

Sexual Orientation, Mental Health and Service Outcomes for Homeless Youth in Transitional Living Programs

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Study Purpose

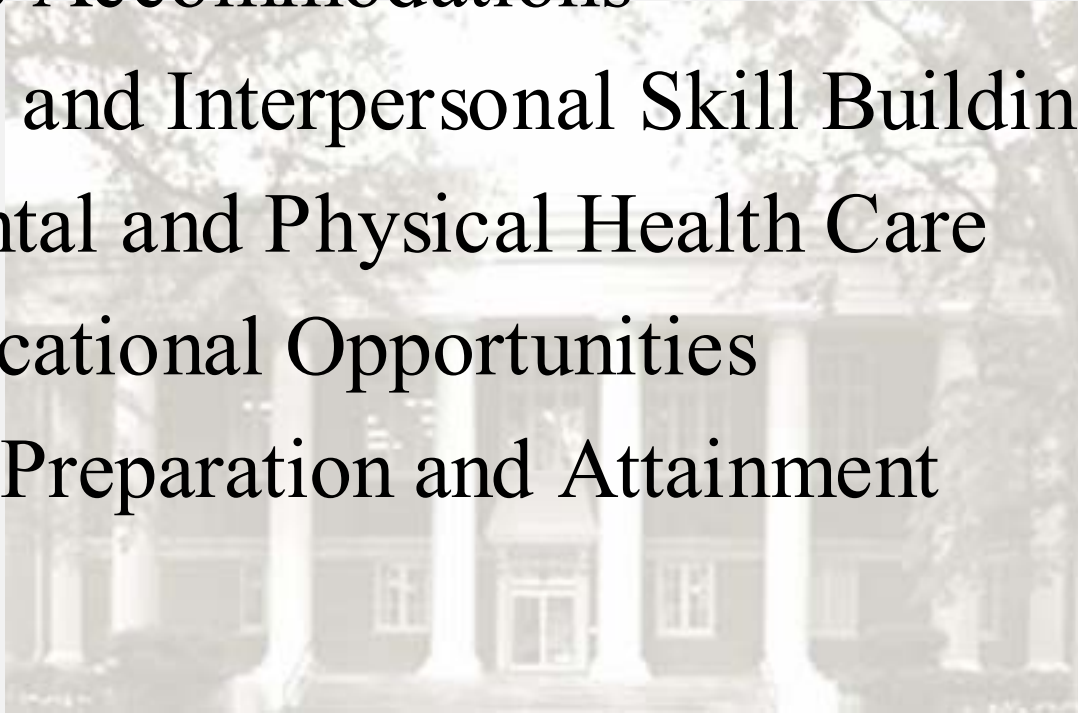
To explore outcomes of homeless youth from federally funded Transitional Living Programs (TLPs) based on sexual orientation, controlling for substance use issues and mental health issues.

Previous Research

- Disproportionate number of homeless youth are members of sexual minorities (Ray et al. 2007)
- Sexual Minority Youth are more vulnerable and likely to engage in high risk behaviors while on the streets (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler & Cauce, 2002)
- Parental disapproval of sexual orientation frequently cited as reason for homelessness (Rew, Whitaker, Taylor-Seehafer, & Smith, 2005)

Defining TLPs

- Safe Accommodations
- Life and Interpersonal Skill Building
- Mental and Physical Health Care
- Educational Opportunities
- Job Preparation and Attainment



Study Question

Do gender, sexual orientation, sexual orientation issues, mental health and substance use status predict safe exit from TLPs?

Methods

- Data collected between 2002 and 2004 in 44 states and the District of Columbia by FYSB, DHHS
- RHYMIS version 1.2 used to collect data upon entry and exit
- Logistic Regression used to test association between independent and dependent variables

Methods

- Dependent Variable: Exit status (safe/not)

- Independent Variables: Gender, Sexual Orientation, Sexual Orientation Issues, Mental Health Status, Substance Use Status, Gender*Sexual orientation, Gender*Mental Health, Gender*Substance use

Sample Characteristics

- N=1,671
- 58% male 42% female
- 92% heterosexual 8 % sexual minority
- 51% White, 36% African-American, 12% Hispanic

Living Situation

At entry

53% in a private residence,
22% living in a shelter,
11% on the streets,
8% in a residential program

At exit

63% go to a private residence
6% to a residential program
14% left with no placement
6% on the streets

Logistic Regression (n=1,552)

Variable	b	Wald Chi-Square	OR
Female	-0.19	2.84	0.83
Mental Health Issues	-0.45	15.39	0.64**
Substance Use Issues	-0.59	25.77	0.55**
Sexual Orientation Issues	0.06	0.05	1.06
Heterosexual	0.10	0.15	1.11
Model $X^2=59.12$; p<.0001			

**p<0.0001

Significant Interactions

Variable	b	Wald Chi-Square	p
Gender*Sexual Orientation	-1.41	6.23	0.01
Gender *Mental Health	0.55	5.43	0.02

Discussion

- Overall, sexual orientation is not associated with likelihood of safe exit
- Heterosexual males and Sexual Minority females are more likely to experience safe exit than their counterparts
- Youth with mental health and substance use issues are less likely to exit safely

Implications

- In general, TLPs lead to safe exits
- When considering sexual orientation, gender differences should also be accounted for.
- Increased street outreach to youth with unsafe exits
- Potential need for services Sexual minority females

Limitations

- Variables underspecified
- Only one dimension of sexual orientation measured
- Service sample
- No information regarding service quality
- No long-term follow-up

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