LGBTQ+ Latinx Intersectionality and the Pulse shooting in Orlando, FL: Implications for health equity and advocacy

Nolan Kline, PhD, MPH, CPH

University of North Texas Health Science Center

School of Public Health

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Background: Violence and LGBTQ+ Populations

- Violence is a pressing public health problem
- Hate Crime Violence
  - Violence motivated by bias against race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability (US DOJ 2021)
- 1 in 5 hate crimes are motivated on sexual orientation bias (FBI 2021)

Background: Violence and LGBTQ+ Populations

- LGBTQ+ racial minorities:
  - more likely than any other population to be victims of hate crime violence (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2015, Park and Mykhyalyshyn 2016)
- Intersectional vulnerabilities
  - Race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation

Background: Violence and LGBTQ+ Populations

- This was evident on June 12, 2016
- A shooter entered the Pulse club in Orlando, Florida, on Latin night
- Fatally shot 49 patrons and injured 53 others.
- At the time, deadliest in US history
- Disproportionally affected people who identified as LGBTQ+ and Black or Latinx (a gender-neutral way to refer to Latino/a).

Background: LGBTQ+ Populations and Intersectionality

- Known: needs for culturally competent care and services
- Unknown: health and social service needs for individuals with unique intersecting LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities following the Pulse shooting?
- Emphasis on intersectionality

Background: Intersectionality

- Intersectionality examines the dynamic interaction of social categories and processes that perpetuate social subordination (Crenshaw 2015, Collins 1999, Roberts 1991)
- Emphasis on multiple interacting axes of discrimination based on subordinated social positions such as being a woman and black (Crenshaw 1989)
- Origins in Critical Race Theory and legal scholarship
- Public health approaches:
  - Shape health disparities (Caiola, Docherty, Relf, & Barroso, 2014; Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003)

Purpose of Research

- Determine the intersectional health and social service needs of LGBTQ+ Latinx individuals after the Pulse shooting.

Study Context: Orlando

- Third most populous city in Florida (United States Census Bureau, 2019)
- One in three residents identities as Latinx/Hispanic (United States Census Bureau, 2019)
- Several unmet public health needs:
  - Sixth highest HIV rate in country
    - Three FL cities rank in top 10 (Coehn, 2018)
- Elevated HIV risk among Black and Latinx MSM

Methods

- Ongoing, in-depth qualitative research with local LGBTQ+ Latinx activist groups that started in 2016
- Community-based Participatory Research Methods
- Part of larger NSF-funded study (n=120)
  - Activist organization leaders, elected officials, law enforcement, counter-activists
  - Participant-driven recruitment strategy
- For this presentation:
  - Formative data from pilot study:
  - Semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ Latinx organization members (n=11), interviews with activist organization leaders/service providers (n=3), and governmental officials (n=2).
  - Interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes with the majority of interviews lasting approximately 80 minutes
  - Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically coded using MAXQDA

Results:

- Exclusion from Service Facilities
- Lack of cultural humility
- Need to Support Undocuqueer individuals
- Lack of Resources
- The importance of intersectionality

Results: Exclusion from Service Facilities

- Exclusion in: LGBTQ+ health service facilities and Latinx health service facilities
- Unwelcome in LGBTQ+ focused spaces and in Latinx-focused organizations

"There's definitely racism in LGBT communities, and there's definitely homophobia in different people-of-color communities…it's like there's no where to go, and it's just like bricks being piled on top of you...you can't fit in anywhere"

–Elena, queer woman

Results: Lack of cultural humility

- Lack of cultural humility in health care spaces
- Ongoing commitment and "process of self-reflection" in order to improve relationships and understanding of others and self (Yeager and Bauer-Wu 2013)

"Where can go to find a doctor who knows how to treat me? I had a doctor who was transphobic, homophobic, sexist, and racist…[and my current doctor] has a white savior complex…she can't see me as more than someone she has to save and she needs to check her privilege "

–Jaime, gender queer

Results: Need to Support Undocuqueer individuals

"One of the people that was there, he's undocumented and in his 30s. He's worked 15 years in landscaping. When Pulse happened, he lost his best friend right in front of him. He got killed right in front of him. Then, the next day, he went back to work—literally the next day after seeing his friend's head being blown off..."

-Andres, gay man, activist org leader/service provider

Results: Lack of Resources

- Limited basic resources for LGBTQ+ Latinx individuals, including Spanish-language health education materials and prevention services

"When Pulse happened, you'd go into the [LGBT] Center and there was no [HIV] testing in Spanish; you couldn't get resources in your language. There wasn't even a pamphlet in Spanish!"

–Andrés, gay man, activist org leader/service provider

Results: The importance of intersectionality

- Preliminary findings indicate how intersecting LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities create unique health-related vulnerabilities and can inform community needs and changes.

Needs

1. Facilities that are welcoming to LGBTQ+ Latinx individuals
2. Providers that understand complex intersectional identities, including undocuqueer statuses

- Absent these efforts, broad health-related inequalities for people with intersecting LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities will persist

Discussion and Implications

- Importance of Intersectionality in Public Health Research and Practice in uncovering needs of hidden populations such as undocuqueer individuals
- Need for social services and public policy that is attentive to intersectional identities
- Highlights the need for public health researcher attention to hidden consequences of contentious topics like gun violence and mass shootings

Conclusion

The Pulse shooting exemplifies how public health researchers addressing health disparities must examine unique forms of vulnerability, such as occupying multiple marginalized social locations that aggravate health inequities.

Findings underscore the importance of using intersectionality in public health research, which can also guide changes to address community health needs

Limitations

- Small, formative study
- Focused on one area

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Thank you!

Questions:

nolan.kline@unthsc.edu