

Improving the health of LGBT+ people: what does “early intervention” mean in a landscape of social inequality?

Professor Katherine Johnson



Health, mental health and LGBTQ+ lives

- Queer subjectivities, wrapped up a history ‘discourses of mental health, the high moral drama of the individual sexual act, the dichotomous opposition between rational agency and pathology, and the epidemiology of risk’ (Halperin, 2007)
- Depathologization has enabled a focus on LGBTQ+ health and mental health issues and experiences, including inequalities in access to appropriate services.
- But, legacy of pathology, social stigma and shame are still implicated in any understanding of LGBTQ+ health and mental health.



Psychiatrists Switch Stand

Homosexuals Gain 'Instant Cure'

By DAVID M. CLEARY
Of The Bulletin Staff
Homosexuality is not a mental illness, the American Psychiatric Association decided yesterday.
But the ruling, adopted by the group's board of directors upon recommendation of several of its committees and its Assembly of District Branches, contains a major concession to psychiatrists who believe homosexuals are sick and can benefit from psychiatric therapy, directing them toward heterosexual habits.
Reaction by leaders of homosexual groups, expressed during a press conference in Washington as APA president Dr. Alfred Freedman, announced the association's policy change, was mixed.
"It's an instant cure for a large segment of the population that has been regarded as sick for many years, without the slightest scientific evidence that illness exists," said Dr. Howard J. Brown, 46, New York City specialist in internal medicine.
Brown, was a cofounder of the National Gay Task Force, specifically organized to effect changes in the attitude of the medical profession toward persons who prefer love partners of the same sex.
"It's a big step," Mr. Gittings said, "but it continues to emphasize that homosexuality can be mentally disturbed by some aspects of their life style, without also admitting that homosexuals can be similarly bothered by problems arising from their sex life."
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The epidemiology of 'risk'

HIV/AIDS
Suicide
Depression
Smoking
Alcohol
Obesity
Under-weight
Drug use
Cancers



SUICIDIALITY

Suicide Attempts[1]

Compared to the general population, LGBTI people are more likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime, specifically:

- LGBTI young people aged 16 to 27 are five times more likely
- Transgender people aged 18 and over are nearly eleven times more likely
- People with an Intersex variation aged 18 and over are nearly six times more likely
- LGBT young people who experience abuse and harassment are even more likely to attempt suicide



Depression

Compared to the general population, LGBTI people are more likely to experience and be diagnosed with depression, specifically:

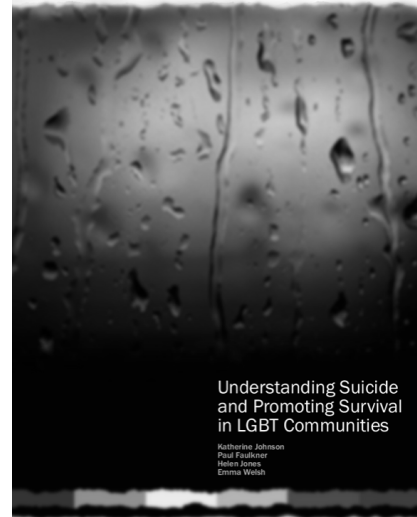
- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people aged 18 and over are nearly six times more likely to currently meet the criteria for a depressive episode
- LGBTI people aged 16 and over are nearly three times more likely to diagnosed with depression in their lifetime
- Transgender and Gender Diverse people aged 18 and over are nearly 5 times more likely to be diagnosed with depression in their lifetime
- People with an Intersex variation are nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression

Explanatory frameworks

- 'Minority stress' – Myers, 2003
- Impact of discrimination, bullying, isolation, family rejection & shame.
- Precarious housing, homelessness, sexual exploitation
- Educational and employment opportunities, poverty and health consequences
- Impact of social, cultural and gender norms on health-related behaviours
- Poor experiences with healthcare providers
- Failure to seek help until in crisis due to double stigma

MIXTURE OF "LIFESTYLE" AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Understanding the inter-relationship of health and mental health with LGBTQ+ people who are suicidal

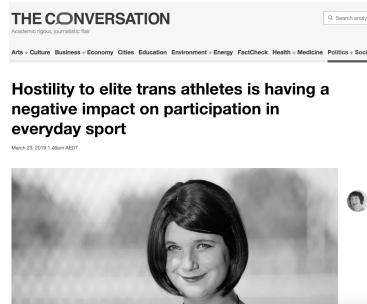


children and young people's trust University of Brighton PROGRESS KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE allsorts youth group think

Trans needs assessment, Brighton & Hove CC, 2015

- Estimates at least 2,760 trans adults in Brighton & Hove (total approx. 270,000)
- More likely to have limiting long-term illness or disability than overall population
- High level of mental health need
- Lack of knowledge about health screening
- Higher rates of smoking and lower rates of physical activity than overall population
- Less likely to use parks or open space
- How can we improve trans health and access to health care?





Public discourse: Gender recognition and trans participation in sport



Early interventions to improve mental health of LGBTQ young people

- Research that will improve the provision of mental health support for LGBTQ+ young people when they first start experiencing mental health problems.
- But when do they first start experiencing mental health problems?
- What would it mean to intervene before?

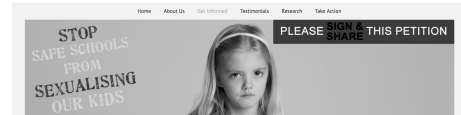


“Lives are ruined by shame and stigma. LGBT lessons in schools are vital”
Hannah Jane Parkinson



→ Read more

You're teaching **WHAT?**
For parents who want to know more about the Safe Schools Coalition program.



Birmingham school stops LGBT lessons after parent protests



Birmingham school stops LGBT lessons after parents protest
Hundreds of children withdrawn from Parkfield community school for day
Screenshot of a newspaper

Public discourse. Teaching about LGBT lives in primary schools

What might an 'early intervention' look like?

- Research to develop accessible and appropriate mental health services for LGBTQ ysp is needed, along with designing public space for gender inclusion and safety
- Social intervention could be earlier - to transform scripts of shame and stigma associated with queer lives, entrenched long before we know ourselves as such.
- Need action of friends, siblings, parents, teachers, therapists and healthcare providers to challenge the normative situations that enable homophobia and transphobia to persist.



MPs vote for LGBT inclusive sex and relationship education from primary school

Thank you

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