



# Learning Community Sexual Minority Youth: a Framework for Integrated Services

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# Learning Objectives

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- ▶ Recognize the link between minority stress and health disparities
- ▶ Be familiar with sexual identity formation and “coming out” patterns
- ▶ Identify major risk and protective factors for LGBTQ youth focusing on family and school
- ▶ Identify institutional practices and policies to create safety and inclusion for LGBTQ youth in health and human services



# What messages do we receive about the LGBT Communities?



*"And this one's for homophobia."*



# Minority Stress and Health Disparities



# Minority Stress

- ▶ Minority stress refers to burdens laid on top of daily stressors, and stems from the *social invalidation, rejection, harassment, and violence* sometimes experienced by minority individuals, including:
  - Feeling different and alienated as a child;
  - Being rejected by family and friends; and
  - Experiencing violence from peers, harassment from strangers, job discrimination from employees, and rejection or extraordinary pressure to change from religious institutions (Meyer, 2003)



# Health Disparities

- ▶ *Minority stress creates disparities in mental, behavioral and physical health*
- ▶ Experiencing stigma has been linked to higher rates of:
  - Mental health disorders
    - Depression
    - Anxiety disorders
    - Suicidal ideation and attempts
  - Substance abuse, including smoking
  - Chronic physical conditions linked to the above mental and behavioral health disorders



# Alcohol Use Among Girls

(Ziyadeh et al., 2006)

|                     | %   | Alcohol Use Past Month | Binge Drinking Past Year |
|---------------------|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Heterosexual        | 88% | 16%                    | 13%                      |
| Mostly Heterosexual | 6%  | 37%                    | 35%                      |
| Lesbian/Bisexual    | 1%  | 52%                    | 44%                      |



# Alcohol Use Among Boys

(Ziyadeh et al., 2006)

|                     | %   | Alcohol Use Past Month | Binge Drinking Past Year |
|---------------------|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Heterosexual        | 88% | 15%                    | 14%                      |
| Mostly Heterosexual | 3%  | 23%                    | 26%                      |
| Gay/Bisexual        | 1%  | 27%                    | 30%                      |



# Suicide Attempts

- ▶ Being bullied at school increases risk by
  - Double the rate of non-bullied LGBT youth (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011)
- ▶ Being rejected by parents increases risk by
  - More than 8 times over low rejecting families (Ryan et al, 2009)



# Paths to Homelessness

- ▶ 25% of sexual minority youth run away or are thrown out of their homes when they come out
- ▶ One-third of LGBT youth are abused by a family member when they come out
- ▶ 100% of LGBT youth in group homes reported verbal harassment and 70% physical assault



# Coming Out Patterns



# Why are Some People LGBT?

- ▶ Sexual and gender identities/orientations may be a *combination of biological and environmental factors* that can vary from one person to another
- ▶ Most people, including LGBT people, experience their sexual orientation or gender identity not as something chosen, but rather as *a core aspect of the self*

