

Are Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexual People, and Transgendered People More Suicidal than Others???

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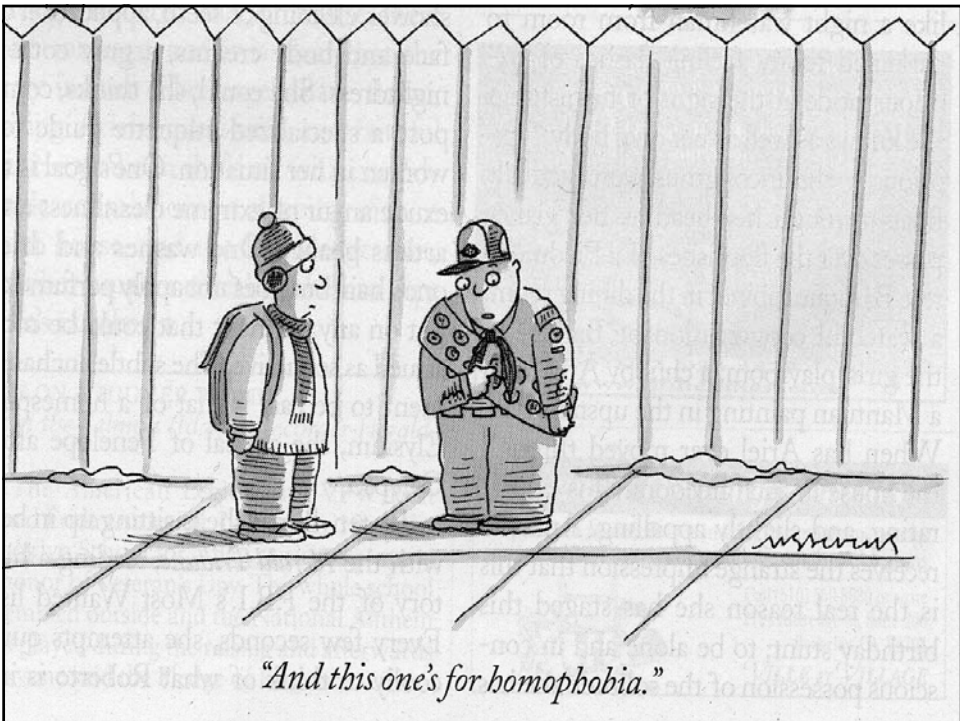
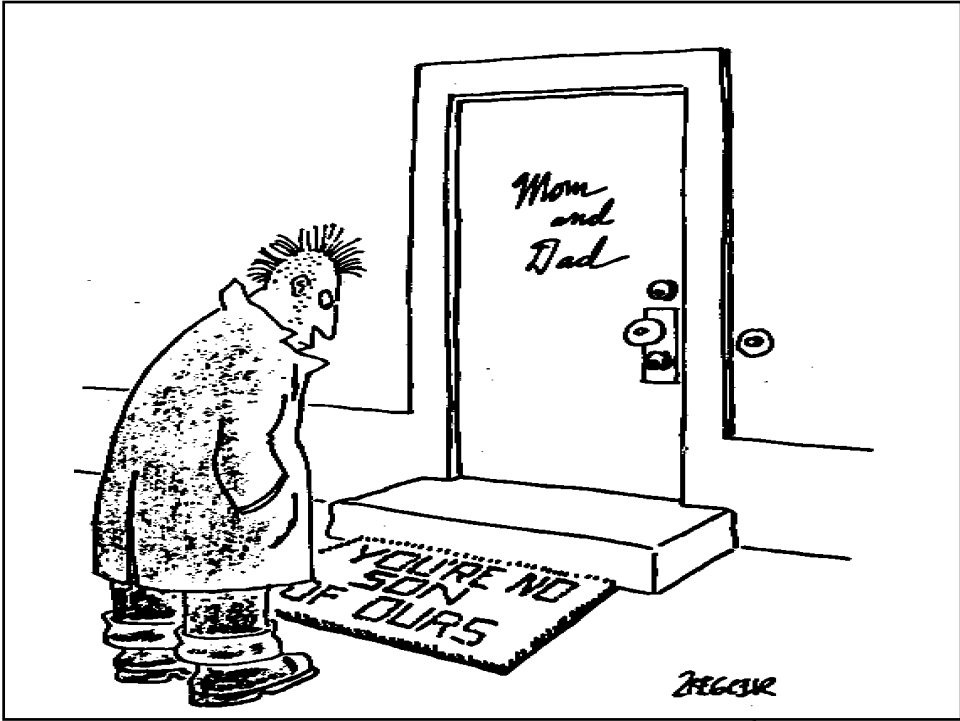
"We don't believe in pressuring the children. When the time is right, they'll choose the appropriate gender."

No (well, maybe) and Yes (McDaniels et al., 2001)

- **Mortality Studies:** No evidence, but.....
- Problems: Population? Definition and Measurement? Reporting Problems
- The Psychological Autopsy
- Can't reject the NULL

Morbidity Studies / Attempts

- Problems with definition of attempt
- No reliable national data
- Convenience sample studies: 20% to 53%
- Population-bases studies: Consistently higher
- **Attempt rates are higher**



Some LGB Youth Suicide Attempts

- (18 Y) Male experiences repetitive peer teasing > cuts wrists
- (16 Y) Female slices her throat and wrists with a blade because she had lost friends, had problems with her new stepmom, and had problems with peers at school
- (18Y) Male overdoses on pills, had been sexually assaulted by a gay man, which was very upsetting
- (16 Y) Female jumps in front of a bus; she's HIV positive, and her mother just died...she felt that "she was the only lesbian in the world."
- (16 Y) Male jumped off a fire escape after a sexual assault by his uncle.

