Cyberbullying and Suicide Among LGBTQ Youth: Is There a Connection?

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Cyberbullying and Suicide Among LGBTQ Youth: Is There a Connection?
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Introduction
Members of the LGBTQ youth population are at considerably greater risk for suicide than their heterosexual peers. LGBTQ youth are also at heightened risk of being bullied due to sexual orientation, and recent technological advancements have created a new platform for bullying, that of cyberbullying. The detrimental impact that cyberbullying can have on mental health suggests the possibility of a potential connection between cyberbullying and LGBTQ youth suicide.

Research Question
Is there a connection between cyberbullying and suicide among members of the LGBTQ youth population?

Methods
• Ecological systems perspective combined with minority stress theory provide the framework through which to consider the impact that cyberbullying has on the lives of LGBTQ youth.
• This is a qualitative content analysis utilizing a random sample of 50 national newspaper articles that fit the inclusion criteria of LGBTQ youth, suicide, and cyberbullying.
• Articles were coded by both researchers and, as categories and subcategories were identified, broader themes emerged.

Findings

Bullying
• “Nearly 40 percent of junior high students are bullied, and 90 percent of LGBT teens (of any age) endure some form of bullying…” (“LGBT teen’s suicide,” 2011).

Cyberbullying
• “Cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon in an era when most students have mobile phones and the use of social networking is rising exponentially” (Wade, 2010).

Suicide
• “People have committed suicide as a result of cyberbullying” (“A closer look,” 2014).

Environment
• “When I was in school, you could go home or go to school to get away from wherever the stress was…But today, kids can never get away from social media and the bullying on social media…” (Deppen, 2017).

Population
• “Bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students continues to occur at an alarming rate” (Alio, 2010).

Discussion
• A positive correlation between cyberbullying and suicide among the LGBTQ youth population emerged that indicates the significant and detrimental effect that cyberbullying can have on the lives of vulnerable LGBTQ youth.
• The data collected from the articles highlight the pervasive and often inescapable presence of technology and social media in the everyday existence of today’s youth. The increasing use of technology as a platform for anti-LGBTQ harassment has a profound impact on the lives on LGBTQ youth, who are particularly likely to be victims of cyberbullying. The increased access to and use of electronic means to engage in cyberbullying contributes to an elevated risk for suicide among LGBTQ.
• The well-publicized and often cited 2010 suicide of Tyler Clementi prompted a significant increase in national attention to and awareness of the role that cyberbullying can play in the lives and suicide deaths of LGBTQ youth.

Acknowledgements
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References

Figure 1. Google image
“Stop bullying people, maybe then they won’t commit suicide.”

Jamey Rodemeyer 1997-2011

Figure 2. Google image

A closer look at Levinsky’s motivation.