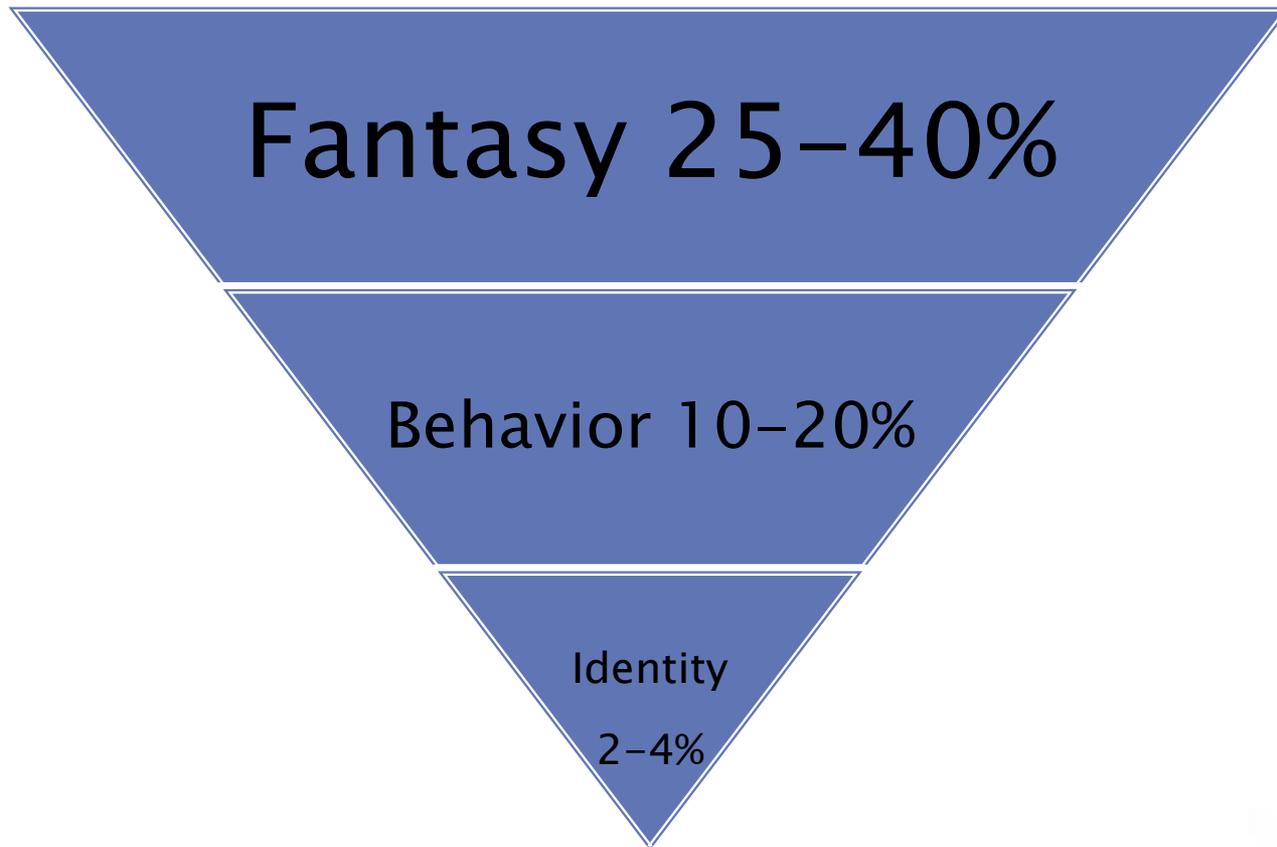


# Components of Sexual Orientation

- ▶ Sexual attractions
  - Who people are attracted to, and how intense
- ▶ Sexual Identity
  - What people call themselves
- ▶ Sexual behavior
  - What sexual activities people engage in
- ▶ Relationships
  - Who people prefer for casual or romantic relationships



# The FBI of Same-Sex Sexuality



(Diamond, 2008)



# Can Sexual Orientation be Changed?

- ▶ Efforts to change a person from lesbian, gay, or bisexual to heterosexual are called “reparative therapy” or “conversion therapy”
  - Some of these efforts are “Ex-Gay Ministries” based in religious beliefs and practices
  - Some are based in beliefs about gender expression; training men to be more masculine and women to be more feminine to “cure” them
  - Some are based in discredited theories about the origins of same-sex attraction in dysfunctional relationships with family and peers

(Drescher & Zuckor, 2006)



# California SB 1172

- ▶ Passed Senate in Aug 2012
- ▶ Proposes a ban on reparative therapies for sexual minority youth
- ▶ ***“The bill would provide that any sexual orientation change efforts attempted on a patient under 18 years of age by a mental health provider shall be considered unprofessional conduct and shall subject the provider to discipline by the provider’s licensing entity.”***



# Coming Out

- ▶ *Coming out* refers to the lifelong process of discovering, exploring, and labeling one's minority sexual or gender identity, and disclosing it to others.
- ▶ *Coming out to others* is a never ending process that involves awareness of cues about what environments and people are safe or hostile, and whether the risks of disclosure will outweigh the benefits



# Coming Out: Cultural Influences

- ▶ ***Coming out is influenced by society and culture:***
  - Coming out for some Asian ethnic groups is facilitated by cultural traditions that provide greater social and economic integration
    - Examples: Bakla in the Philippines, Katoey in Thailand, and Hijras and Khotis in India.
- ▶ Increased access via the Internet and other modern media to accurate information about sexuality and gender identities is decreasing barriers to self-understanding once caused by traditions of misinformation and stereotypes about LGBTQ people.



# Racial and Ethnic Considerations



# Diversity in the LGBT Community

- ▶ People with same-sex attractions, behaviors and identities, and people with gender identities other than male or female are found in all
  - Racial/ethnic groups
  - Religious and political groups
  - Geographic regions
  - Age groups
  - Socioeconomic classes
  - Mental and physical ability groups
- ▶ Sexual orientation and gender identities interact with other cultural factors to produce a diversity of LGBT subcultures



# Diversity in the LGBT Community

- ▶ Across race/ethnic groups, milestones of sexual orientation are the same:
  - Age of first same-sex attraction
  - Age of first same-sex experience
  - Age of coming out to self
- ▶ Among diverse groups, differences occur in:
  - Degree of disclosure
  - Labels used
  - Ideas about the relationships between gender and sexuality

(Rosario et al, 2004)



# LGBT Diversity and Disclosure

- ▶ For some LGBT individuals, dynamics between family members influence disclosure
  - Culture-based experiences of “losing face” and subsequent feelings of familial shame may prevent Asian American LGBT clients from coming out, especially within recent, culturally unassimilated Immigrant families
  - Prejudice from members of the family experienced by LGBT clients from conservative family backgrounds may cause them to be less open about their sexuality or gender identity



# LGBT Diversity and Identity

- ▶ Cultural cofactors influence not only disclosure, but also labels used and thus identity formation
  - In some cultures, only the receptive partner in a sexual exchange is considered “gay” whereas the dominant partner is not
    - Terms used for MSM who partner with feminine men or transgender women, are often different from terms used for “gay” men
  - In some cultures, being the receptive partner in a same-sex encounter is acceptable for youth, but considered taboo after a certain age.



