

Engaging LGBT Youth in a Rural Community: Photovoice as a Participatory Method for Suicide Prevention

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GOALS

To describe and demonstrate the community-based participatory research method of digital storytelling

Identify ways to use photovoice projects to engage key decision-makers in community-based suicide prevention efforts

Identify the unique mental health needs and social context of LGBT youth living in rural communities

Photovoice

- ▶ Participatory Action Research Strategy...

“By which people create and discuss photographs as a means of catalyzing personal and community change”

- (Wang, Yi, Tao, and Caravano 1998)

Photovoice Process

Orientation

Develop needs assessment question

Use cameras to document everyday lives

Critical reflection and discussion of photographs

Community Forum



Participatory Action Research Strategy



Three state process of analysis

Selecting Photos

Contextualizing
photos through
storytelling

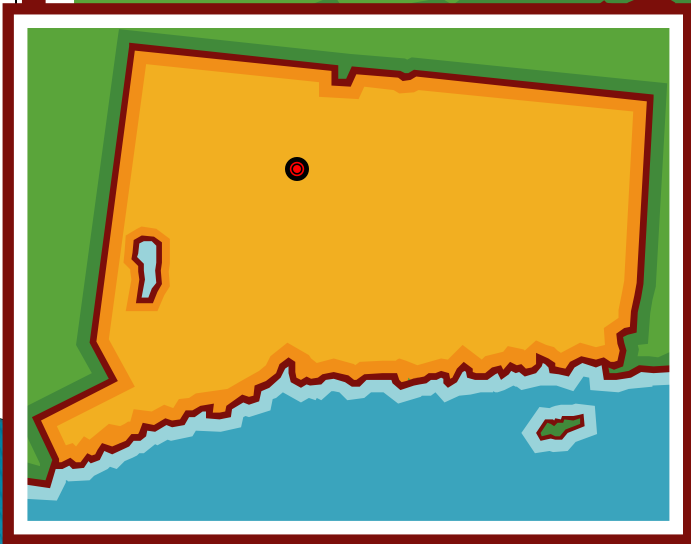
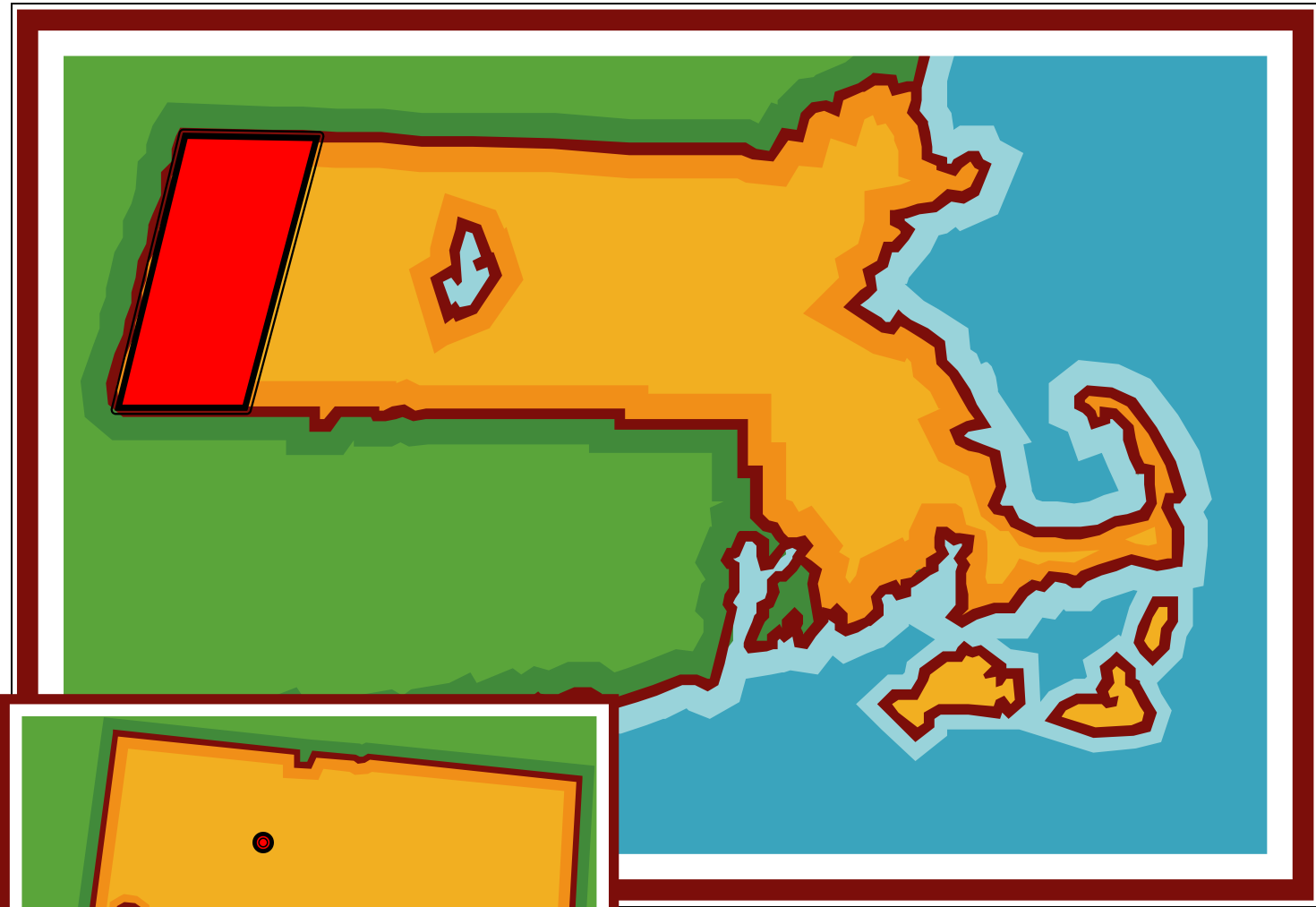
Identifying
themes/Issues

