DE COLORES: CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKING WITH LGBTQ+ YOUTH

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She/her/hers
PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

After attending this training, attendees will be able to:

1. Use and understand terminology relevant to working with LGBTQ+ youth
2. Identify experiences of marginalization and sources of resilience that impact the mental health outcomes of LGBTQ+ youth in the state of New Mexico, and at large
3. Recognize the importance of intersectionality when working with LGBTQ+ youth
4. Identify at least one clinical practice that is mindful of the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth
RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY

FOR MORE TERMINOLOGY PLEASE VISIT: HTTP://WWW.JULIA SERANO.COM/TERMINOLOGY.HTML#C

Sexual Orientation
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Pansexual
- Demisexual
- Asexual
  - Ace

Gender Identity
- Gender can exist on a binary
- Transgender
  - Trans Masculine
  - Trans Feminine
- Or not
- Gender nonconforming
  - Non binary (Enby)
  - Genderqueer, gender fluid, two-spirit, etc.
- Agender
LGB AND TGNC INDIVIDUALS & PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

• Sexual minorities have increased risk of psychological distress (Levitt et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008), including depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse.

• TGNC individuals, on average, exhibit a higher prevalence of psychiatric symptoms than the general population (Hendricks & Testa, 2012).

• LGBTQ+ individuals often utilize mental health services (Bieschke et al., 2000) and often experience significant discrimination that may increase psychological distress.
BIAS AGAINST LGB INDIVIDUALS

- Homophobia
  - Fear or hatred of LGB people

- Heterosexism
  - A cultural ideology that assumes heterosexuality to be the societal norm and distinctively superior to homosexuality

- Heterosexual Privilege
  - The unearned privileges and power that one receives, accepts, and experiences as a heterosexual person

- Institutional heterosexism
  - Discriminatory laws
  - Misrepresentation in media
  - Condemnation by religious groups (i.e. Westboro Baptist Church)
BIAS AGAINST TGNC INDIVIDUALS

**Transphobia**
- Fear or hatred of transgender people

**Cissexism**
- A cultural ideology that assumes that being cisgender to be the societal norm and distinctively superior to holding a TGNC identity

**Cis Privilege**
- The unearned privileges and power that one receives, accepts, and experiences as a cisgender person

**Institutional Cissexism/Cisgenderism**
- Discriminatory laws (i.e. Military, bathroom)
- Misrepresentation in media
- Boy and Girl Scouts of America (in the past)
Research has demonstrated that sexual minorities are at a greater risk for internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., substance use) mental health issues.

- Sexual minorities also have an earlier onset and longer persistence of mental health diagnoses.

Minority stress theory proposes that sexual minority individuals are exposed to multiple stressors that put them at a greater risk of health disparities (Meyer, 2003).

- Distal stressors
  - Prejudice-inspired events (e.g., violence, discrimination)

- Proximal stressors
  - Internalized heterosexism
  - Concealment of identity
  - Expectations of rejection
### STRESSORS LGBTQ+ YOUTH FACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navigating Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Discrimination and Violence</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Coming out to self and others</td>
<td>• Bullying</td>
<td>• Familial rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internalized &quot;Isms&quot;</td>
<td>• Threat of abuse or assault</td>
<td>• Limited access to dating partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of positive role models</td>
<td>• Lack of legal protection</td>
<td>• Social invisibility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Relationship becomes main source of support</td>
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GLSEN Report (2017) regarding school climate in NM

Majority of LGBT students heard anti-LGBTQ remarks in school

- 22% heard homophobic remarks from school staff; 41% heard negative comments about gender expression from school staff

Most LGBTQ students in NM experience anti-LGBTQ harassment and assault at school

Fewer than 9% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying harassment policy with specific protections for LGBTQ students

Hostile school environment

- Contributes to lower GPA
- Predicts decreased likelihood to go to college
- Lower levels of self-esteem
FACT: Most LGBTQ students in New Mexico experienced anti-LGBTQ victimization at school (Fig. 2). They also experienced victimization at school based on religion (36%), disability (29%), and race/ethnicity (38%). The majority never reported the incident to school staff (52%). Only 34% of students who reported incidents said it resulted in effective staff intervention.

**Figure 1. Hearing Anti-LGBTQ Remarks from Students in New Mexico Schools**

- "Gay" used in a negative way (e.g., "that's so gay"): 91%
- Homophobic remarks (e.g., "fag," "dyke"): 80%
- Negative remarks about gender expression: 83%
- Negative remarks about transgender people: 65%

**Figure 2. Anti-LGBTQ Harassment & Assault in New Mexico Schools**

- Sexual orientation (verbal harassment): 67%
- Gender expression (verbal harassment): 56%
- Gender identity (verbal harassment): 48%
- Other (physical harassment): 31%
- Physical assault: 16%
- Verbal harassment: 18%
- Physical harassment: 8%
FACT: Many LGBTQ students in New Mexico reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school (Fig. 3). Nearly 3 in 5 (58%) experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school during the past year.