Landmark LGBT Research

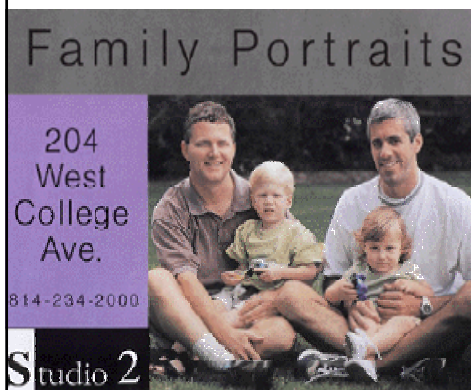
- Kinsey Studies (1948-1953)
- Evelyn Hooker's research (1950's) >
- Masters and Johnson ("HSR," "HSI," "Homo.")
- DSM- III change (1973) and DSM-IV
- Kinsey Institute studies of the 80's ("Homosexualities," "Sexual Preference")
- "The Male Couple" published (1984)
- First gay-positive youth research on males (1987)
- Federal report on youth suicide (1989)
- First gay-positive youth research on females (1990)

Landmark LGBT Research

- Research on HIV (1985....) and focus on male sexual behavior
- Research on lesbian and gay couples (late 1980s to present)
- Research on hate crimes and victimization (late 1980's to present)
- Bisexuality emerges as a sexual orientation
- Research on the "causes" of sexual orientation (...the "gay gene," twin studies, etc.)



Landmark LGBT Research



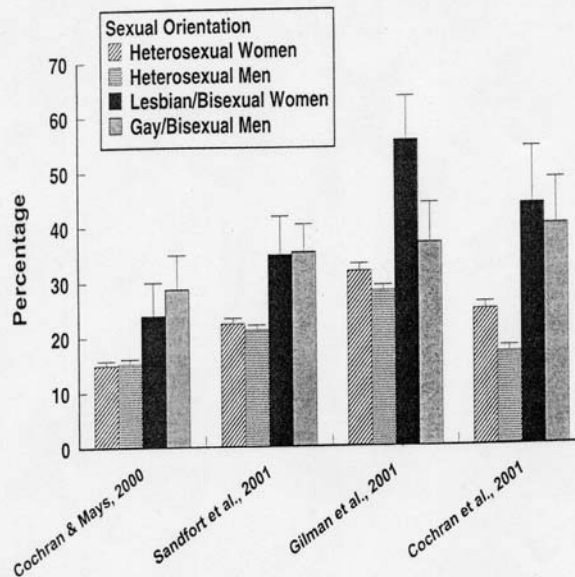
- Research on children raised by same-sex couples (1990's)
- Gerontological research on LGB older adults(1990's on)
- Research on ethnic and racial (etc.) diversity within the LGBT community (African Am, Latina/o, Asian; rural)
- Research on transgendered people
- **Population-based research**
- **Census data**

Problems with LGBT Research

- Too few studies of women!
- Too much male sexuality overgeneralized....
- Too many 20-40 YO's!
- Simplistic views of sexuality as categorical and fixed
- Not enough people of color or people from non-urban areas
- Almost no longitudinal studies (less than 10?)
- Too few studies of relationships
- Almost no studies of parents of LGBT people

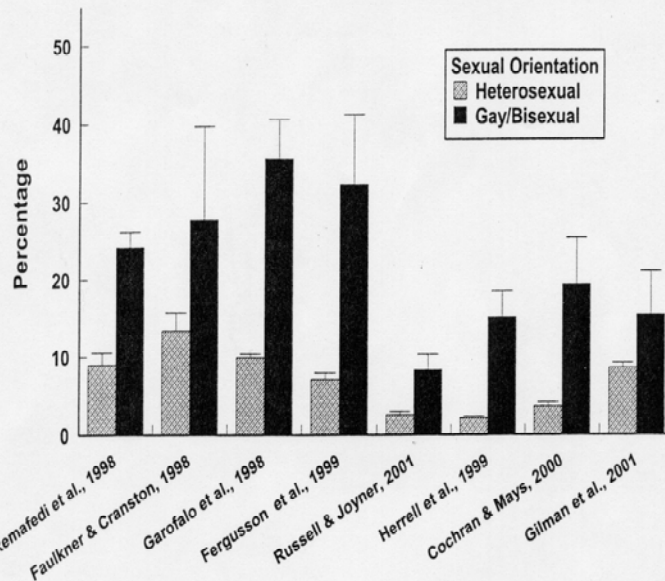


Figure 1
Population-Based Estimates of One-Year Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders by Gender and Sexual Orientation



