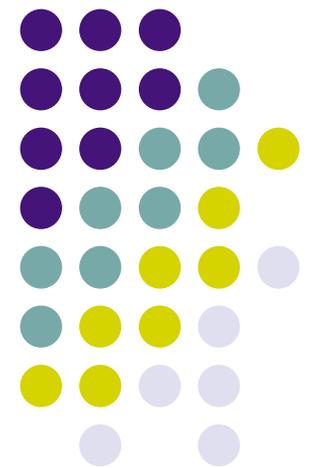
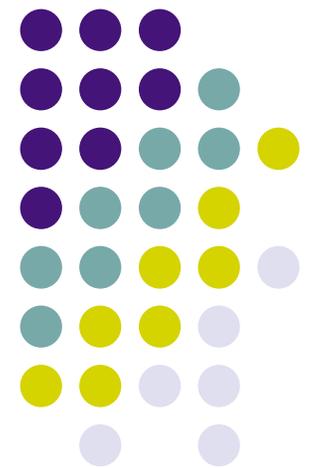


Health Status and Risks of LGBT Youth

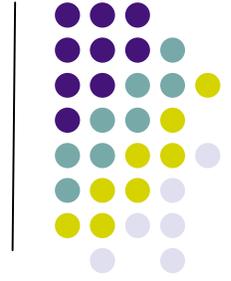
Patricia A. Wren, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor and Program Director
Health Sciences Program
School of Health Sciences
Oakland University



What Do We Know?

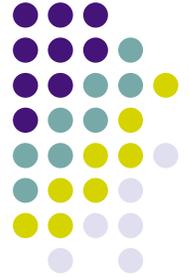


Health Status and Risks of LGBT Youth



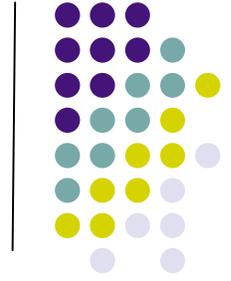
- Overall, young people are healthy and resilient
- Common developmental challenges include:
 - Physical maturation and puberty
 - Cognitive development
 - Psychological development

Additional LGBT Challenges



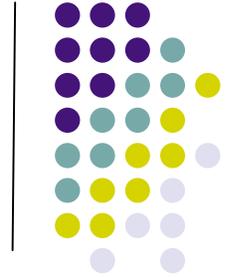
- Becoming comfortable with sexual orientation
- Becoming comfortable with gender identity
- Dealing with internal and external phobias (homophobia, biphobia, transphobia)
- Access to positive images and role models
- Limited support from influential adults/peers
- + Challenges for racial/ethnic minority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

Health Risks in LGTB Youth



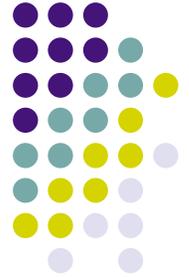
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Overweight and obesity
- Eating disorders
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Mental health
- Suicide
- Violence and Bullying
- Homelessness

Tobacco Use



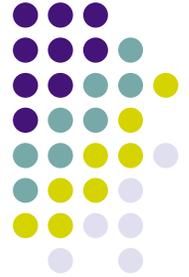
- LGB adult men and women are twice as likely to smoke as heterosexual counterparts (Tang et al., 2005)
- Rates are also higher in LGB youth (Up to 50% of LGB youth v. ~35% of straight youth) (Ryan et al., 2001)
- Bisexual adults reported smoking rates at or above the LGB rates (Conron et al., 2008;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

Alcohol and Other Drugs



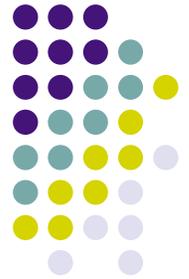
- Evidence for heavier alcohol use (Aaron et al., 2001)
& more alcohol-related problems (Wilsnack et al., 2008)
- Greater lifetime rates of marijuana, cocaine, club and other illicit drug use
- LGBT sub-groups have different use patterns

Overweight and Obesity



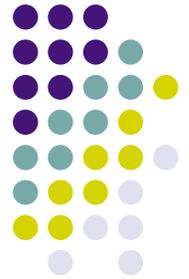
- Current epidemic of overweight and obesity
- Adult lesbians may still be twice as likely to be overweight or obese; similar trends for youth (Boehmer et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2003; Austin et al., 2009)
- Significant health concern and risk factor for other chronic conditions

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

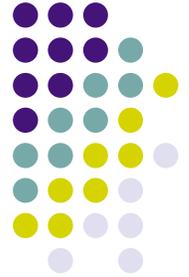
Sexually Transmitted Infections



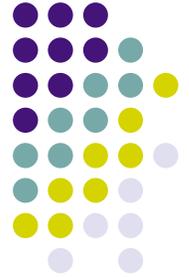
- Men who have unprotected sex with other men are at increased risk for:
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Syphilis
 - Gonorrhea
 - Chlamydia
 - Herpes
 - Human papillomavirus (HPV)
 - Viral hepatitis A and B