- One-third of LGBTQ students (33%) in New Mexico were disciplined for public displays of affection (PDA) that did not result in similar action for non-LGBTQ students.

- In New Mexico, nearly 1 in 3 LGBTQ students (30%) and more than 3 in 5 transgender students (62%) were unable to use the school restroom aligned with their gender. Additionally, 1 in 4 LGBTQ students (25%) and over half of transgender students (53%) were prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns in school.

- LGBTQ students in New Mexico experienced other forms of school discrimination (not in Fig. 3): being prevented or discouraged from playing school sports due to an LGBTQ identity (17%), being unable to discuss LGBTQ issues in assignments (16%), being unable to form a GSA (15%), being unable to wear LGBTQ-supportive apparel (14%), and being disciplined at school for identifying as LGBTQ (7%).

**Figure 3. Anti-LGBTQ Discrimination in New Mexico Schools**

(percentage of LGBTQ students that were prevented from...)

- Expressing PDA in School: 33%
- Using the Bathroom that Aligns with Gender: 30%
- Using the Locker Room that Aligns with Gender: 28%
- Wearing Clothing Considered Inappropriate for Their Gender: 26%
- Using Their Chosen Name or Gender Pronouns: 25%
- Including LGBTQ Themes in Extracurricular Activities: 18%
- Bringing a Same-Gender Date to a School Dance: 17%
Sexual minority students were less likely than their peers to have a number of resiliency factors, including:

- A parent who believes that they will be a success (79.2% vs. 85.6%)
- A parent who is interested in their school work (64.6% vs. 77.3%)
- A teacher who believes they will be a success (65.9% vs. 76.4%)
- A teacher who listens to them (56.6% vs. 71.0%)
- An adult in the community who really cares about them (72.7% vs. 82.7%)
- An adult in the community who tells them when they do a good job (63.5% vs. 76.0%)
- A parent or guardian who knows where they are when they are not home (74.6% vs. 82.1%)
- Sexual minority students were less likely to plan to attend college or be involved in sports, clubs, or extracurricular activities (77.6% vs. 86.9%, 42.5% vs. 59.1%)
MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- Physiological: Food, Water, Rest
- Safety: Security
- Love/Belonging: Intimate Relationships, Friends
- Esteem: Feeling of Accomplishment
- Self-actualization: Achieving one's full potential
DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

• Vickery (2016) proposed that many LGBT individuals are caught somewhere between safety and esteem without the proper community and possibility to reach a state of self-actualization.

• HRC’s (2012) Growing up LGBT in America Youth Survey in which a stark contrast was found between LGBT students and their non-LGBT counterparts in relation to self-reported problems.
  • Non-LGBT students reported that their most pressing problem was classes/exams/grades and college/career.
  • LGBT students identified that their most pressing problem was bullying and not being accepted at home by their families.

• Wright and Smith (2013) argued it appears that non-LGBT students function at the esteem level of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy with concerns related to achievement and confidence. Meanwhile, LGBT students function at the safety and belonging levels with concerns for basic needs: protection, security, stability, the need for love, and relationships.
RESILIENCE

• More research has been done regarding struggles that LGBTQ+ individuals face versus their resilience
  • This can create an unbalance in the manner in which we view them

• For LGB youth:
  • Navigating safety across contexts, asserting personal agency, seeking and cultivating meaningful relationships, un-silencing marginalized identities, and engaging in collective healing and action (Asakura, 2016).

• For TGNC youth:
  • Ability to self-define and theorize one’s gender, being aware of adulthood experiences, proactive agency (self-advocacy) and access to supportive educational systems, connection to a LGBTQ+ youth and trans-affirming community, reframing of mental health challenges, and navigation of relationships with family and friends, use of social media to affirm one’s identities as a trans youth (Singh, 2013; Singh, Meng, & Hansen, 2014).
COPING STRATEGIES WITHIN LGB YOUTH
(SKINNER & SIMMER-GEMBECK, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support-seeking strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing a problems with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finding information from references or others to help with a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comfort seeking</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem-solving strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning or strategizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perspective-taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distraction strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Thinking about other things than the stressor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keeping busy with other activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trying to forget the stressor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Rotated Factor Loadings for Coping with LGB Minority Stress Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>LGBT-Specific</th>
<th>Alternative-Seeking</th>
<th>Cognitive Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in LGBT groups or orgs</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for services for LGBT youth</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for information on LGBT issues</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Going online or using the internet to find LGBT connections</em></td>
<td>.037</td>
<td><strong>0.78</strong></td>
<td>-0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for places to spend time that felt safer or more accepting</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td><strong>0.73</strong></td>
<td>0.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to find an alt. living situation away from family</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td><strong>0.835</strong></td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for new friends who would be more accepting</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td><strong>0.486</strong></td>
<td>0.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending more time by yourself to figure things out</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td><strong>0.792</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagining a better future for yourself</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td><strong>0.526</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just trying to put it all out of your mind</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td><strong>0.547</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding other people</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td><strong>0.680</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/RCW_USCLDTO?T=26M56S

I AM ME: A video created by New Mexico Communities of Care
CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Now what?
THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLYSHIP

• Lee (2002) found that students did experience some hopelessness and despair, but that the GSA helped them ‘move beyond’ and gain stronger identities. They learned that their perceived problems were society’s problems. They also reported increased positive relationships with school stakeholders, self-pride, feeling safe, and sense of belonging.

