see them and treat them as a result of how they exist as they are" (Sam)

Lack of trust. Participants expressed that marginalized youth often distrust the systems designed to support them. Some commented that the existing systems cannot support clients' complex needs and that the youth are aware of this service gap. Emily described how youth experiencing TDV might remain in unhealthy relationships due to distrusting alternative arrangements.

> "And not only are they at risk, but they're also quite often afraid of institutions. Like being involved with CAS or wanting to live in group care, whatever that would mean. If you have to flee from an abusive partner, quite often there's no place to go that they want to go." (Emily)

Systemic barriers. Last, participants explained the systemic barriers that exist for marginalized youth. Participants generally described how marginalized youth experience vulnerability within particular spaces due to interacting systems of oppression. Holly noted that a contributing factor to this vulnerability is that they lack individual social power and thus experience more difficulties navigating and overcoming the systemic barriers they face. In the quote below, Lisa lists the various systemic barriers that 2SLGTBQIA+ youth as a group have to contend with daily.

"When you're thinking about LGBT2Q+ youth, just because there's one acronym doesn't mean everybody's the same. We're all different. We don't have all the same identities and experiences. But generally, what we have in common is that we experience oppression in the form of schooling, in the form of media, in the form of some religious institutions, and in the form of government. So, all these institutions are heteronormative or cis-normative, meaning the privileges are provided to straight and cisgender people. So, policies, procedures, all the things are catered towards people who are straight or cisgender. If we think about education, here's a concrete example. Sex education and how many LGBT2Q+ youth are crying out: we don't see ourselves in sex education, and there must be some representation." (Lisa)

3.3.2 Main Theme 2: Professionals' Examination of Positionality, Privilege, and Impact on Work

The following subthemes address how professionals apply intersectionality A) Positionality and privilege, B) Impact of positionality and privilege on work

Subtheme 2A: Positionality and privilege. When participants discussed positionality and privilege, the data fell into two categories: self-reflection and awareness of positionality and privilege and implication in violence.

Self-reflection and awareness of positionality. All participants highlighted the importance of self-reflection and discussed it mainly as a personal endeavour that significantly affects their professional life. The idea of wrestling with one's positionality and with anti-oppressive theories was identified as necessary. Some participant responses extended this category by suggesting that professionals must also consider personal identities that are marginalized or have historically been oppressed.

Sam described having multiple identities and how some identities may not appear marginalized or complex on the surface. He explained that many individuals will have hidden identities and outlined the differences between visible markers of identity, which may be changeable, and visible identities, which are not changeable.

"I saw myself as a punk or skater or whatever. And then I had a cultural
dress and everything, and people did react to me in a certain way. But if I
didn't want to be treated like a punk, I could take out my gauged earrings
and not have a Mohawk. If I was Black, that's not changeable for me" (Sam)

Kelsey explained that she brought her own identity into her counselling role and noted
that professionals could engage in reflective work on their own or with the support of a
counsellor. In addition, Kelsey mentioned that as a part of her graduate training, it was
emphasized that students should intentionally dedicate effort to understanding
themselves.

"And so, I think part of bringing your own identities into counselling, I
guess, is being aware of what your experiences are, and I think that's
through doing your work, so doing your work to understand yourself, which
I think people can do that on their own, they can do it with the support of a
counsellor. But I think that was a piece throughout my master's. That was
highlighted getting to know parts of you and then choosing an approach that
aligns with kind of those approaches, those parts of you." (Kelsey)

"you have to continually go back on it, just like being aware of your own
identities and privileges and being reflexive in your pedagogy and your
facilitation." (Lisa)

Lisa noted that professionals must understand their social location and the gaps in their
understanding to apply intersectionality effectively. Lisa elaborates that she can only
relate to the world through the identities she knows and personally embodies and that
individuals with marginalized identities have unique experiences and understandings of
the world. Later, Lisa emphasized the importance of wresting with theory and the
challenges of feeling comfortable and confident when holding privileged identities and
working with individuals with marginalized identities.

"we have to understand our own social location. So, for me, I'm a minority
in a variety of ways. Sexual minority, gender minority, I have mental health

issues and things like that, but I'm also white. So, it's really important for folks to understand their own social locations and the gaps in their own understandings because they don't have those experiences that, for example, a black, trans-disabled woman does. Right. So, I can navigate the world differently and for social reasons. So, in terms of what I do, I must understand my social location" (Lisa)

"I know about the critical race theory, and I know about anti-racism, and I know what the things you're supposed to do and when you're not supposed to do. So sometimes, as a white researcher and educator, I still am working on being comfortable and confident and having those kinds of conversations right now. And sometimes, it makes me think, and it gives me more empathy for people who take the training that I facilitate because I know that they're coming at it in the same kind of manner, something I'm always working on trying to understand and be bolder, I guess, and competent and confident with sharing my understandings that also, you know, I don't want to talk over or on behalf of racialized folks" (Lisa)

Tess articulated the nuances in self-reflection and understanding one's identity. For example, she explained that self-reflection on one's positionality includes an assessment of strengths (or privileges) and challenges (or oppressions). Interestingly, Tess described that there is power in individual reflection. However, engagement in the collective experiences of oppression, such as racism, and fostering collective actions at a system level can be valuable.

"I mean, my personal life and knowing your story changes throughout your life, but like, I think at any given point, sort of thinking about your story at that moment and thinking about strengths, as well as recognizing where some of you think about challenges or oppressions but being able to validate that. And I think there's power in being able to do that individually, but also to have that validated collectively. So sometimes, we do it and individualize experiences of racism. So, it's very personal; sometimes, responses and

systems are very individualized. This is a unique circumstance, but it's like, well, no, it's part of a larger reality and system that's reinforced. (Tess)

Privilege and implication in violence. The final category that developed from the subtheme on positionality and impact on work with youth included the idea of privilege and the implication in violence. Participants generally discussed professionals' acknowledgement and awareness of privilege within this category and emphasized the importance of accepting responsibilities and role in historical and current violence that marginalized individuals face.

To some degree, all participants discussed the role of personal privilege in their work with marginalized youth. In the first quotes, Olivia and Holly discussed her personal background and their privilege. Kelsey acknowledged her privilege and noted that her experiences may have acted as protective factors against adverse outcomes such as involvement in the justice system.

"I've realized the, just luck, you know what, I was born into the right family, and I had every opportunity that I ever needed and still dealt with my own mental health challenges" (Olivia)

"I have a pretty privileged identity. I don't identify with many marginalized groups, so how can I say I would not have committed a crime or done something had I had a different life? So had I not had a very supportive family, had I grown up without those kinds of feelings like belonging in my community and feeling safe, like walking home from school, and so I think it helped me understand that more." (Kelsey)

Tess discussed the importance of acknowledging privilege in the context of organizations and outlined how colleagues can benefit from group-based reflection and honest conversations.

"I think this comes to people in the organization, and we need to do our work in terms of recognizing our privileges and what we bring into our work. What are the experiences and privileges, power, but also

vulnerabilities? I mean, I think depending on what your staff makeup is in terms of what we're bringing into the work or how sort of our identities inform how we understand these issues and may have lived these issues and then relate to young people." (Tess)

Similarly, participants communicated how professionals must examine and own their privileges. Kelsey points to the uncomfortable reality of how privileged members of society are implicated in the historical and current violence impacting marginalized populations. Specifically, she outlines how in her counselling role supporting Indigenous individuals, she acknowledges not only her privileged identity of being White but also the historical violence that white individuals have caused Indigenous communities. She eloquently articulated that acknowledging this reality is uncomfortable and that she is vulnerable in owning it.

"when I go into the community, I acknowledge that I'm a White individual, and you know I'm coming here with my knowledge as a counsellor, but I also understand that it would be difficult to have a White person kind of show up for support when White people have caused so much harm to their communities. And I think acknowledging that it's uncomfortable because, you know, I wish I weren't related to all of that trauma for these communities, but I can't change that I am, and I think through acknowledging it, I'm being vulnerable" (Kelsey)

Kendra similarly highlighted how professionals must think about how they themselves may have perpetuated violence and that this process may include "turning stuff up in your own life."

Last, in two quotes, Emily discusses how in the past, she has minimized the importance of intersectionality in her practice and that her White identity and the privileges garnered from this identity contributed to this minimization.

"I think maybe I minimized some of those things historically and which, of course, is easy to do as a White, privileged person. To not think about the

complexities of what it's like to live racialized or and just in a different and
in a world that doesn't necessarily treat everyone the same" (Emily)

"somebody made some comments about the level of racism in our agency.
And I have not been witness to that. I say from my position of White
privilege and not being a client" (Emily)

Subtheme 2B: Impact of positionality and privilege on work. Participants outlined
their examination of positionality and privilege and how this type of reflexivity impacts
their work. In discussing these topics, participants' responses aligned with three
categories: self-reflection to benefit youth, applying personal identities in work, and
recognizing their experience with marginalization and how it contributes to their work.

Self-reflection to benefit youth. Participants discussed utilizing self-reflective
practices to benefit youth. They identified processes such as reflecting on one's own
experiences and intersecting identities concerning the difficulties youth experience,
questioning one's own experiences, evaluating personal opinions and biases, and
considering how these opinions and biases impact work with youth.

Emily indicated that she considers the multi-dimensional issues marginalized youth
experience and her own experiences to benefit the youth she works with.

"think about the multi dynamics of things that are happening for them, but
also reflect about myself and what I know about myself. And as this is
impacting me, how can I use what I know about me and my own
experiences to benefit the young people I work with" (Emily)

Similarly, Kelsey emphasized that to practice authentically and actively attend to youth's
experiences; professionals should explore who they are as a clinician and their
intersecting identities.

"I think a huge piece is figuring out who you are as a clinician,
understanding the parts of yourself, and learning to be in uncomfortable
situations by being like your authentic self and acknowledging your

intersecting identities. And I think through that understanding of your
intersecting identities and showing up as you are, you also naturally attend
to how someone else might navigate a situation because you understand that
on a personal basis, so." (Kelsey)

Kelsey identified factors supporting her in examining her biases, such as consulting colleagues and supervisors.

"I think it's important to always kind of question your own experiences and
get other people's opinions and consult with colleagues and supervisors to
see, you know, is this really coming from some bias that I have based off of
my experiences?" (Kelsey)

Applying personal identities in work. Most participants discussed strategies they use to apply their personal intersecting identities in their work with marginalized youth and offered several considerations.

For example, Kelsey highlighted the importance of being authentic and using her identities to build empathy and understanding of her client's experiences. However, she also noted that she keeps in mind that her clients have different lived experiences due to their unique intersecting identities.

"being like kind of your authentic self and acknowledging your intersecting
identities. And I think through that understanding of your intersecting
identities and showing up as you are, you also kind of then naturally, attend
to how someone else might navigate a situation because you kind of
understand that on a personal basis." (Kelsey)

In a discussion of personal identities, Amy articulated how it can be important for youth to see their identities represented in their facilitators and other significant adults, such as their teachers. She noted that reserving her expressions of identity while working with youth can be challenging and emphasized the importance of maintaining her emotional capacity for youth. In the following two quotes, Amy and Kelsey highlight the tension between expressing their intersecting identities in session with clients while

focusing on their clients' experiences. In other words, they both discussed using clinical judgment when engaging in self-disclosures and the need to be mindful of the space they are taking up in a session with the youth they are working with.

> "I struggle with integrating my own intersection identities to my work with youth because I think there's a bit of a balance of being like, oh no, I get that or like I went through that too. And not dominating the space with your own experiences and just resulting in talking about yourself." (Amy)

> "So, I guess I don't hold back with acknowledging my identities. I like to be very authentic and open with who I am as a person, and I think that's part of the therapeutic relationship that I'm trying to create. But I think it crosses a line if you're starting to disclose a lot of your experiences, and it takes away from that individual's experiences" (Kelsey)

Last, Holly expressed her appreciation for personal privileges and outlined how these privileges have supported her in developing a resilient framework in her work with youth.

> "I have this knowledge because I have an education. I had my parents; they had economic means. I didn't have to do this. But do you have to do all of those things? And yet you are here. But at the same time, it also helps me take a resilient framework. And I work with marginalized youth because it helps me to recognize that sometimes, despite your actions, just privileges. They're still surviving, in many cases in their own right, thriving." (Holly)

Recognizing their own personal experience with marginalization and how it contributes to their work. Participants discussed their marginalized intersecting identities as a pathway for better understanding their lived experiences and offered thoughts on integrating their personal marginalization into their work.

Olivia indicated that she has always used a critical perspective in her work and has been keenly attuned to the impact of marginalized identities because of the mental health challenges she has experienced.

"I have always been very critical, I think, because of my own mental health issues. So, I've always had a very keen sense of importance. I've always understood the importance of people's mental health and mental wellness, and I see understanding and being aware of race and gender and like social determinants of health and inequity and umm income, you know, just all these aspects of an individual, how important it is" (Olivia)

Holly articulated that her interlocking identities as a woman and immigrant and her privileges have led her to be cautious in her approach with youth. Further, she indicated that the recognition of her privilege has helped her to understand youth's marginalized identities.

"when I think about my own interlocking identities as a woman, as a person of colour, as someone who came to Canada as an immigrant, for me, I'm very cautious because while I recognize my walking identities simultaneously, I also recognize the many, many privileges I have. So whenever in a public presentation or I say that I work with newcomer youth, a very common question I often receive is, did your own immigration journey inspire your work? And I'm very clear that I might, I had so many privileges that I think it will be an insult if I say that, yes, my own migration journey has inspired the refugee experience of the youth that we work with. So, for me, I think that my work with marginalized communities has helped me recognize the many privileges that I have, and I think the recognition of the privilege has helped me understand those identities and have a deeper level and have changed my practice." (Holly)

Lastly, both Emily and Amy described drawing from their personal experiences to develop empathy and understanding for marginalized youths' experiences. For example, Emily indicated that despite not having the same story as the youth, having complex personal experiences has helped her to understand and empathize with the youth's experiences. Last, Amy expressed that empathy comes easier when she can personally connect with challenging experiences that youth communicate.

"So, having that kind of experience, understanding the complexity of those

kinds of relationships helps me understand the complexity of what our

young people are dealing with. I know it's not the exact same story, but I

know it's a story that hard stuff happens and stuff you can't control happens,

but you still love that parent. And I can understand those dynamics. So, I

feel like that has always been an asset to me. So, I have been able to

empathize, which I think is important" (Emily)

"I think empathy comes a lot easier and less, not less of a cost, but less work

when you can go, oh yeah, I felt that. You can make a note in your head like

I felt exactly how that youth felt in the situation they're describing. I think it

makes it easier to empathize consistently, and then it also makes it easier to

talk about, like, yeah, when you're dealing with micro aggression in this

way, like, this is how I deal with it." (Amy)

3.3.3 Main Theme 3: Professionals' Journeys Toward Applying an Intersectional Approach

I identified the following subthemes when professionals outlined the various pathways or influences that drew them toward applying an intersectional approach: A) Multi-layered systemic issues necessitating the use of intersectional approach, B) Continued training and professional development, C) Engagement with community, D) Independent learning.

Subtheme 3A: Multi-layered systemic issues necessitating use of intersectional approach. Participants discussed that the complexity of their client's issues often required an intersectional approach to adequately address. Consistent with serving the client's best interests, two categories were identified within this subtheme: gaining an understanding of youth experiences and systemic issues and learning directly from the experiences of marginalized youth.

Gaining an understanding of youth experiences and systemic issues. Participants outlined the contexts in which they worked with youth and the process of allowing youth needs to guide their approaches. For example, Kelsey discussed her experience working

in a halfway house for men in the justice system and working to understand their backgrounds and experiences. She communicated the importance of learning about how they understood the different aspects of themselves and the systemic issues that contributed to their involvement in the justice system. Kelsey explained using this information to guide her interventions and the importance of using an intersectional approach to avoid making judgements.

> "the first time that I realized how much work I needed to put into that was when I worked at a halfway house for men on parole to understand where they were at and their experiences and what brought them to where they are now. I needed to understand all parts of them because so many systemic issues contributed to them engaging in criminal activity that led them to be incarcerated. And so understanding that helped us kind of figure out what healing meant as well as, you know, understanding their human experience, because sometimes we can have judgments about somebody's actions or what somebody does, and I think looking at things in an intersectional way, we understand that person more, and we see that we're all human, and we're navigating the world as best as we can with you know, the systems play" (Kelsey)

Also, Holly expressed that awareness of youths' backgrounds helps determine the specific types of programming they might benefit from. However, she outlined that she doesn't adjust the foundational approaches used to support marginalized youth based on the programming they are receiving.