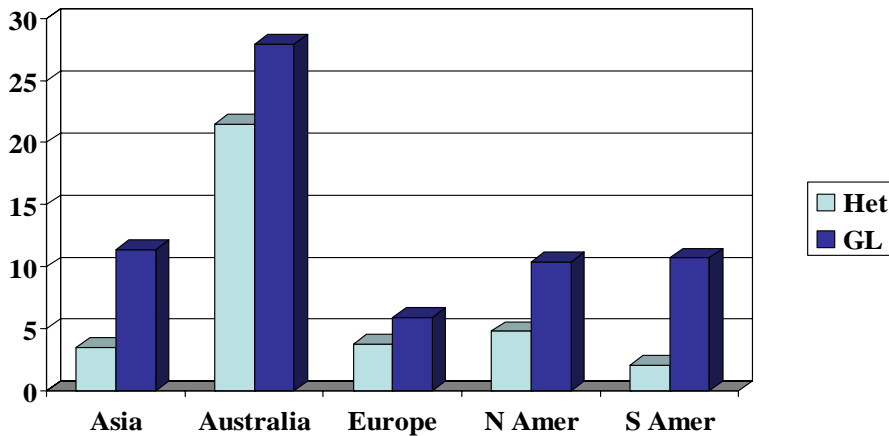
Note. Sexual orientation was estimated from reports of sexual partners' gender in the past year (Cochran & Mays, 2000b; Sandfort et al., 2001) or five years (Gilman et al., 2001) or from self-identification (Cochran, Sullivan, & Mays, 2001). Error bars depict standard errors of the estimates.

Figure 2
Positive Histories of Suicide Attempts by Sexual Orientation Across Eight Surveys

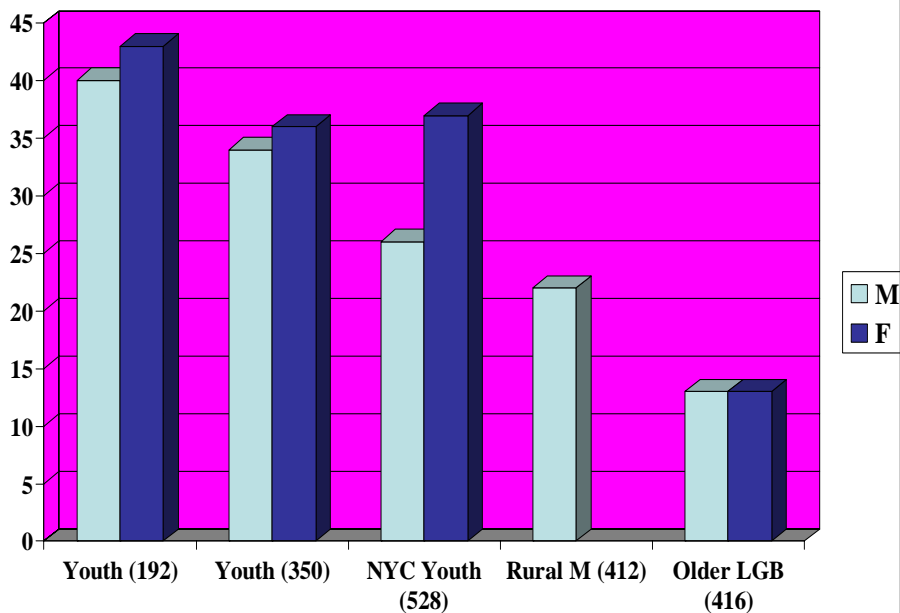


Note. These numbers are estimated for lifetime (Cochran & Mays, 2000a; Gilman et al., 2001; Herrell et al., 1999; Remafedi et al., 1998), seven-year (Fergusson et al., 1999), and one-year (Faulkner & Cranston, 1998; Garofalo et al., 1998; Russell & Joyner, 2001) periods. Error bars depict standard errors of the estimates.

Suicide and Sexual Orientation in Five Continents (Mathy, 2003)



Suicide Attempt Rates (D'Augelli)



Lesbian-Gay Bisexual Development

1. Exiting heterosexual identity
2. Developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity status
3. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual social identity
4. Becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring
5. Developing a lesbian-gay-bisexual intimacy status
6. Entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community

STRESSES ON LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL ADOLESCENTS

Normative Adolescent Development

+

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Development

A Sense of [Devalued] Difference
“Invisibility” from Self and Others
Lack of Current Information
Lack of Role Models
Lack of Social Support
Lack of Helping Resources

LEADS
TO

- Internalized Homophobia and Heterosexism•
- Personal, Familial, Social, and Interpersonal Fluctuations•
 - Rejection by Peers, Siblings, Parents•
 - Social Isolation and Loneliness•
 - Harassment, Assault, and Discrimination•
 - Indifference from Schools and Helping Professionals•
- Educational, Career, and Intimacy Development Disruptions•
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Unsafe Sex [STD's, HIV], Homelessness**
- Mental Health Problems>>>**
- Anxiety, Depression, Conduct Disorders and Suicidality**•

EARLY STUDIES OF LGB YOUTH & SUICIDE – I (D'AUGELLI & HERSHBERGER, 1993, 1997)

- 194 youth under 21 in 14 community groups
- Depression: very or extremely troubling for nearly 40%
- Anxiety: 27% of males, 16% females
- Telling family: 39% males, 36% females
- 21% sometimes thought of suicide; 8% often
- The more out, and the more parents knew, less suicidal thinking
- *42% made past suicide attempt*

Characteristics of Suicide Attempters

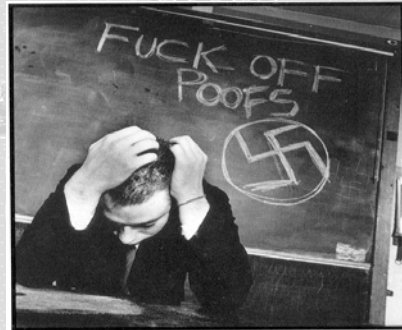


- **Aware of feelings earlier, knew they were LGB for longer periods, more years in closet**
- **More sexual experiences with same-sex partners**
- **More open about their SO**
- **More positive relats with families**
- **Males had lower self-esteem than non attempting males**
- **More likely to have past mental health care**
- **Loss of friends an important distinguishing characteristic**

