Advising LGBT Students at the Community College: a multicultural perspective

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Outline

• Difference between the community college student and 4 yr student
• LGBT Statistics/Risk Factors
• Recognizing biases and oppression
• Small Group Work
• Advising
  • Careers and Transfer Issues
  • Recognizing Resources
    • On campus and Local/National
• Being an Ally
Why do we need to have additional training to advise/counsel LGBT students?

- Biases/Nurture/Nature
- Recognizing Heterosexism/Sexual preferences doesn’t always show
- Don’t understand because experience is different
- The experience of oppression
- Concepts of oppression and privilege
- Creating a safe space for students
What issues do you imagine would be different when advising LGBT students?
LGBT College Students

Reported significantly:

- Less support for their academic and career development than their heterosexual peers
- A strong need for role models
- A preference for LGBT role models or heterosexual role models who are LGBT allies

(Nauta, Sauciers, & Woodard, 2001)
Characteristics of the Community College Student

- Commuter Population
- Transient Population
- Diverse Population (SES, Ethnicity, Level of academic preparedness, age, religion, etc...)
- High Attrition
- Difficult to engage students on campus
- Students work (many full-time)
- 1st Generation
- Many students academically underprepared
Challenges Faced by the Community College Advisor

• Focus on Basics
• Students typically may not be assigned to an advisor (walk-ins)
  • Difficult to create rapport
• Explaining Developmental Coursework
• Time for meeting with an advisor may be limited
• Transfer Issues
• Multiple Stressors impeding academic success
Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiJGD5J5mB4

(interviews with LGBT youth)
Risk Factors - Suicide

- Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death overall in the US and the third leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24 (National Adolescent Health Information 2006) with more than 34,000 deaths by suicide each year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC 2007).

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death on college campuses (CDC 2008).

- Research suggests that Gay and Lesbian Youth are more at risk for suicide:
  - Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Massachusetts Youth Risk Survey 2007)
  - LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are more than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide than LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection (Ryan C, Huebner D, et al - Peds 2009;123(1):346-352)
Risk Factors - Harassment

• In a 2005 GLSEN survey of LGBT youth, 90% reported experiencing verbal or physical harassment/assault in the past year.

• FBI data shows that in 2005, 13.8% of hate crimes in the USA, a total of 1,213 attacks, were motivated by bias against the victims sexual orientation.
  • Homosexuals are 2.4 times more likely to suffer a violent hate crime attack than Jews (8.3 divided by 3.5). In the same way, gays are 2.6 times more likely to be attacked than blacks; 4.4 times more likely than Muslims; 13.8 times more likely than Latinos; and 41.5 times more likely than whites, according to the FBI figures.

• LGBT youth in rural communities and those with lower adult educational attainment face particularly hostile school climates (JG, Greytak EA, Diaz EM – Journal of Youth & Adolescence 2009)
Risk Factors - Homelessness

• According to a 2006 report, between 20 and 40 percent of homeless in the US identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and 26% of LGBT youth who come out to their parents are asked to leave home. (Ray, 2006)

• Research suggests that LGBT college students are more likely to abuse alcohol as a coping mechanism. (Drabble, Midanik, & Trocki, 2005).

• Questioning youth who are less certain of their sexual orientation report even higher levels of substance abuse and depressed thoughts than their heterosexual or openly LGBT-identified peers (Poteat VP, Aragon SR, et al – Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 2009)
**Risk Factors - Substance Abuse**

- Research suggests that LGBT college students are more likely to abuse alcohol as a coping mechanism. (Drabble, Midanik, & Trocki, 2005).

- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents are significantly more likely to use drugs and alcohol than are heterosexual teens (Marshal MP, Friedman MS, et al – *Addiction* 2008).

- Questioning youth who are less certain of their sexual orientation report even higher levels of substance abuse and depressed thoughts than their heterosexual or openly LGBT-identified peers (Poteat VP, Aragon SR, et al – *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 2009)
Transgender Students

- Fear of death / killed
- Bathrooms
- Isolation
- Clinical Issues
  - Body Image
  - Grief and loss
  - Spiritual/Religious concerns
  - Sexual Concerns
  - Social Isolation
  - Substance Use
  - Violence/abuse
  - Workplace
  - Transition
Multiple Oppression

- Religious Conflicts
- SES
- Minorities can feel many levels of stigmatization
  - Women/Minority=triple
- Often discriminated within their own culture as well as within the gay and lesbian community itself
Small Groups

TIME

THE BATTLE OVER GAY TEENS

They are coming out earlier, to a more accepting society. So how did they end up on the front lines of America's culture war?