> "I think we need to be cognizant of the youth we're working with. There is a specialized program for certain individuals. But I'm not a different psychologist when working with newcomer youth versus with CAS [Children's Aid Society] youth." (Holly)

Learning directly from the experiences of marginalized youth. Participants described learning directly from youth as contributing to their decision to apply intersectionality.

Within this theme, a tension exists between learning from youth and not burdening youth to teach adults.

Olivia indicated that she was impacted by many of the conversations with youth during her work. Similarly, Amy articulated that she was gaining practical experience working with marginalized youth and adults while learning about intersectionality. Theoretically, learning about intersectionality supported Amy's approaches in her client work.

> "I got to work in a children's hospital when I was in my undergrad, with kids and adults with disabilities and kids and adults without disabilities. So, I was learning about intersectionality at the same time that I was working with various vulnerable populations, which made a big impact because I could see the way that I changed my wording and my interactions with families as I learned, and then my impact on my relationships with them." (Amy)

Similarly, Kelsey described her experience working with individuals worldwide and was struck by how they understood and expressed their identities, especially how they valued their differences.

> "I worked at an international institute and worked with people from all over the world, and hearing their experiences as well and learning about their cultures and learning about different cultures that value different parts of your identity differently made me realize how sad it is that our communities almost shame people for their identities rather than celebrating them" (Kelsey)

Subtheme 3B: Continued training and professional development. When participants discussed what led them to adopt an intersectional perspective, they listed a variety of continuous training and professional development experiences. After data analyses, their statements were used to develop four categories: approaches to continued training,

academic training, criticisms of academic training, critical consciousness and praxis (theory to practice).

 Approaches to continued training. The approaches and reasons for pursuing continued training participants described varied from wanting to invest the time, remaining humble, recognizing a gap in their training and wanting to improve, and keeping up to date with a rapidly evolving field. Regarding approaches to training, Kendra indicated that she views the time she dedicates to continued training as an investment for which she will be better. Tess explained that sometimes as a professional, she has to be challenged in her approach to work.

Participants expressed the importance of approaching the learning process humbly and expressed the importance of continued reading to access the plethora of unexplored knowledge that exists.

> "be humble about the fact that there are mountains of wisdom outside of that you don't know about, and you should go out and find that and not just say like, oh, this is such an interesting topic. No one thought about this, like, really do your homework." (Kendra)

Lisa expressed her privileged identity as white and admitted to lacking training and knowledge in many relevant practice areas.

> "for me, that identifies like me being a white person and not having that experience. And there are gaps like, for example, in queer communities, there have been massive like movements and cultural components that I am oblivious to." (Lisa)

In the series of quotes below, participants described their professional obligations to continued training. For example, Tess articulated feeling a personal responsibility to continue her learning. Lisa indicated that when she notices a gap in her practice, she feels a need to do better. Lisa also expressed feeling that additional training is necessary in an evolving field.

"I noticed a gap when teaching that I needed to fill because people would have all these questions. And I'm like, well, I don't know. And so, I needed to do better. So, I do that initially with my teaching. And then I would have been trying to translate those understandings in practice, even when I train folks." (Lisa)

"Like even for myself. Like I'm still learning things all the time. I participate in professional development. Even if I did one professional development for the 519 in Toronto, I would do another because a different person might facilitate, and I'll learn something different, not just because that person is different, but because things evolve and change as well." (Lisa)

Academic training. Some participants expressed that their academic training provided them opportunities to learn about intersectional approaches; however, other participants indicated that intersectionality and its application in practice were largely absent within their academic training.

Some participants discussed their experience in more specific academic pathways, such as women's studies and forensic psychology, and how intersectionality was presented as a tool for better understanding the lived experiences of marginalized populations.

"I started in my undergrad. And women and gender studies, so we started exploring this idea of intersectionality, and then I started seeing more and more how it played out in my environment. Specifically, with sexual violence and at an undergrad university, seeing how certain populations were particularly vulnerable to experiencing violence." (Kelsey)

Kendra expressed that her studies in social work provided her with a lens that fundamentally changed her practice and emphasized the practical connection between systemic oppression and intersectionality.

"I was super fortunate to do the second half of my postdoc in a social work faculty, which is really what brought this lens to my work and not just in a sort of passing way, but like really fundamentally changed how we do our

work and how we locate sort of the problem of dating violence. And so, like

in preparation for that postdoc, I read for like a year, I just read and read

everything I could get my hands on to understand intersectionality and

where it comes from and how it's been applied." (Kendra)

In the final quotes, Lisa and Amy described how their equity-related degrees contributed to their application of intersectionality in practice. For example, in the first quote, Lisa indicated that she has previous knowledge of seminal work on intersectionality due to her degree. In the second and third quotes, Amy explained that the application of intersectionality is more accessible because of her previous academic training. Further, she explained that intersectionality was embedded in every aspect of her academic training.

"like my degree is in equity and inclusive education. Right. So, you know, I

took all my equity courses as I have; this is my expertise. Right. So, it's

easier for me because I've heard of Kimberle Crenshaw, like I've read her

work, but for other people. Not so much." (Lisa)

"But my perspective on intersectionality as like a solid understanding of it

or a more academic understanding of it, definitely started in university

because I got to take a diversity and equity degree that focused on it in many

different aspects like history, sociology, science across the board. Yeah, so.

I sometimes do not think it comes easy, but it has been embedded in how I

learn for a while now, and I sometimes forget that it's a relatively new thing

for others. Just like embedding that properly." (Amy)

Criticisms of academic training. Despite describing many positive experiences with academia, participants also offered several criticisms of their academic training.

Kendra and Holly expressed a lack of recognition of social justice and anti-oppressive perspectives in traditional psychology programs:

"I was trained in developmental psychology and like a community-based

but traditional setting. Although my training was excellent in many ways,

the concepts of like oppression or intersectionality were never discussed."
(Kendra)

"I realized that most of my training was not going to my knowledge; my therapeutic skills that at that time existed didn't work." (Holly)

Holly indicated that sometimes the approach and skills required while working with marginalized youth could not be located in theory.

"I think being realistic, and sometimes it's not your textbook, it's not your theory" (Holly)

Critical consciousness and praxis (theory to practice). Applying theory to practice was viewed as being integral in actualizing intersectionality. Participants emphasized the importance of self-reflection but communicated that intersectionality requires a combination of reflexivity and action.

For example, Kendra commented that applying intersectionality requires self-reflection, praxis, critical consciousness, and action and suggested that reflection and action must go beyond acknowledging privilege. Lisa explained the importance of reflexivity and goal-oriented action. Specifically, she mentioned the importance of applying theoretical knowledge gained from readings into practical work and that separating theory and practice is impossible when using intersectionality.

"I have to do better. I have to read the professional development, listen to minorities perspectives and experiences, and then integrate those perspectives into my thought processes of what programming is and actually practically what that is in terms of implementing programming. Right. And then also in research as well. Right. So, it impacts research as well. So, it's as I said before, it's something that is threaded throughout. It's something that is prioritized. It is something that we can't not do." (Lisa)

Subtheme 3C: Engagement with community. Related to professionals' journeys toward intersectionality, participants communicated engagement with the community as

another pathway. Two categories were identified within the data set: pursuit of learning opportunities in diverse settings and influence of social justice movements on awareness of intersectionality.

Pursuit of learning opportunities in diverse settings. Participants discussed the importance of being aware of what is happening in the community and utilizing opportunities outside of academia to build knowledge and skills.

For example, Holly indicated that she remains aware of what is happening in the community and uses this understanding to step outside of manualized approaches to therapy and programming.

> "I am aware of what's happening in the community, and if this week we
> need the space to decompress what's happening in the community rather
> than sticking to my manual, I am doing that" (Holly)

Participants explained how they access learning opportunities outside of their respective fields. For example, Kenda highlighted the value of talking to individuals outside of her field and that the academic training may be rooted in a Western white perspective.

> "I don't think we value their input enough and get training, if you can, from
> like people outside your field, people doing this work and be humble that
> like the frame that you're getting in grad school, try though we might, and I
> know on our program we're trying, it's still coming from a very Western
> white perspective" (Kendra)

One underlying premise among participants was that they were responsible for their own ongoing learning. For example, Kelsey described the importance of attending community events.

> "attending like community events and like seeking to learn from other
> people and not relying on necessarily your clients to be the ones that educate
> you, but different sources." (Kelsey)

Similarly, Amy described how she steps outside of academic research and accesses social forums to keep up to date with essential knowledge relevant to the clients that she works with.

> "I think I start with doing research. I'll try and access a lot of different social forums in social forums that are public in a way that I'm not being intrusive and try and keep up to date with the way that youth are experiencing things and talking about things just so that I have a little more knowledge and things like even if you're approaching queer youth, you're like I know all the labels, I know all the language, you don't have to teach me. You also want to avoid having them, requiring them to teach you about their experiences. This is what this slang means. It's just another barrier to getting to know youth." (Amy)

Influence of social justice movements on awareness of intersectionality. Current events have created a context where there is greater awareness of systemic issues. For example, social justice movements and the COVID-19 pandemic influenced individuals' understanding of intersectionality.

> "I guess it's become much more nuanced as I've been training other folks and trying to articulate the stuff that I think I took for granted, like knowledge from my history. Maybe when we're reading about it, there's a lot more education and awareness about it, especially in the past year since the George Floyds riots and then also how Trump was just so clearly recapitulating all those historical, social oppressions, so clearly, I think that spurred a lot more discussion and interest in these things, and I've been tracking that. So, I guess it's evolved due to that too." (Sam)

Subtheme 3D: Independent learning. During the interviews, participants highlighted various independent learning endeavours contributing to using an intersectional approach. The data that emerged within this subtheme were grouped into two categories: reading and training and professional development.

Reading. Generally, most participants communicated the importance of continuous reading and self-directed learning. They outlined important areas and approaches to engagement with reading material.

For example, Kendra highlighted her reading journey.

> "I'm just trying to read more and more in like queer theory and critical race theory. So, it's kind of like this whole I feel like I'm doing a comprehensive exam again because I'm just like reading and writing." (Kendra)

Regarding the process of selecting appropriate reading material, participants explained the value of engaging with diverse material. In the first quote, Lisa outlined how she consults academic articles and social media and follows various social movements. Kelsey listed the multiple sources that she engages with as continual training. In the third quote, Kendra described the value of widening the scope of fields she engages with.

> "I don't only just understand by looking like reading academic articles, but also like via Instagram and like really cool like YouTube and, you know, looking at all these political like memes and like movements like Black Lives Matter and things like that and Land Back for indigeneity, all the things that are incorporating those into the work that I do, right, so I would say for me, it's been more of a personal, professional kind of passion and pursuit that I've been trying to do." (Lisa)

> "educating yourself so through school, through reading, through staying aware of what's going on in the news, those sorts of things. But I think for me like through schooling and stuff, I learned all of that stuff." (Kelsey)

> "don't just read in psychology. Get out, like, even though there's more and more all the time. Well, I shouldn't just see, like, developmental psychology. Of course, other areas of psychology could be relevant. Still, I think reading outside of your area, in sociology, in social work, like reading things from scholars of those communities and bringing that to your work. I

think interdisciplinarity is always a strength, but in this area, particularly

like do the source reading, don't just read like the summary." (Kendra)

Training and professional development. Participants discussed the different training and professional development opportunities they participated in to understand intersectionality better.

For example, Tess indicated that she participates in professional development and benefits from both the content and the relationships/connection she builds with other participants. In the second quote, Emily mentioned using videos, workshops, and relationships with other professionals to develop her understanding.

> "Yeah, participating in professional development opportunities because that
> also facilitates connections to others and relationships. So, I think it's also
> been helpful when I participated in workshops where maybe you have the
> experience of participating in some of these spaces and what that looks like,
> you know, that can also be helpful." (Tess)

> "There are so many videos online; you can watch and get an understanding
> of different ways of doing things and engaging people. So that's super
> helpful. You know reading and conversing and workshops are great, too,
> because I am one who learns through conversation." (Emily)

Holly noted that she incorporates her learning from collaborative professional relationships into the programming she delivers to youth. Similarly, Lisa communicated the importance of listening to minority perspectives and experiences and integrating this into her practice.

> "I have to understand my own social locations. I have to be better. I have to
> read the professional development, listen to minorities' perspectives and
> experiences, and then integrate those who were here to integrate those into
> my thought processes of what programming is and practically what that is in
> terms of implementing programming. Right. And then also in research as
> well." (Lisa)

3.4   Discussion

This study aimed to explore how professionals implementing a healthy relationships program with marginalized youth understand intersectionality. A secondary objective was to explore factors influencing their choice to integrate intersectionality into their work. Past scholarship has posited that intersectionality can be a valuable lens for developing a critical stance toward working with marginalized populations in various settings. However, there remained a clear gap within the literature regarding how professionals understand this complex framework and the factors influencing their desire to use this approach. To explore this gap, the current study drew on thematic analysis to understand the perspectives of a sample of professionals working within diverse fields implementing the same healthy relationships programming. I identified three main themes outlining professionals' understanding of intersectionality, aspects of their self-reflection, and their journey toward applying an intersectional approach.

Theme 1: Understanding intersectionality as a framework. As noted in the results section, participants' understanding of intersectionality ranged across a spectrum of sophistication. For example, some participants' understanding was reserved to the notion of interlocking identities. In contrast, others provided a detailed analysis of the interconnected systemic factors related to these marginalized identities. Additionally, some participants' descriptions of intersectionality revealed gaps in their understanding, mainly related to the following areas: nuance and salience within youth identity exploration and expression; the complexity in understanding how multiple identities co-exist; and the power dynamics associated with systemic factors that are associated with each identity. Participant reflections on identity appeared to be centred on specific marginalized identities. Although some incorporated how multiple marginalized identities interact to impact youth experience, most participants' comments focused more on the particular groups they worked with, e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+, justice-involved youth, females, ext.

Although there appeared to be some gaps in participants understanding, within the scholarship, intersectionality is known as a complex framework for researchers and practitioners alike (McCall, 2005), and the multitude of definitions, some of which are

contradictory, contributed to Collins (2015) coining the term 'definitional dilemma.' The definitional dilemma refers to the tension associated with defining intersectionality either too narrowly, whereby it would only reflect or capture a fraction of marginalized identities, or too broadly, leading the term to lose its meaning. Within this debate, researchers have argued that academics and practitioners must acknowledge complex inter and intra-group differences between an individual's marginalized identities while also avoiding the tendency to oversimplify and generalize categories of difference (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Similarly, McCall (2005) refers to the 'epistemological continuum' that exists due to the variety of ways intersectionality can be understood and applied. One implication of this particular definitional concern is that a more expansive understanding of intersectionality may broaden the concept to focus on everyone, ultimately resulting in the erasure of disadvantaged groups at several interlocking axes of power and categories of difference (Bilge, 2013; Jordan-Zachery & Alexander-Floyd 2018). The range of participant responses highlighted these tensions and illustrated how professionals working with diverse populations grapple with understanding nuanced identity-related considerations when understanding intersectionality as a framework.

Theme 2: Professionals' self-reflection: Examination of positionality, privilege, and continued learning. The literature highlights the vital role of critical reflection in applying intersectionality (i.e., Collins, 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Murphy, 2009). Further, research has outlined how intersectionality can be used to facilitate critical reflection. For example, Mountain et al. (2019) argue that intersectionality is essential for critical social work because it implies continuous reflexivity on how social categories appear within one's work. Although a structured reflective process or model was not identified within this study, professionals identified several considerations for engaging in self-reflection grounded within intersectionality and supports them in utilizing an intersectional perspective. Consistent with existing literature (i.e., Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Case & Lewis, 2012; Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Simon et al., 2022; and Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020), participants in this current study expressed the importance of examining their privilege but went a step further in communicating how reflection of privilege must also acknowledge ones own implication in violence, especially when delivering healthy relationship programming with marginalized youth.

Professionals articulated the nuances of privileged versus marginalized identities and the importance of understanding themselves as having a variety of interlocking identities that exist along a spectrum of power and privilege. These comments drew parallels with Coston and Kimmel's (2012) article which cautioned against making global assumptions about privilege and stressed the importance of contextualizing privileged identities within the context of one's many identities. Additionally, like Mattsson (2014), participants identified how specific situations may elicit opportunities for intersectional reflection. Those reflections centred on practical work with marginalized youth can be essential in maximizing intervention outcomes. Professionals elaborated on how their identities and experiences of marginalization are applied within their work and stressed the critical role of intersectionality in their reflective practices. Using oneself in clinical work and engaging in critical self-reflection has been identified as an essential practice for social workers (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005) and psychotherapists (College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, 2017); however, the application of intersectionality in this self-reflective process is a useful addition to the field.

