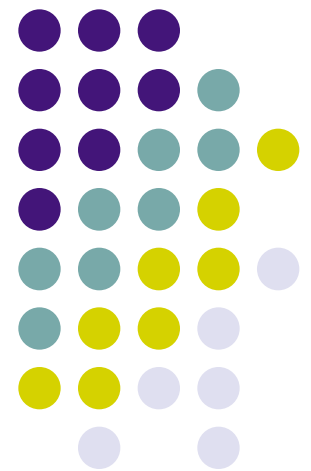


What Do We Know About the Health of LGBT Youth?

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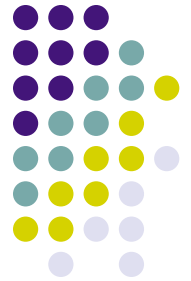


Health Status of LGBT Youth

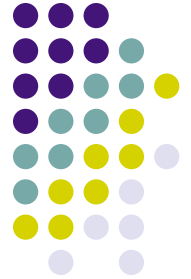


- Overall, young people are healthy and resilient
- Common developmental challenges include:
 - Physical maturation and puberty
 - Cognitive development
 - Psychological development

Additional LGBT Challenges



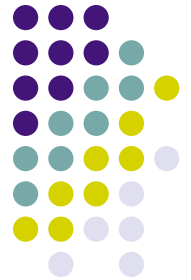
- Becoming comfortable with sexual orientation
- Becoming comfortable with gender identity
- Dealing with internal and external phobias (homophobia, biphobia, transphobia)
- Access to positive images and role models
- Limited support from influential adults/peers
- + Challenges for racial/ethnic minority youth



Methodological Challenges

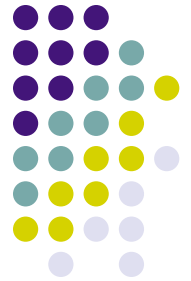
- Reliance on small, cross-sectional convenience samples
- Lack of funding, political will
- Study design may overestimate problems
- Inclusion of sexual orientation is recent and limited in scope
- Inclusion of transgendered persons is limited

Measurement Challenges (continued)



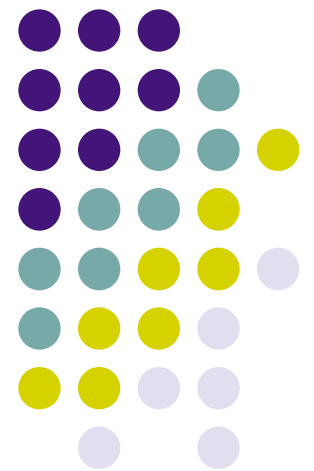
- Defining and measuring sexual orientation and gender identity
- Overcoming the reluctance of LGBT persons to identify themselves to researchers
- Obtaining high quality samples of relatively small populations

Measuring Sexual Orientation

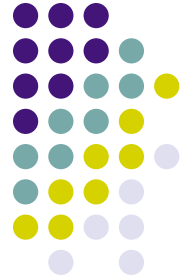


- Few national or state health surveys on youth collect data on sexual orientation
- No one method to assess sexual orientation (i.e., sexual orientation, identity, attraction, sex of partner)
- Youth may be unsure of own orientation and sexual development is fluid and ongoing
- Estimates of proportion of LGBT youth likely underestimated

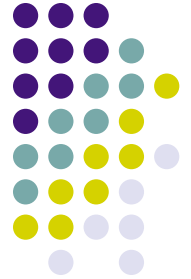
How is the Health of LGBT Youth?



Health Risks in LGTB Youth



- Mental health
- Suicide
- Violence and Bullying
- Homelessness
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Overweight and obesity
- Eating disorders
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



Mental Health Concerns

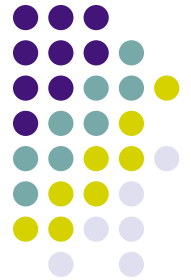
- Homosexuality itself is **not** a mental illness
- LGBT youth **may** have higher risk for:
 - Eating and body image disorders
 - Depression
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
 - Suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior



Suicidality

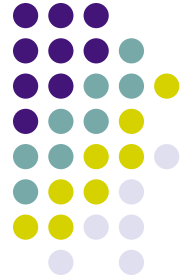
- Serious methodological challenges and limitations in this literature
- LGBT youth are 3-4x more likely to report a suicide attempt (Garofalo et al, 1999)
- LGBT youth at high risk for depression, substance use, recent suicide attempt by friend/family, and conflicts with parents
- Unique risks include more frequent and violent victimization, minority- and gay-related stress

Impact of Parental Rejection



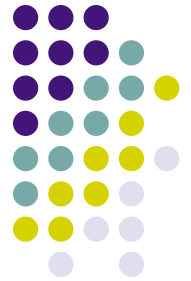
- LGBT young adults who experienced parental rejection as adolescents were:
 - Almost **6x** as likely to have high levels of depression
 - More than **8x** as likely to have attempted suicide
 - More than **3x** as likely to use illegal drugs
 - More than **3x** as likely to engage in unprotected sex

