




## Affirmative Cognitive Behavioural Therapy


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### Fast Facts

- 8 session cognitive behavioral intervention developed to target the unique needs of diverse LGBTQ+ youth
- Promotes positive change and healthy coping through the creation of a safe, affirming, and collaborative therapeutic experience
- Rooted in the tenets of CBT and aims to improve emotional and behavioral functioning by targeting underlying, problematic cognitions (Beck, 1970; Beck, 2011)
- Developed to counter the harmful and unethical 'reparative' or 'conversion' therapies which pathologize LGBTQ+ identities and coercively aim to change minority sexual orientations and/or gender identities



### Why AFFIRM?


“Holistic”-focused on the intersection between context, psychosocial factors and mental health”  
(Craig & Austin, 2016; Austin & Craig, 2015)

**Evidence-informed intervention**

- Designed for LGBTQ+ youth
- Created in partnership with community
- Grounded in realities of contemporary mental health service delivery
- Systematically developed through practice-based research to enhance the practice "toolbox"

**Community-based intervention**

- Designed to be flexibly implemented in group or individual formats
- Can be delivered in natural settings (e.g., schools, LGBTQ+ community centers etc.)
- Can be easily integrated into existing programs
- Cost-effective and evidence based



### Clinical Considerations


in the development of AFFIRM

- Recognizes that LGBTQ+ youth may develop patterns of **negative thinking, feeling, & acting** as a result of **exposure to transphobic and homophobic attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.**
- Utilizes **CBT strategies to target identity-based stressors** (e.g., homophobic and transphobic bullying, family rejection) that contribute to emotional distress among LGBTQ+ young people.
- Engages LGBTQ+ youth in a CBT strategies aimed at **improving coping** related to both internal and external sources of distress.






### Evidence Supporting Effectiveness

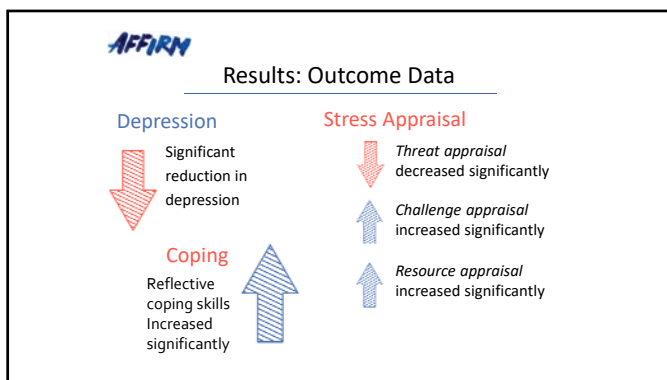
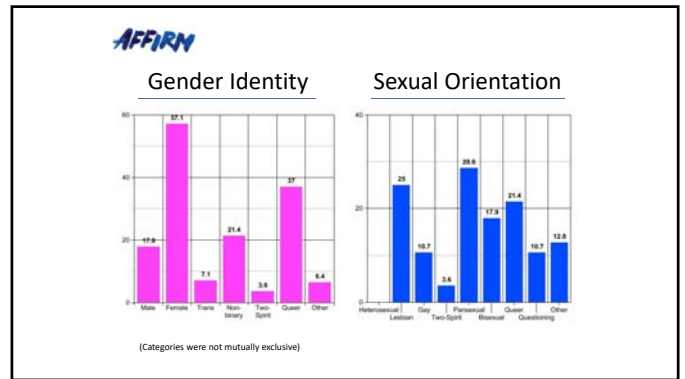
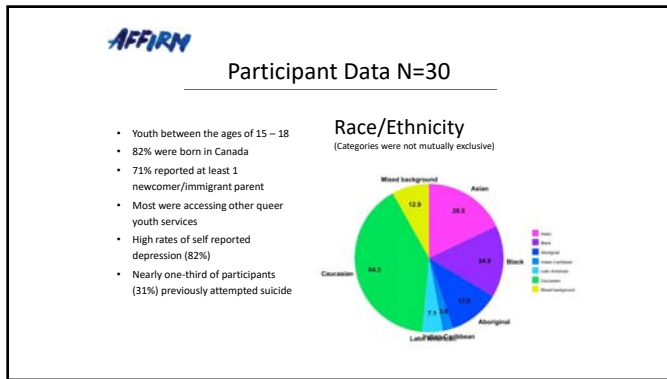
Craig & Austin, 2016



### Open Pilot Feasibility Study

A pilot implementation of the 8 module AFFIRM intervention was delivered at an LGBTQ+ Center in Toronto



**AFFIRM**

### Results: Acceptability and Satisfaction Data

Participants had high levels of satisfaction:

- 97% indicated that they learned how to deal with stress and could apply what they learned
- 90% felt AFFIRM helped them understand how feelings, actions and thoughts are connected.
- 100% stated that they were comfortable participating and discussing information
- 97% would recommend AFFIRM to other SGMY.

Qualitative data illustrate the "most" helpful aspects of AFFIRM:

- ✓ "Learning tools to deal with stress"
- ✓ "Seems to be made for queer youth and our lives"
- ✓ "Restoring my faith in humanity"
- ✓ "Learning from others' lives"
- ✓ "Coping methods"
- ✓ "Learning to validate feelings"
- ✓ "Everyone was so positive about being queer"

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### Current AFFIRM Sites

- Sites include:** foster care, schools, LGBT organizations and community-based organizations, hospitals and mental health organizations
- Many **population specific sites** that focus on care to Black/Caribbean MSM, South Asians, newcomers/immigrants, trans\*, middle age and older populations
- Translations:** Urdu, Spanish, Mandarin, French (all in process)

**Research:** Ongoing 2018-2022 randomized control trial

- 17 sites in Ontario
  - a diverse group of SGMY and young adults
- Additional outcomes including hope and sexual health

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### Thank YOU! Questions?

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<http://www.affirmativeresearch.com>