Theme 3: Professionals' journeys toward applying an intersectional approach. The third theme illustrated professionals' journeys toward applying an intersectional approach. Scholarship consistently demonstrates difficulties associated with translating intersectionality from theory to concrete practice or interventions, and the factors contributing to professionals' decision to apply intersectionality are sparse (Heard, 2021; Heard et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2016). The subtheme entitled 'Multi-Layered Systemic Issues Necessitating Use of Intersectional Approach' highlights how client needs necessitate an intersectional approach and challenges professionals to continually maintain a critical lens in their work with marginalized youth. Participants discussed how approaches must be adapted based on youth's presenting issues and their resources. This finding is related to Nayak and Robbins (2019), who emphasized the notion of situation intersectionality to illustrate how the application of intersectionality is dependent on client factors and must account for client differences. Notably, professionals discussed factors that motivated them to use an intersectional approach, such as recognizing a gap in their training and wanting to keep up with an evolving field. Despite previous research presenting the case for integrating intersectionality into training programs (i.e., Buchanan

& Wiklund, 2020; Simon et al., 2022) and identifying various suggestions for professionals, this current study highlights why professionals choose to develop their practice by integrating intersectionality. Like Simon et al. (2022), this study's participants communicated the limitations of academic training and its capacity to teach students about intersectionality. Notably, multiple professionals within this study did not appear to learn about intersectionality within their formal academic education. Instead, they were exposed to the framework throughout their work in the community. Professionals identified engagement with the community as a means of developing an intersectional perspective and a potential venue for professional growth that may not be accessible through the academic environment alone.

3.4.1 Limitations

One limitation of this study was related to the qualitative interviews and participants' exposure to the visual point map before beginning their interviews. As an extension of chapter two, this researcher presented the visual point map to participants before their interviews as a part of a member checking for the previous study. A secondary motivation for presenting the visual point map was introducing the interview protocol for this current study. Although participant feedback on the visual point map was included in chapter two, some of their feedback informed the themes identified within this present study. Thus, participant exposure to the visual point map may have caused an unintended priming effect and influenced their responses to interview questions.

A second limitation relates to the interconnections between this current study and the two other studies included in this dissertation. First, six of the 10 participants in this present study participated in chapter two, and their responses may have been shaped by their participation in this previous study. Second, the same interview protocol for this current study was also used in chapter four. By extension, the data set for these two studies was split based on logical themes. The interview protocol was designed to capture professionals' understanding of intersectionality and how it can be applied within their work. However, stemming from their shared experience implementing a healthy relationships program with marginalized youth within community settings, some questions explicitly referred to TDV contexts which may have limited participant

reflections on intersectionality. The majority of data pertaining to TDV is included in chapter four; however, some reflections related to TDV were included in this study because they were directly related to the themes.

3.4.2 Conclusion

Previous research has highlighted that professionals continue to grapple with understanding intersectionality and how it relates to their practice. (Gkiouleka et al., 2018; Heard, 2021; Heard et al., 2019). A central theme within this study's findings was the participants' acknowledgement that applying intersectionality requires a critical lens. Although the recognition of interlocking marginalized identities is in and of itself important, intersectionality aims to challenge inequity and enact change to eliminate it, thus upholding the broader social justice change agenda (Collins, 2020). Participants in this study offered insights beyond the importance of merely acknowledging the interlocking identities of marginalized youth and described how systemic oppression influences the adverse outcomes they experience. Further, they provided detailed descriptions of the role of self-reflection as it relates to intersectionality and articulated factors that influenced their decision to adopt an intersectional approach to their practice.

We have identified three crucial next steps stemming from this research. First, although participants in this study briefly commented on how organizations may facilitate professionals' application of intersectionality within their work, a more in-depth analysis of organizational influences on professionals' work would be a helpful addition to the literature. Some research has identified the important role of organizational applications of intersectionality and facilitative processes (i.e., Buchanan et al., 2020; Cole, 2008; Ellison & Langhout, 2020), but this research is yet to extend to the context of TDV prevention programming with marginalized youth.

Second, as part of documenting professionals' journey toward intersectionality, it must be acknowledged that a generational gap may exist and impact professionals' willingness and capacity to integrate intersectionality into their practice with marginalized youth. Critical approaches to working with marginalized populations have existed for decades; however, research related to intersectionality and its practical application remains in a

relatively novice stage of development. The current study and previous research presented throughout identified academic institutions/professional training programs as a venue for developing an intersectional approach. However, later career professionals may not have benefited from accessing this knowledge during their academic training. Thus, in the context of a rapidly evolving field, it would be interesting to better understand how professionals at various stages of their careers relate to the concept of intersectionality.

Last, there remains a gap in research on professionals' application of intersectionality. Intersectionality must maintain its potential to elicit critical praxis and address complex social inequalities (Dhamoon, 2011; Collins, 2015). Future research could aim to better understand the approaches and practical strategies that professionals use to apply intersectionality to their work with marginalized youth.

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Chapter 4

4   Application of Intersectionality Among Professionals Working with Marginalized Youth: A Qualitative Study

4.1   Introduction

Teen dating violence (TDV) is intimate partner violence that encompasses various forms of abuse, including psychological, physical, and sexual violence, between individuals in current or former dating and/or sexual relationships during the adolescent period (CDC, 2021). This phenomenon is considered a significant public health concern, as evidenced by estimates that indicate a high prevalence of physical, psychological, and cyber aggression within current or former dating relationships among Canadian youth. Specifically, it is estimated that over one in three Canadian youth have experienced and/or perpetrated such forms of aggression within the past 12 months (Exner-Cortens et al., 2021). This highlights the urgent need for effective prevention and intervention strategies to address TDV and mitigate its negative consequences on the well-being of young people. Studies have consistently revealed that marginalized youth (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2020) are disproportionately affected by TDV, experiencing it at higher rates than socially dominant groups (Dank et al., 2014; Exner-Cortens, 2021; Hautala et al., 2017; Kann, 2018). Furthermore, these youth also tend to suffer more negative, long-lasting, and detrimental consequences of TDV, such as increased risk of suicidal ideation and homicide (Adhia et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2015; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013, 2017; Reidy et al., 2017). This highlights the need for targeted and culturally responsive interventions to address TDV among marginalized youth and to address the structural inequalities that contribute to their heightened vulnerability to TDV.

4.1.1 TDV Theory

The underlying causes of TDV victimization and perpetration are multifaceted, involving a complex interplay of risk and protective factors across various levels, including individual, relational, and societal. The literature on TDV etiology is diverse and encompasses a wide range of theoretical frameworks. Many of these theories draw on frameworks used to understand adult interpersonal violence (Exner-Cortens, 2014) and

others that center violence within the various systems included in the ecological model (Banyard et al., 2006; Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Foshee et al., 2001; Foshee et al., 2008). These theoretical frameworks provide valuable perspectives on the complex nature of TDV and inform the development of prevention and intervention strategies.

Although these models have traditionally been widely used to understand TDV, they often lack recognition of larger structural oppressions that contribute to disproportionately high rates and adverse outcomes of TDV experienced by marginalized youth (e.g., sexism, homophobia/transphobia, ableism, racism, xenophobia). Identifying individual-level risk factors is one lens for understanding TDV; however, these explanations can reinforce stereotypes about marginalized groups and place little emphasis on the influence of systemic and institutional structures of inequality. Recent research has begun to apply anti-oppressive theories to explain the connections between TDV among socially marginalized groups and inequitable power relations such as transphobia, racism, xenophobia, and classism (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023, 2021). That said, the association between social marginalization and TDV remains an underdeveloped area of study, and this limited understanding significantly impacts prevention efforts.

4.1.2 TDV Programming

TDV programming aims to promote healthy relationships through education, engagement and utilizing youth strengths (Crooks et al., 2019). It also aims to develop communication, self-regulation, coping skills and help-seeking strategies (De La Rue et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). Comprehensive and well-implemented TDV prevention programs have been shown to reduce rates of dating violence and have been adapted to serve high-risk youth better (Lee & Wong, 2022). These targeted programs employed in this context are designed to simultaneously address multiple risk factors while preventing the emergence or progression of areas of concern. Although these intensive programs aim to address various risk factors, TDV programming for marginalized youth often fails to address intersecting social identities and the structural oppression that socially marginalized youth face based on aspects of their identities (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018). Intersectionality has served as an essential theory and heuristic for intellectual

inquiry and has emerged as a valuable intervention strategy, especially within social work (Murphy, 2009).

4.1.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categories and identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, and how they shape an individual's experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991). The concept of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argued that traditional approaches to understanding discrimination and inequality, which focused on one aspect of identity at a time, were insufficient in capturing the complexity of lived experiences. Intersectionality provides a theoretical framework for comprehending interacting systemic power imbalances, privilege, and oppression that affect marginalized individuals due to their interlocking identities. This framework has been employed to understand the intricacies of lived experiences across multiple hierarchies and how power relations intersect to influence individual and collective experiences rather than operating as discrete entities (Hankivsky, 2014; Warner, 2008). Since its inception, intersectionality has had significant implications for research, practice, and policy and has influenced how individuals understand and address complex social problems among socially marginalized individuals.

4.1.4 Professionals' Application of Intersectionality in TDV Practice

Critical praxis, which involves taking action to disrupt existing patterns of inequality, is a fundamental aspect of the intersectionality framework (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Intersectionality has been proposed as an innovative tool for enhancing the understanding of health disparities and promoting action toward addressing these inequities (Kapilashrami & Hankivsky, 2018). Applying intersectionality requires individuals and organizations to critically examine traditional approaches to practice that may perpetuate inequality and address the societal-level factors that contribute to oppression and privilege (Heard, 2020; McCall, 2005). Although scholarship argues for the radical transformative potential of intersectionality in practical settings, there remains little research exploring how it can be applied in work with marginalized youth, generally and

within the context of TDV prevention programming. Additionally, there is a lack of research capturing professionals' perspectives on the applicability of intersectionality within their respective fields. Recently, Holman et al. (2021) explored how professionals working within a range of health research, policy and practice roles believed intersectionality could be applied within their work to understand and address health inequalities. However, studies have yet to explore the perspectives of professionals working with marginalized youth in various settings, including TDV prevention programming.

To effectively prevent and intervene in TDV among marginalized youth, it is essential to comprehensively address the underlying causes of violence, including social inequalities (Crooks et al., 2019). A case has been made for the importance of intersectionality in this area (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018), and it is necessary to understand the perspectives of professionals completing this vital work to avoid overlooking, misunderstanding or rendering invisible important interlocking identities. Drawing upon professionals' experience and expertise, this study aimed to explore the perspectives of professionals implementing a TDV prevention program to explore if they apply intersectionality in their work with marginalized youth and, if so, how they apply it. Given that professionals delivering youth TDV programming work within various roles and contexts and have varying professional training backgrounds, this study sought to learn how professionals apply intersectionality within TDV programming and, more broadly, within their respective roles supporting marginalized youth.

4.2   Methods

This study employed an adapted version of grounded theory known as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine the participants' experiences applying intersectionality. Qualitative research methodologies offer a comprehensive and robust approach to understanding complex issues (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis, in particular, is not constrained by a specific theoretical viewpoint, allowing for versatility in the theoretical/interpretive lens, research question, sample size, data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, thematic analysis has been shown to be effective for projects with both small and large data sets (Clarke & Braun, 2017), making it an appropriate

method for this study's sample size, which did not aim for data saturation or the development of a substantive theory.

This study interpreted the data using social constructivism and relativism. According to social constructivism, knowledge is co-constructed through the dynamic interaction between the researcher and the participants involved in the study (Schwandt, 2003). The interpretation of each participant's reality is not assessed in terms of absolute truth, but rather in relation to their level of knowledge and sophistication. Relativism posits the existence of multiple subjective realities, thereby allowing for diverse interpretations of an individual's lived experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

4.2.1 Participants

The present study recruited participants based on their involvement in developing, training or implementing a program to promote healthy relationships and prevent dating violence among youth. These individuals had connections to the program as facilitators, administrators, researchers, or graduate students conducting related research. Most participants had between 10 and 15 years of experience working with marginalized youth (60%) and had facilitated more than two HRP-E groups (70%). The sampling strategy was purposive and focused on professionals affiliated with a partnership between a university research team and community agencies serving marginalized youth in Southwestern Ontario. The participants were selected based on pre-existing relationships with the researchers. Participants included a diverse range of professionals, such as social workers, child and youth workers, post-doctoral research associates, university research team staff, a public health nurse, a university professor working within community mental health, and professionals working within child protection, youth criminal justice, and newcomer support settings (refer to Table 6 for professional experience of participants). A total of 12 professionals were invited to participate in the study, and ten consented to be interviewed. To maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Table 6: Professional experience of participants

	n	%

Years Working with Marginalized Youth

More than 15 years	1	10
Between 10 and 15 years	6	60
Between 6 and 10 years	3	30

Prior Experience with HRP Research and Programming

HRP Researcher	1	10
Participated in HRP-E Training	2	20
Facilitated 2 or more HRP-E Groups	7	70

4.2.2 Data Collection

One-on-one interviews were completed with participants who provided informed consent and supplied their names and email addresses on Qualtrics. The primary researcher contacted participants to schedule interviews and provided them with an interview protocol, a two-page summary sheet (appendix C) providing information on the following key topics: social identities, systems of oppression, multiple marginalized identities, youth identity development, intersectionality and TDV among marginalized youth. Additionally, participants were also provided with the results from a previous group concept mapping study conducted by the researcher. Six of the 10 participants had also participated in the group concept methodology to examine the application of intersectionality by professionals (as described in chapter two and three of this dissertation).

The interview protocol consisted of three sections: demographics, participant feedback on the previous group concept mapping study, and a semi-structured interview. This study focuses on the findings from the semi-structured interview section of the protocol (as outlined in appendix D). Although the demographic information is closely related to participants' understanding and application of intersectionality, it was not included in the study for several reasons. Due to the small sample size, the demographic information, namely their professional experiences, would not be sufficient to articulate meaningful differences among participants. Thus, the data collected was primarily used for descriptive purposes.

Additionally, specifying participant demographics would reduce their identities to mere categories and would be insufficient in capturing the nuance within their respective social locations. Further, outlining participant identities would compromise their anonymity. The sample included a considerable diversity among participant identities, and their personal experiences of marginalization and privilege are reflected in the results. The semi-structured interviews with open-ended prompts lasted between 46-73 minutes and averaged 56 minutes (SD = 8.71). Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

A six-phase approach to thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was utilized. These phases included: 1) Familiarization with the data, 2) Generating initial codes, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes, and 6) Writing up. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility and ability to identify, organize, and understand common participant experiences. Furthermore, it is based on the rigorous coding methods of grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Throughout the various phases of analysis, both open and axial coding methods, as well as a constant comparative approach, were applied.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the authors employed a collaborative approach throughout most of the data coding stages, including the review of transcripts and codes. Several measures were taken to enhance the validity and reliability of the results, following established methodologies such as Lincoln and Guba's (1985) and Shenton's (2004). For example, to enhance the transferability of the findings, I interviewed a diverse range of professionals working in various settings supporting marginalized youth. Additionally, the team audited codes and debriefed all findings to enhance the credibility of the results. I kept a reflexive journal to provide a self-critical account of the research process and to improve the study's dependability and confirmability.

The research team focused on data highlighting the professionals' actions, philosophies towards work, reflective practices, and pathways toward adopting an intersectional

perspective. These data were gleaned from the professionals' work experience and how intersectionality was critically applied, addressing the central research question of how professionals use an intersectional framework to bring a critical lens to their work with marginalized youth.

4.3   Results

The study results are outlined by summarizing the main themes and delving deeper through participant quotes and interpretive explanations. These quotes and descriptions encapsulate the core of the main themes and provide a more thorough understanding of the data. In addition, analytical narratives are employed to describe the data, interpret the findings, and link them to the main research question. The sub-themes and dimensions of each main theme are examined to describe the data comprehensively. The main themes, sub-themes, and categories are presented in the results section and investigated in depth.

Three main themes and nine subthemes were identified during the data analysis: 1) Professionals' application of intersectionality, which included two subthemes 2) Intersectionality in the Context of Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programming, which included three subthemes 3) Benefits of an Intersectional Approach for Youth, which included three subthemes. To summarize, Table 2 outlines the three main themes and associated subthemes.

