Understanding Social Networks and Natural Coping Resources with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing College Students to Inform a Suicide Prevention Intervention

Meghan Fox, Psy.D., LMHC, Peter Wyman, Ph.D. & Steven Barnett, M.D.

Background
Suicide was identified as a research priority by Rochester Deaf communities
Suicide is a leading cause of death among college students in the US
Many college & university campuses are establishing suicide prevention programs
Deaf & hard-of-hearing (D/HH) college students have been found to experience high risk of suicidal behavior
New D/HH university students face attrition, high dropout rates, depression & loneliness
There is a need for adapted evidenced based suicide prevention practices
Sources of Strength is an upstream suicide prevention program that uses peer leaders & adult mentors to spread healthy coping messages to reduce vulnerability to suicide, strengthen connections & increase help-seeking

Purpose & Aims
To gather information to inform a culturally specific adaptation of Sources of Strength
Aim 1) Identify D/HH college students’ social network characteristics related to influential peer leaders, ties to mentors & affiliations
Aim 2) Identify D/HH college students’ perspectives on natural coping resources

Theoretical Approaches for Data Collection: Phenomenological, critical, & grounded theory qualitative research approaches
Recruitment Strategies: Flyers posted on campus, NCDHR Facebook fan page & Contact list & “word of hand”
Sample: Purposive sampling of D/HH students from Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf (RIT/NTID) where there are approximately 1400 D/HH students in the entire general campus population of approximately 15,000 students. Target N = 25.
Methodology: Semi-structured video recorded interviews conducted in participant’s preferred mode of communication at RIT/NTID campuses
Questions exploring: On & off campus social networks, how they access these networks, stressors & what gives them strength.
Data Analysis Plans: Translate interview videos into written English & qualitative data analysis of English transcripts.
- Familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining & naming themes, & descriptive frequency statistics of demographic information.
- Preliminary result themes determined by response frequency

Preliminary Results (N = 8)

Social Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On campus social network</td>
<td>Mostly D/HH friends &amp; roommates, some hearing friends, club/organization involvement (e.g. residence life, Greek life) &amp; academic staff (some D/HH, but mostly hearing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off campus social network</td>
<td>Mostly family (in distance) &amp; D/HH friends (in distance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Means of accessing social networks

| In-person, text, Facebook & Facebook Messenger, FaceTime & other social media |

Trusted groups/clubs/offices on campus

| D/HH focused groups (e.g. student government, Greek life & intramural sports) |

How they learned about on campus groups/ clubs/offices

| Events, orientation/1st year workshops, fliers & from others |

Coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stressors</td>
<td>Academics, balancing responsibilities, adjustment to different Deaf culture on campus &amp; being away from family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies</td>
<td>Family support, friend support, thinking positive &amp; healthy activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Discussion
Conducting research with collaborative institutions requires relationships, communication & collaboration
Participants were generally comfortable with being filmed, receptive to questions & forthcoming in their responses
Translation from American Sign Language to written English is very time consuming & complex
Coding written English is “easier” than coding video recordings
Adaptation of Source of Strength will require insight from D/HH persons regarding how those sources of strength apply or do not apply in their lives

Collaboration between on campus & off campus resources including medical providers is vital to addressing suicide risk with D/HH college students

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Email: meghan_fox@urmc.rochester.edu

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