Hartford, CT

- ▶ Population (2008)
124,062
- ▶ Area:
17 square miles

Berkshire County, MA

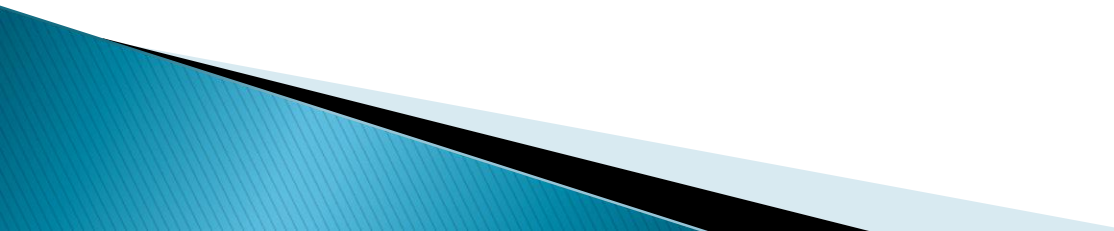
- ▶ Population (2008)
129,395
- ▶ Area:
931 square miles



“Hartford, CT gay resources”

1. Dignity Hartford
 2. EROS (Encouraging Respect of Sexualities)
 3. Hartford Gay and Lesbian Collective
 4. Hartford GLBT Community Center
 5. Hartford Gay Men’s Professional Network
 6. The Health Collective
 7. The Twenty Club
 8. OutInHartford.com
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“Berkshire County, MA gay resources”

1. Berkshire County genealogy website
 2. List of Berkshire County attorneys
 3. Outdated Gay/Straight Alliance directory
 4. Berkshire County Hotel listings
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Youth school experiences based on real or perceived sexual orientation

- ▶ 85% of students self-identifying as LGBT report being verbally harassed
- ▶ 40% report being physically harassed
- ▶ 19% report being physically assaulted
- ▶ 72% of LGBT students heard homophobic remarks such as “faggot” and “dyke”
- ▶ Nearly two-thirds of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation

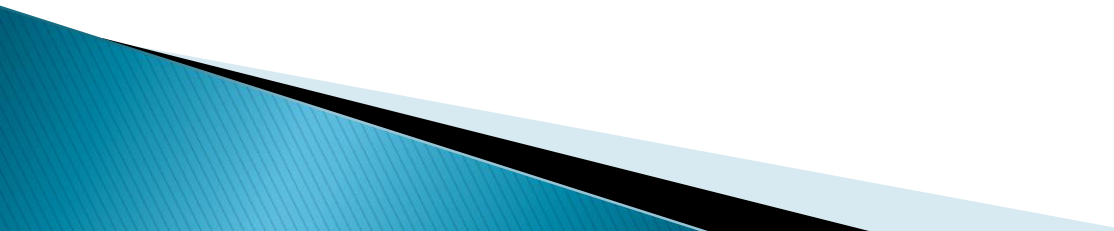
(GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2009)