Table 7: Main themes, sub-themes, and categories related to how participants described enacting intersectionality

Main Themes	*Sub-Themes*	*Categories*
1. Professionals' application of intersectionality	A) Core philosophy-beliefs, values and approach to ethical practice	Importance of professionals' philosophy and framework Broadening perspective and consideration of systemic factors Anti-oppressive approach Strength-based perspective Working with where clients are at

	B) Putting intersectionality into action	Using a person-centred approach Creating a safe and inclusive space for youth Managing mistakes
2. Intersectionality in the Context of Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programming	A) Tailoring programming delivery to fit with youths' identities and lived experiences	Awareness of youth identities and experiences Alignment of TDV programming content and youth Discussing experiences of dating violence
	B) Group-based dynamics	Identity-related considerations Promoting group cohesion
	C) Recommendations for improvement	Overarching framework to modifications Ongoing adaptations
3. Benefits of an intersectional approach for youth	A) Developing self-awareness	Supporting youth identity exploration Bolstering youth's inherent capacity for self-awareness
	B) Developing critical consciousness	Supporting youth in developing critical perspectives Supporting youth advocacy

4.3.1 Main Theme 1: Professionals' Application of Intersectionality

Participants outlined how intersectionality has influenced their conceptualization of clients' challenges and provided a range of practical approaches and strategies for translating this complex theory into practice. The identified subthemes that address how professionals apply intersectionality included core philosophy beliefs, values, and approaches to ethical practice; and putting intersectionality into action.

Subtheme 1A: Core philosophy, beliefs, values, and approach to ethical practice.
When discussing the ethical application of intersectionality, professionals identified

relying on a collection of beliefs, values, and approaches to guide the process. Based on the data, the researchers identified five categories: importance of professionals' philosophy and framework, broadening perspective and consideration of systemic factors, anti-oppressive approach, strengths-based perspective, and working with where clients are at.

Importance of professionals philosophy and framework. Generally, participants discussed that applying intersectionality requires a firm understanding of theory and utilizing a framework that guides their work. For example, Tess highlighted that applying intersectionality involves using a framework that challenges oppression and avoids harm through reinforcing oppression.

> "I think a lot of how we frame our work is an important starting point because you can frame it in ways that bring in intersectionality in ways where you're challenging oppression, but if you're framing it in ways, you could also be doing more harm because you might be reinforcing some of those oppressions. So, I do think that to me, that is an important piece, and I think because I like theory, so probably that's where I often go to." (Tess)

Additionally, participants indicated that intersectionality is threaded throughout everything and should be prioritized. Further, they described intersectionality as being a guiding framework that permeates their entire philosophy versus merely a set of strategies applied within professional settings.

> "So, in terms of intersectionality, for me it is a lot like a life, passion, understanding and then implementing strategies to combat oppression. Right. So, it's not an afterthought for me. It's not an add on. It's not something that we just do, for example, once in February for Black History Month or in June for, you know, LGBTQ Plus Pride Month or whatever" (Lisa)

Broadening perspective and consideration of systemic factors. Related to professionals' core philosophies, several participants indicated that broadening their

perspectives and considering systemic factors supported them in applying intersectionality. For example, Emily described strategies that support her in conceptualizing youth concerns and conducting a comprehensive assessment of their challenges that are located outside of individual-level deficits.

> "I always have been someone to look at the big picture, you know, and been able to see, look, this person is dealing with poverty, and their parent may be a substance user, and they're not even getting to being able to get to school and the colour of their skin or what they're dealing with. So, I was able to look at situations and see multi-level challenges that people experience. And I always took that approach when I worked with families or had individual youth clients I would support. You almost make a list, right? What are their needs? What are the resources? What's unique about this person?" (Emily)

Similarly, Tess described some of the social structures and factors that impact the youth she works with. Interestingly, Tess identified the influence of multiple risk factors on each other and explained how these various social structures affect their daily lives and families.

> "What are some of the factors, social structures or systems that have impacted youth, their everyday reality and their family lives, including the neighborhood they may live in? What or how those influence their schooling experiences and what they share in terms of their experiences within the educational system or even in their neighborhood in relation to each other." (Tess)

Anti-oppressive approach. Participants indicated that being anti-oppressive was an essential orientation while applying intersectionality with marginalized youth. Holly commented that professionals must be anti-homophobic, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive.

Sam discussed that professionals must demonstrate an awareness of identity-related power dynamics consistent with an anti-oppressive approach. Tess articulated a similar

opinion and described that professionals must consider power, privilege, and the larger systems within which their assumptions are embedded.

> "…then being able to always create that space for a sort of nuanced thinking about how power to me is thinking about how power and privilege work in different spaces and how they impact young people differently because of sort of the larger systems in place and how those are embedded then in sort of our everyday norms of the assumptions we make about people or how we interact with others based on their gender or race ability. All those pieces I think are really important. I see it both in terms of sort of creating that sense of how we will be going about the process of building relationships, meaningful relationships, and honest, I guess, relationships with young people" (Tess)

Related to professionals' understanding of their assumptions, Emily indicated that professionals must also be mindful of their biases and not promote stereotypes and prejudices.

Strengths-based perspective. Participants communicated the value of utilizing a strengths-based perspective while applying intersectionality and described the various forms this approach takes in their work with marginalized youth. Holly articulated that professionals must approach their role with humility and a curious stance and made a connection between this strengths-based orientation and intersectionality's focus on learning about people's unique stories.

> "…you also recognize that you are not the expert. You're a leader and not the expert in the work you do because the core of intersectionality is recognizing and learning from people's realities and experiences." (Holly)

Consistent with this approach, Emily and Kelsey expressed that professionals should be willing to have youth teach them things. Their comments highlight the importance of allowing youth to be experts in their own experiences.

"I think having a willingness to have them (youth) teach you stuff, and this is the one area where my age actually comes in is an advantage because there's a lot of things I don't know. Right terminologies or whatever, or sometimes I can even pretend I don't know as much as I do or whatever. What was that all about? Right? And then they teach you. And allowing them to be your teachers has not only really benefited myself, but I think it benefits them as well when they're the people who are explaining, doing the explaining or trying to sway your opinion." (Emily)

While Emily mentioned that she often asks youth to explain things to her due to the generational gap in her understanding, Kelsey made a more general comment related to the beginner mindset she uses in her counselling approach.

"…when I show up to counseling, I'm not acting like, you know, I know all the answers. And I'm like on this, like, totally up here, like I can support my wellbeing way better than everyone else. Like, no, I'm human too. I'm flawed and fallible and kind of have things I can share with that client. But that client also teaches me a lot. And I think it should always be this reciprocal relationship where we're hearing each other and, you know, intentionally spending time too." (Kelsey)

Amy highlighted how professionals must make space for and prioritize youth voices. Further, she highlighted the importance of working with youth where they are and being mindful of not pushing conversations or topics on youth.

"…the same way that you listen to people talk about their experiences as a queer person, as a racialized person, you need to make space for that conversation about being a queer youth or a racialized youth or youth in general. And I think this is hard with youth who are more likely to do the little teaching thing like you're a minority. And youth don't always want to talk about it that way, and their experiences are different in how they learn and comprehend; these things are different. So, if we're trying to take an intersectional approach and turn it into a tea tree idea around systems of

oppression and push that conversation onto youth, that's not equitable. That's not trauma informed. And that's not letting them dictate their lived experiences and be in a group the way they want to be." (Amy)

"at one point I was talking about I think like systems of oppression, in kind of a roundabout way. And one of the youth was like, you don't have to tell us how hard it is to be a minority. That's like, oh, shit. Yeah, I'm just I'm talking about something you don't want to talk about. And I'm doing it in a teaching way, like, you know this and I'm being condescending." (Amy)

Like Amy, Sam explained that professionals should be aware of the power dynamics between them and the youth and create a space where they can exercise their agency by disagreeing with them.

"…then things you can do like around power dynamics is being intentional to create space and opportunities for youth to disagree, to air their opinions, to express criticisms towards the facilitator. There's some art to doing that where it becomes productive." (Sam)

Working with where clients are at. Overarching the core philosophy to ethical practice, participants discussed the need to tailor their approach to their clients' needs. Emily and Olivia highlighted the importance of being flexible with their expectations of youth. Olivia elaborated by stating that her expectations must be firmly grounded in what the youth are saying.

"I base a lot of my responses, expectations of them, and recommendations within where I hear them coming from them." (Olivia)

Participants discussed adjusting expectations and setting flexible and realistic goals in various contexts. For example, Holly noted that she adapts to client needs and uses flexible approaches when delivering youth programming in general. She also stated that she deviates from the manualized approach to address immediate concerns, such as what may happen in the community.

"I am aware of what's happening in the community, and if this week we need the space to decompress what's happening in the community rather than sticking to my manualization, I am doing that" (Holly)

Kelsey indicated that professionals must ensure that their approach is culturally appropriate and aligned with client needs.

"I think checking ourselves and being like, am I thinking about this just from my worldview or am I thinking about this from like the needs of other groups" (Kelsey)

Curiosity was identified as an essential tool for facilitators. Olivia discussed balancing the tension between wanting to share information with youth, being genuinely curious, and listening intently to youth and their experiences.

"Don't get me wrong, I have a lot I want to tell youth, but I really want to hear from them as well. Like, I'm very fascinated. And I think just like if you can be genuinely curious about where youth are coming from and, you know, just listening to them." (Olivia)

Subtheme 1B: Putting intersectionality into action. Participants discussed a variety of tangible actions that they used to apply intersectionality. These relate conceptually to the subthemes already discussed but were distinct in having an action orientation. The researchers identified four areas of action: using a person-centred approach, creating a safe and inclusive space for youth, and managing mistakes.

   Using a person-centred approach. Participants identified a series of actions that broadly fall into the category of using a person-centred approach. Using a non-judgemental approach in the context of intersectionality was discussed as providing a safer space through supporting youth in exploring different aspects of their identity and facilitating a perspective shift among youth toward a less judgemental view of their actions.

Sam discussed applying a non-judgemental approach while working with marginalized youth in the justice system.

> "I do it because that's the way I operate as a clinician. And when I worked with youth in detention for about six years and in secure detention like jail, essentially. And there's just so many conversations about, like, there's no right or wrong way to live your life. There's just what's workable and what's not workable. And you probably think I'm going to tell you to stop committing crime. I don't know your lived history. Maybe crime is the best thing you can do for yourself right now." (Sam)

In the quote below, Sam provides an example of how professionals could apply a non-judgemental stance while supporting youth in exploring their identities.

> "…how do you be nonjudgmental with youth? What does it actually look like? It would mean things to me, like using a lot more reflection statements rather than questions for a change. So, if you say, oh, tell me about how you see yourself, your identity in the world and they say, oh, well, you know, I'm I guess I'm a boy. I'm an athlete. Like my parents are from Jamaica. My parents are super Christian, but I don't really go to church." (Sam)

Another person-centred approach identified by researchers was the importance of being authentic, genuine, open, and honest. For example, Olivia indicated that she avoids trying to be someone she is not. Similarly, Alyssa briefly discussed how youth could often see through adults and that being an open and honest person increases the likelihood that youth will be more honest with her.

> "I think it's really important that I am an honest and open person with them because more than adults, I think youth can see right through you. Right. If I'm being dishonest with youth, they will not be honest with me. So, I think that the number one thing that I can like that helps me in my job is actually, to be honest with them. If they ask me a question, I should answer it honestly." (Alyssa)

Participants highlighted the importance of using active listening skills to support marginalized youth. For example, Lisa communicated how in the context of TDV prevention programming, youth require professionals to be truly present and to value their voices by listening to them.

> "…we need to be here and now and sometimes listening to youth who are coming there and they have so much agency to put together all these kind of things because, you know, whether it's youth or whether it's like particularly those with minority identities coming together and lobbying for themselves, it's just it's really important to take time to listen to what they have to say and to do better by them." (Lisa)

Similarly, Olivia mentioned how acknowledging and validating youths' lived experiences can be healing for marginalized youth, and Alyssa highlighted the importance of allowing youth to self-identify their chosen identities.

Creating a safe and inclusive space for youth. Participants identified creating a safer and inclusive space for youth as an essential goal, with specific actions for applying intersectionality into practice. Multiple participants highlighted how professionals must intentionally create a space where youth are comfortable being themselves and feel safe.

> "…thinking about how we then create that space for some of the conversations that are important to have with young people about issues impacting their lives and how do I hear that? How do I listen? And also, how do you facilitate a space where young people are comfortable to come as who they are and to feel safe about being able to participate in those spaces." (Tess)

Also, Kelsey mentioned that professionals should consider aspects of the physical environment that may be triggering or harmful to individuals.

> "And like with the environment, like even where it's located. Is that accessible, and what's around there? Are there things around that building or

around that organization that can be potentially triggering or potentially
harmful like exposing people to" (Kelsey)

Tess emphasized that professionals, and their organizations, must consider what it means
to create an anti-oppressive space. Although these considerations are essential, Amy also
highlighted that there are still risks to marginalized youth accessing services if the
organization hasn't done the necessary work to apply an intersectional perspective.

"I think that often we assume that if resources surround youth and they're
not openly homophobic or openly racist, they are fine environments. But
that is still a risk that youth is taking, accessing resources where people
haven't done that work, even if they say that they're affirming, and haven't
done that work to provide an intersectional approach." (Amy)

Lastly, participants discussed how creating a safe and inclusive space and identity are
connected. For example, Sam explained the negative implications, such as implicit and
internalized shame, that can develop when marginalized individuals cannot express their
identities.

"…provide opportunities for youth to express their identities. It's just super
important because one of the big things that happen within minority stress
models of difficulty is that when you can't express your identity, there's an
implicit shaming, a self-shaming that goes on, because basically every time
you don't tell people about your identity or express your identity in a certain
way, you're reinforcing the idea that if I were to present this, people would
shit on me. So, I guess there's reinforcing the idea that external shame is
coming in about that. So, making lots of opportunities and encouraging
youth to express their ideas is important" (Sam)

Conversely, Kelsey suggested that professionals should explicitly let youth know they
don't have to explain their identities and experiences to people and encourage youth to
use their agency to decide whether they would like to invite professionals in when they
feel comfortable.

"…sometimes I'll say to clients, rather than the idea of coming out or kind of coming to me and explaining exactly who they are, choosing when they want to invite me in, so and doing that with all of their relationships is like you don't need to come out and explain all your experiences to everybody you can invite those who you feel comfortable with. And I understand that you might not feel comfortable at this point to invite me into those experiences because of, like, not trusting me yet." (Kelsey)

Managing mistakes. The final category related to professionals' actions was managing mistakes. Amy noted the complicated feelings associated with making a mistake and the importance of not making excuses to avoid professional responsibility for the incident. Related to managing mistakes, she stressed the importance of apologizing to youth, stepping back, and focusing on listening.

"…if you mis-pronoun or misgender somebody… it's about apologizing, putting my emotions aside, noting what I need to learn and then letting them hold more space in the room for the rest of that session." (Amy)

4.3.2 Main Theme 2: Intersectionality in the Context of Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programming

The interview questions were contextualized in reference to implementing TDV prevention programming, although many of the themes extend beyond this area. Here are subthemes that addressed how professionals applied intersectionality to TDV prevention programming: tailoring programming to fit with youth's identities and lived experiences, group-based dynamics, and recommendations for improvement. This main theme covers practical considerations for preventionists delivering TDV programming and how professionals may adapt their programming to incorporate intersectionality.

Subtheme 2A: Tailoring programming delivery to fit with youths' identities and lived experiences. Participants outlined how professionals can attune to identity-related factors when delivering TDV programming and offered practical suggestions for how programming can incorporate intersectionality. Two categories were identified from these

descriptions: awareness of youth identities and experience and alignment of TDV programming content and youth.

   Awareness of youth identities and experiences. Participants identified the importance of attuning to youth identity and experiences and adjusting content to meet their needs. In developing awareness, participants emphasized that professionals must prioritize youth voices and demonstrate patience and curiosity when learning about their identities and experiences. Additionally, Holly described how in conjunction with certain overarching approaches, professionals must demonstrate flexibility toward program-related adaptations to account for youths' unique identities and experiences.

> "…what changes is making scenarios or bringing up concerns or issues that
> are more relevant to that group of youth, so they feel more connected to the
> programing. But I'm still being anti-racist and anti-oppressive. And I am
> acknowledging peoples' identities and being flexible with the approach"
> (Holly)

   Alignment of programming content and youth. Participants underscored how universal TDV programs designed for typically developing youth are insufficient for marginalized youth. Specific differences identified included that specialized programming requires a consideration of various risk factors contributing to their marginalization. Lisa noted that the content must aim to ameliorate the institutional harm that has occurred and suggests that universal TDV programs must be adapted to avoid reinforcing these identified harms.