Sexually Transmitted Infections

(continued)



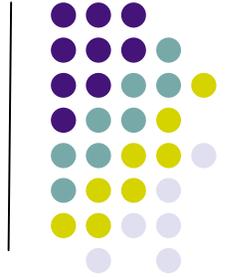
- Literature on women who have sex with women is much more limited and mixed:
 - Self-identification of sexual orientation is frequently inconsistent with reported sex of sexual partners
 - Some evidence for increased risk of bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, HSV-1, HPV, trichomonas



Mental Health Concerns

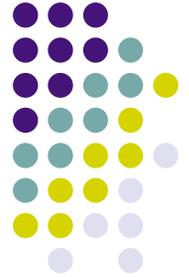
- Homosexuality itself is **not** a mental illness
- LGBT youth may have higher risk for:
 - Eating and body image disorders
 - Depression
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
 - Suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior

Suicidality



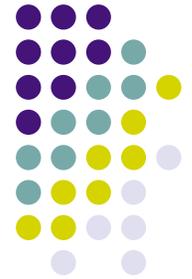
- Serious methodological challenges and limitations in this literature
- LGBT youth are 3-4x more likely to report a suicide attempt (Garofalo et al, 1999)
- LGBT youth at high risk for depression, substance use, recent suicide attempt by friend/family, and conflicts with parents
- Unique risks include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

Impact of Parental Rejection



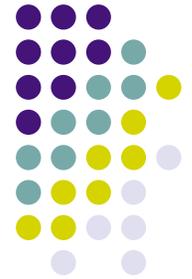
- LGBT young adults who experienced parental rejection as adolescents were:
 - Almost **6x** as likely to have high levels of depression
 - More than **8x** as likely to have attempted suicide
 - More than **3x** as likely to use illegal drugs
 - More than **3x** as likely to engage in unprotected sex

Safety, Violence, and Trauma



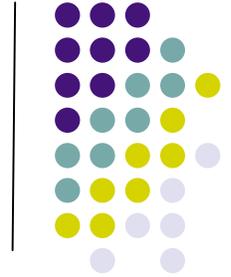
- 2009 National School Climate Survey of 7,000+ LGBT middle and high school students found:
 - 8 out of 10 had been verbally harassed at school
 - 4 out of 10 had been physically harassed at school
 - 2 out of 10 had been physical assaulted at school
 - 6 out of 10 felt unsafe at school
 - 25%+ missed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

Health Effects of Bullying



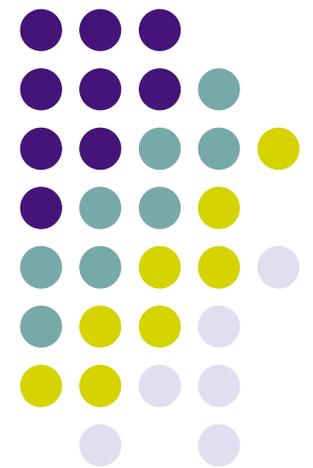
- People who are bullied:
 - Feel sad and lonely
 - Altered sleep and eating
 - Less interest in activities
 - Suicidal thoughts
 - Physical health problems
 - Miss, skip, drop school
 - Lower academic achievement
 - More violent retaliation
- People who bully others:
 - Abuse alcohol and drugs
 - Get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

Homelessness

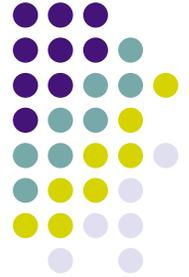


- Between 575,000-1.6 million homeless youth in any given year; ~20-40% identify as LGBT
- LGBT-specific reasons for homelessness may be to avoid violence and discrimination or as a consequence of coming out / being outed
- Additional health challenges include survival sex, substance use, victimization,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

How Do We Know It?

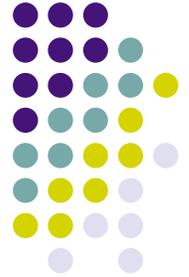


Methodological Concerns



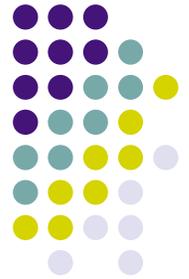
- Reliance on small, cross-sectional convenience samples
- Lack of funding, political will
- Study design may overestimate problems
- Inclusion of sexual orientation is recent and limited in scope
- Inclusion of transgendered persons is even more limited still

Measurement Concerns (continued)