Suicide Attempters

- **Five victimization types related to being LGB associated with suicid attempts: verbal insult property damage, physical assaults, and sexual assaults**
- **In structural equation modeling, victimization was related to mental health but not to suicid attempt history**

Homophobic Bullying in Schools



Early Studies-II

- **350 youth < 22**
- **35% reported past suicide attempt**
- **>half of the attempters needed medical treatment**
- **Suicide risk greatly increases by age 16 (1/4 had made attempt)**
- **57% of the attempters said attempts were related to being LGB**
- **Those whose 1st attempt related to their SO had higher internalized homophobia**
- **Many attempts occurred before mothers knew**
- **39% said a family member or friend had made a suicide attempt or suicided**
- **54% reported a suicide attempt by a close friend**



- Anthony R. D'Augelli, Principal Investigator, *Penn State University*
- Nick Salter, Project Manager
- Brian Judd, Research Assistant
- Arnold H. Grossman, Co-Investigator, *New York University*
- Jo Beecham, Project Assistant
- Liz Dahmen, Youth Coordinator

Distinct Features

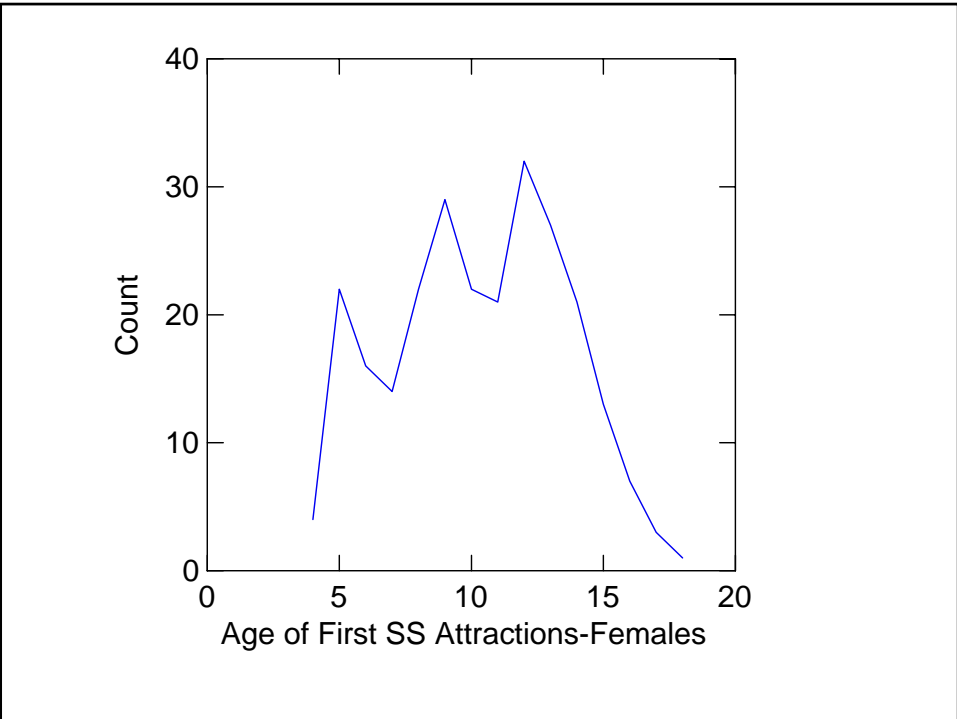
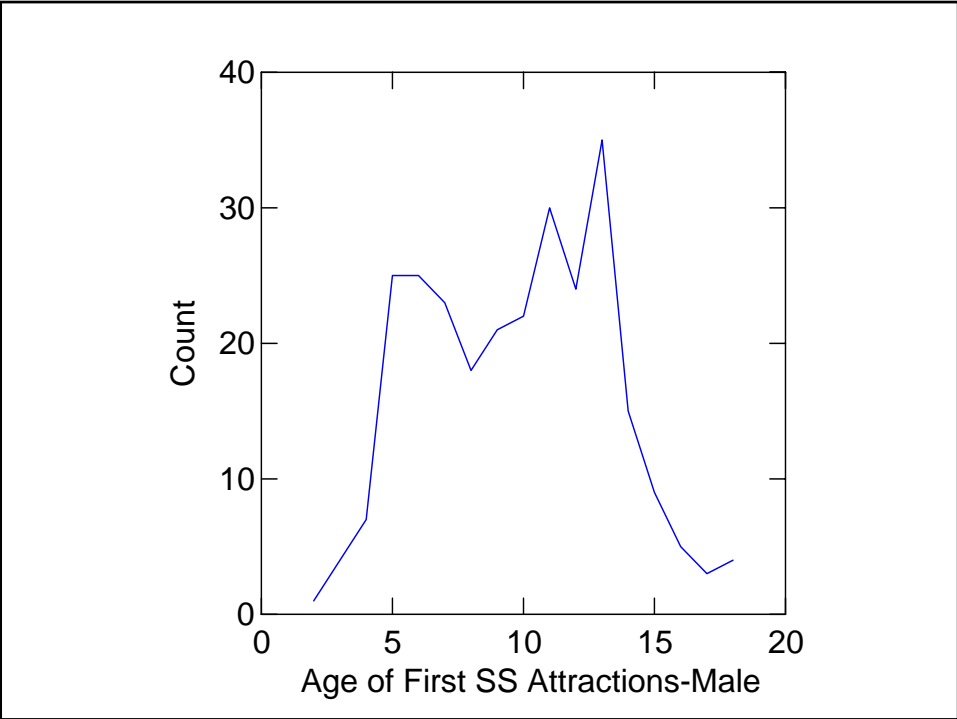
- Longitudinal Design Over Two Years
- Large Sample (~500) of Females and Males; from different ethnic backgrounds
- Youth from Diverse Sites; 15 to 19 YO
- Measurement of Different Forms of Victimization (incl. ethnic identity)
- Measurement of PTSD and Coping
- Direct Linkage of Sexual Identity Issues to Mental Health Outcomes