> "I think that sometimes folks think they can have one standardized program,
> a universal program to meet everybody's needs. But that's not the case
> because often they've been developed for white, straight, cisgender, middle-
> class people." (Lisa)

Regarding the specific adaptations, participants indicated that programming must represent gender and sexual diversity, and they offered concrete examples regarding 2SLGTBQIA+ identity and relationships. In the quote below, Amy articulates a vital

distinction between TDV programming for 2SLGTBQIA+ youth and universal programming and describes how these differences impact youth. Later in the interview, Amy noted that a lack of representation could lead to disengagement among youth, which can negatively impact the program's efficacy, and missing warning signs that may be unique to unhealthy relationships among 2SLGTBQIA+ youth.

> "…the HRP for LGBT2Q+ specifically takes a different approach to intersectionality than maybe HRP, at least in terms of gender and sexual diversity. When we talk about relationships, we don't gender relationships, even friends or family, so that there's an opportunity for youth to see themselves in various ways." (Amy)

Additionally, participants commented on the importance of flexibility and adjusting program content to align with youths' contexts. Holly explained how some communication strategies taught within the programming, such as an assertive style, may not be the best form of communication in specific environments or scenarios where marginalized youth find themselves. She provided an example where a youth's assertive communication of their needs is perceived as defiance by residential treatment or youth justice staff using a punitive approach within their roles. Thus, promoting skill acquisition tailored to their unique contexts may be best.

   Discussing experiences of dating violence. Participants noted that marginalized youth require a safe and accepting space to discuss their relationships and mentioned that the topic of dating violence could be sensitive. Specifically, Holly described that some marginalized youth might feel that professionals do not accept their identities and thus do not feel safe disclosing their identity within individual or group settings. Importantly, Amy commented on the necessity of reviewing scenarios and teaching skills for instances when resources or individuals in supportive roles are not affirming. Additionally, Amy outlined barriers preventing youth from discussing experiences of dating violence and emphasized the importance of an affirming and safe space/community.

> "…when youth are oppressed and experiencing isolation, relationships, particularly romantic relationships, can be one of the few spaces where they

potentially feel safe, accepted, heard or have somebody to relate to for the first time. For them, it can feel very all or nothing. And it very well also might be an all-or-nothing situation. You might be outed. You might have to leave your home if a relationship goes south and there's some regression afterwards. And suppose you don't have an affirming space or a community surrounding these youth and their identities, a space where they feel a whole community that isn't related to a single romantic relationship. When they have this support, it's easier for them to feel like they can leave those relationships." (Amy)

Subtheme 2B: Group-based dynamics and considerations. Participants offered reflections for working with marginalized youth within group settings. Specifically, they discussed the role of individual and group identities and professional responsibilities related to facilitating a safe and collaborative group dynamic. Two categories were identified: identity-related considerations and promoting group cohesion.

Identity-related considerations. Participants highlighted the importance of being aware of youths' identities and how these identities express themselves within a group dynamic. Through her experience facilitating TDV prevention programs with newcomer groups, Tess noted that professionals must consider how identities shift and change in relation to other youth. Further, she discussed how their involvement in various systems, such as their family or education, will impact how they relate to the group and what they choose to share within the group setting. Participants emphasized the importance of providing youth with space to describe how different oppressive systems impact them. In the quote below, Tess outlined some challenges working with a diverse youth group and expressed how she allows youth to connect over their similar experiences navigating inequitable systems. She also indicated that professionals must recognize their power and privilege within these shared spaces.

"…this work isn't easy, I think is very true, especially if you're working with a mixed group of youth. So, when everyone is coming with different identities, you really have to question how you hold that space for all these

different identities and experiences and help youth feel safe coming fully as they are. I think that is challenging work. But I think maybe that the piece to step into there is to recognize maybe their power and privilege in relation to others. Sometimes it's really important to create a space for people to share their experiences of feeling oppressed, excluded, and marginalized in society and how their experience has been similar. I also think it's important to recognize maybe where we're at. When are those moments, maybe when you also have the power to silence or exclude others" (Tess)

Promoting group cohesion. While discussing group dynamics, participants commented on the importance of creating an environment where youth feel safe and can process experiences and learn from each other. Emily noted that youth benefit by connecting through their shared identities, which supports overall group cohesion. Participants commented on the collaborative nature of creating a supportive environment. They mentioned that although they are the programming facilitators, they provide youth with opportunities to take responsibility for creating a supportive and inclusive space. In the quote below, Tess explains why professionals should always take time to reflect on their group dynamics and offer a variety of reflection topics.

"I think, as you know, professionally, it is always about reflecting. It's about thinking about what worked well in this group or these spaces and what is missing. And reflecting on where I missed some key or foundational pieces that would have created a safer space for everyone. Like, where have youth felt silenced or excluded because maybe it wasn't safe to fully identify how they might want to identify because of fear? Or maybe not feeling safe in a space, and so I think it takes a lot of work" (Tess)

Subtheme 2C: Recommendations for improvement. Participants provided various recommendations for improving programming based on their involvement with TDV programming for marginalized youth. Two categories were identified: overarching framework to modifications and ongoing adaptations.

Overarching framework to modifications. Participants explained that to apply intersectionality, a TDV program manual must be treated as a living document that is modified regularly. Amy indicated that preventionists often attempt to develop specific programming for each marginalized group, such as Indigenous or 2SLGTBQIA+ streams. Despite the acknowledged benefits of having programming specifically tailored toward particular marginalized social identities, she expressed that having individualized programs based on distinct marginalized identities is not consistent with the core tenants of intersectionality, as other interlocking identities may be rendered invisible in this process. Instead, she recommended that professionals consider developing programming for a diverse range of marginalized youth and regularly update the content as professionals learn more about youths' identities and experiences. Additionally, Holly indicated that professionals need to learn from each iteration of a group and build processes to gather youths' feedback at every opportunity (i.e., before, during, and after programming). Similarly, Lisa's noted the importance of ensuring that your TDV evolves through feedback.

> "…it (feedback) doesn't threaten your program. It only strengthens it if you listen to it. Right. If you don't, you're just resisting it, and it (TDV programming) is always going to be the same, and it's just never going to evolve. And it has to" (Lisa)

Later in the interview, Lisa cautioned that while gathering feedback, professionals must avoid sampling small segments of individuals who may hold a particular identity and assuming that their feedback reflects all individuals sharing that identity. Importantly, Amy noted that having a pre-set curriculum and published hard copies can hinder continued modifications. Still, she also spoke to the importance of both elements, especially while training professionals new to TDV programming. Overall, these reflections speak to the flexibility required by professionals at all stages of designing, implementing, and evaluating TDV programming.

Ongoing modifications. Participants described how intersectionality could be incorporated into TDV programming through continuous improvements. First,

participants suggested that in addition to a manual, programming should include guidelines that support community-based facilitators in identifying which activities can be modified or skipped altogether while maintaining fidelity to the program. Holly noted that professionals could co-create these guidelines to incorporate their perspectives within unique clinical settings. Additionally, she suggested that professionals should be offered ongoing implementation support and training.

Related to specific adaptations, some participants suggested activities that allow youth to discuss their identities. For example, Emily indicated that youth could identify similarities and differences among their identities and prompt youth to reflect on how their identities may shift over time and change based on the context. Additionally, Lisa commented that professionals must aim to include scenarios where individuals have multiple marginalized identities.

> "…we have to incorporate scenarios that cover multiple identities. And not just include but integrate racialized folks. And racialized folks who are queer and have a single parent and things like that. It's really important for folks to see themselves represented in the programming. And it's also not just for them, but it's also really important for the other youth participating in the program to understand those examples and realities. To help them grow and learn and better themselves in terms of not perpetuating oppression moving forward. So, we have to ensure that programming isn't standardized in such a way that it is just made to appeal to white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied youth." (Lisa)

Others offered more general feedback, such as delivering programming in various contexts and ensuring that a diverse range of professions, concerning their background, training, and identity-related characteristics, are provided opportunities to facilitate programming. Last, Holly indicated that to apply intersectionality to programming effectively, organizations must always attempt to improve youths' access to services and continually reach out to those who have been excluded historically.

4.3.3 Main Theme #3: Benefits of an Intersectional Approach for Youth

The following subthemes encompass participants' perspectives on the youth outcomes resulting from applying intersectionality within programming: development of self-awareness and development of critical consciousness. The outcomes identified align with a strength-based approach and offer essential considerations for supporting positive youth development and overall wellness.

Subtheme 3A: Development of self-awareness. Participants described that applying an intersectional approach to programming allows youth to explore their identities and develop self-awareness.

   Supporting youth identity exploration. Participants felt that youth benefit from opportunities to explore their identities within a group format. Although participants expressed that youth could guide this type of discussion, they mentioned that, while exerting sound clinical judgement, providing observational comments related to youth identities can help promote insight. Related to this, participants commented on how it may be beneficial to safely challenge and pose critical questions to youth in some circumstances. For example, in the quote below, Emily articulates how intersectionality has helped her to engage in critical reflection and practice with youth.

> "…before learning about intersectionality, I was not really thinking about the complexities of what it's like to live racialized or in a world that doesn't necessarily treat everyone the same. So, I think intersectionality has really enhanced the language I use and allows me to pose questions that challenge youth to think about their identities a little bit differently" (Emily)

   Bolstering youth's inherent capacity for self-awareness. Participants commented on how they often drew upon youths' abilities to engage in self-reflective conversations regarding their identity, marginalization, and various lived experiences. While discussing this inherent capacity, participants frequently used the term 'empowerment' to describe providing youth with space to reflect and share their perspectives. However, some participants noted the challenges associated with ensuring that all participants within the group setting had the opportunity to participate and build insight together and offered

examples of some group settings when opportunities for self-reflection and expression were not as equitable. Kendra articulated youths' capacity for self-awareness and engagement in potentially sensitive topics and noted the sense of empowerment youth often experience when discussing shared marginalization within group settings and creating the potential for collective action.

> "youth actually have a lot more capacity than adults to have these conversations. And I think they're also very aware of it. But they haven't been given the structure to put a name to it. And at least in the literature, when you do this [engage in conversation], it's typically very empowering because they're already aware. It's not like they don't know that they're experiencing the same things but being able to externalize that and understand that it's not you, it's this external force, and you can actually then take action. This can be very empowering." (Kendra)

Subtheme 3B: Development of critical consciousness. Participants expressed how applying intersectionality involves supporting youth in developing critical consciousness. They described this as including youths' ability to recognize their marginalization and the contributing systemic factors and supporting them toward action in advocacy. Two categories were identified: supporting youth in developing critical perspectives and supporting youth advocacy.

Supporting youth in developing critical perspectives. Participants highlighted the importance of supporting youth in developing their critical perspectives, particularly related to their interlocking identities and lived experiences. They noted that in encouraging and supporting this dialogue, youth develop a broader understanding of how their identities, and associated experiences, may be situated within broader systems of power and privilege. Kendra explained how youth might shift their attribution of adverse life events to being systemic versus individually based.

> "…what's missing is like a key part of this work is letting youth connect the personal with the political like they have to be able to understand that. A big part of doing this work is letting them understand that they're not

experiencing disparities or crappy things because of who they are but actually letting them identify with this larger group and the collective experience of oppression. And helping them to realize that it's actually about these much larger things." (Kendra)

Additionally, some participants emphasized the importance of intentionally making space within programming to discuss concepts such as power, inequity, and various forms of oppression and challenge youth to apply these concepts to their lives. Alyssa indicated that a major component of programming is supporting youth in freely expressing their identities and contemplating their involvement in various power structures.

"You want to make sure that they are free to express themselves and their identities in a variety of ways and also to understand the power structures that they are involved in so that they understand some of their decision-making capabilities within those structures. Then they can think critically about them. That's the whole point of the program." (Alyssa)

Supporting youth advocacy. Participants highlighted the importance of supporting youth in developing their advocacy skills as part of the actionable component of developing critical consciousness. However, they also expressed that advocacy has the potential to be emotionally draining and exhausting for youth.

"…it (advocating) can be really draining on youth. And I think it's the same way that kind of like unpaid internships is a little bit of a classist issue that youth are doing this work, and we say oh, we're super proud of you and you're a real strong advocate. And we also want to let youth speak for themselves, but they might not even realize until later how exhausting that was or how damaging it was to not be able to access resources right away." (Amy)

Additionally, Amy commented on how professionals must consider the potential negative impact of self-advocacy on youth and balance the tension between actively supporting them in their advocacy efforts and encouraging their autonomy in these pursuits.

"So, I think there's a very fine line between supporting and encouraging advocacy. When youth constantly say, 'I can take over; I can do this instead', I think it can be a good thing and can lead to a lot of resiliency, but youth shouldn't have to build resiliency in that way when they're struggling."

(Amy)

4.4 Discussion

The first theme summarized professionals' core philosophy identified as being integral to using an intersectional approach which included their beliefs, values, and the existing approaches they found themselves drawing upon to practically apply intersectionality within their actions. Within this theme, professionals described the important role of their theoretical framework and how it underpins the work they do with marginalized populations. Many of the approaches identified by professionals within this study align with research and have earned a reputation as best practice for direct client work within social work and psychology. For example, researchers and professionals generally agree upon strength-based perspectives, anti-oppressive, and person-centred approaches as being fundamental approaches to working with marginalized populations. Although limited, past research has highlighted the benefit of combining strength-based perspectives and intersectionality when working with marginalized youth (Njeze et al., 2020). Specifically, scholars have advocated that the scope of intersectionality in both research and practice contexts should not be restricted to examining experiences of suffering and oppression. Instead, it should also highlight the resilience and resources within individuals' social location (Earnshaw et al., 2013). A unique contribution yielded from the results of this study was that professionals identified strength-based approaches as instrumental in applying intersectionality as opposed to being separate frameworks. Specifically, professionals outlined how these approaches can be drawn upon to acknowledge youth's interlocking identities and the systems of oppression they are embedded within. Thus, professionals spoke to the critical nature of their work and communicated an awareness of the various power dynamics between them and their clients.

Participants indicated that intersectionality can be used as a mechanism for social change in several ways, such as being a tool for identifying marginalized identities and recognizing their interactive and cumulative impact, as well as examining the nature and consequences of systems of social inequality. Nearly every applied professional field dedicated to providing social care, health, or education has a network of critical scholars and practitioners that aim to challenge the status quo and mobilize radical social change (White, 2020). Critical theorists have argued that critical workers and researchers should challenge inequality at a structural level by developing an awareness of the systemic oppression that impacts the marginalized populations with whom they work (Brookfield, 2009). Within theme one, professionals' articulated how intersectionality deviates from the traditional models of working with marginalized populations, which are often rooted within a focus on youth deficits and ignore the social and relational drivers of behaviour.

The second main theme included a host of considerations related to how TDV programming could incorporate intersectionality. First, participants outlined the importance of tailoring prevention programming delivery to fit with youths' identities and lived experiences. Intersectionality challenges the notion of employing a universal approach and advocates for the customization or adaptation of intervention programs to effectively address clients' multifaceted and complex needs (Pachankis, 2014). Although there is limited scholarship related to intersectionality in prevention programming, numerous academics have acknowledged the utility of using intersectionality in developing individually tailored intervention services (Cole, 2009; Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2014). Further, scholarship argues that using intersectionality should ideally enhance professionals' understanding of their clients' systemic marginalization while accounting for various risk factors (Heard, 2021). The reflections of many professionals within this current study centred on adapting the program to account for multiple intersecting identities and ensuring proper representation of marginalized groups within programming content. Although these are important, there were fewer programming-related suggestions aimed at targeting the systemic inequities that dynamically shape youths' lives and underlie their marginalization. These findings overlapped with a systematic review assessing the extent to which existing mental health interventions for sexual minority people considered various forms of marginalization using an intersectional

approach. In this study, Huang et al. (2020) found that approximately half of the analyzed research focused on the influence of intersecting social positions on participants' mental health. Yet, the presence and effects of intersecting forms of disadvantage were not thoroughly accounted for and evaluated.

Consistent with existing literature on evidence-based programming (Barnett et al., 2019; Movsisyan et al., 2019), participants emphasized the importance of attending to group-based dynamics and utilizing strength-based strategies to affirm and prioritize youth voice, especially when facilitating discussion related to systemic challenges. There is little research related to how programming can apply intersectionality by centring group-based discussions on systemic issues. One study completed by Cole and Duncan (2022) evaluated a sexual assault prevention program (Worthen & Wallace, 2017) and offered suggestions for enhancing participants' awareness of systemic issues. For example, they recommended that programming could encourage an open discourse about how various intersecting social identities might impact an individual's propensity to intervene in an active sexual assault (e.g., experiencing fear towards authorities, Klein et al., 2020). They also suggested that this sexual assault programming could analyze the social identities of the perpetrators, including the overrepresentation of heterosexual men, as a way of prompting discussions concerning the relationship between social positioning, power dynamics, and privilege within the patriarchal system.

