Sexual Orientation, Race, and Suicide Risk

January 13, 2017
News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark Research

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) first-year college students have a higher risk of suicide than their heterosexual peers, according to the findings of a recent study of sexual orientation, race, and suicide risk. Although suicide risk was highest among white LGB students, LGB students of color were also found to be significantly more at risk of suicide than either heterosexual white students or heterosexual students of color.

Suicide risk was measured by analyzing responses to questions about suicidal ideation, intent, and attempts, and categorized into three groups with increasing levels of risk. LGB students were more than twice as likely to fall into the 90 and 95 percent suicide risk groups and more than five times as likely to fall within the 99 percent risk group. White LGB students, who composed 8 percent of the sample, accounted for 29.5 percent of the highest risk category and 17.3 percent of the second highest risk category. LGB students of color represented 8.1 percent of the sample, yet accounted for 20.5 percent of the highest risk group and 12.4 percent of the second highest risk group. In contrast, both heterosexual white students and heterosexual students of color were underrepresented in the two highest risk groups.

Given these findings, the authors suggested that colleges should provide services and support to help first-year LGB college students safely transition to university life.


**Spark Extra!** Watch the SPARK Talk, [Culturally Competent Care for LBGTQ Youth][1].

Links within this resource