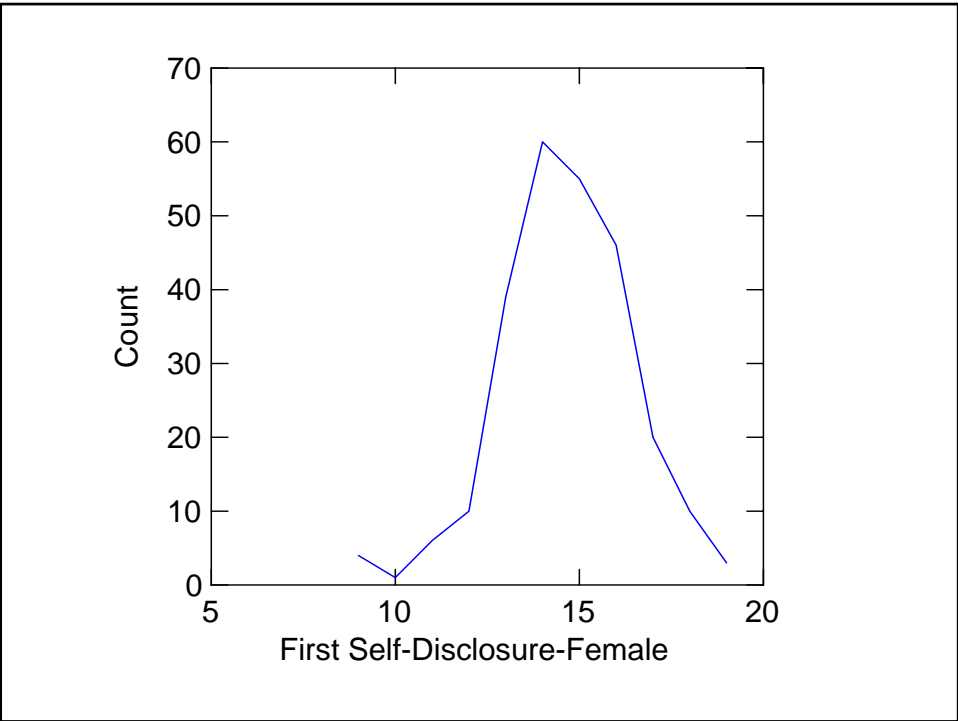
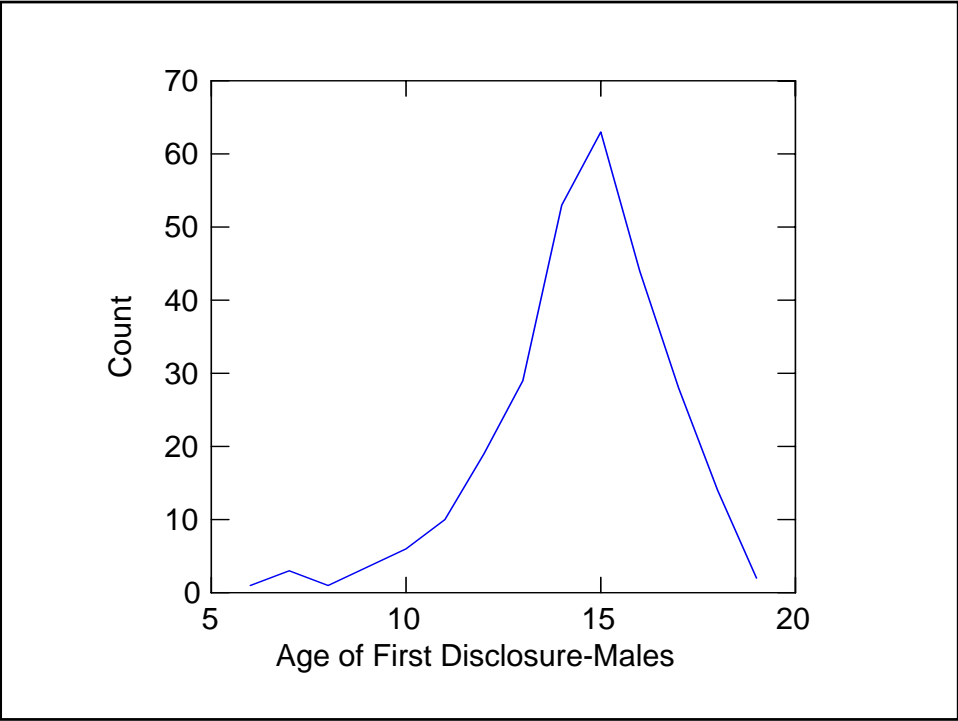
Demographics of Sample

- Wave 1 interviews: data collected from June '99--May '01
- 528 youths: 274 males, 254 females
- Age: Mean = 17.01 (range 15 to 10)
- Out in school:
 - to *everyone or most*: M 43%, F 55%
 - to *some or few*: M 34%, F 34%
 - to *no one*: M 14%, F 10%