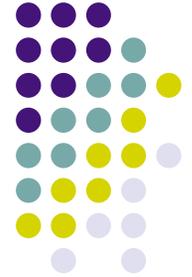


- Defining and measuring sexual orientation and gender identity
- Overcoming the reluctance of LGBT persons to identify themselves to researchers
- Obtaining high quality samples of relatively small populations

Measuring Sexual Orientation



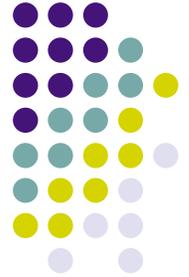
- Few national or state health surveys on youth collect data on sexual orientation
- No one method to assess sexual orientation (i.e., sexual orientation, identity, attraction, sex of partner)
- Youth may be unsure of own orientation and sexual development is fluid and ongoing
- Estimates of proportion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



Sexual Orientation Measures

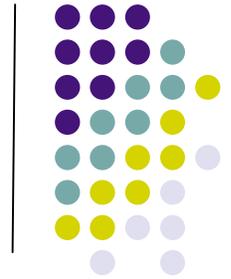
Survey Name	Sexual Orientation Question
National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)	In your lifetime, with how many [females] [males] have you had vaginal, anal, or oral sex?
National Longitudinal Survey on Adolescent Health	Have you ever had a romantic attraction to a [male] [female]?
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



- What are the consequences for response rate depending on how you measure orientation?
- How does item location, item structure, or survey context matter?
- What happens when you include “unsure?”
- When you include multiple measures, how congruent are the responses?
- What are the strengths and limitations of these methods?

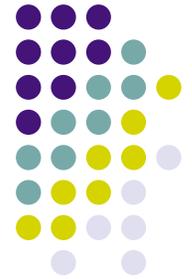
Recommended Wording: Sexual Attraction



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

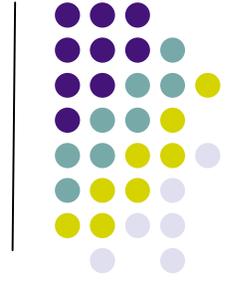
- Are you sexually attracted to males - Y/N?
- Are you sexually attracted to females - Y/N?

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



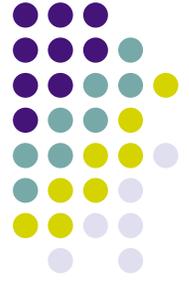
- How would you describe your sexual orientation?
 - Heterosexual (sexually attracted to the opposite sex)
 - Mostly heterosexual
 - Bisexual (attracted to both men and women)
 - Gay or lesbian (sexually attracted to the same sex)
 - Other _____
 - I am not sure yet
 - I don't understand this question

Recommended Wording: Fantasies



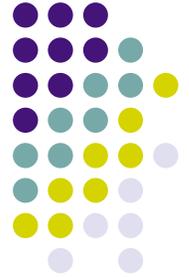
- When you think or daydream about sex, do you dream about:
 - Males
 - Females
 - Both
 - I don't daydream about sex yet

Measurement Consequences



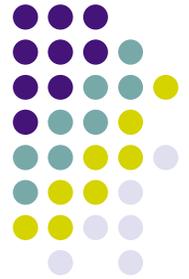
- Use of self-identification as LGBT may limit findings to youth “out enough” for self-report
- Use of sex of sexual partners excludes youth who have not engaged in partnered activity
- Better approach is multidimensional:
 - Sexual identity
 - Sexual attraction
 - Sexual partners

Problem of Reluctant Participants



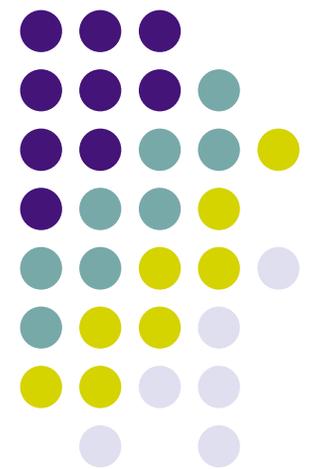
- Research on sensitive topics heightens concern
 - Perceived as intruding on privacy
 - Repercussions of disclosure
 - Triggers social desirability
- Consequences for measurement include:
 - Refuse to participate at all
 - Decline to answer individual question(s)
 - Intentionally give inaccurate response(s)

