Trauma & The LGBTQ Community

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Who We Serve
LGBT Terms & Definitions

• “LGBT” is short hand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

• While the terms ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’ and ‘bisexual (and ‘heterosexual’) refer to someone’s sexual orientation, ‘transgender’ is a term related to gender identity.

• You may see variation in the designation
  ◦ LGBTQ, LGBTQI, etc
What’s the Difference?

Sexual Orientation – The type of sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction one feels for others

For example...
- Gay
- Straight
- Bisexual
- Lesbian
- Queer
- Pansexual
- Polysexual
- Asexual
What’s the Difference?

Gender Identity – A person’s perception of their gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they identify with what they understand their options for gender to be.

In America, we see options for gender as Man or Woman

Other cultures have terms to describe folks who identify as other than within the binary:

- Indigenous American Tribes: Two-Spirit
- India: Hijra
- Thailand: Kathoeys
What’s the Difference?

Gender Expression – The external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity.

- We see what is considered traditional expression change over time and culture.
Transgender People

Transgender is an umbrella term to describe a number of different identities – it relates to an individual who’s sex assigned at birth is not in line with their identified gender.

Cisgender:
An individual who has a biological sex that aligns with their felt and/or experienced gender.
[Or, someone who doesn’t identify as transgender]
Sex vs. Gender

"Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define human beings.*

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for its members.*

*World Health Organization
How Do We See Gender?

The concept of gender is everywhere
- It’s how we carry ourselves
- How we interact with one another
- What we wear and how we wear it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Gender Stereotypes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not aggressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dependent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Easily influenced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Submissive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Passive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Home-oriented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Easily hurt emotionally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Indecisive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Talkative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Gentle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sensitive to others’ feelings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Very desirous of security.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cries a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Emotional.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Verbal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tactful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Nurturing.</td>
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</table>

| **Masculine.**                  |
| - Aggressive.                   |
| - Independent.                  |
| - Not easily influenced.        |
| - Dominant.                     |
| - Active.                       |
| - Worldly.                      |
| - Not easily hurt emotionally.  |
| - Decisive.                     |
| - Not at all talkative.         |
| - Tough.                        |
| - Less sensitive to others’ feelings. |
| - Not very desirous of security.|
| - Rarely cries.                 |
| - Logical.                      |
| - Analytical.                   |
| - Cruel.                        |
| - Blunt.                        |
| - Not nurturing.                |
Gender Stereotypes

• “Gendering” – to decide what a child’s gender is and how they should express it, without the child’s input. *
  ◦ Generally starts before birth

• Children begin to develop gender identity at age 2-3 **
  ◦ Of self & others
  ◦ Awareness of “gender roles”

• Transgender children can develop varying levels of dysphoria as they begin to understand their own gender.
Key Differences

Gender Non-Conforming
The extent to which a person’s gender identity, role, or expression differs from the cultural norms for people of a particular sex

Transgender
An umbrella term for a person whose sex assigned at birth is different than their identified gender

Gender Dysphoria
Discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth

*Institute of Medicine
The Impact of Identities

Trauma & The LGBTQ Community
LGBTQ Stats

• 2003 survey found that disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity:
  ◦ 33% of LGB students reported attempting suicide
  ◦ 84% of LGBTQ students were called names or had their safety threatened
  ◦ 45% of LGBTQ youth of color experienced verbal harassment and/or physical assault
  ◦ 39% of LGB students and 55 percent of transgender students were shoved or pushed. Transgender youth were one-third more likely to endure physical harassment than LGB students.
  ◦ 64% of LGBTQ students feel unsafe at school.
  ◦ 25-40% of homeless youth may identify as LGBTQ. Parents or caregivers often throw them out of their homes
Illegal Drug Use

(n = 245)

157%  
157%  
328%

Low Rejection
Moderate Rejection
High Rejection

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

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Family Acceptance Project™
Lifetime Suicide Attempts
(1 or more times)

Low Rejection
194%

Moderate Rejection
p < .10

High Rejection
857%
p < .001

LEVEL OF FAMILY REJECTION

© Caitlin Ryan, PhD, 2012

Family Acceptance Project™
See a Future as Happy LGBT Adult

(n = 245)  
LEVEL OF FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

**Extremely** Accepting  
92%

**Very** Accepting  
77%

**A Little** Accepting  
59%

**Not at All** Accepting  
35%

© Caitlin Ryan, PhD, 2012  
Family Acceptance Project™
Key Findings

- *Family rejection* is linked with serious health & mental health problems for LGBT young people

- *Family acceptance* is a protective factor for LGBT young people

- *Family acceptance* helps promote well-being for LGBT young people
Risk factors unique to LGBT: “Minority Stress”

- Disclosure / coming out
- Gender non-conformity
- Experiences of discrimination; victimization
- Homophobic bullying
- Parental rejection / abuse
Potential Traumatic Events

Abuse
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Physical
- Domestic violence
- Witnessing violence
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Institutional

Loss
- Death
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Separation
- Natural disaster
- Accidents
- Terrorism
- War

Chronic Stressors
- Poverty
- Housing Insecurity
- Food Insecurity
- Community trauma
- Inconsistent Authority
- Arbitrary Authority
Problems or Adaptations?

• Fight – Non-compliant or combative OR struggling to hold on to some personal control/power?

• Flight – Treatment resistant, uncooperative OR disengaging, withdrawing or titrating external stimulus/demands

• Freeze – Passive, unmotivated OR giving in to those in power, repeating cycle of surrender in order not to get hurt
Effect

Trauma can...