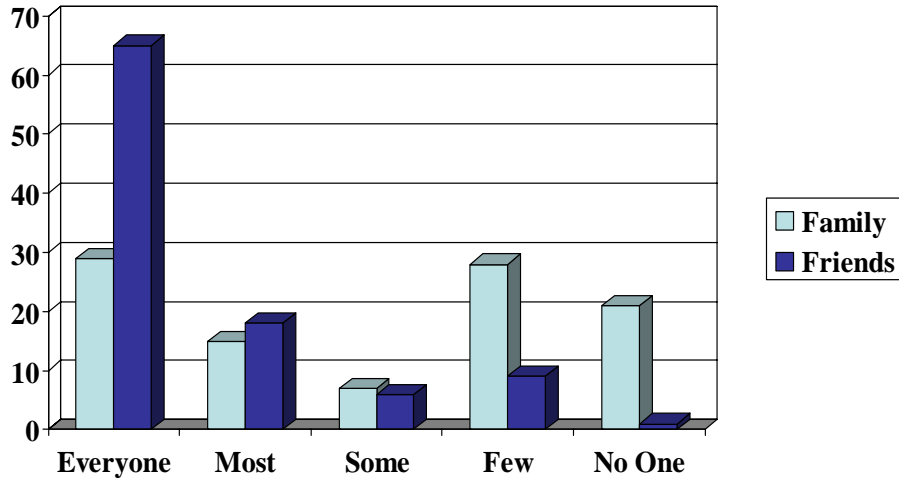
Sexual Orientation Milestones (M/F)

Feeling Different	8/8
Aware of Same-Sex Attractions	10/10
First Same-Sex Sexual Fantasies	12/13
Self-Identified as LGB	14/14*
First Disclosure	14/15
First Same-Sex Date	15/15

