GLBTQ College Students: Mental Health, Suicide, and Bullying

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Introduction

• Who are we?

• Who are you?

• Vocabulary Quiz:
  – LGBTTTQQIPAA
Learning Outcomes

• Understand the mental health needs and concerns of LGBT students
• Understand the impact of bullying on LGBT students
• Understand the relationship of bullying to suicide
• Identify avenues to address bullying and suicide related to LGBT students
An estimated 4-10% of the American population is LGBT

12% of UNCG’s Student Population self-identify as LGBTQ
The GLBTQ Experience

- Homophobia
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- Homelessness
The GLBTQ Youth Experience

- 84.6% -- verbally harassed,
- 40.1% -- physically harassed, and
- 18.8% -- physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation. *(GLSEN, 2009 Report)*
- 72.4% -- heard homophobic remarks and slurs frequently or often *(GLSEN, 2009 Report)*
- 61.1% of GLBT students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation *(GLSEN, 2009 Report)*
- Sexual minority youth are bullied 2 to 3 times more than heterosexuals. *(Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH, 2010)*
## Risk Factors for Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BIOLOGICAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOCIOLOGICAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>PSYCHOLOGICAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>EXISTENTIAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Family History of - Cognitive - impairments  
Disability  
Chronic illness  
Mental illness  
Puberty | Family conflict  
Victimization experiences  
Bullying  
Harassment  
Expectations: of school, family, & self  
Break up  
Rejection: by family & peers  
Negative coming out experience  
Homophobia  
Heterosexism  
Inaccessible GLBT friendly service providers | Depression  
Negative self talk  
Poor distress tolerance  
Poor Resiliency  
Previous attempt  
Anxiety  
Internalized: Homophobia & transphobia  
Overwhelming stressors/distress  
Internal conflict | Failure to see the good in the world  
Feelings of hopelessness  
“The world will never be a safe place for gay people” |

www.yspp.org
Protective Factors for Youth

GLB youth report lower levels of each of the following “protective factors” against suicide:

• Adult caring
• Parental support (of sexuality/gender identification)
• High self-esteem
• Positive role models (mentors)
• Family connectedness
• School safety
• Access to effective care

Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006
Protective Factors

• Eisenberg & Resnick (2006) found that family caring, other adult caring, and school safety were important protective factors for GLBT young people.
## Increase Support for Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUALS</th>
<th>FAMILIES</th>
<th>PROVIDERS</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of GLBT issues</td>
<td>Unconditional support of student's identity</td>
<td>Explicit policies that prohibit ALL discrimination</td>
<td>Welcoming environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of and condemns heterosexism &amp; discrimination</td>
<td>Access to safe health care</td>
<td>Trains all staff about GLBT issues</td>
<td>Obvious “safe zone” programs (GSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models appreciation for ALL youth</td>
<td>Ensure that school is safe &amp; welcoming</td>
<td>Offers programs for ALL types of families</td>
<td>Trains all staff about GLBT issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains confidentiality</td>
<td>Educate self about issues facing student</td>
<td>Establishes a welcoming environment</td>
<td>Curricula is inclusive of GLBT issues &amp; people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lets student take lead in coming out process</td>
<td>All forms inclusive</td>
<td>Staff are representative of GLBT community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks resources of GLBT issues</td>
<td>Staff/volunteers representative of GLBT community</td>
<td>Easily available &amp; accurate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate response to issues if they come up</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate response to bullying &amp; harassment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.yspp.org
The GLBT College Experience

• Gay and lesbian individuals are far more likely to be the targets of violent hate crimes than any other minority group in U.S. (SPLC, 2010)

• 23% of GLBT college students, faculty, and staff have experienced harassment (2010 State of Higher Education)

• One-third of GLBT students, faculty, and staff have considered leaving their institution due to hostile climate (2010 State of Higher Education)
Bullying

• Bullying – The act of intentionally and repeatedly causing harm or injury (by a person or group) to someone who has difficulty defending him/herself.

• *Bullying is the systematic abuse of power.*
## Bullying behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
<td>• Insulting language</td>
<td>• Persuading another to verbally abuse someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Name calling</td>
<td>• Spreading malicious rumors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ridicule</td>
<td>• Anonymous phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cruel teasing or taunting</td>
<td>• Offensive text messages and emails</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Demeaning content on websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td>• Striking, kicking</td>
<td>• Deliberately and unfairly excluding someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Throwing objects</td>
<td>• Removing and hiding things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Slapping, shoving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using weapons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gestural</strong></td>
<td>• Threatening gestures</td>
<td>• Repeatedly turning away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staring at someone</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Berman, L., Bullying and Suicide (2010)
The GLBT College Experience

Of those who reported harassment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Harassment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Derogatory remarks</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt deliberately ignored/excluded</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated or left out</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt intimidated or bullied</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feared for my physical safety</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of a crime</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target of physical violence</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2010 State of Higher Education
Bullying and Suicide: Is it connected?

Pre-existing vulnerability

Victimization

Depression, Decreased self-esteem, Decreased self-worth, Feelings of entrapment, Loneliness, Withdrawal, Anxiety, Insomnia, Hopelessness… [New and/or exacerbations]

Results in

Which are risk factors for

Suicide Ideation
Suicide Attempt
Death by Suicide

Berman, L., Bullying and Suicide (2010)
Suicide Experience

- Suicide attempts amongst GLBT youth:
  - 35% of GLB youth \((\text{avg. 5 YRBS})\)
  - 54% Trans identified people report at least one suicide attempt (GLMA Journal, 2000)
  - 62% of homeless GLB youth report an attempt (Van Leeuwen et al., 2006)

- 42% of adolescent lesbians and 34% of gay male youth who have suffered a physical attack also report an attempted suicide. (GLSEN, 2003)
Suicide and GLB Youth

- Significantly higher rates of suicide attempts
- Significantly higher rates of suicide ideation (SPRC, 2008)
Suicide and Transgender Youth

• 45% of transgender youth (ages 15-21) had considered suicide (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2007)
  – ½ of them said that it was related to being transgender

• 32% of transgender people over age 18 had attempted suicide (Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Bkatz, 2006)
Barriers to Help Seeking

• Many providers lack knowledge, are unaware of heterosexism and are demeaning to GLBT clients
• Low provider awareness of and sensitivity to transgender issues
• GLBT youth with negative provider experiences may feel discouraged from further help-seeking and disclosure
• Important to include family
At UNCG

- Improve climate for GLBT students
  - SafeZone training
- Show support
  - Anti-bullying vigil
- Model acceptance, convey accurate knowledge, awareness
  - Peer education
- Informed providers and others
  - YSPP training and train the trainers
Social Ecological Model

Intrapersonal

Interpersonal

Organizational

Policy

Community
Application of Social Ecological Model

• Intrapersonal
  – Peer Education
  – Stigma Reduction

• Interpersonal
  – Peer Education
  – Safe Zone

• Organizational
  – Safe Zone
  – Staff training

• Community
  – Coalitions
  – Student groups

• Policy
  – Anti-bullying laws
  – Anti-discrimination policy
Applying This to Your Campus: Assessment

- Assess campus climate
  [http://www.campusclimateindex.org/about/default.aspx](http://www.campusclimateindex.org/about/default.aspx)
- Cultural Competence Checklist (handout)
- ACHA Guidelines
- Assessing your own staff
Applying This to Your Campus: Training and Staff Development

- Fenway Institute
- Safe Zone
- Partnerships with campus, local and state LGBT organizations
- GLMA conference or similar
Action Plan

• Brainstorm for your campus
Discussion
References


References


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