Sexual Minority youth in Massachusetts Schools

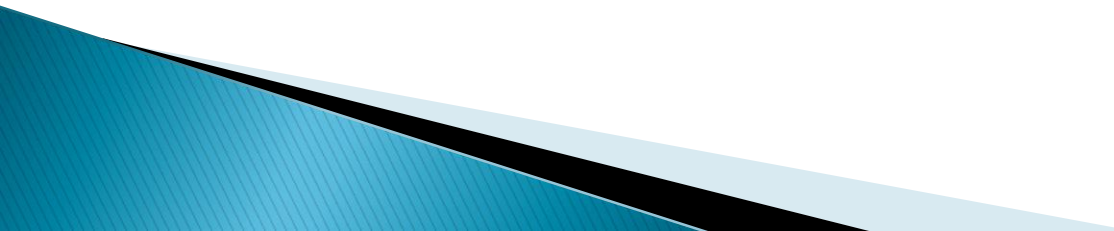
- ▶ Over four times more likely to have attempted suicide in the last year
- ▶ Over five times more likely to have required medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt
- ▶ Over three times more likely to have missed school because of feeling unsafe
- ▶ Over four times more likely to have been injured or threatened with a weapon at school

(Massachusetts High School Students Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2007)

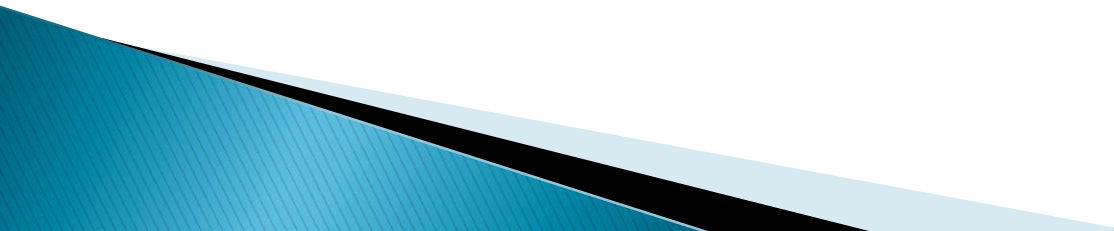
Why Photovoice?

- ▶ Conducts a needs assessment
 - ▶ Collects participant experience
 - ▶ Empowers participants
 - ▶ Builds community through group process
 - ▶ Reduces social isolation (risk factor for youth suicide)
 - ▶ Impacts individual and social change
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Photovoice Project Steps: Overview

1. Identify target population
 2. Identify participants
 3. Conduct process meetings
 4. Plan final exhibition
 5. Create action plans
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Step 1: Identify your target population

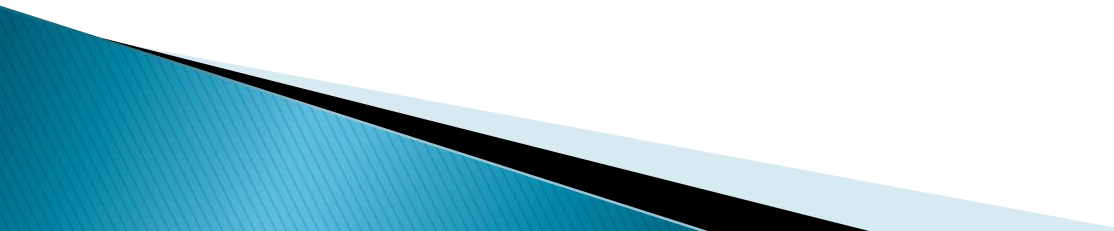
- ▶ What is the population you serve?
 - ▶ Who, within that population, is marginalized, under-represented, under-voiced, and/or ignored by mainstream society?
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Live Out Loud Youth Project

Step 1:

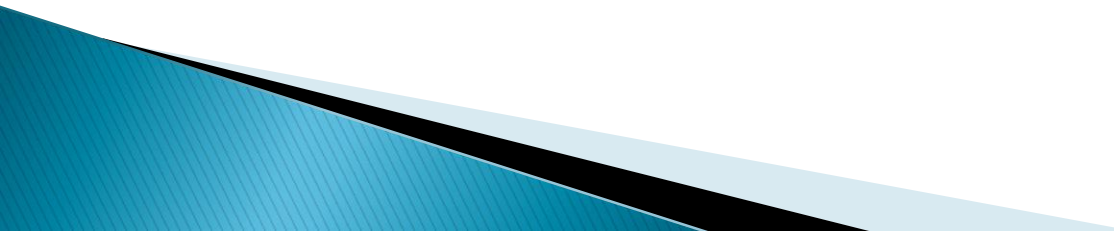
- ▶ Target population: LGBTQQIA youth
 - ▶ Youth identifying as LGBTQQIA and living in rural communities
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Step 2: Identify participants

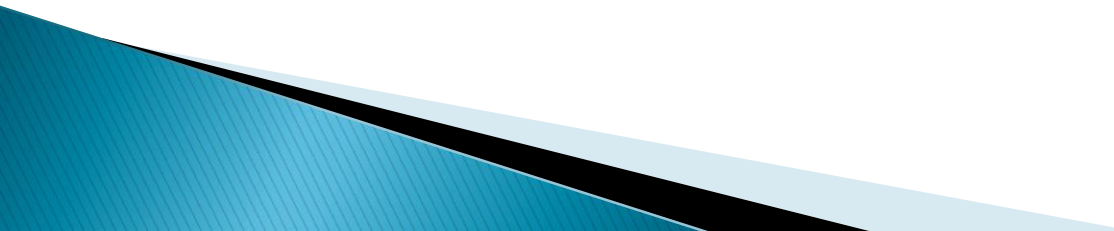
- ▶ Participants should be voluntary and able to commit to consistently attending all scheduled meetings
 - ▶ How to contact potential subjects for research process?
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Live Out Loud Youth Project

Step 2:

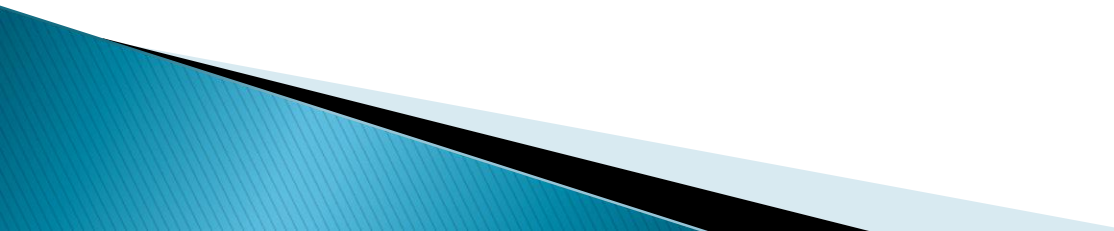
- ▶ Announced idea to the Live Out Loud Youth Project group members to assess their interest in Photovoice project
 - ▶ Word-of-mouth interest from youth inspired participation from youth not previously involved with LOLYP
 - ▶ Posted invitation on facebook page
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Step 3: Conduct initial meetings

- ▶ Familiarize participants with the Photovoice method
 - ▶ Obtain informed consent from participants
 - ▶ Teach ethics of photography
 - ▶ Distribute materials for shooting and consolidating photos
 - ▶ Identify specific topics focusing on broadly-defined aspects of health
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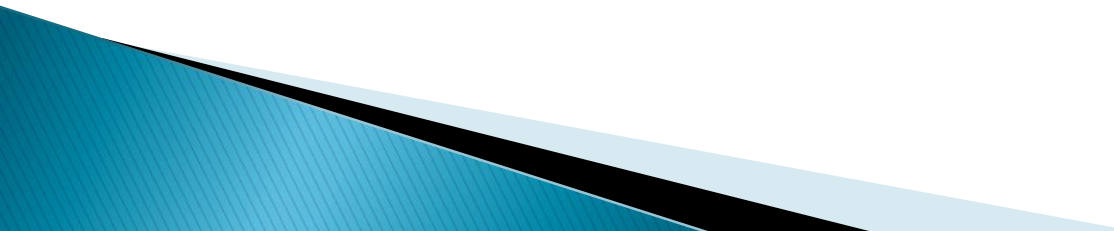
Live Out Loud Youth Project