There are important considerations when delivering programming with vulnerable youth within community settings, and it is well established that programming requires adaptations to meet their unique needs (Chiodo, 2017; Cwinn et al., 2022; Kerry, 2019). Participants discussed how they must treat their programming as a living document and highlighted the importance of adaptability and flexibility in their approaches to modifications. Intersectionality underscores the importance of exhibiting adaptability when supporting marginalized populations (David et al., 2015). One of the ways intersectionality encompasses the concept of adaptability is by acknowledging that various elements of an individual's identity may vary over time and in different situations (Kaschak, 2010). Consistent with literature exploring the adaptation of evidence-based intervention and practices (Barnett et al., 2019; Movsisyan et al., 2019), participants

discussed how content must be adapted to include culturally relevant examples and the importance of having a diverse range of participants and perspectives in considering these adaptations (Smith & Crooks, 2022). Last, participants highlighted the importance of creating a safe space for individuals to express their identities and discuss dating violence experiences. Although there is limited empirical research exploring the utilization of trauma-informed approaches within TDV prevention programming (Li et al., 2021), it is a well-established framework for discussing sensitive topics with youth and is commonly applied as a framework for adapting TDV programming for marginalized youth (Cwinn et al., 2022; Kerry, 2019).

Participants described multiple advantages to using an intersectional approach, including supporting youth self-awareness and developing critical consciousness. Conceptually, these terms are closely related in that reflective skills are instrumental to achieving critical consciousness (Watts et al., 2011). Critical consciousness (Freire, 1973, 2000) refers to an individual's awareness of oppressive systems, sense of agency, and participation in action against such oppression. The concept of critical consciousness is comprised of three interrelated components: (a) critical reflection, characterized by an examination of societal inequality; (b) political competence, or critical motivation, reflecting an individual's belief in their ability to bring about change; and (c) critical action, or active engagement in efforts aimed at promoting social change (Watts et al., 2011). In approaching work from a critical perspective, professionals serving marginalized youth engage in advocacy for systemic change and facilitate the cultivation of critical consciousness among young people (Diemer et al., 2021). Participants explained that applying an intersectional approach provided opportunities for youth to explore their identities and relate to their shared experiences of marginalization within a group format. Participants commented on how this reflective opportunity allows youth to consider the influence of systemic factors in their lives and make connections between their marginalized identities and systems of oppression.

Although the primary aim of TDV prevention programming with marginalized youth is not necessarily to develop critical consciousness, it emerged among participant responses as an outcome that is inherently connected with the application of intersectionality. There

is considerable research exploring critical consciousness among children and adolescents, including research exploring adaptive developmental outcomes and the impacts of interventions aiming to promote critical consciousness. For example, research indicated that factors such as school climate, particularly open discussion of challenging social issues (Seider et al., 2017), possessing marginalized identities (Kelly, 2018), and participation in community engagement activities, all contributed to the development of critical consciousness (Fullam, 2017). Interventions focusing on developing critical consciousness among young people have been implemented in various contexts, such as academic and extracurricular settings, and have generally demonstrated positive outcomes. Typically, these interventions aim to facilitate the development of critical consciousness through the following means: structured dialogue of a social justice topic; promoting reflection by providing novel information relevant to the context and linking this to students' personal experiences; use of open-ended queries to facilitate discourse between peers; and challenging statements that indicate bias (Heberle et al., 2020). The cultivation of critical consciousness has been linked to positive social-emotional outcomes, such as the enhancement of resistance and resilience; the acquisition of leadership abilities; a strengthened sense of self-worth; and feelings of having basic psychological needs met (Clonan-Roy et al., 2016; Delia & Krasny, 2018). However, counter to critical consciousness theory, Godfrey et al. (2019) found that youth who exhibit high levels of critical reflection are at increased risk for adverse social-emotional outcomes, such as symptoms of depression and diminished academic involvement. Although only a small subset of research within the systematic review completed by Heberle et al. (2020) found adverse outcomes associated with critical consciousness, the possible unintended negative consequence of developing critical consciousness among marginalized youth needs to be more fully explored in the research to better understand when and with whom this work should be undertaken.

As was noted by participants in this study, critical action, specifically through advocacy, can be draining for youth. Thus, sound clinical judgement and adherence to trauma-informed principles (Steele & Malchiodi, 2012) must be employed when navigating complex social issues with marginalized youth, especially when attempting to connect these social issues to their personal lives. There is a considerable risk of re-traumatization

associated with asking a group of marginalized youth to reflect on their marginalization, especially within the TDV prevention programming contexts, which often includes a host of other potentially sensitive topics such as consent, dating violence, sexual exploitation, and substance use, among others (Cwinn et al., 2022). Additionally, some other considerations for professionals' aiming to support youth in achieving critical consciousness through applying intersectionality, but certainly not all, include youths' reflective capacity, stage of change, existing awareness of personal challenges, current life circumstances, past developmental/clinical histories, and their developmental abilities. There are several adaptations to mitigate the risks associated with delivering TDV programming within complex community settings such as adapting the mode of delivery and amount of support provided; being flexible with time and resources such as offering the program 1:1 and follow-up supports; including multiple facilitators; providing group engagement rules to ensure a safe space (Cwinn et al., 2022).

4.4.1 Limitations

There are some study limitations to be considered. The first pertains to the participant sample and recruitment strategy. This study and two other studies making up this dissertation were introduced as a larger initiative dedicated to exploring professionals' understanding and application of intersectionality within their work. Based on existing relationships with various community partners and, by extension, the professionals working within these organizations, I purposefully sampled professionals familiar with and interested enough in intersectionality to volunteer for the research. This limitation impacted the generalizability of the findings in that there are likely professionals working with marginalized youth who are unfamiliar with intersectionality and/or uninterested in participating in a research study exploring its applicability in their work.

Additionally, each professional within this study supported marginalized youth in various capacities, and their roles were not isolated to TDV prevention programming. This may have contributed to the lack of specificity in the considerations they offered. Last, regarding the participant sample, participants' understanding of intersectionality ranged across a spectrum of sophistication (refer to chapter three of the dissertation for a more detailed explanation), which inevitably influenced their application. Factors that likely

contributed to the observed variability in participants' understanding include their positionality and training background; we cannot conclusively comment on the impact of these factors as this fell outside the scope of the study.

Although the interview protocol provided several prompts related to applying intersectionality in TDV prevention programming, many participants provided more general strategies and considerations than those that apply directly to TDV prevention programming. Thus, the first theme identified within this current study related to professionals' application of intersectionality with marginalized youth more generally as opposed to placing a specific emphasis on TDV prevention programming contexts, as theme two did. Many subthemes and categories identified within theme one contain essential information for applying intersectionality within TDV contexts. They should be considered within TDV prevention contexts and the broader scope of professionals' practice with marginalized youth.

4.4.2 Conclusion

This study used qualitative methods to explore professionals' application of intersectionality within their work broadly. Although participants were provided with a brief two-page summary sheet outlining key concepts (which did not include a definition for intersectionality; appendix C), they had latitude in how they interpreted the concept and, by extension, how they understood its applied function in their work. As one might expect, their understanding of intersectionality varied in sophistication. On the one hand, it was essential for the authors to demonstrate this diverse representation in understanding as it appears to be a consistent feature within studies exploring the applications of intersectionality. For example, Grzanka and Miles (2016) found that psychologists frequently limit intersectionality to examining interlocking identities, thereby neglecting to comprehend the systemic nature of social inequality. On the other hand, it may have been helpful to provide participants with the definition of intersectionality in preparation for the interview, as the purpose of this study was not to evaluate their understanding but rather to explore how they applied intersectionality within their work. Therefore, future work could provide participants with a consistent definition before the interview and

allow them opportunities to ask questions to enhance their comprehension during the interview to support their reflection.

Within the field, the criteria for defining what constitutes intersectionality is unclear and, at times, arbitrary. Although some approaches have been developed and used within the practice to evaluate policies, such as Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (Hankivsky et al., 2014), an established approach or set of guidelines for incorporating intersectionality within programming is required. Some recent systematic reviews have designed criteria for evaluating intersectionality within policy interventions (i.e., Cole & Duncan, 2022; Ghasemi et al., 2021). However, a standard tool for assessing the degree to which prevention programming for marginalized populations incorporates intersectionality could be beneficial, especially for adapting existing programming content to reach individuals with multiple marginalized identities and address structural inequities.

4.5   References

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Chapter 5

5   Conclusion

This integrated-article dissertation explored how professionals working with marginalized youth within various settings, including teen dating violence prevention contexts, understand and apply intersectionality. In chapter one, I reviewed literature related to two theoretical perspectives on teen dating violence, namely the developmental and ecological systems approaches, and articulated the importance of using critical approaches, such as intersectionality, to advance research and practice initiatives with marginalized youth. Research findings presented in chapter two outlined organizational and individual considerations for applying intersectionality and how they may impact marginalized youth. Chapter three outlined how a diverse set of professionals understood intersectionality and their internal processes when considering intersectionality within their practice with marginalized youth. The findings from chapter four explored how professionals apply intersectionality broadly within their work and, more specifically, within TDV prevention programming contexts. In this chapter, I reflect on some of the cross-cutting themes and potential future directions arising from this research.

5.1   Research Findings and Contributions

The studies provide an overview of how professionals understand and apply intersectionality. Within chapter two, a group concept map highlighted professionals' integration of intersectionality into TDV programming, their application of intersectionality to TDV program delivery, and their broader utilization of intersectionality within work with marginalized youth. Most of the six clusters generated by respondents focused on individual considerations for professionals implementing intersectionality. These clusters included self-reflection and awareness; values, beliefs, and actions; considerations for creating anti-oppressive and safe environments; and practices for person-centred care. Although sorted within separate clusters, participants commented that applying intersectionality requires self-examination, awareness of internal processes, and meaningful action.

Additionally, the findings from this study confirmed the critical role that organizations have in actualizing the potential of intersectionality through initiatives such as developing concrete policy and procedures, providing intersectionality training, and inter and intra-agency collaboration. The last category encompassed professionals' perspectives on youth outcomes based on their application of an intersectional perspective. Many statements within this cluster focused on how professionals may support reflection among youth, especially supporting youth in developing an understanding of their various social identities within group settings. Further, professionals' qualitative feedback alluded to significant clinical tensions in efforts to achieve these outcomes that were explored more deeply within subsequent chapters.

Chapter three utilized thematic analysis to investigate the comprehension of intersectionality by ten professionals working with marginalized youth in diverse community settings who were also implementing a healthy relationships program. Moreover, the study aimed to gain insight into the professionals' internal reflective processes relating to intersectionality. The findings of this chapter provided an overview of how these professionals understand intersectionality, the role of self-reflection in grappling with the concept, and their journey toward applying intersectionality. Consistent with previous literature, the findings revealed that professionals' understanding ranged across a spectrum of sophistication (Collins, 2015; Holman et al., 2021). Participants explained their use of critical reflection and its integral contribution to their efforts to apply intersectionality. Last, their journeys toward intersectionality were shared, and they reflected on what motivated them to adopt an intersectional approach.

Additional themes were identified and used in chapter four based on the same interviews conducted in chapter three. Where chapter three focused on understanding and reflecting, the themes in chapter four related to doing, Namely, how professionals apply intersectionality in a general sense and, more specifically, within the context of TDV prevention programming. Participants discussed the role of theory, particularly strength-based perspectives, anti-oppressive, and person-centred approaches, in allowing them to apply intersectionality. Additionally, the findings highlighted how adaptations to TDV prevention programming must be ongoing, intentionally account for multiple intersecting

identities, and represent marginalized groups. These findings contributed to the literature by offering suggestions for facilitating group-based discussions about systemic oppression with marginalized youth. Last, participants highlighted how intersectionality could be used to enhance youth self-awareness and their development of critical consciousness.

5.2   Overall Findings and Themes

Grappling with Understanding: Necessity of Critical Reflection and Continued Learning. Consistent with existing literature (Holman et al., 2021), the results in each of the three studies suggested that professionals were grappling, to varying degrees, with understanding intersectionality. Although some participant descriptions revealed considerable gaps in understanding, which inevitably impacted their application, this study was designed to provide thick descriptions of their current understanding instead of being a test of their knowledge. The extensive body of literature describing intersectionality as a complex and academic term contributed to the decision to explore professionals' understanding and unpack their journey toward intersectionality. Regardless of the range of sophistication within participant reflections, all participants identified critical reflection and a commitment to continued learning as essential factors in grappling with intersectionality and its implications in practice.

In chapter two, participants identified the need for a structured reflective process to examine their practice. In chapters three and four, participants provided more substantive explanations regarding the research methodology used. The reflective practices suggested included a thorough examination of their positionality, including their occupations of privilege and oppression, and how their interlocking identities express themselves in relation to their clients. Self-reflective practices and having an awareness of oneself impact a clinician's work with clients and is a prerequisite for adhering to many professional colleges' standards of practice (e.g., College of Psychologists of Ontario, 2017; College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, 2017; Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, 2008). These findings suggest that understanding and incorporating intersectionality into one's reflective practices is complex, nuanced, and context-dependent. Further, participants detailed this process as a continuous,

lifelong journey that requires them to embrace the potential of making mistakes. For participants whose understanding of intersectionality was less developed, this study may act as a starting point for their continued growth in this area.

Application: Core Tensions. Participants' qualitative responses pointed toward some crucial tensions that were elucidated in greater depth within the later chapters of this dissertation. Notably, these tensions are not mutually exclusive or binary. Instead, they are viewed as two points along a continuum of possible options for professionals when applying intersectionality. Additionally, professionals require considerable clinical judgment while navigating these tensions. The first observed tension within the findings is that professionals noted the importance of supporting youth in recognizing their strengths while also challenging them to develop an understanding of oppressive structures impacting their lives. Supporting youth in understanding their unique matrix of privilege and oppression is theoretically consistent with applying an intersectional approach but must be approached skillfully by professionals as an overemphasis on points of oppression can potentially be experienced by marginalized youth as unnecessarily heavy and discouraging (Lapointe et al., 2018).

Another notable tension that emerged from these data relates to being open to learning from youth and prioritizing their voices while not inadvertently assigning to them the potentially burdensome role of teaching about their experiences of marginalization. Prioritizing youth voices and maintaining an open and curious stance toward youth perspectives is generally held as best practice; however, professionals also need to engage in professional development to avoid relying on youth to educate them (Bounds & Posey, 2022; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013).

The last identified tension relates to the distinction between supporting or encouraging youth to develop critical consciousness and becoming advocates. In this circumstance, the difference between these terms lies in the professionals' agenda, namely, supporting seems to prioritize clients' decision-making capabilities and autonomy, regardless of their decision, and encouraging insinuates a preference, in this case toward the client developing greater critical consciousness or engaging in advocacy efforts. Although the

benefits of developing critical consciousness and advocacy are well founded, especially as a form of resistance against oppressive forces, it seems prudent that professionals consider various client and group factors in navigating this tension. Further, professionals should always maintain at the forefront the potential of unintended harm associated with exposing marginalized youth to content that could contribute to undue discouragement (e.g., providing extensive information about their systemic oppression) and encouraging/pressuring (e.g., creating an expectation) youth to engage in advocacy efforts that could contribute to emotional exhaustion (Godfrey et al., 2019; Hope et al., 2018). As the findings indicate, at the heart of this work is allowing foundational client-centred skills to be a guide.

Suggestions for TDV Programming. Each professional within this study supported marginalized youth in various capacities, and their roles were not isolated to TDV prevention programming. This may have contributed to the lack of specificity in the considerations they offered. Some suggestions provided by participants, such as "using an intersectional approach" or "addressing systemic barriers," run the risk of abstracting the problem to that level of analysis where there are no longer any precise, actionable components. Of course, in levelling this consideration, I am not suggesting that systemic barriers do not exist. Instead, I am suggesting that the imprecision of these suggestions can contribute to a lack of meaningful change and may inadvertently exacerbate the problems these groups face by avoiding a core tenant of intersectionality, praxis. That said, many of the suggestions for integrating intersectionality are context dependent and complex in their application. Thus, in combination with training on intersectionality, it would be helpful for professionals to receive ongoing implementation support to generate suitable applications of intersectionality within this ever-evolving field.

A study completed by Cole and Duncan (2022) investigated how interventions and policies applied an intersectional perspective and proposed specific modifications to enhance their inclusiveness and effectiveness. One of the interventions examined was a sexual assault prevention program completed on college campuses (Worthen & Wallace, 2017). Through their intersectional evaluation, they suggested adaptations to broaden participants' awareness of broader systemic issues, such as generating open discussion

related to how intersecting social identities may impact an individual's willingness to take action to intervene in sexual assaults (i.e., due to distrust or feelings of being threatened by authorities, Klein et al., 2020) and considering the social identities of perpetrators as a means of sparking discussions regarding social positioning and its connection to power (i.e., the disproportionate number of straight men perpetrating sexual assaults and the social structures and privilege garnered through the patriarchal system). This study illustrates how programming may be expanded to explicitly address interlocking identities and their links with structural inequality, ultimately increasing an individual's comprehension of the intricate nature and extent of the problem.