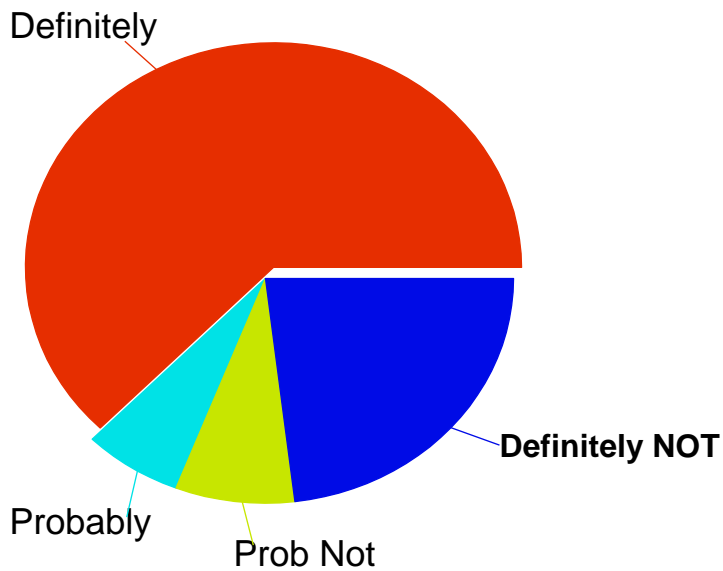




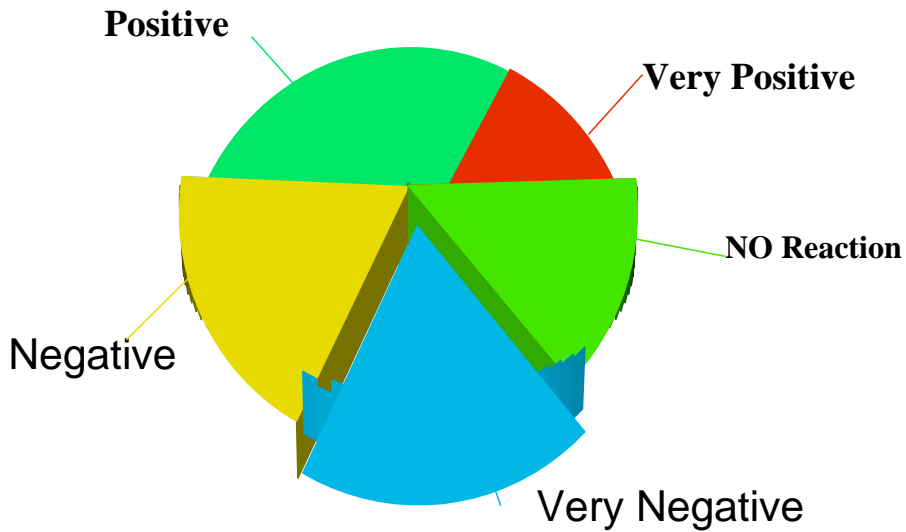
Openness with Family and Friends



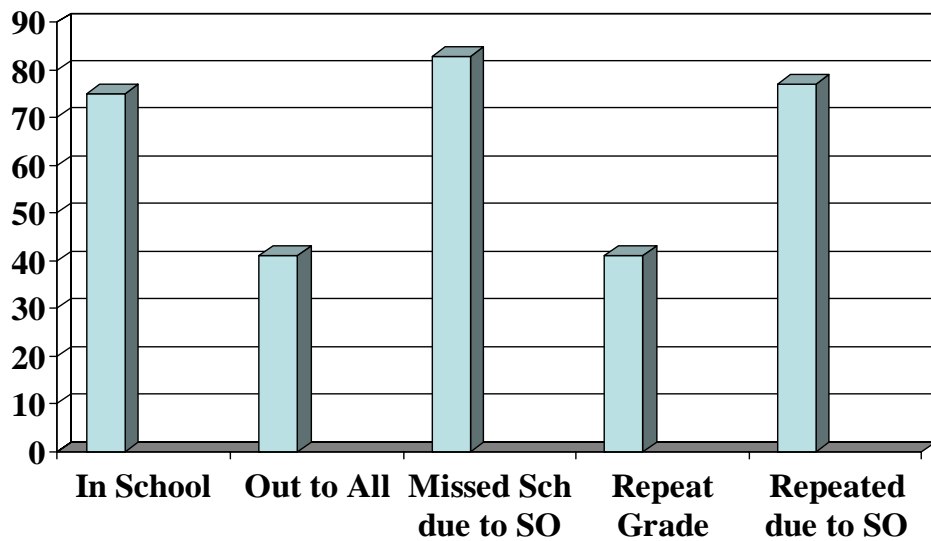
Does Adult 1 Know About SO?



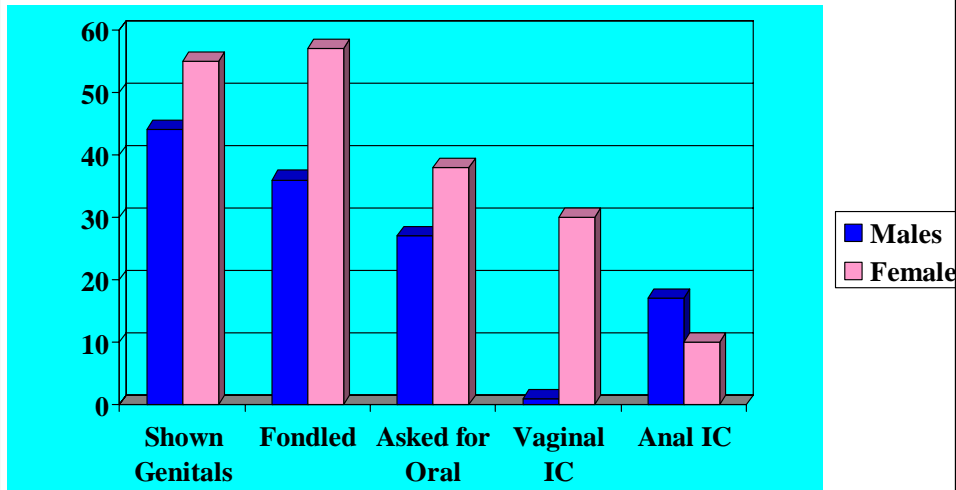
Adult 1's First Reaction



School Issues



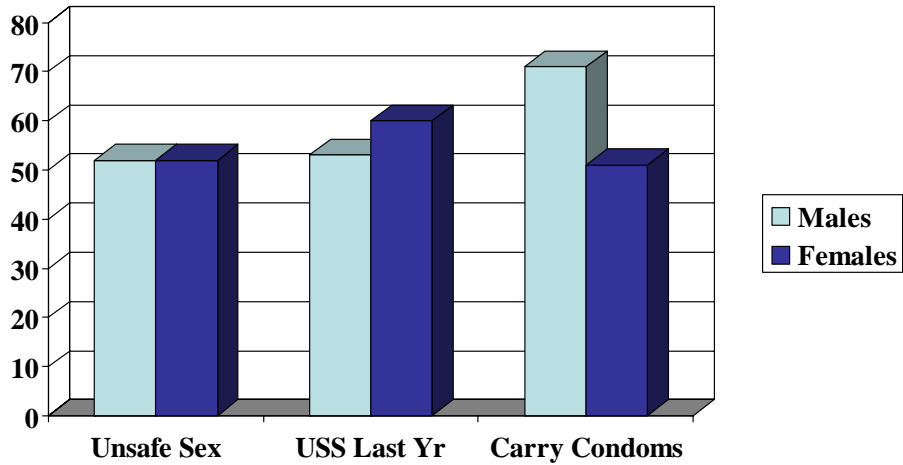
Unwanted Sexual Experiences



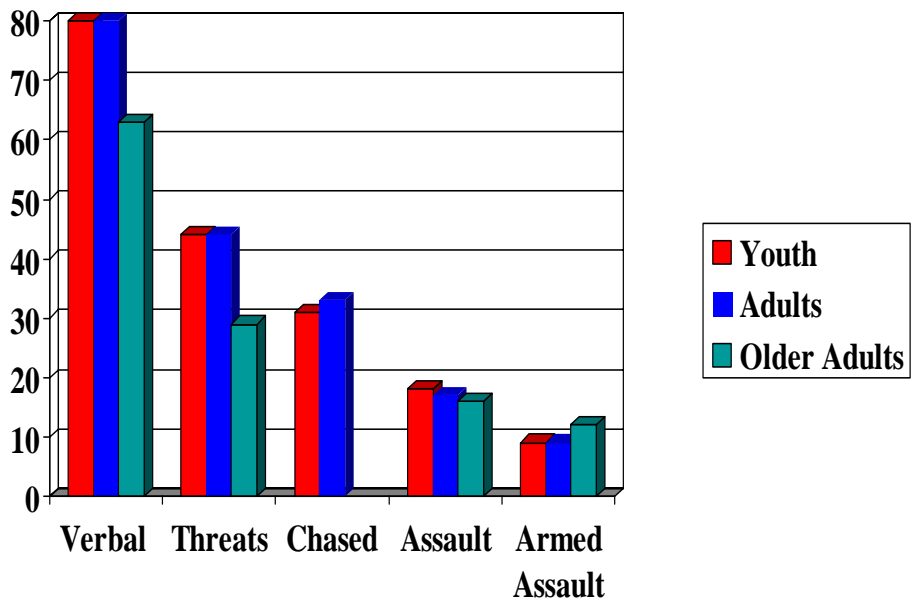
Onset of Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse starts, on average, at 12 for boys and 11 for girls
- 88% of the attackers of males were male; 6% of the attackers of females were female
- 60% were very or extremely upset by the first incident
- 40% of the boys and 13% of the girls felt the first attack was related to their SO
- Even now, lingering effects: 40% of males and 56% of females felt the incident had a bad or very bad effect on their lives

