Sexual Orientation

Week 7
Objectives

1. Describe research methods for studying health across sexual orientation

2. Identify some key sexual orientation-related health disparities
Sexual Orientation Dimensions

Each dimension represents different exposures, lived experience, pathways to health outcomes.

- **Identity** ("heterosexual," "bisexual," etc)
- **Behaviors** (sex/gender of sexual partners)
- **Attractions** (attracted to males, male and females, etc)
Dimension 1: Sexual Orientation Identity

How might sexual orientation identity be linked to health?

• Exposure to discrimination/victimization, rejection by family/community

• Alternatively, immersion in communities with distinct social norms, social networks

• Norms may be good or bad for health
Dimension 2: Sexual Orientation Identity

How might *sex of sexual partners* be linked to health?

• STI transmission differs by sex of partner

• STI prevalence in sexual network

How might *gender of sexual partners* be linked to health?

• Gendered power inequities

• Gendered expectations of role in sexual encounters
Dimension 3: Sexual Attractions

How might same-sex sexual attractions be linked to health?

• Psychosocial impact of stigmatized feelings

• Even without one’s attractions being known to others
Historical Changes in Those Reporting Same-Sex Partners by Gender

% w/ Same-Sex Partners

Year


0% 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%

Women
Men

Butler Social Forces 2005
Study Population

• NHSII women consented for children
  • 9-14 years old in 1996 (N=16,882)
  • 10-17 years old in 2004 (N=10,923)
• Created new longitudinal cohorts
  • Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) 1 & 2
• Annual questionnaires
GUTS Sexual Orientation Assessment

Taps two dimensions of orientation

• Sexual orientation identity

• Attraction

Adapted from Remafedi et al. (1992)

• Minnesota Adolescent Health Survey

Included on GUTS since 1999 & ongoing

• Repeated measures on multiple waves
GUTS Sexual Orientation Assessment

Which one of the following best describes your feelings

• Completely heterosexual (attracted to persons of the opposite sex)

• Mostly heterosexual

• Bisexual (equally attracted to men and women)

• Mostly homosexual

• Completely homosexual (gay/lesbian, attracted to persons of the same sex)

• Not sure
Emergence of Sexual Orientation Over Time: Females

Ott et al. J Sex Res 2010
Emergence of Sexual Orientation Over Time: Males
Sexual Orientation Health Disparities

Observed for many outcomes

• BMI/overweight
• Eating disorder behaviors
• Substance use
• Many more

Significant sex/gender-by-orientation interactions

• Patterns vary by outcome and developmental period
Sexual Orientation Assessment

NHS2 Categories
- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Lesbian

GUTS Categories
- Completely heterosexual
- Completely heterosexual with same-sex partners
- Mostly heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Lesbian
Sexual Behavior

Compared to heterosexuals, bisexual and lesbian females are:

1. **As likely** to have sex with:
   A. Men

2. **More likely** to have sex:
   B. At a younger age
   C. With more partners
Gynecologic Care
Sexually Transmitted Infections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of STI Diagnosis in Lifetime</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely Heterosexual</td>
<td>Ref.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Heterosexual/Bisexual</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Charlton et al. *J Adolesc Health* 2010
Pap Testing

% Pap Test in Last Year

- Completely Heterosexual: 88
- Mostly Heterosexual/Bisexual: 84
- Lesbian: 70

Odds Ratio
- Ref.: 0.73
- 0.25

Charlton et al J Adolesc Health 2010
Gynecologic Care Mediators

% Pap Test in Last Year

Completely Heterosexual: 88%
Lesbian: 70%

66% variable y
33% variable x

Charlton et al Am J Public Health 2014
Gynecologic Care Mediators

- % Pap Test in Last Year
  - Completely Heterosexual: 88%
  - Lesbian: 70%

36% hormonal contraceptive use

HPV Vaccination
HPV Vaccination

Special attention is needed among boys and men, especially those males who do not identify as gay.

HPV Vaccination

HPV vaccination (≥1 dose) by sexual orientation among males

Completely Heterosexual

0.46 (0.30-0.68)

Mostly Heterosexual

0.44 (0.25-0.78)

Gay

1.0

Risk Ratio

Charlton et al In Preparation (abstract: Am J Epidemiol 2015)
Teen Pregnancy
Increased Teen Pregnancy

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<th>Risk Ratio</th>
<th>% Pregnant</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
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<th>2.28</th>
<th>1.61</th>
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<tr>
<td>Completely Heterosexual w/ Same-Sex Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly Heterosexual/ Bisexual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Potential Risk Factors

1. Gender expression/conformity
2. Identity-related stress
3. Bullying
4. Childhood abuse
5. Sexual orientation disclosure
6. LGB community involvement
7. Developmental milestones

Disparity driven by established risk factors, rather than unique risk factors

27 Charlton et al In Preparation (abstract: J Adolesc Health 2015)
Further Risk Factors

Upcoming qualitative work

1. Family composition
2. Pregnancies, abortions, contraceptive use
3. Sexual history, sexual orientation
4. Abuse
5. Stigma
6. Discrimination
Maternal Attitudes
Maternal Attitudes Assessment

- Attitudes and behaviors around Pap tests and HPV vaccines
  - A number of sexual orientation-related differences (e.g., mothers of LGB participants more likely to intend to vaccinate)
- Acceptance of diverse sexual orientations
  - Mothers of LGB participants were more accepting
- Maternal-child relationship quality
  - Mothers of LGB participants and their child were more likely to both report low relationship quality
Maternal Attitudes Predicting Daughter’s Reproductive Health

• Some maternal attitudes and behaviors around Pap tests and HPV vaccines (e.g., intention to vaccinate daughter) predicted daughter’s improved reproductive healthcare (e.g., daughter’s Pap test and HPV vaccination)

• More acceptance of diverse sexual orientations predicted daughter’s improved reproductive healthcare

• Maternal-child relationship quality less consistently predictive

• Next step: Examine mediation (e.g., sexual orientation differences)
Public Policy
Law and Policy

30% more likely to change from heterosexual to any sexual minority if living in state with same-sex marriage laws