BY JOHN CLOUD
Situation 1

Tony walks into your office to discuss his academic probation status. Through conversation, he reveals that he is having difficulty coming out. His parents are religious and their beliefs do not accept who he is. Religion is also important to him. This conflict is severely impacting his academic performance.

How would you work with Tony?
Situation 2

John is a 20 year old male criminal justice student who comes into your office to discuss graduation and transfer plans. He is openly gay, however, is apprehensive about transferring to a four year institution where he will have to stay in the dorms. He is also beginning to question his decision to go into law enforcement for fear of being discriminated against and seeks your advice.

How would you advise John?
Situation 3

Trey is 20 and identifies as queer. He has decided on a new career path and transferred to a small community college from a large urban university. He is out, passionate and outspoken and feels comfortable holding hands with his partner when they walk across campus. Yet this public display has caused him some discomfort, since some students heckled and ridiculed him and his partner on more than one occasion. He has classes at night and doesn’t feel safe on campus. He sees a Safe Zone/ALLY decal and stops by for advice.

What do you do?
Advising
Skills and Techniques

• Gender neutral language
• Do not ask questions from a patriarchal heterosexual perspective (i.e. “Do you have a girlfriend”)
• Create a safe atmosphere (physically and emotionally)
• Be open to discussing sexuality
• Know the resources available to help before a minority or oppressed student comes in your office
• Be comfortable with your own sexuality
• Be aware of your own biases when advising this population of students and refer out
Academic Advising

- Be supportive of emotional confusion at school
- Be aware of resources
- Create a mentoring relationship
- Integrate LGBT curriculum into study so students can learn and understand (or heterosexuals as well)
- Encourage inclusion to organizations and college community
- Career planning has additional considerations
  - glass/metal ceilings, physical harm, etc
- Transfer Planning
  - Geographic Location and Campus Climate
An Advisor can make the difference between

Emotions that the student may be feeling:
- Scared
- Confused
- Vulnerable
- Uncertain
- Unsure if you are safe

OR

- Empowered
- Exhilarated
- Relieved
- Proud
- Brave
- Affirmed
Being a Supportive Ally

1. **Be open and supportive** if someone comes to you with questions about sexuality and gender identity.
2. **Respect confidentiality.** Trust is important!
3. **Be informed.** Know your resources on and off campus.
4. **Know when and where to seek help.** It is always appropriate to seek additional information/resources.
5. **Stay in touch.** Follow up when appropriate.
6. **Know that individual situations may be ambiguous or confusing.** LGBT or questioning people need time to work through their feelings.

7. **Help, but don't force.** LGBT or questioning people need to move at the pace they feel most comfortable.

8. **Deal with feelings first.** You can be helpful by just listening and allowing a LGBT or questioning person the opportunity to vent feelings.

9. **Share that you are honored!** Someone who comes out to you clearly recognizes you as an ally and trusts you.
Concluding Thoughts

- Developing a positive LGBT identity is a lifelong process (pitfalls, regression, heterosexism and homophobia)

- Sexual minorities often do not have familial sameness within their home environment while growing up which limits role models
National Organizations

- www.hrc.org  Human Rights Campaign
- www.algbtic.org/resources/listing.htm  Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Counseling- A division of the ACA.
- www.LGBTHealth.net  The National Coalition for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health.
- www.glnh.org  LGBTT National Help Center
- LGBTT National Hotline- Toll Free 1-888-THE_GLNH (1-888-843-4564)
- www.thetrevorproject.org  Trevor operates the nations only 24 hour, toll-free suicide prevention helpline for LGBTTQ youth (1-866-4-U-TREVOR)
- www.pflag.org  Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG).
References


- www.glsen.org

- www.hrc.org

- www.thetrevorproject.org
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