• Can become part of a cultural/community narrative of victimization and humiliation
• Can create opportunity for blame, shame, guilt to mask grieving and loss and block recovery and resiliency
• Paralyze community healing, cohesion, restoration.
Family, Support, and Acceptance is crucial to the health of the LGBT individual.
Recovery

• Safety
• Trustworthiness
• Peer Support
• Collaboration
• Voice, Choice
• Cultural Mindfulness
Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the intersection of forms (or systems) of oppression and discrimination. (Crenshaw 1989)

◦ This type of exclusion is particularly difficult because they often support and reinforce one another.
Mental Health & Substance Abuse

• Being LGBT *is not* a mental disorder

• “Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities” (American Psychiatric Association)
  ◦ Was “removed” from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the APA in 1973.

• Despite Gender Dysphoria being a clinically diagnosable condition, it describes the characteristics of a feeling, not a person.
Several studies suggest that LGBT people appear to have higher rates of some mental disorders compared to their non-LGBT peers, although not to the level of a serious pathology.*

This is generally due to a lack of support and acceptance (in self and from others); a lack of resources (mental and medical), and issues of discrimination.

An LGBT individual may deny, suppress or ignore feelings about orientation or identity.

*American Psychological Association
True or False: Ohio Edition

1. You can be fired in Ohio for being gay or transgender.
   True. There are no state-wide protections for LGBT individuals.*

2. Sexual orientation and gender identity are protected state-wide in housing discrimination.
   False. Neither sexual orientation nor gender identity are protected at the state level.

3. Gender markers can be changed on drivers’ licenses.
   True. Transgender person are able to change their gender marker on their license, but not their birth certificate.
4. The recent legislative changes have mandated recognizing same-sex marriages performed out of state.
True! Thanks a sweeping ruling by SCOTUS in June 2015, all 50 states are mandated to recognize same-sex marriages.

5. Same sex couples are able to adopt in Ohio.
Pending, mostly true! Married couples are able to petition the courts for joint adoption.

6. Neither sexual orientation nor gender identity are protected in hate crime legislation.
True & False. At the state level, LGBT people are not enumerated as a protected class.*
Acquisition of Proper Identification

• For Trans* folks, having documents reflect their identified gender can be a difficult process
  ◦ Ohio Name Change Laws
    ◦ To obtain a legal name change in Ohio, an applicant must submit a petition to the court.
  ◦ Ohio Drivers License
    ◦ In order to update name and/or gender on an Ohio ID, the applicant must submit (1) a court order and/or (2) a Declaration of Gender Change form signed by a physician or psychologist certifying the applicant’s gender identity (through the BMV)
  ◦ Ohio Birth Certificate Laws
    ◦ the Ohio Office of Vital Statistics can issue an amended birth certificate upon receipt of a court order of gender change.
Working with LGBT People
Becoming an Ally

Four levels of acceptance:

- **Repugnancy** – Openly hostile, outright rejection of LGBT people in general
- **Tolerance** – “Not in my backyard” mentality; it’s okay, as long as “it’s not in our face;” Separate but equal
- **Acceptance** – Open to LGBT people, believe in rights for all, against discrimination
- **Affirmation** – Welcoming LGBT people into your life, recognize the importance of cultural difference, actively combatting discrimination
Checking Your Thoughts & Biases

1. If someone were to come out to you as LGBT, what would your first thought be?

2. How would you feel if your child came out to you as LGBT? How would you feel if your mother, father or sibling came out to you as LGBT?

3. Would you go to a physician whom you thought was LGBT if they were of a different gender than you? What if they were the same gender as you?

4. Have you ever been to an LGBT social event, march or worship service? Why or why not?

5. Can you think of three historical figures who were lesbian, gay or bisexual?

6. Can you think of three historical figures who were transgender?

7. Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of LGBT people?

8. Have you ever stood up for an LGBT person being harassed? Why or why not?

9. If you do not identify as LGBT, how would you feel if people thought you were LGBT?
Helpful Ways to Challenge Bias

• Consciously acknowledge group and individual differences
• Routinely check thought processes and decisions for possible bias
• Increase exposure to stereotyped group members
• Consider asking for assistance (specifically from diverse perspective) and/or feedback
• Actively work to seek out uniqueness in stigmatized groups

Adapted from the National Center for State Courts
Specific Language to Monitor

- Person-Centered Language
  - A person is gay or transgender as opposed to a gay or transgender

- ‘Homosexuality’ v. ____
  - Somewhat antiquated and/or clinical; focuses on ‘sexuality’

- Transition as opposed to more outdated terms

- Civil Rights vs. Equality or Justice
Implications of Research

• In working with LGBT people, consider the following conditions:
  ◦ What issues are they facing? Is there the potential for discrimination?
  ◦ Risk factors
    ◦ Moreover – consideration of intersectionality
  ◦ What role does implicit bias play?
About The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland

- The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center of Greater Cleveland works to advance the rights, respect and diversity of the LGBT community.

- The Center is the 3rd oldest LGBT center in the country.
  - Celebrating our 40th anniversary this year
Services of the LGBT Community Center

- Community programs
- Discussion Support Groups
- Advocacy and Social Justice
- Social Events
- Education and Awareness Training
- Internship Program
- Volunteer Program
Important Resources

- The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland
- Equality Ohio
- Lambda Legal
- BRAVO
- Social Security Administration
- ACLU
- PFLAG CLEVELAND
- TransOhio
- AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland
- Pride Clinic (Thomas McCafferty Health Center)
- Plexus