Safety, Violence, and Trauma



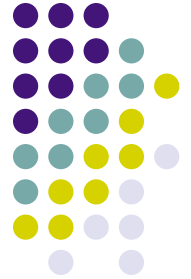
- 2009 National School Climate Survey of 7,000+ LGBT middle and high school students found:
 - 8 out of 10 had been verbally harassed at school
 - 4 out of 10 had been physically harassed at school
 - 2 out of 10 had been physical assaulted at school
 - 6 out of 10 felt unsafe at school
 - 25%+ missed school because of feeling unsafe
- Perpetrators may be family, peers, teachers, coaches, church officials, employers, police, etc

Health Effects of Bullying



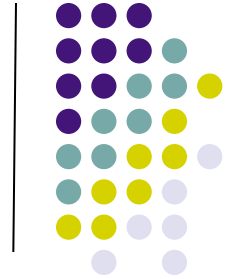
- People who are bullied:
 - Feel sad and lonely
 - Altered sleep and eating
 - Less interest in activities
 - Suicidal thoughts
 - Physical health problems
 - Miss, skip, drop school
 - Lower academic achievement
 - More violent retaliation
- People who bully others:
 - Abuse alcohol and drugs
 - Get into fights
 - Vandalize property
 - Traffic and criminal convictions
 - Drop out of school
 - Abuse romantic partners, spouses, and children

Homelessness



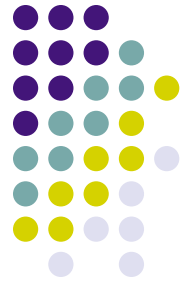
- Between 575,000-1.6 million homeless youth in any given year; ~20-40% identify as LGBT
- LGBT-specific reasons for homelessness may be to avoid violence and discrimination or as a consequence of coming out / being outed
- Additional health challenges include survival sex, substance use, victimization, violence, discrimination

Tobacco Use



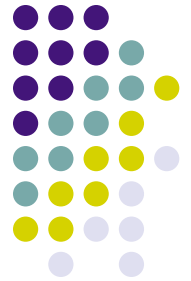
- LGB **adult** men and women are twice as likely to smoke as heterosexual counterparts
(Tang et al., 2005)
- Rates are also higher in LGB youth
(Up to 50% of LGB youth v. ~35% of straight youth)
(Ryan et al., 2001)
- Bisexual adults reported smoking rates at or above the LGB rates (Conron et al., 2008; Dobison 2008)

Alcohol and Other Drugs



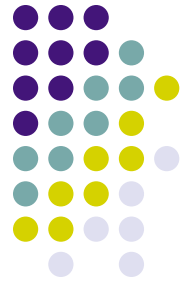
- Evidence for heavier alcohol use (Aaron et al., 2001)
& more alcohol-related problems (Wilsnack et al., 2008)
- Greater lifetime rates of marijuana, cocaine, club and other illicit drug use
- LGBT sub-groups have different use patterns

Overweight and Obesity



- Current epidemic of overweight and obesity
- Adult lesbians may still be twice as likely to be overweight or obese; similar trends for youth
(Boehmer et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2003; Austin et al., 2009)
- Significant health concern and risk factor for other chronic conditions

Body Image & Eating Disorders



- Gay and bisexual men have higher prevalence of eating disorders (Feldman & Meyer, 2007) and body dissatisfaction (Kaminski et al., 2005)
- Younger men (ages 18-29) are at highest risk
- Data on lesbian & bisexual women are mixed
 - Lesbians happier with bodies and less likely to report trying to look like images of women in the media
 - Higher risk for bisexual women, notably purging

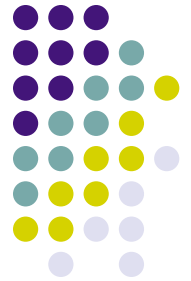
Sexually Transmitted Infections



- Men who have unprotected sex with other men are at increased risk for:
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Syphilis
 - Gonorrhea
 - Chlamydia
 - Herpes
 - Human papillomavirus (HPV)
 - Viral hepatitis A and B

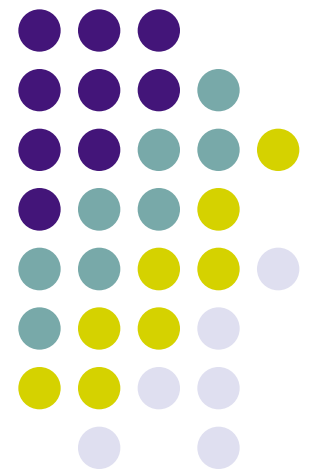
Sexually Transmitted Infections

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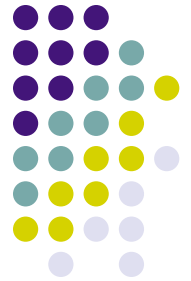


- Literature on women who have sex with women is much more limited and mixed:
 - Self-identification of sexual orientation is frequently inconsistent with reported sex of sexual partners
 - Some evidence for increased risk of bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, HSV-1, HPV, trichomonas

How Can We Better Collect Better Data?

