

Transphobia Among Transgenders of Color

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Objectives

- Identify the effects of transphobia on the psychological vulnerability of MTF transgenders of color.
- Describe how mental health issues can vary among different ethnic groups among transgenders.
- Develop a community-based mental health intervention for transgenders of color.

Background

- Male-to-female transgenders (MtF TGs) are at high risk for mental health concerns, such as depression and suicidal ideation and attempts, due to their unique social context.
- Transphobia is defined as stigma and prejudice against transgender people.
- Experiencing transphobia can contribute to psychological vulnerability among transgender people.

Methods

Study 1

- Seven focus groups with 48 MtF TGs.
- All participants were ethnic minorities.
- Analyzed discussion relating to transphobia and socio-cultural conditions among MTFs of color.

Study 2

- Cross-sectional survey with 332 MtF TGs.
- All participants were ethnic minorities.
- Analyzed questions relating to transphobia, psychological vulnerability, and social support.

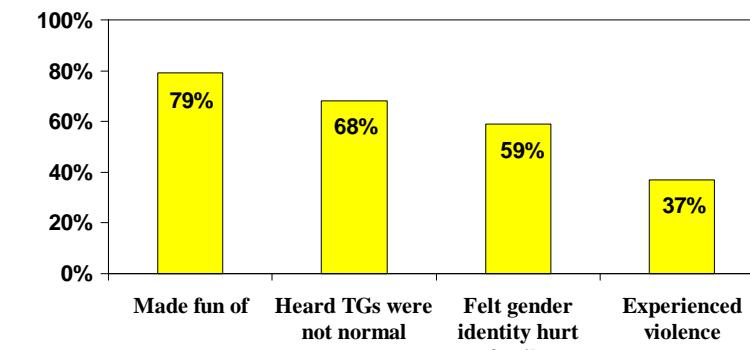
Demographics

| | Focus groups N = 48 | Cross-sectional N = 332 |
|------------------|--|---|
| Mean age (range) | 35 yrs. (19 – 55) | 34 yrs. (18 – 60) |
| Ethnicity | 33% African Am. 31% API 25% Latina 10% Mixed/other | 34% African Am. 33% API 33% Latina |
| Gender Identity | 70% Pre-op transsexual or transgender 23% Female 6% Other ^a | 52% Pre-op transsexual or transgender 36% Female 12% Other ^a |

Results

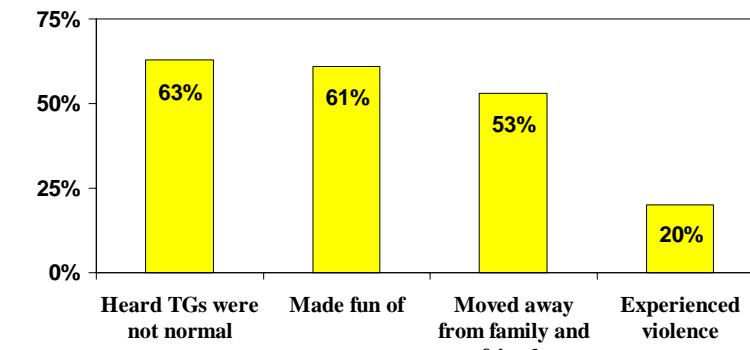
Transphobia in childhood

"When I was 4 years old, I dressed up one time. I always felt like a woman. I got hit by my sister. They kept me in a dark room for a whole day, since then I got numb, and I didn't even know how to be who I was."



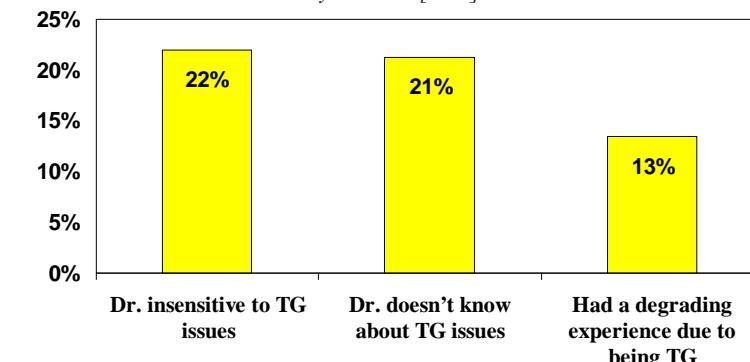
Transphobia as an adult

"For me what hurts most is not the physical abuse. It's basically emotional. Basically they abuse verbally. That hurts. I think that hurts more because it hurts your moral esteem and your self-esteem, emotionally and mentally."



