

Executive Summary: The Prevalence of Domestic Violence in LGBT College Student Relationships

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Purpose of the Study

- To measure the prevalence of domestic violence in LGBT college student relationships at the University of Louisville
- To assess the unique needs of this target population and provide appropriate services and programming that will help University of Louisville students to avoid, recognize, and/or leave unhealthy relationships.

Methodology

- An anonymous survey was conducted via www.surveymonkey.com. All University of Louisville students were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey in the Spring 2009 semester.
- Those who were 18 years of age or older, a current U of L student, AND identified as part of the LGBTQQI community were encouraged to complete the survey.
- Participants were asked a series of demographic questions, followed by questions about their possible experiences with domestic violence, both as a victim and then again as a perpetrator.
- Two different formats were used for the main body of questions about possible domestic violence experiences.
 - The first format was a 3-part question series:
 - Participants were asked whether or not they had ever experienced a particular event/incident: Yes or No?
 - If the respondent answered "Yes," they were then asked if the event happened on campus: On or Off?
 - If the respondent answered "Yes" to the first question, they were also asked the gender of the perpetrator: Male, Female, Male-to-Female, Female-to-Male, or Multiple Occurrences with Different Genders?
 - The second format asked about the frequency of particular domestic violence events/incidents:
 - Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often
- Finally, participants were asked two qualitative questions to determine if there was anything else they felt needed to be shared and what future programming/services they would like to see for LGBTQQI students.
- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the aggregate data.

Quantitative Research Questions

- What are the types of domestic violence incidents that occur within the University of Louisville's LGBT population?
- What is the prevalence of domestic violence incidents that occur within the University of Louisville's LGBT population?

Qualitative Research Questions

- What programs and services are most needed in order to best serve the student's who identify as part of the LGBT population at the University of Louisville?

Results

Demographic Information

- 50 usable surveys were considered, meaning respondents answered questions beyond just demographic information.
- Gender of participants:
 - 20 Males
 - 29 Females
 - 1 Female to Male
- Average age of participants was 24.8, age range from 18-46 years of age
- Race/Ethnicity
 - 38 Caucasian (76%)
 - 8 African American (16%)
 - 2 Asian American (4%)
 - 2 Other (4%)
- Sexual Identity
 - 19 Gay (38%)
 - 12 Lesbian (24%)
 - 12 Bisexual (24%)
 - 1 Transgender (2%)
 - 3 Queer (6%)
 - 2 Questioning (4%)
 - 1 Intersex (2%)
- Current Classification
 - 7 Freshmen (14%)
 - 3 Sophomores (6%)
 - 6 Juniors (12%)
 - 8 Seniors (16%)
 - 12 Graduate Students (24%)
 - 12 Medical/Dental Students (24%)
 - 1 Law Student (2%)

- 1 Post Graduate Student (2%)
- Currently Live on Campus
 - 10 Yes (20%)
 - 40 No (80%)
- Current Relationship Status
 - 14 Single (28%)
 - 8 Casual Dating (16%)
 - 13 In Relationship (26%)
 - 11 Living with Committed Partner (22%)
 - 3 Married (6%)
 - 1 Divorced (2%)
- Length of Time in Relationship (if applicable)
 - 0 Less than 1 Month (0%)
 - 4 1-6 Months (8%)
 - 4 6-12 Months (8%)
 - 8 1-2 Years (16%)
 - 5 3-4 Years (10%)
 - 11 5+ Years (22%)
 - 18 N/A or Skipped Question (36%) *Assumed that those who skipped question would have chosen N/A.

Quantitative Results

Table 1

Has your partner ever:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A	Response Total
Prevented you from engaging in activities with your friends?	55% (n=24)	27% (n=12)	7% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	11% (n=5)		n=44
Prevented you from engaging in activities with your family	75% (n=30)	12.5% (n=5)	7.5% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	5% (n=2)		n=40
Does/Did your partner:							
Allow you a say in how the money was spent?	18% (n=9)	4% (n=2)	2% (n=1)	4% (n=2)	47% (n=23)	25% (n=12)	n=49
Threaten to leave if you didn't agree with them?	76% (n=37)	8% (n=4)	6% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	4% (n=2)	6% (n=3)	n=49
Humiliate or embarrass you in front of other people?	55% (n=27)	23% (n=11)	14% (n=7)	6% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	2% (1)	n=49
Always keep track of your whereabouts?	41% (n=20)	29% (n=14)	14% (n=7)	6% (n=3)	8% (n=4)	2% (n=1)	n=49
In some way monitor your phone calls/text messages?	61.2% (n=30)	16.3% (n=8)	12.2% (n=6)	2% (n=1)	6.1% (n=3)	2% (n=1)	n=49
In some way monitor your email, Facebook, MySpace, etc.?	63.3% (n=31)	16.3% (n=8)	8.2% (n=4)	2% (n=1)	8.2% (n=4)	2% (n=1)	n=49
Do/did you feel that your partner controls every minute and every detail of your day?	68% (n=34)	12% (n=6)	12% (n=6)	0% (n=0)	8% (n=4)		n=50

*Note: All data is broken into Male and Female genders only; there were no other genders that reported instances of relationship violence.