Although there were not enough data to substantiate a theme within this current dissertation, one participant suggested that, along with the individual skills taught to youth during TDV programming, professionals should incorporate anti-oppressive practices, such as anti-racism initiatives within TDV programming. She explained that these initiatives may appear unrelated to TDV prevention through a traditional lens, yet, through an intersectional lens, they are essential in addressing the underlying contributors to TDV among marginalized youth. Implementing this suggestion would require a system-level shift in our thinking about what group-based TDV programming should include. Further, TDV prevention programming would have to allow professionals more flexibility and latitude in delivering content that, on the surface, may not appear to be targeting an individual risk factor for TDV. This creative suggestion would expand our current frameworks toward a more holistic way of supporting youth by acknowledging their lived realities and the systemic barriers they face daily.

5.3   Future Directions for Research and Implications for Practice

There are several potential avenues for building on the results of this dissertation. These include expanding the scope to look at organizational conditions, integrating youth voice, and looking more systematically at how service providers' intersecting identities influence their understanding and application of intersectionality.

Organizational Considerations. Related to professionals' application of intersectionality, participants offered a variety of approaches and concrete strategies

pertaining to their work. Still, outside of the cluster related to organizational consideration in chapter two, this dissertation largely overlooked how the community organizations participants worked for influenced their willingness and ability to implement intersectionality into practice. Previous research has explored how organizations as a collective can take an intersectional approach (Almeida, 2013; Almeida et al., 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Rosenthal, 2016); however, organizational facilitators and barriers influencing professionals' ability to apply intersectionality remains a novel area for future research. This research could explore organizational policies, hiring practices, workplace culture, and leadership. Aligned with this suggestion, it may be helpful to examine the efficacy of organization-wide intersectionality training, guidelines, or toolkits, focusing on evaluating how these resources may influence professionals' practice.

Youth Perspectives. This dissertation explored professionals' perspectives on youth outcomes; however, it is essential to obtain input from the community for which the intervention is intended (Stimatze, 2022). Focusing on the experiences of individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by structural discrimination and its consequences, could significantly enhance our understanding of the difficulties they face and lead to developing more effective and transformative solutions. It would be beneficial to understand how the application of intersectionality impacts youth. Youth perspectives would help clarify some of the tensions identified in this work, such as when it is empowering to be able to educate adults about social identities and when it is onerous, and how thoughtful professionals can navigate that tension.

Further, youth perspectives on topics related to marginalized identities and their influence on adverse outcomes, such as TDV, as well as their understanding of intersectionality and critical consciousness, may be a valuable addition to the current body of literature. These topics rely heavily on personal reflection and a relatively advanced understanding of systemic issues impacting marginalized populations. These topics may be challenging for a group of youth to explore. To address this challenge, researchers could design each

research activity with youth to remove jargon intentionally and provide developmentally attuned preparatory materials.

To better understand the lived experiences of marginalized populations, it is necessary to utilize a methodology that accurately represents their perspectives, considers the existence of multiple marginalized identities through integrating our knowledge of intersectionality, and avoids further marginalizing these individuals by fully including participants in the research process. A research methodology that is particularly useful for exploring the experiences of marginalized populations and considers the complex nuances within their lived experiences is youth-based participatory action (YPAR). YPAR draws on strong partnerships to engage youth in constructing knowledge through identifying, researching, and addressing social problems (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Checkoway, & Richards-Schuster, 2003). YPAR is grounded in three main principles (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009): choosing a topic that is closely related to youth's lived experiences and concerns, ensuring that methodological processes are collaborative, and making the research transformative by aiming to create meaningful social change. Stemming from Freire's (1970) idea of critical consciousness, YPAR seeks to build the capacity for youth to critically examine their historical, social, and political conditions as these factors relate to the topic being explored. Last, Ozer and Douglas (2015) identified vital processes in YPAR that include: "developing an integrated research and action agenda; training in, and application of, research and advocacy methods; practicing and discussing strategic thinking about how to create social change; and building alliances with stakeholders" (Anyon et al., 2018, p. 865).

As noted throughout the dissertation and detailed most extensively within chapter four, there may be unintended negative consequences related to asking youth about their marginalized identities and experiences or sensitive experiences such as TDV. Thus, it would be essential to ensure that conversations are firmly rooted in strength-based approaches. Positive youth development (PYD) practices may be particularly useful in guiding this area of research. PYD is an approach to working with youth that emphasizes their strengths and potential rather than their deficits (Damon, 2004). PYD seeks to highlight youths' competencies, agency, and autonomy (Catalano et al., 2004), which are

often aspects of youths' functioning that are overlooked in the literature on marginalized youths' experience of TDV (De La Rue, 2019; Roberts et al., 2018).

Connection with Participants' Identities. Interpreting these data requires recognition that participants understanding and application of intersectionality is inextricably linked to their own identities and lived experiences. Although this study collected some demographic data related to participants' gender, years working with marginalized youth, roles within their organization, and prior experience with TDV research and programming, professionals' personal interlocking identities were not captured. An analysis of professionals' interlocking identities and the potential influence of these identities on their responses went beyond the scope of this current dissertation. This was a challenging issue to balance for a variety of reasons.

On the one hand, the link between one's social location and connection with this topic must be acknowledged. On the other hand, we attempted to avoid using a reductionist approach whereby particular experiences and findings were linked to their self-identified identities. Additionally, to navigate this tension, we deliberately decided to refrain from collecting and reporting identity categories in chapters three and four and allowed participants to bring their diverse identities and experiences of privilege and marginalization into the interviews as they saw fit. Last, since we recruited participants from a relatively small research and professional community of practice, we wanted to ensure that we protected their privacy.

Future research could expand on this dissertation by looking at professionals' interlocking identities and their relation to participants' perspectives on intersectionality. For example, it would be interesting to explore how gender, years of experience, roles within the organization, and previous experiences related to professionals understanding and applying intersectionality. Most participants had over ten years of experience (75% in chapter two and 60% between 10- and 15 years of experience in chapters three and four). Gathering the perspectives of more junior professionals and understanding their experiences at different points in their careers would be a valuable addition to the field. This dissertation also included a diverse sample of professionals regarding their training

backgrounds and organizational roles. Some participants revealed that they had learned about intersectionality within their program of study, whereas others indicated that they came to it throughout their work with marginalized youth. Exploring the similarities and differences stemming from these experiences and linking these factors with their understanding and application of intersectionality would be interesting.

5.4   Limitations

Several limitations cut across the three studies in this dissertation, related mainly to recruitment and sampling. Related to the recruitment strategy, participants were recruited from agencies partnered with the Centre for School Mental Health (CSMH). Participants invited to participate in these studies were informed before the data collection that this study was designed to examine how intersectionality is applied in their work. Therefore, there may have been a self-selection bias whereby professionals interested in participating were more knowledgeable on intersectionality than other professionals working at organizations partnered with the CSMH. Thus, the voices of professionals who have not considered intersectionality were likely absent from this work.

The final limitation is related to participant understanding of intersectionality ranging across a spectrum of sophistication. When this study was introduced at the CSMH Partner's Day, many professionals indicated unfamiliarity with intersectionality. They reported it as a somewhat academic concept. To enhance participants' understanding of intersectionality before commenting on its application within their work, they could have been provided with a definition before participating in the interviews. Although participants were provided with a 2-page summary sheet outlining important concepts (i.e., social identities, systems of oppression, multiple marginalized identities, youth identity development, and intersectionality as it relates to TDV among marginalized youth; appendix C), defining intersectionality may have supported participants reflections on its application within their work.

5.5   Personal Reflections and Final Thoughts

While completing this dissertation, I have learned much from the literature and the participants about working with marginalized groups. I have experienced firsthand that

understanding and applying intersectionality in practice is a complex, lifelong journey. In acknowledging this journey, I must note that I have presented ideas I am still working out and learning about within this dissertation. As such, I have learned that while we are always making imperfect movements along this journey, there are ways of understanding and acting that can improve how we support marginalized youth and the challenges they face. I hope this dissertation's findings can serve as a resource to others on this journey.

Regarding my professional journey, I have intentionally sought clinical training opportunities working with marginalized populations. Most recently, I completed a full-year residency providing psychological assessments and individual/group-based intervention services to justice-involved youth and youth within residential treatment settings. I have also had the privilege of co-facilitating the HRP-E with adolescents in child-protective settings. My positionality statement in chapter one outlined that I approach my work through a white-centred, colonial, and Eurocentric lens. As a result, implicit biases undoubtedly influence my understanding. Early in this work, I recognized systemic issues and have been dedicated to better understanding and addressing these factors in my professional and personal spheres. However, throughout this journey, a difficult reality that I have had to grapple with is my implication in the historical violence and systems of oppression that have contributed to the pernicious challenges experienced by my clients. Further, the discipline I am a part of and have been intimately shaped by during the past decade of training are the same systems that I argue must evolve and, in many circumstances, be dismantled and thoughtfully reconstructed.

My conceptualization of marginalized youths' issues has developed considerably throughout this work. The reality of this work is that the systems of oppression predict who is most at risk, and emerging research continues to unveil these structural determinants of health. Marginalized youth are at higher risk of adverse outcomes such as TDV, not because of individual-level deficits but because of larger social systems that shape interactions at the interpersonal level (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023). These individual factors often act as proxies for the oppression operating at a systemic level (e.g., race as an individual-level variable in research is a proxy for racism). Locating problems at their point of origin dramatically changes our work. Aligned with reflections offered by

participants within this dissertation, I see critical reflection as a fundamental component to developing this lens and ultimately understanding and applying intersectionality. Without this reflection, I believe we risk becoming disconnected from the material realities of suffering and violence that marginalized youth face.

As a psychologist-in-training, I have had the privilege of supporting other students in a co-supervisory capacity within community mental health clinics. I eagerly anticipate having more opportunities within this throughout my career. Although many of the participants in this dissertation were not psychologists, I have reflected on how I may approach my role as a future supervisor of students or colleagues. I firmly believe that integrating intersectionality into early training opportunities is necessary. Research supports this claim and indicates that embedding intersectionality into psychology and social work training programs contributes to trainees developing a critical lens within their work (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Case & Lewis, 2012; Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Simon et al., 2022; Wallin-Ruschman et al., 2020). To achieve this goal, researchers have argued that students must examine how categories of oppression and privilege exist within their own lives and share their understanding of the issues marginalized clients face (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017). Further, Buchanan and Wiklund (2020) recommended that clinical psychology programs could do the following to integrate intersectionality into their programs: conducting program-wide syllabus audits to infuse intersectionality, social justice, and diversity into training at all levels and evaluating competence in this area; hosting speakers and hiring consultants that utilize an intersectional and social justice lens within their work; and having admissions committees consider placing particular preference for applicants with intersecting marginalized identities. However, numerous barriers related to integrating intersectionality into the early training goals of practitioners have been identified, such as the complexity of the theory and the fact that it is an emotionally laden topic. For example, Simon et al. (2022) noted that within social work classrooms, intersectionality is often reduced to multiple overlapping individual-level identities and fails to consider its systemic reach.

In conclusion, the application of intersectionality moves beyond merely acknowledging and respecting diverse cultures and their influence on the individual to understanding the complex and unique interactions within individual identities and the systemic forces that historically and currently contribute to their marginalization and disadvantage (Jani et al., 2011; Murphy, 2009). In applying a critical lens, intersectionality can be used as a mechanism for social change in several ways, such as being a tool for identifying marginalized identities and recognizing youths' interactive and cumulative experiences, examining the nature and consequences of systems of social inequality, and addressing practices and policies that continue to perpetuate the oppression these groups face (Murphy, 2009). This integrated dissertation highlights how professionals understand and apply intersectionality to their work with marginalized youth. Through continued research, there are opportunities to usher in transformative change in how professionals conceptualize and approach their work with marginalized youth and how intersectionality can continue to evolve from an abstract academic concept to something embedded in our work with youth.

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6 Appendices

Appendix A: Western University Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 4 June 2020

To: Dr. Claire Crooks

Project ID: 114293

Study Title: Evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Enhanced Program

Application Type: NMREB Amendment Form

Full Board Reporting Date: July 3 2020

Date Approval Issued: 04/Jun/2020

REB Approval Expiry Date: 11/Oct/2020

Dear Dr. Claire Crooks,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the amendment, as of the date noted above.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Component 1_Facilitator Pilot Online LOI-Consent_V2-clean	Implied Consent/Assent	07/May/2020	2
Component 3_Facilitator Online LOI-Consent_V2-clean	Implied Consent/Assent	07/May/2020	2
Component 2-Online Youth LOI and Verbal Consent V1-20200505	Verbal Consent/Assent	05/May/2020	1
Component 2-Online Guardian LOI and Verbal Consent-V1-20200505	Verbal Consent/Assent	05/May/2020	1
Component 2_Guardian Telephone Recruitment Script_Phase 2 (V2)-clean	Recruitment Materials	05/May/2020	2
Component 2-Youth Telephone Script for Verbal Consent-V1 20200505	Recruitment Materials	05/May/2020	1
Component 2_Youth Email Recruitment Script-V1-20200505	Recruitment Materials	05/May/2020	1
Component 3_InterviewGuide_Facilitators_V1	Interview Guide	21/May/2020	1
Component 3_InterviewGuide_Administrator_V1	Interview Guide	21/May/2020	1
Component 4_Focus Group Guide-V1	Focus Group(s) Guide	21/May/2020	1
Component 3_Interview Email Recruitment Script_V1	Recruitment Materials	21/May/2020	1
Component 3_Interview Email Reminder Script_V1	Recruitment Materials	21/May/2020	1
Component 4-Email Recruitment Script-V1	Recruitment Materials	21/May/2020	1
Component 4_Phase 1-2_Email Reminder- V1	Recruitment Materials	21/May/2020	1
Component 4_Phase 2 Email Reminder- V1	Recruitment Materials	21/May/2020	1
Component 4_Online Sorting and Rating Activity- V1	Online Survey	21/May/2020	1
Study Procedures-V5_clean	Protocol	29/May/2020	5
Component 2-Online Youth LOI and Consent-V1-20200505	Written Consent/Assent	05/May/2020	1

Component 2-Online Youth LOI and Assent-V1-20200505	Written Consent/Assent	05/May/2020	1
Component 4_Online Sorting and Rating Activity- LOI and Consent- V1	Implied Consent/Assent	21/May/2020	1
Component 3_Interview_LOI_Consent_Qualtrics_V1	Written Consent/Assent	21/May/2020	1
Component 4_Focus Group LOI and Consent- V1	Written Consent/Assent	21/May/2020	1

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Western Research

Date: 27 October 2020

To: Dr. Claire Crooks

Project ID: 114293

Study Title: Evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Enhanced Program

Application Type: NMREB Amendment Form

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: November 6 2020

Date Approval Issued: 27/Oct/2020

REB Approval Expiry Date: 11/Oct/2021

Dear Dr. Claire Crooks,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the amendment, as of the date noted above.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Component 1_Guardian LOI and Verbal Consent-V3-clean	Verbal Consent/Assent	13/Oct/2020	3
Component 1_Online Youth LOI and Consent-V1	Written Consent/Assent	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 1_Online Youth LOI and Assent-V1	Written Consent/Assent	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 1_Online Youth LOI and Verbal Consent-V1	Verbal Consent/Assent	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 1-Youth Telephone Script for Verbal Consent-V1 20201013	Recruitment Materials	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 1_Youth Email Recruitment Script-V1-20201013	Recruitment Materials	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 1_Guardian Telephone Recruitment Script V2-clean	Recruitment Materials	13/Oct/2020	2
Study Procedures-V6_clean	Protocol	13/Oct/2020	6
Component 4-Interview LOI and Consent- V1-20201013	Written Consent/Assent	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 4-Semi-Structured Interview Guide-V1- 20201013	Interview Guide	13/Oct/2020	1
Component 4-Interview Email Recruitment Script-V1-20201013	Recruitment Materials	13/Oct/2020	1

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson , Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix B: Online Sorting and Rating Activity: Evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Enhanced Program

Q28 Please respond to the questions by typing your response in the space provided or clicking the box beside the most appropriate response. Please <u>do not</u> include names or any other identifying information.

Q21 What is your age?

_____

Q23 What is your gender?

_____

Q22 What is your ethnicity?

_____

Q24 How many years have you worked with vulnerable youth?