# Risk and Protective Factors



# Why the Focus on Risk Factors?

- ▶ Because some of the risk factors are life-threatening and are preventable
- ▶ Risk factors stem from stigma and societal rejection, not from sexuality per se, thus addressing risk factors is a social justice issue



# What Creates the Risk?

- ▶ Societal Stigma about sexual orientation and gender.  
Two major forces for youth:
  - School climate and bullying
  - Family acceptance or rejection

Note: hostile school climates and rejecting families lead to an increase of homelessness, substance abuse, suicide, unsafe sexual behavior, etc. among sexual minority youth (Toomey et al, 2010; 2011)



# Gender Expression

- ▶ Gender non-conforming people, regardless of their sexual or gender identity are at risk to experience more
  - Harassment and bullying,
  - Anti-gay discrimination, and
  - Hate-crime violence including murder
- ▶ Gender expression does not predict sexual identity:
  - Masculine women can be straight
  - Feminine women can be lesbian or bisexual
  - Masculine men can be gay or bisexual
  - Feminine men can be straight

(Toomey et al, 2010)



# Gender-Based Harassment of Youth

- ▶ Boys who are not typically masculine are often punished from an early age by parents, teachers, and peers
- ▶ Girls can be tomboys in childhood without negative consequences, but must start conforming in adolescence
- ▶ Students who do not conform are more likely to be bullied at school



# The Impact of Family Acceptance vs. Rejection



# Examples of Rejecting Behaviors

- ▶ Blocking access to LGBT friends, events, resources
- ▶ Blaming the youth when they are harassed
- ▶ Telling the youth God will punish them
- ▶ Telling the youth the parent is ashamed of them
- ▶ Excluding the youth from family events
- ▶ Making the youth keep their sexuality/gender a secret
- ▶ Hitting, slapping, physically hurting
- ▶ Verbal harassment and name-calling



# Effects of Family Rejection

- ▶ Children of highly-rejecting parents were
  - Over 8 times more likely to report a suicide attempt, and
  - 6 times more likely to be depressed than children of low-rejecting parents.
- ▶ *Intervention: reduce rejecting behaviors and increase accepting behaviors*



# Examples of Accepting Behaviors

- ▶ Talking openly about sexuality and gender with the youth (remove secrecy)
- ▶ Express affection so the youth knows the parent loves them
- ▶ Support the youth's identity even if the parent feels uncomfortable
- ▶ Advocate for youth when society mistreats them
- ▶ Join PFLAG or other support groups
- ▶ Welcome youth's LGBT friends to the home



# Protective Factors

- ▶ School
  - At least one supportive adult
  - GSA or LGBT-inclusive policies
  - School has anti-bullying education
  - Safe Zone programs to educate staff
  
- ▶ Community
  - Resources for sexual minority youth
  - Inclusive and welcoming community services
  - Inclusive religious/spiritual services



# Protective Factors

- ▶ Family/Caregivers
  - Freedom from family violence
  - Acceptance by one trusted family member
  - Feeling loved



# Direct Services and Referrals

- ▶ In collaboration with Child & Adolescent Services at SF General Hospital/UCSF, the FAP provides free and confidential support to help families decrease rejection and increase support for their LGBT or Q children
  - Services available in English, Spanish, and Chinese
  - Referrals can be made by parents, youth, other family members or providers
  - Includes coming out and crisis management assistance to reduce family conflict and violence, juvenile justice involvement, and foster placement.



# Additional Resources

- ▶ Advocates for Youth [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)
- ▶ American Academy of Pediatrics' "Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth"  
[www.aap.org/featured/sexualorientation.htm](http://www.aap.org/featured/sexualorientation.htm)
- ▶ Family Acceptance Project [fap@sfsu.edu](mailto:fap@sfsu.edu) or 415-522-5558 <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>
- ▶ Gay-Straight Alliance Network [www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)
- ▶ GLMA: Gay and Lesbian Medical Association  
[www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)
- ▶ GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network  
[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)



# Additional Resources

- ▶ HRSA Anti-bullying Tip Sheet/Information, [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-33.aspx](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-33.aspx)
- ▶ LGBT-TRISTAR [www.lgbt-tristar.com](http://www.lgbt-tristar.com)
- ▶ National Association of LGBT Community Centers [www.lgbtcenters.org](http://www.lgbtcenters.org)
- ▶ National Center for Lesbian Rights [www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)
- ▶ National Resource Center for LGBT Aging [www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/index.cfm](http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/index.cfm)
- ▶ PFLAG: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)



# Additional Resources

- ▶ SAMHSA's "A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for LGBT"  
<http://kap.samhsa.gov/products/manuals/pdfs/lbgt.pdf>
- ▶ SIECUS: Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. [www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)
- ▶ The Trevor Project [www.trevorproject.org](http://www.trevorproject.org)
- ▶ Transgender Law and Policy Institute  
[www.transgenderlaw.org](http://www.transgenderlaw.org)



# Questions?

