

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS LEADING TO LGBT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter describes LGBT-specific risk factors for substance use that are superimposed on general risk factors. The confluence of factors helps explain the elevated rate of substance use for many LGBT individuals.

OVERVIEW

A *health disparity* is a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. One noted health disparity is the elevated rate of substance use among LGBT people. Research finds that there are common risk factors for the initiation of substance use, and that the more risk factors a person has, the greater the chance that taking addictive substances will lead to a substance use disorder. There are also LGBT-specific risk factors that compound an individual's likelihood of developing a substance use problem; these include minority stress (including internalized heterosexism), experience of microaggressive behaviors, navigation of the coming-out process, and an LGBT culture deeply rooted in bars and clubs, where the use of alcohol and other substances is prevalent. These risks are further compounded when one is a member of more than one minority group.

KEY TERMS

Health disparity; risk factors; minority stress; microaggressions; hate crime; internalized heterosexism; stereotype threat; stigmatization; coming-out process; gay bars and clubs

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Fundamentals of LGBT Substance Use Disorders: Multiple Identities, Multiple Challenges

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

- 1 Case study adapted from Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, *A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals* (Rockville, Md.: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001), 120.
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