Is it getting better?
A program of research evaluating health equity for LGBTQ youth in Western Canada

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Overview

• Introducing the Stigma & Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre

• Our program of research: populations, types of methods, examples of research projects

• Recent innovative methods developed

• Some of the impacts of our work
What is the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC)?
Goals

• Understanding how stigma, trauma, & violence influence youth health

and

• What environments, relationships, programs or policies help foster resilience in spite of stigma & trauma
In order to:

- Reduce stigma and trauma, foster healing and resilience
- Reduce health inequities and improve health outcomes for marginalized youth
A Cast of Dozens...

- Researchers from multiple universities
- Many languages, LGBTQ2S (+ allies)
- Postdocs, graduate & undergrad RAs
- Co-researchers from community & clinical organizations
- Youth advisory councils
Multi-Site and Multi-Country

UBC, SFU
U Alberta
U Winnipeg, U Manitoba
Wilfrid Laurier
McMaster
UQAM, Concordia
Western, Dalhousie
U Connecticut
Harvard
CIPHR-California
U of Minnesota
MN Children’s Hospital
U Texas at Austin
San Diego State U
U of Waikato NZ
U of Auckland
Mukogawa Women’s U Japan
HBSC—Ireland, England, Wales, France, Hungary, Belgium, Iceland+
SARAVYC is Multi-disciplinary

Our Program of Research
Populations of youth

• Those who may be stigmatized/marginalized, including:
  • LGBTQ2S youth
  • Runaway, homeless, & street-involved
  • Sexually abused or sexually exploited
  • Indigenous young people
  • Immigrant, refugee, and international students
  • Youth in care of the government
Definition of Stigma

• A mark, characteristic, or attribute of a group that bears social disapproval or prejudice

• Examples:
  • Immigration status (+ ethnocultural/racialized)
  • Indigenous status
  • Sexual orientation and/or gender identity
  • Housing status, employment status, income
  • Sexual abuse/sexual exploitation/sex work
How Stigma influences health

- Discrimination in basic needs
- Social rejection, negative comments
- Overt bullying, harassment
- Violence, assault, abuse, exploitation
- All found at higher prevalence among stigmatized groups

ENACTED STIGMA
Definition of Resilience

• Doing well in spite of stigma, adapting to stressors and challenging circumstances

• Focus not on characteristics, but on processes

• Environments, relationships, coping strategies learned: Protective Factors

• Outcomes that count as “doing well” may be contextual
Drawing on multiple methods

- Population surveys & complex modeling (new SLEPHI approach)
- Go along interviews & GIS
- On-line focus groups & surveys
- Photo voice & other arts-based approaches
- Participatory epidemiology & other participatory research
- Intervention studies (RCT & eval)
- Systematic reviews & discourse analyses

and more!
Population or large-scale surveys

- Canada, US, New Zealand, and more recently, HBSC in several countries in Europe
- Documenting enacted stigma and health disparities for marginalized groups
- Complex modeling to understand environmental influences, population intervention effects of policy/programs
First National Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey

• Online survey of health and risk exposures conducted 2014
  • All 10 provinces, nearly all territories
  • 923 youth age 14-25
  • Included developing new measures of gender identity/assessing preferences
  • Repeated 5 years later (data collection just closed May 31, N doubled)
BEING SAFE, BEING ME:
Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey

ETRE EN SÉCURITÉ, ÊTRE SOI-MÊME :
Résultats de l'enquête canadienne sur la santé des jeunes trans
Are health gaps getting better?

- New analytical techniques for testing not just trends, but trends in disparities (gaps)
- Recent analyses of the BC AHS suggests:
  - Tobacco, alcohol and drug use down for straight and LGB (but gaps remain)
  - Suicidal thoughts & attempts declining among straight boys and girls, and gay/bi boys, but increasing among lesbian/bi girls
  - Many gaps are unchanged, some narrowing, but mostly for gay boys
Analyses of Protective Factors

- *Connectedness* matters—being cared about by family, other adults
- School connectedness, belonging, supportive and fair teachers
- Opportunities to be involved with community, culture
Testing policy/program effects

- Drawing on large-scale surveys
- Mapping external information about school policies, GSAs, other interventions onto student data
- Logistic regression and multi-level modeling to test intervention effects on health outcomes for LGB and straight youth
LGBTQ-Supportive Environments and Suicidal Behaviors Among Sexual Minority Youth in Western Canada

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Ryan J. Watson, PhD
Darin Erikson, PhD
Heather L Corliss, PhD, MPH
Marla Eisenberg, ScD, MPH
Go along interviews and mapping
LGBTQ-Supportive Environments Inventory (BC)

- School LGBTQ-supportiveness
  - GSA length of time in school
  - Anti-homophobic-bullying school policy
- Community LGBTQ-supportiveness
  - Youth-serving organizations
  - Community resources (PFLAG)
  - Community events (Pride)
- Progressive Political Environment
  - Percent voting New Democrat
New Method: Site-level Longitudinal Effects of Population Health Interventions: SLEPHI

• Multi-Group Multi-Level modeling (Mplus)
  • Individuals nested within schools
  • School-level outcomes dependent variable
  • Time since intervention start varies at each survey cycle
  • Compares schools within each survey year, then relationships across survey years

Li G., et al., *SSM*—*Population Health*, 2019
The longer a GSA is in a school, the safer ALL students feel!

Long-term environmental effects
Qualitative Research

• Girl2Girl mixed methods study:
• Online asynchronous focus groups with lesbian and bisexual girls explores:
  • Why lesbian/bi girls do not use barriers in sex with other girls
  • Sexual decision making around sex with both guys and girls
  • Why lesbian/bi girls have higher risks for pregnancy vs. heterosexual girls
Intervention studies

- Girl2Girl: RCT text messaging sexual health intervention
- Multi-clinic longitudinal study of transgender youth health care
What are the impacts of our research?
Impacts of SARAVYC research

- Changing safe school laws and regulations in several provinces
  - School district and health authority policies and practices too
- Evidence for Courts, Human Rights Tribunal cases
- Helping to secure clinical services in BC for trans people
Impacts of SARAVYC research

- Informing research measurement globally
- Creating visibility in media, helping expand resources
- Offering hope and picturing resilience
  - Population analyses show many marginalized youth with protective assets are surviving, and even thriving
Thank you!

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References discussed


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