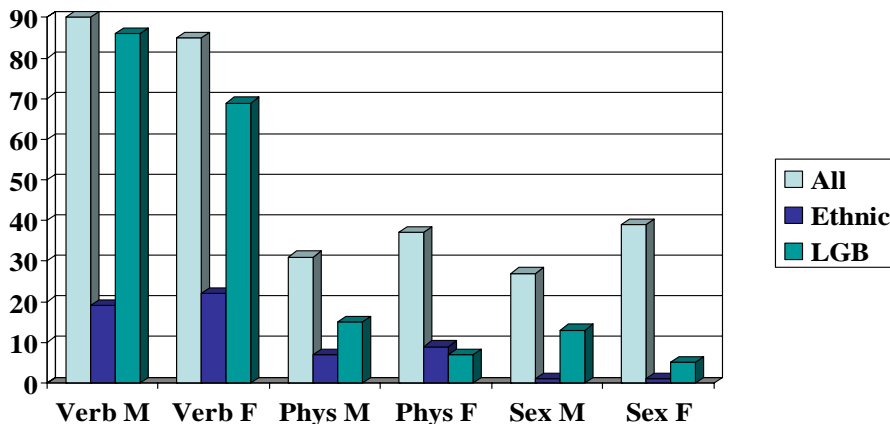
Unsafe Sex Practices (%)



Victimization of LGB People



Victimization Patterns (Q& A Project)



Mental Health Indicators

- **23% of males and 34% of females have made a suicide attempt**
- About 15% of attempts were seriously life-threatening
- Age of first attempt = 13 for males, 14 for females
- 44% of males' first attempt related to SO; 22% of females'
- Little suicidal ideation in last year (85% rarely-never)
- **15% of females and 4% of males have PTSD**

Mental Health Indicators

- **Youth with PTSD have a variety of adjustment problems significantly more often than others:**
- **Lower self-esteem, higher stress, more symptoms, more fear about harassment at school and at home, more drug use, higher depression scores**
- **Youth with PTSD use emotional coping more than other youth.**

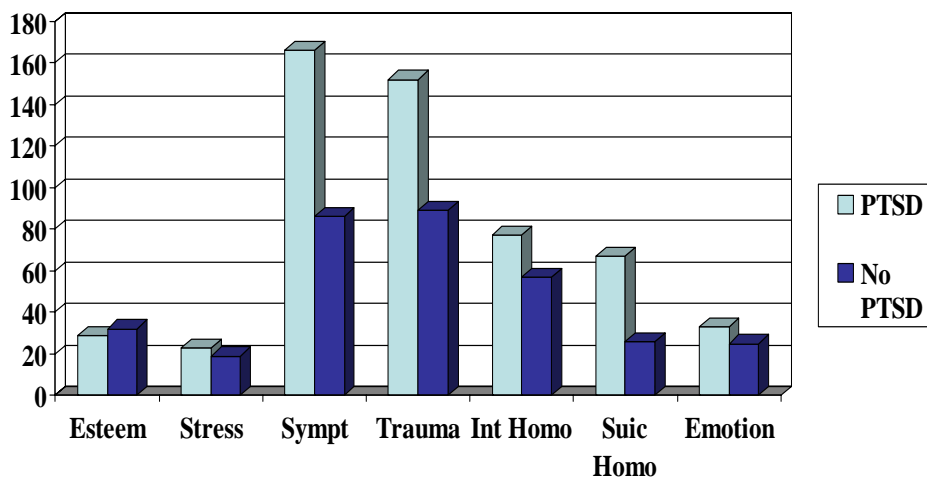
Mental Health Indicators

- 20% have had psychiatric hospitalization
- 25% have had an alcohol or drug problem
- 22% have been in foster care or a group home
- 35% had a family member in a psychiatric hospital
- 27% have been arrested, mostly for assault

Substance Use in the Last Year

- 59% cigarettes 37% daily
- 60% alcohol 8% several times/wk
- 56% marijuana 10% twice/wk; 8% daily
- 7% cocaine
- 7% speed, meth
- 14% hallucinogens-LSD, Ecstasy, Sp K 5% once a week or more

PTSD vs. No PTSD



Sexual Orientation Victimization and Mental Health Indicators

- No relationship found between any kind of SOV and mental health symptoms, including trauma.
- PTSD: 10% with verbal SOV had PTSD vs 6% with no verbal SOV
- 14% with physical SOV had PTSD vs 9% with no physical SOV
- 17% of sexual SOV victims had PTSD vs. 8% with no sexual SOV.
- **Physical and sexual SOV were associated with more suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.**

Best Predictors of LGB Youth Suicide

- Total “gay-related” verbal abuse
- History of parental verbal abuse
- Openness with parent about SO
- Openness in junior high school
- Gender atypical behavior in childhood (“sissy/tomboy”) which others criticized

