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Poster Abstract

This poster presents initial findings from an exploratory, qualitative study investigating the health information practices of LGBTQ+ communities in South Carolina (SC). Significant health disparities exist between LGBTQ+ people and their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts. An important, but under-researched barrier producing these disparities is informational, as LGBTQ+ people find it challenging to learn about their healthcare needs, navigate the healthcare system, and overcome barriers to care. This study addresses this research gap via the following research questions: 1) How do LGBTQ+ communities create, seek, share, and use health information?, and 2) What are the social and structural factors affecting these health-related information practices?

Findings are informed by ~30 ongoing individual, in-person interviews with SC LGBTQ+ community leaders using a semi-structured protocol. Sampling strategies align with those suggested for marginalized or "hidden" populations – purposive, snowball, and theoretical. We incorporate an intersectional lens in our methodology, sampling for maximal variation among salient identity categories like race/ethnicity, age, and education. Data include transcripts from audio-recorded interviews and results of a mapping exercise to triangulate data collection. Analysis is iterative and inductive. We have used the constant comparative method to first generate open codes and then organize them into larger themes via axial and selective coding.

Preliminary findings have uncovered themes related to resilience, self-defensive information practices, and structural barriers to information access. Conceptual analysis of these themes via the process of selective coding suggests that SC LGBTQ+ communities are knowledgeable about their health information needs, but perceive a lack of knowledge among experts. Further, participants often mistrust experts like medical practitioners, who often lack the necessary cultural competence to facilitate use of their services by LGBTQ+ communities. Participants navigate significant structural barriers to health information and resources by engaging in self-defensive practices, which insulates their health knowledge within the community. These findings provide implications for how health practitioners can improve care to LGBTQ+ patients and information centers like libraries can leverage the knowledge of LGBTQ+ communities for health promotion.

Literature Review (Selected)

- *Health Information Needs and Behaviors of LGBTQ+ Adults*
  - *Information Needs*
    - *Physical Health*
      - Flenar, D. J., Tucker, C. M., & Williams, J. L. (2017). Sexual minority stress, coping, and physical health indicators. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings, 24*(3-4), 223-233.
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  - *Information Seeking Behavior*
    - *Online Resources*
      - Drake, A. A., & Bielefield, A. (2017). Equitable access: Information seeking behavior, information needs, and necessary library accommodations for transgender patrons. *Library & Information Science Research*, *39*(3), 160-168.
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  - *Information Needs*
    - *Sexual Health*
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    - *Mental Health*
      - Bostwick, W. B., Meyer, I., Aranda, F., Russell, S., Hughes, T., Birkett, M., & Mustanski, B. (2014). Mental health and suicidality among racially/ethnically diverse sexual minority youths. *American Journal of Public Health*, *104*(6), 1129-1136.
  - *Information Seeking Behavior*
    - *Online Resources*
      - Steinke, J., Root-Bowman, M., Estabrook, S., Levine, D. S., & Kantor, L. M. (2017). Meeting the needs of sexual and gender minority youth: formative research on potential digital health interventions. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *60*(5), 541-548.
    - *Physical Resources*
      - *Physicians*
        - Hoffman, N. D., Freeman, K., & Swann, S. (2009). Healthcare preferences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *45*(3), 222-229.
      - *Gay Straight Alliances*

- o Poteat, V. P., Yoshikawa, H., Calzo, J. P., Gray, M. L., DiGiovanni, C. D., Lipkin, A., ... & Shaw, M. P. (2015). Contextualizing Gay-Straight Alliances: Student, advisor, and structural factors related to positive youth development among members. *Child Development*, *86*(1), 176-193.
- *Libraries*
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More Information
Project website: https://bit.ly/hiplgbtq
Grant proposal: https://bit.ly/hiplgbtq-proposal

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