Table 2

Has Anyone Ever...	Yes Responses	Male	Female
Accused you of having affairs or flirting with others	58% (n=29)	24% (n=7)	76% (n=22)
Misinterpreted the level of sexual intimacy you desired?	58% (n=29)	38% (n=11)	62% (n=18)
Threatened to hit or throw something at you?	18% (n=9)	44% (n=4)	56% (n=5)
Threw, smashed or kicked something to intimidate you?	18% (n=9)	22% (n=2)	78% (n=7)
Threw something at you?	10% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	60% (n=3)
Pushed, grabbed or shoved you?	27% (n=13)	38% (n=5)	62% (n=8)
Kicked, bit or hit you with a fist?	10% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	60% (n=3)
Beat you up?	0% (n=0)	N/A	N/A
Choked you?	4% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=2)
Threatened you with a gun or knife?	2% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=1)
Used a gun or knife on you?	0% (n=0)	N/A	N/A
Threatened to “out” you because of your sexuality?	10% (n=5)	20% (n=1)	80% (n=4)
Told you that no one will come to your aid because of your LGBTQI status?	4% (n=2)	50% (n=1)	50% (n=1)
Raped you?	10% (n=5)	20% (n=1)	80% (n=4)
Answered “Yes” to at least one of the questions asked about experiencing some sort of violence/intimidation	86% (n=43)	37% (n=16)	63% (n=27)

- 16/113 (14%) of the incidents reported by victimized participants occurred “On Campus”
- Victims reported the gender of their perpetrator as:
 - 46% Male
 - 37% Female
 - 17% Multiple occurrences, different genders
- All victims who reported having been raped listed males as the perpetrators.

*The below table reflects responses from 42 participants who answered the set of questions regarding perpetrating violence

Table 3

	Yes Responses	Male	Female
Have you ever accused your partner of having affairs or flirting with others	41% (n=17)	29% (n=5)	71% (n=12)
Have you ever misinterpreted the level of sexual intimacy your partner desired?	12% (n=5)	40% (n=2)	60% (n=3)
Perpetrated an act of physical and/or emotional violence/intimidation in at least one of the other questions?	14% (n=6)	17% (n=1)	83% (n=5)
Answered "Yes" to at least one of the questions asked about perpetrating some sort of violence/intimidation	48% (n=20)	30% (n=6)	70% (n=14)

- Of the 48% of participants who admitted to perpetrating an act of violence/intimidation, 70% of these were women. This contradicts the above data that indicated that men were more likely than women to be reported as the perpetrators. This may be because:
 - Women may be more likely than men to admit and report these instances.
 - Of the 42 participants who answered these questions, 23 were female, 18 were male, and 1 was Female-to-Male. Therefore the higher percentage could be due to a higher female response rate.

Limitations

- Timing of the survey: was available right before and during finals week, possible factor in the number of participants who completed the survey.
- Survey error due to design: due to unfamiliarity with Survey Monkey, the first several participants were unable to answer two of the questions in the manner in which they would have chosen.
- Small sample size: results may not be generalized to outside populations and may not provide an accurate depiction of the types and prevalence of domestic violence in LGBTQQI relationships at the University of Louisville.
- Caution should be exercised not to assume that all those who answered "yes" to any of these questions were indeed involved in an abusive relationship. For example, if a participant reported being accused of having an affair, the survey did not address if they actually were being unfaithful, which would justify the suspicions of their significant other.

Recommendations

- Survey needed a more clear explanation of which relationships should be considered when answering the questions.
- An additional question should be added which states: “Do you perceive to have ever been a victim of some type of domestic violence, whether it was a one time occurrence or repeat occurrences?” The same question should also be asked with the word “perpetrator” instead of “victim.”
- Further research should be conducted and include heterosexual populations in order to compare data between the LGBTQQI community and those who identify as heterosexual, to examine what the similarities and differences are about the types and prevalence of domestic violence for University of Louisville students.
- Programming suggestions from survey participants:
 - Evening or lunchtime couples counseling for any students
 - Work more closely with the Department of Public Safety and Campus Police regarding domestic violence in LGBTQQI relationships and how to help and recognize unique needs/concerns
 - LGBTQQI Hotline
 - Healthy relationship training class oriented to the LGBTQQI community
 - Increasing awareness about domestic violence; doesn’t just happen to women or heterosexual couples

Conclusion

- Of the 50 usable surveys, 86% of these participants reported being the victim of at least one act of relationship violence/intimidation.
- While males were more likely to be listed as the perpetrators, females appear to be more likely to self-report their involvement in perpetrating an act of violence/intimidation.
- Comparing this survey data to that of the previous study, conducted in 2001 by Drs. Bledsoe and Sar, proved to be difficult. While there are many similarities, there are enough differences that it is not possible to directly compare results to determine exactly what, if any, significant changes have occurred over the past 8 years.
- The 2001 study had 30 participants who answered questions in regards to victimization. The data was collected during two different semesters. Percentages on almost all of the domestic violence/intimidation questions were significantly higher in the 2001 study, as compared to this 2009 study. It is not known if these differences can be attributed to error due to the small sample size of these two studies, on-campus service improvements such as PEACC and LGBT services, or other outside factors.