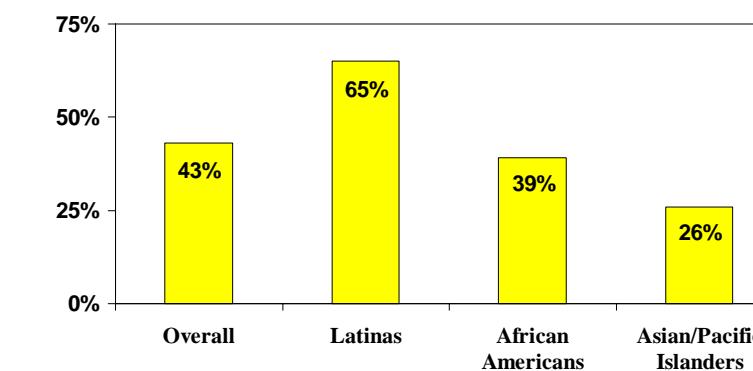
Barriers to accessing health care

"In order for us to get help, we need to go someplace where we can get appropriate help, where we're being treated equally. Because when I go somewhere and I don't feel like I'm being treated equally, I'll just leave. It's gonna defeat the whole purpose, if they don't care if I get well. Why should I [care]?"

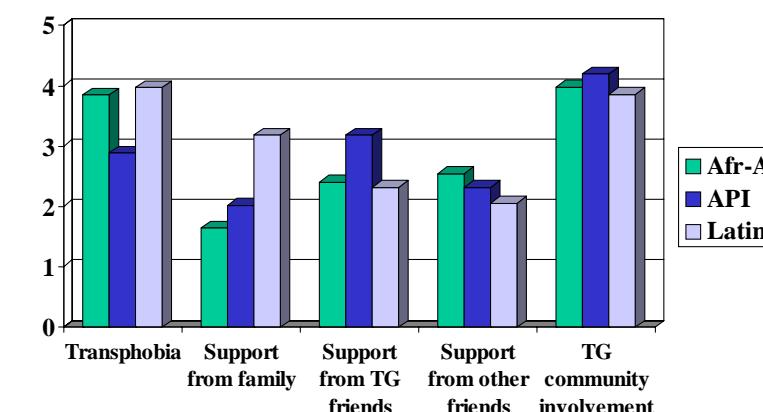


Prevalence of depression (CES-D > 15), by race/ethnicity

"My main focus right now is depression. I have very serious problems with depression. That's always been a big issue for me, and it's still an issue."



Mean levels of transphobia, social support, and transgender community involvement, by ethnicity



Multivariate analyses

- Multiple regression analysis was conducted on the levels of depression by entering demographic variables at the first step and socio-psychological variables at the second step.
- Results indicated transphobia as the strongest independent contributor to depression.
- Involvement in transgender community had a significant inverse relationship to depression.

Findings

- Both qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that depression among MTF transgenders of color is significantly associated with their experiences of transphobia.
- The negative effects of transphobia can be mediated by social support and involvement in the transgender community.

Current intervention projects

- Providing workshops regarding HIV risk reduction, substance abuse prevention, and health promotion. (Supported by SAMHSA, Grant # H79TI12592)
- Subcontract with a local substance abuse treatment agency that developed a transgender recovery program, the first in the nation.
- Currently expanding to accommodate FTM transgenders as well as gender variant people.

Recommendations

- Future research should investigate how cultural constructs among racial/ethnic groups influence psychological vulnerability and experience of transphobia.
- Intervention studies should incorporate community experience and input, and should be scientifically evaluated for efficacy.
- To minimize transphobia, education should have multi-dimensional approaches (e.g., classroom, workplace, healthcare, media, and policy).
- More research needed on other adverse health outcomes associated with transphobia, including rape and homicide.