• Compared to LGBTQ students with no supportive school staff, students with many (11 or more) supportive staff at their school (GLSEN, 2016):
  - Were less likely to feel unsafe (40.6% vs. 78.7%)
  - Were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (16.9% vs. 47.2%)
  - Were less likely to not plan on pursuing post-secondary education (4.5% vs. 14.7%)

• A study by Valenti & Campbell (2009) found two major themes for serving as a GSA advisor
  - (1) A protective attitude toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth
  - (2) A personal connection with sexual minority people/issues

• When it came to the decision-making process, two themes were found
  - Differing worries (possible lack of credibility, fear of job loss, and being accused of recruiting youth to the ‘gay lifestyle’) 
  - Security concerns (tenure or protections against being fired, and being married)
SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH

• Work with local schools to enact policies to make schools safe and inclusive
• Provide affirming and accepting environment
• Do not assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual or cisgender
• Assess for signs of risk and isolation
• Educate self on issues facing LGBTQ+ youth
• GLSEN offers resources and support to help schools implement anti-bullying policies and Gay-Straight Alliances
  • Lesson plans for teachers
  • Information on forming GSA
LGBTQ+ AFFIRMATIVE PRACTICES

• Language
  • Words can establish a trusting relationship

• Expectations
  • May be distrustful due to previous experiences

• Questions
  • Open-ended and clarification

• Barriers
  • Understand that navigating systems can be frustrating and LGBTQ+ youth experience the same barriers to care as other youth and more.

• Charting
  • I.e. gender assigned at birth

• Handling Mistakes
  • Know that even experienced practitioners sometimes makes mistakes with names and pronouns. Be prepared to correct them when they occur.
### PRONOUNS: A BRIEF GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Pronouns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>He called</td>
<td>I called him</td>
<td>His phone rang</td>
<td>He likes himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>She walked</td>
<td>I asked her</td>
<td>Her car is red</td>
<td>She likes herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonbinary Pronouns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>They drove</td>
<td>We invited them</td>
<td>Their car is blue</td>
<td>They like themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ey</td>
<td>Ey laughed</td>
<td>Text eir</td>
<td>That’s eir phone</td>
<td>Did eir enjoy eirself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze (or hir or zie)</td>
<td>Ze works</td>
<td>We invited hir/zir</td>
<td>That’s hirs/zers</td>
<td>Ze talks to hirself/zirself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Challenge yourself to seek out supervision and learning opportunities that familiarize yourself with LGBTQ+ issues.

• Do not over-rely on clients to educate you.

• Develop and maintain a current list of local and national resources. Display such materials in your office.

• Have affirming signs, posters, or literature in your office.

• Assist client(s) in seeking out appropriate role models.
DIVERSITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

• Be aware of how sexual identity interacts with race, ethnicity, class, ability status, age, gender, etc.

• Be sensitive to unique challenges that bisexual individuals may face.

• Be aware of perceived or actual generational differences between older LGB folks and LGB youth.
• Mindfulness was related to less use of avoidance coping and improved mental health for sexual minorities (Gayner et al., 2012).

• When engaged in mindful practice, a young person who encounters minority stress may respond more objectively (non-judgmental reaction) to their feelings (“I am aware that I am upset because I am encountering discrimination.”) rather than in a shameful or judgmental way (e.g., “I’m being discriminated against. Something must be wrong with me.” or “I am upset as a result of this encounter – I am just an angry person”).

• As posited by Neff (2003), mindfulness and self-compassion are closely-related processes, such that self-compassion requires that a person respond to stress by acknowledging its existence, without avoidance.
• This intervention is specific to LGBTQ+ individuals, but for now tailor it to an aspect of your identity

• Allow yourself to recall, in some detail, a situation where you were devalued by another, not because of something you did or didn’t do, but because of some aspect of your identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.)

• After completion of the meditation, help the client shift from their internal experience to processing it through reflective dialogue using SIFT
SIFT

S
  • Sensations

I
  • Images

F
  • Feelings

T
  • Thoughts
REFERENCES

- Available upon request. Please email me at jlop13@nmsu.edu

- If I have a copy of the article you are interested in, I would be happy to email you a PDF. 😊