Ways to Overcome Reluctance



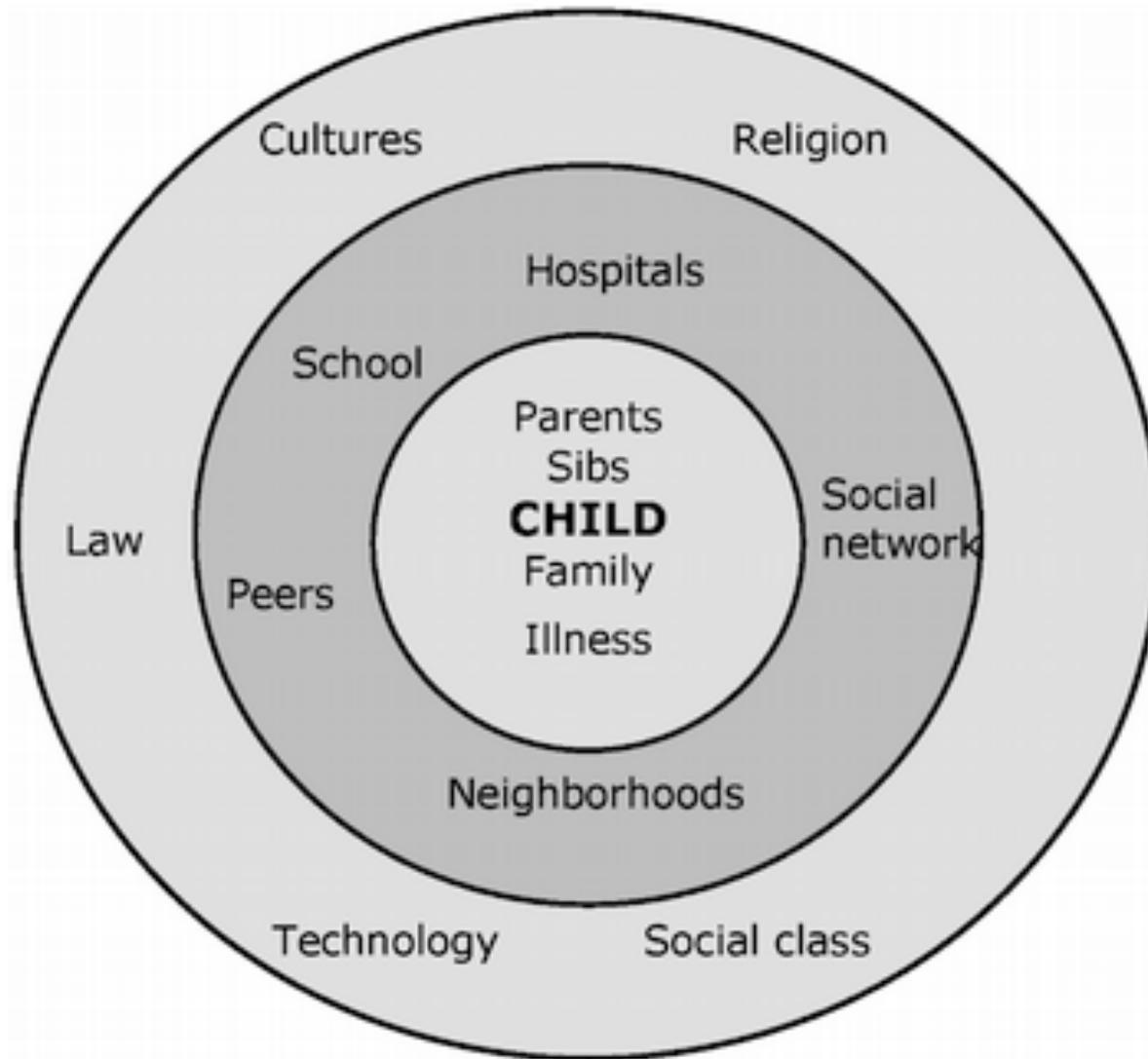
- Establish trust and credibility
- Be professional, competent, and sensitive
- Choose appropriate research methods
- Guarantee anonymity -- confidentiality
 - NIH Certificate of Confidentiality

What Should We Do About It?



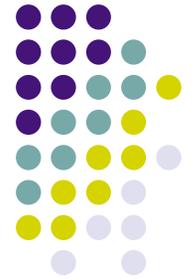


Socio-Ecological Model



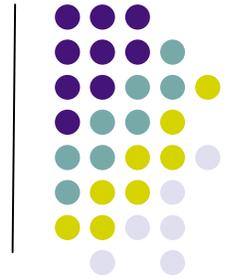
Kazak AE (2006). Pediatric Psychosocial Preventative Health Model (PPPHM): Research, practice, and collaboration in pediatric family systems medicine. *Families, Systems, & Health*; 24(4):381-395.

HEADS Interview/Conversation



- **H** - Home
- **E** - Education
- **A** - Activities
- **D** - Depression / Drugs / Diet
- **S** - Safety and Sexuality

Protective Factors for the Health of LGBT Youth



- Family connectedness, teacher caring, other adult caring, school safety (Eisenberg and Resnick, 2006)
- Schools with supportive staff, anti-bullying policies, and gay-straight alliance groups (Goodenow et al., 2006)
- Disclosing one's sexual identity can be protective but is entirely contextual