Step 3:

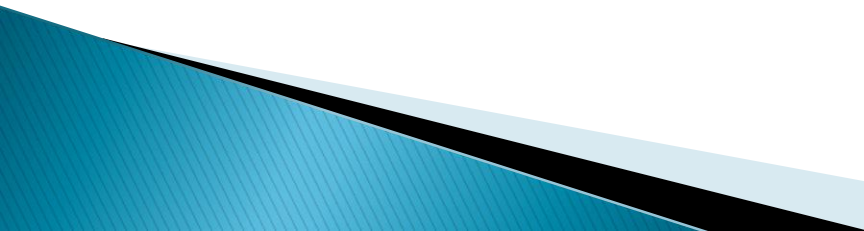
- ▶ Presentation from professional photographer
 - ▶ Informed consent from participants or guardians, depending on age
 - ▶ Distributed digital cameras
 - ▶ Identified adult facilitator who consolidated photos from memory cards
 - ▶ Identified issues in question format
 - ▶ Consolidated topics by theme
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Live Out Loud Youth Project

Finalized topic questions:

1. Where do I find inspiration to be who I am?
 2. What does homophobia or transphobia look and feel like?
 3. What is important in relationships?
 4. Where do I find support?
 5. What message do you want to give to other LGBTQQIA youth?
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Step 4: Conduct focus group meetings


- ▶ Meet weekly for 4–6 weeks
 - ▶ Participants bring up to 20 photos that address the identified topic
 - ▶ Photos are projected for group viewing and discussion
 - ▶ Group discussion is recorded with participant permission
 - ▶ Topic for next issue is identified
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Live Out Loud Youth Project discussion prompts:

- ▶ What is happening in this photo?
 - ▶ How does this photo address the identified topic?
 - ▶ What does this photo tell us about your life?
 - ▶ Facilitator prompt for response to each photo from group participants
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Step 5: Final Exhibition

Create format to exhibit work with goals to:

- ▶ Exhibit work to the public
 - ▶ Evoke dialogue of emergent issues
 - ▶ Create community awareness of population needs
 - ▶ Appeal to policymakers and influential community members in the interest of change
 - ▶ Develop action plan to enhance strengths and address identified needs
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Live Out Loud Youth Project

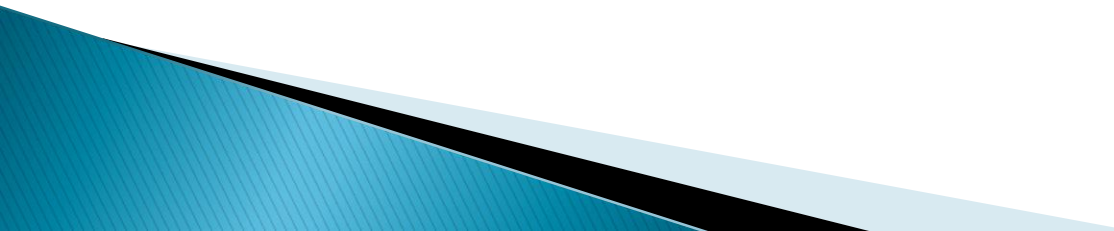
next steps:

- ▶ Gallery exhibit at Lichtenstein Center for the Arts
March 2nd–5th 2011
 - ▶ Community forum with parents, families, friends of youth, youth-serving agencies and organizations, educators, legislators, art lovers, and interested community members
 - ▶ Youth-led gallery reception and fundraiser
 - ▶ Workshop presentation with youth panel at True Colors conference in Hartford, CT
 - ▶ Incorporate lessons learned into local, regional, and national trainings and presentations
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Impact on participants

“This gave me the freedom to express myself with pictures. Sometimes it’s hard to say what you mean but if you put it in a picture you can put down what it means to you. Also you can get other people’s input and then it can mean more to you.” -H.

“The best thing about being a part of this project was making new friends and being around people that are like me.” -M.



“This project gave me something to look forward to...something better to do than sit in the house and mope. It means a lot to me to be here and be able to be myself.” -D.

“I finally got to express how I feel about things, like about how I’ve been made fun of and stuff, and I finally got to let it out. When you let it out you don’t feel as bad.” -K.

