Alcohol use among LGBTQ young adults: General and population specific influences

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Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery
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Alcohol use among LGBTQ young adults:
General and population specific influences

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Today’s Talk

• SOGI-related disparities in alcohol use
• Minority specific factors of LGBTQ alcohol use
• Normative drivers of LGBTQ alcohol use
• Treatment evidence and gaps

(SOGI= sexual orientation and gender identity; LGBTQ = Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning)

LGBTQ Populations and Alcohol Use

• Elevated rates of underage alcohol use, hazardous drinking, and alcohol use disorders
• Disparities in early onset and at young ages
• Particularly pronounced among sexual minority girls/women, relative to sexual minority boys/men

(Fish et al., 2017; Kuehnle et al., 2015; Marshal et al., 2008; Talley et al., 2014, 2016; Watson et al., 2020)
LGBTQ Populations and Alcohol Use

• Elevated rates of underage and hazardous drinking, and alcohol use disorders
• Disparities in early onset and at young ages
• Particularly pronounced among sexual minority girls/women, relative to sexual minority boys/men
  • Bisexual relative to gay/lesbian
  • Trans men than trans fem/women and non-binary*
• High intensity binge drinking

(Fish et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2008; Talley et al., 2014, 2016; Watson et al., 2020; Fish et al., 2019, Fish, 2019)

LGB disparities in high-intensity binge drinking

![Graph showing disparities in high-intensity binge drinking among LGB populations.](image)

[Fish, Schulenberg, & Russell, 2018; Journal of Adolescent Health]

Developmental Trends: AUD

![Graph showing developmental trends in alcohol use disorder (AUD).](image)

(Fish & Exten, 2020; American Journal of Preventive Medicine)
2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

(SM= sexual minority)

(SOGI Disparities Start Young)

(Fish, Bishop, & Russell, 2020, Journal of Adolescent Health)
Minority Stress Theory

General Stress

External Minority Stressors
Racism, Homophobia, Bullying, Harassment

Internal Minority Stressors
Internalized homophobia & transphobia, hypervigilance, expectation of rejection, concealment (Meyer, 2003)

Mental Health

Substance Use

- But it's different now...
  Arent' things better?

- There have been swift changes in visibility and rights of LGB people
  - Attitudes
  - Laws/policies
  - Representation and visibility
Developmental Collision?

- Collision between:
  - normative adolescent developmental processes on the one hand
  - individual development for LGBTQ young people on the other

- As more LGB youth come out in early adolescence, they must navigate intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, social and cultural contexts in which SGM identities and issues may be particularly complex.
Developmental Collision?

Intrapersonal: puberty; metacognition

Interpersonal: peer (non)conformity; social / self-regulation; vigilance

Contextual / institutional: coming out at home/school

Socio-political climate: anti/pro LGBTQ+ policies; attitudes

(Russell & Fish, 2016, 2019)

Age of coming out

1970
2016

Troiden (1979)
McDonald (1982)
Herdt & Boxer (1993)
Savin-Williams (1998)
Rosario (1996)
D'Augelli (2001)
D'Augelli (2010)
Baams, 2016
But what do the data say?

Trend studies

Alcohol Use

H = heterosexual
B = bisexual
L/G = lesbian/gay
U = unsure

(Fish & Baams, 2018, LGBT Health)
### Lifetime Cigarette Use

**Figure 1.** Unadjusted Prevalence and Trend Comparisons of Cigarette-Related Outcomes among Females by Sexual Identity from 2005 to 2015.

**Figure 2.** Unadjusted Prevalence and Trend Comparisons of Cigarette-Related Outcomes among Males by Sexual Identity from 2005 to 2015.

*Fish et al., 2019; Pediatrics*

Alcohol use (BC, Canada: 1998-2013)

Cigarette use (BC, Canada: 1998-2013)

Suicidality (Mass YRBS: 1999-2013)

Eating disorders (Mass YRBS: 1999-2013)

Victimization/bullying (Mass YRBS: 1999-2013)

Parental support (BC, Canada: 1998-2013)

...and others...

1 in 6 Generation Z adults identify as something other than heterosexual

Gen Z is the Queerest Generation Ever, According to New Survey

*1 in 6 Gen Z’ers identify as LGBT: Gallup poll*
Gender Identity
- Yes, I'm transgender, 1.8%
- I am not sure if I'm transgender, 1.6%

Sexual identity
- Gay/lesbian, 2.5%
- Bisexual, 8.7%
- Not sure, 4.5%

Minority Stress Theory

External Minority Stressors
- Stigma, discrimination, rejection, harassment

Internal Minority Stressors
- Internalized homophobia & transphobia, hypervigilance, expectations of rejection, concealment

(Meyer, 2003)
However...stigma is only part of the story...