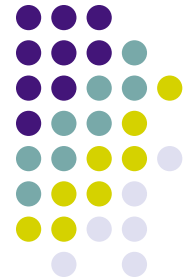


Measurement Points to Ponder



- What are the consequences for response rate depending on **how** you measure orientation?
 - Behavior more revealing than attraction
 - Self-labeling and identity can be most challenging
 - Non-responders more likely to be boys, younger students, and racial/ethnic minorities
- What happens when you include **unsure**?
 - People who skip one question skip many more

Sexual Orientation Measures



Survey Name	Sexual Orientation Question
National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)	In your lifetime, with how many [females] [males] have you had vaginal, anal, or oral sex?
National Longitudinal Survey on Adolescent Health	Have you ever had a romantic attraction to a [male] [female]?
National Survey of Children's Health	None
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)	Which of the following best describes you: heterosexual (straight), gay or lesbian, bisexual, not sure, or none of the above?

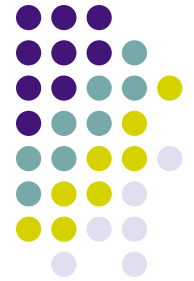
Measurement Points to Ponder

(continued)



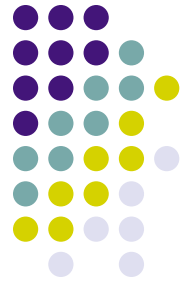
- How does **item location**, **item structure**, or **survey context** matter?
 - More items missed on first and last pages
 - Length and complexity of items, too many response options = lowest response rate
 - Who is sponsoring the study matters
 - How closely students sit next to each other matters
 - Privacy in seeking clarification matters

Recommended Wording: Sexual Attraction



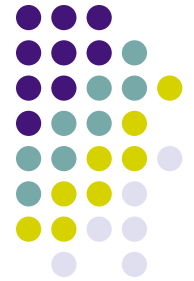
- Who are you sexually attracted to?
 - Males
 - Females
 - Both males and females
 - I am not sexually attracted to anyone yet
- Are you sexually attracted to males - Y/N?
- Are you sexually attracted to females - Y/N?

Recommended Wording: Sex of Sexual Partner(s)



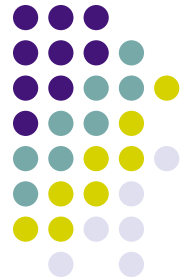
- How many different males have you had sexual experiences with in your life?
 - None, one person, two people, three or more
- How many different females have you had sexual experiences with in your life?
 - None, one person, two people, three or more

Recommended Wording: Self-Labeling / Identity



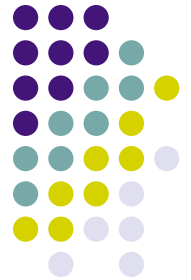
- How would you describe your sexual orientation?
 - Heterosexual (sexually attracted to the opposite sex)
 - Mostly heterosexual
 - Bisexual (attracted to both men and women)
 - Gay or lesbian (sexually attracted to the same sex)
 - Other _____
 - I am not sure yet
 - I don't understand this question

Recommended Wording: Fantasies



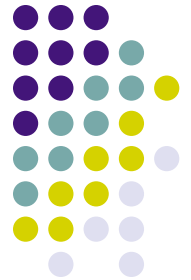
- When you think or daydream about sex, do you dream about:
 - Males
 - Females
 - Both
 - I don't daydream about sex yet

Measurement Consequences



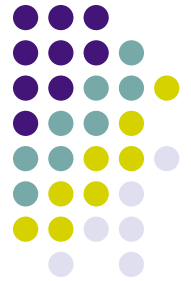
- Use of self-identification as LGBT may limit findings to youth “**out enough**” for self-report
- Use of sex of sexual partners **excludes** youth who have **not** engaged in partnered activity
- Better approach is multidimensional:
 - Sexual identity
 - Sexual attraction
 - Sexual partners

Problem of Reluctant Participants



- Research on sensitive topics heightens concern
 - Perceived as intruding on privacy
 - Repercussions of disclosure
 - Triggers social desirability
- Consequences for measurement include:
 - Refuse to participate at all
 - Decline to answer individual question(s)
 - Intentionally give inaccurate response(s)

Ways to Overcome Reluctance



- Establish trust and credibility
- Be professional, competent, and sensitive
- Choose appropriate research methods
- Guarantee anonymity -- confidentiality
 - NIH Certificate of Confidentiality

Questions

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