○ Less than 1 year (1)

○ 1 year (2)

○ Between 1 and 5 years (3)

○ Between 6 and 10 years (4)

○ More than 10 years (5)

Q25 Check all boxes that apply to your involvement with the Healthy Relationship Plus (HRP) Enhanced Program:

○ Participated in HRP- Enhanced training (1)

○ Facilitated 1 HRP- Enhanced Group (2)

○ Facilitated 2 or more HRP- Enhanced Program (3)

○ Worked in a community agency where the HRP- Enhanced Program was/is being implemented (4)

○ Conducted research on the HRP- Enhanced Program (5)

Q29 Rate how important for you is it to incorporate intersectionality in your work?

○ Not important at all (1)

○ Slightly important (2)

○ Moderately important (3)

○ Important (4)

○ Very important (5)

Q30 How difficult is it for you to incorporate intersectionality into your work?

○ Not difficult at all (1)

○ Slightly difficult (2)

○ Moderately difficult (3)

○ Difficult (4)

○ Very difficult (5)

Page Break

GCM Instructions: Evaluation of the

Healthy Relationships Plus Enhanced Program

Q3 Here is a list of 50 statements that relate to the question "How do you bring intersectionality into your work with vulnerable youth?"

We are asking for your help in sorting these statements into groups that make sense to you. When ready, please group every statement. You can sort the statements into as many or as few groups as possible. No statement may be in a group twice. You must create more than one group and you may have groups with only one statement.

In this activity, you will categorize the statements, according to your view of their meaning or theme. To do this, you will sort each statement into piles in a way that makes sense to you. First, read through the statements in the Unsorted Statements column to the left.

Next, sort each statement into a pile you create. Group the statements for how similar in meaning or theme they are to one another. Give each pile a name that describes its theme or contents.

Do NOT create piles according to priority, or value, such as 'Important', or 'Hard to Do.'

Do NOT create piles such as 'Miscellaneous' or "Other" that group together dissimilar statements. Put a statement alone in its own pile if it is unrelated to all the other statements. Make sure every statement is put somewhere. Do not leave any statements in the Unsorted Statements column.

People vary in how many piles they create. Usually 5 to 12 piles works well to organize this number of statements.

Items	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Provide a positive environment for youth					
Promote self-awareness among youth					
Participate in professional development					
Promote self-understanding among youth	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10
Provide an inclusive/accepting environment for youth					
Engage in self-reflection					
Recognize my privileges					
Consider how my identity impacts interactions with youth					
Appreciate diversity in youth's experiences	Group 11	Group 12			
Recognize my own social identities					
Be flexible in approaches used to support youth					
Actively listen to youth					
Incorporate youth's lived experiences					
Be curious about youth's identities/experience					
Use a trauma informed approach					
Provide a safe and consistent physical space for youth					

Use a culturally relevant framework with youth

Consider youth who maybe excluded

Consider youth's multiple identities

Support youth's vulnerability

Avoid making assumptions about youth

Use inclusive language with youth

Practice humility

Encourage youth to be themselves

Provide opportunities for youth to express their identities

Promote open dialogue among youth

Provide a welcoming space

Be willing to learn from youth

Build rapport with youth

Engage youth in conversations about intersectionality

Be non-judgemental with youth

Be empathetic toward youth

Invite youth to share their identities

Validate youth

Advocate for youth

Prioritize hiring facilitators with identities and lived experience that matches the youth you are working with

Include a youth co-facilitator when possible

Consider how my identity impacts interactions with youth

Support youth in exploring their identities

Recognize organizational biases

Respect where youth are at in their process of identity formation

Respect how youth understand/express their identities

Recognize the impact of environment on youth's identity expression

Recognize importance of intersectionality in organization's vision

Allow youth to self-pronoun at each session

Avoid assigning identities to youth based on physical characteristics

Support youth to explore identities by facilitating peer-to-peer learning

Consider barriers to participation (such as transportation, work hours, childcare needs)

Ensure program examples include a variety of identities (e.g., in role plays)

Ensure that a range of identities are reflected in the physical space (e.g., posters, resources)

Q4 What name would you give to the groups you just sorted above?

○ Group 1 (1) _____

○ Group 2 (2) _____

○ Group 3 (3) _____

○ Group 4 (4) _____

○ Group 5 (5) _____

○ Group 6 (6) _____

○ Group 7 (7) _____

○ Group 8 (8) _____

○ Group 9 (9) _____

○ Group 10 (10) _____

○ Group 11 (11) _____

○ Group 12 (12) _____

Q5

Please, take a few minutes and rate each statement on a scale of 1 (not at all important)
to 5 (extremely important) on how important you think this attribute is in defining
socially and emotionally competent teachers.

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
Provide a positive environment for youth (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Promote self-awareness among youth (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Participate in professional development (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Promote self-understanding among youth (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Provide an inclusive/accepting environment for youth (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Engage in self-reflection (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Recognize my privileges (7)	○	○	○	○	○

Recognize my own biases (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Appreciate diversity in youth's experiences (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Recognize my own social identities (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Be flexible in approaches used to support youth (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Actively listen to youth (12)	○	○	○	○	○
Incorporate youth's lived experiences (13)	○	○	○	○	○
Be curious about youth's identities/experience (14)	○	○	○	○	○
Use a trauma informed approach (15)	○	○	○	○	○

Provide a safe and consistent physical space for youth (16)	○	○	○	○	○
Use a culturally relevant framework with youth (17)	○	○	○	○	○
Consider youth who maybe excluded (18)	○	○	○	○	○
Consider youth's multiple identities (19)	○	○	○	○	○
Support youth's vulnerability (20)	○	○	○	○	○
Avoid making assumptions about youth (21)	○	○	○	○	○
Use inclusive language with youth (22)	○	○	○	○	○
Practice humility (23)	○	○	○	○	○

Encourage youth to be themselves (24)	○	○	○	○	○
Provide opportunities for youth to express their identities (25)	○	○	○	○	○
Promote open dialogue among youth (26)	○	○	○	○	○
Provide a welcoming space (27)	○	○	○	○	○
Be willing to learn from youth (28)	○	○	○	○	○
Build rapport with youth (29)	○	○	○	○	○
Engage youth in conversations about intersectionality (30)	○	○	○	○	○
Be non-judgemental with youth (31)	○	○	○	○	○

Be empathetic toward youth (32)	○	○	○	○	○
Invite youth to share their identities (33)	○	○	○	○	○
Validate youth (34)	○	○	○	○	○
Advocate for youth (35)	○	○	○	○	○
Support youth in exploring their identities (36)	○	○	○	○	○
Recognize organizational biases (37)	○	○	○	○	○
Respect where youth are at in their process of identity formation (38)	○	○	○	○	○
Respect how youth understand/express their identities (39)	○	○	○	○	○

Recognize the impact of environment on youth's identity expression (40)	○	○	○	○	○
Recognize importance of intersectionality in organization's vision (41)	○	○	○	○	○
Allow youth to self-pronoun at each session (42)	○	○	○	○	○
Avoid assigning identities to youth based on physical characteristics (43)	○	○	○	○	○
Support youth to explore identities by facilitating peer-to-peer learning (44)	○	○	○	○	○

Consider barriers to participation (such as transportation, work hours, childcare needs) (45)	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure program examples include a variety of identities (e.g., in role plays) (46)	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure that a range of identities are reflected in the physical space (e.g., posters, resources) (47)	○	○	○	○	○
Prioritize hiring facilitators with identities and lived experience that matches the youth you are working with (48)	○	○	○	○	○

Include a youth co-facilitator when possible (49)	○	○	○	○	○
Consider how my identity impacts interactions with youth (50)	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Appendix C: Intersectionality and Teen Dating Violence: Summary Sheet

<u>Social Identities</u>

- Social identities are based on the groups or communities a person belongs to. These groups give people a sense of who they are. For example, social class, gender, sexual identification, race, culture, disability, economic status, education, religion, age, immigration status, and occupation are all social identities.

- A person is usually a member of many different groups or communities at once; in this way, social identities are multidimensional. An individual's social location is defined by all the identities or groups to which they belong.

- Aspects of identity are not static, stable categories or roles; instead, they exist in different ways in different social environments and depending on the social environment, particular social identities become more or less salient.

<u>Systems of Oppression</u>

- Systems of oppression refer to larger forces and structures operating in society that create inequalities, give greater social power to some groups, and reinforce exclusion. These systems are built around societal norms and are constructed by the dominant group(s) in society.

- Systems of oppression are created and reinforced through harmful social norms, practices, and institutions.

- For example, systems of oppression are maintained through language (e.g. "That's so gay"), social interactions (e.g. "catcalling" women), institutions (e.g. when school curriculum does not acknowledge residential schools), and laws and policies (e.g. immigration policies that make it difficult for new Canadians to access health services).

- Systems of oppression include racism, colonialism, heterosexism, class stratification, gender inequality, and ableism.

- An individual may face oppression based on their social location and oppression produces inequality, exclusion, fear, and violence.

Multiple Marginalized Identities

- Each person has multiple social identities, each of which contributes to how they understand and experience the world, themselves, and their social relationships

- Social identities interact with each other or 'intersect' to create a complete social identity that cannot be explained by each social identity alone.

- Social identities and systems of oppression do not exist in isolation. Instead, they can be thought of as intersecting or interacting. In other words, individuals' experiences are shaped by the ways in which their social identities intersect with each other and with interacting systems of oppression.

- For instance, a person can be both black, a woman, and elderly. This means she may face racism, sexism, and ageism as she navigates everyday life, including experiences of violence.

Youth Identity Development

- An individuals identity development differs as a function of their social location, including all the identities or groups to which they belong.

- Youth with marginalized social identities experience more identity-related challenges, as more negative health outcomes compared to youth whose identities are within the majority group in these categories.

Intersectionality and TDV among Marginalized Youth

- An intersectional approach to understanding teen dating violence suggests that the experiences of various groups of marginalized populations will differ based on factors such as race, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc.

- These intersecting social locations and associated oppressions shape experiences of violence.

- Different forms of oppression interact and shape the distribution of social resources and impact an individual's sense of power, resilience, and well-being.

- Many empirical studies have demonstrated that adolescents with marginalized social identities experience dating violence victimization and perpetration at a disproportionally high rate compared to the rest of our society.

– When adolescents with marginalized social identities experience dating violence victimization or perpetration, the outcomes are more negative, long-lasting, and detrimental to their development.

Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Guide: Evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Enhanced Program

<u>Preamble</u>:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this semi-structured interview. We are interested in collecting your perspectives on how you bring intersectionality into your work with vulnerable youth by applying a critical lens. Using a critical lens while working with marginalized populations refers to the process of examining the nature and consequences of historical and systemic inequities between groups and advocating for structural change.

<u>Demographic Questions</u>:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. How many years have you worked with vulnerable youth?
- Prompt: Less than 1 year, 1 year, between 1 and 5 years, between 6 and 10 years, more than 10 years

4. Describe your role(s) within the organization you work for?

5. What is your involvement with the Healthy Relationship Plus (HRP) Enhanced Program:
- Prompt: Participated in HRP- Enhanced training, facilitated 1 HRP- Enhanced Group, facilitated 2 or more HRP- Enhanced Program, worked in a community agency where the HRP- Enhanced Program was/is being implemented, conducted research on the HRP-Enhanced Program

6. Describe the importance of incorporating intersectionality in your work?

Present group concept mapping findings to focus group

This focus group is the final phase and involves a discussion of the cluster groupings and labels that were generated during the group concept mapping activity on Qualtrics. In this phase I will present the cluster groupings and labels for you to review and provide an opportunity to offer any suggestions related to the current results.

GCM Questions:

1. Do you have any suggestions for cluster groupings and labels?
A. How could the group concept map be improved?
- Prompt: Are there aspects of the map that you feel are missing or areas that are underrepresented?
- Prompt: Are there areas of the map that you feel are overrepresented?

2. What was your experience with the group concept mapping exercise?
A. What were aspects that you enjoyed?
B. What were aspects that you disliked or found difficult?

3. After participating in the group concept mapping activity and the focus group, do you have any suggestions for improving the HRP?
A. Are there additional supports that would be helpful for integrating intersectionality into the HRP programming?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:
1. Explain the importance of using an intersectional approach in your work with youth.
A. How has your perspective on the importance of intersectionality in your work developed over time?
- Prompt: What do you feel has contributed to this development?

2. Describe how the intersections of marginalized identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation, are related to TDV among the marginalized youth you work with?

A. What systemic factors do you feel contribute to increased risk and negative effects of TDV among youth with marginalized social identities?

- Prompt: Can you provide an example from a youth that you've worked with where systemic factors contributed to their experience of TDV?

3. How does the organization that you work for use an intersectional perspective in understanding/addressing TDV among marginalized youth?

- Prompt: Can think broadly about the policies/mandate/vision that your organization uses to support youth?

A. What barriers and resources exist within your organization which facilitate or make it challenging to apply an intersectional approach in your work?

B. What are ways that your organization makes using an intersectional perspective possible or challenging?

C. What policies, type of leadership, or professional development within your leadership would be helpful in allowing you to use an intersectional perspective in your work?

4. What do you do to integrate intersectionality into your work with youth?

A. Are there certain methods or skills that you feel are important for integrating intersectionality into your work with youth?

- Prompt: Could you list two methods that you use? What worked and what did not work?

B. Describe how these strategies may contribute to addressing the systemic barriers that exist for marginalized youth?

5. Can you provide an example of when you used an intersectional approach with youth(s) in your work?

A. How did the youth respond to your use of an intersectional approach?

B. How did it impact your work with youth?

- Prompt: Perhaps it allowed you to build rapport with youth(s)?

- Prompt: How do you think the youth felt when you used an intersectional approach?

6. How do you integrate your own intersecting identities into your work with youth?

A. What role do you feel your level of awareness and integration of your own personal intersecting identities has on your work with youth?

- Prompt: Are there strategies that you use to build an awareness of your own intersecting identities and integrate this into your work with you?

B. Can you provide an example of when your own intersecting identity impacted your work with youth?

- Prompt: Have you ever noticed that your intersecting identities has enhanced your working-relationship with the youth you work with?

7. What advice would you give new facilitators for integrating intersectionality into their work with youth?

<div align="center">
Curriculum Vitae
Brad Daly
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<u>**Education**</u>

Ph.D., School and Applied Child Psychology
Western University, London, Ontario
Advisor: Dr. Claire Crooks, C. Psych.
2018-Present
M.A., Counselling Psychology
University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario
Advisor: Dr. Nick Gazzola
2016-2018
B.A., Honours Specialization in Psychology, Minor in Sociology
King's University College – Western University
Advisor: Dr. Cathy Chovaz
2012-2016

<u>**Honours and Awards**</u>

David Wolfe Scholarship in Research on Violence Prevention
2022-2023
Walter M. Lobb Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2021-2022
Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2020-2021
Scotiabank Graduate Award for Studies in Violence Against Women and Children
2020-2021
Graduate and Post-Doctoral Travel Grant
2018
King's University College Dean's Honours Scholarship
2012, 2014, 2015
Canadian Cancer Society Scholarship
2012
Childcan Scholarship
2012

<u>**Relevant Work Experience**</u>

Research Assistant
Centre for School Mental Health, Western University
2018-Present
Psychology Resident
London Family Court Clinic
2021-2022
Ph.D. Practicum Student
Child and Youth Development Clinic
2020-2021

Graduate Research Assistant
PREVNet
2019-2020
Ph.D. Practicum Student
Child and Youth Development Clinic
2019-2020
Teaching Assistant
Kings University College
2018-2020
Ph.D. Practicum Student
Mary J Wright Center
2018-2019
Masters Practicum Student
Roberts/Smart Centre- Youth Mental Health
2017-2018

Publications

Chovaz, C.J., Russell, D., & **Daly, B.** (2022). Lived Experiences of Deaf Canadians: What we want you to know! *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne, 63*(4), 651–666. https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000313

Daly, B., & Chovaz, C.J. (2020). Secondary Traumatic Stress: Effects on the Professional Quality of Life of Sign Language Interpreters. *American Annals of the Deaf. 165*(3), 353-367. doi: 10.1353/aad.2020.0023

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Daly, B., & Lapointe, A. (Plain Language Summary Report, 2019). Building Educator Capacity in the Peel District School Board to Support LGBT2Q+ Youth through Gay-Straight Alliances and a Healthy Relationships Program: Centre for School Mental Health.

Daly, B., Gazzola, N. (2018). Qualitative Investigation Exploring Feelings of Incompetence Among Counselling Interns. *Proceedings Jean Paul Dionne Symposium: Weaving the Fabric of Education- Past, Present, Future*: University of Ottawa. doi: 10.18192/jpds-sjpd.v1i0.2173