Normative Mechanisms

- Alcohol norms
- Social and contextual factors
- Motivations and expectations
- Attitudes and perceived harm
- Childhood victimization and ACES

Norms

Perceived norms
- Beliefs about alcohol use in peer group (prescriptive)
- Perceptions of alcohol approval/acceptability by peers (injunctive)

Actual norms – reality

Discrepancies
- Individual often overestimate peers use and approval
Norms and LGBTQ Alcohol Use

• Compared to heterosexual college student, LGB students perceive that peers...
  • Consume more alcohol
  • Are more approving alcohol use
  • And, as a result, consume more alcohol themselves
• These norms partially or fully explain sexual orientation disparities in use

(Hatzenbuehler et al., 2008; Mereish et al., 2017; Ehkle, Stamates, Kelley, & Brainman, 2019; Litt, Lewis, Rhew, Hodge, & Kaysen, 2015)

Norms and LGBTQ Alcohol Use

• Stronger among ingroup
  • Perceive greater use among LGB relative to hetero women
  • Stronger association with self use

(Hatzenbuehler et al., 2008; Mereish et al., 2017; Ehkle, Stamates, Kelley, & Brainman, 2019; Litt, Lewis, Rhew, Hodge, & Kaysen, 2015)

Social Contextual Factors

• Social and environmental factors increase alcohol use
  • LGBTQ community participation, networks, nightlife

(Boyle et al., 2020; Trocki, Drabble, Midanik, 2005)
Social Contextual Factors

- LGB people see alcohol use contexts (i.e., bars, clubs) as more normative\(^1\)
- \(\geq\) monthly visits to bars
  - 15% of heterosexual vs. 30+% of LB women
  - 22% of heterosexual vs. 20% and 55% of bisexual and gay men, respectively

\(^{1}\) (Bayle et al., 2020) \(^{2}\) (Trocki, Drabble Midanik, 2005)

Motivations & Expectations

- Drinking to cope
- Drinking to fit in
- Social lubricant, complicated by stigma
- Engaging in bars as a way to meet partners
  - LGBTQ community socialization

\(\) \(^{1}\) (Boyle et al., 2020; Drabble & Trocki, 2014; Sanfort) \(^{2}\) (Cochran et al., 2012) \(^{3}\) (Day et al., 2017)

Attitudes and Perceived Harm

- More accepting attitudes towards heavy drinking\(^1\)
- LGBTQ youth also perceive alcohol and substance use as less harmful\(^2\)

\(^{1}\) (Sussman et al., 2012) \(^{2}\) (Day et al., 2017)
Childhood Victimization and ACES

- SA and ACES more prevalent among LGB people
- Associated with excessive alcohol use and AUD

Normative Mechanisms

- Alcohol norms
- Social and contextual factors
- Motivations and expectations
- Attitudes and perceived harm
- Childhood victimization and ACES

(Boyle et al., 2020)

Treatment Evidence and Gaps
The Case For LGBT-Specific Treatment

- LGB-adapted CBT
- Better treatment outcomes in LGB-specific programs than “traditional” programs
- LGB respondents in a traditional program reported lower levels of satisfaction with treatment than their heterosexual counterparts
- Gay and bisexual men were less likely to have completed treatment
  - More likely to have cited their needs going unmet as a reason for terminating treatment prematurely

Prevalence of LGBT-specific Services?

- MH Facilities Offering LGBT-Specific Services: 12.60%
- SA Facilities Offering LGBT-Specific Services: 17.60%

Treatment Gaps

- Mental Health Facilities: \( b = 3.38, p < .001 \)
- Substance Abuse Facilities: \( b = 2.03, p = 0.11 \)
Consideration for LGBTQ-Specific Services and Treatment

1. Assess, acknowledge, and understand LGBTQ populations and experiences

2. Explore LGBTQ-related stigma, support, community connection

3. Examine prescriptive and injunctive norms, social environments, motivations, and attitudes of alcohol use

4. Be prepared to discuss and assess childhood victimization and ACES

A few notes on COVID-19...

- Unique experiences for LGBTQ youth and young adults
- Many reported...
  - Disconnection from LGBTQ community and friends
  - Limited access to LGBTQ-specific services
  - Rejection and hostility from unaccepting families
  - "Re-closeting" (Fish et al., 2020; Gonzales et al., 2020; Salerno et al., 2021)

A few notes on COVID-19...

- Changes in stress and mental health
  - Also associated with increased substance use
  - LGBTQ youth who moved in with parents experienced...
  - Greater increases in psychological distress
  - Higher reports of victimization (Fish et al., 2020; Gonzales et al., 2020; Salerno et al., 2021)
Thank you!
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