

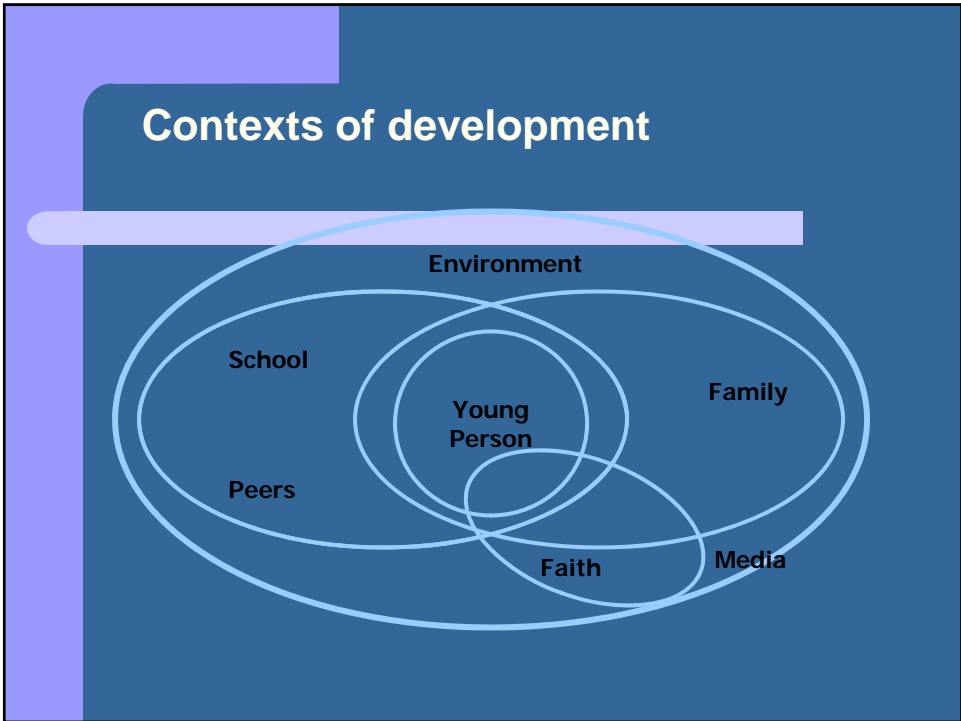
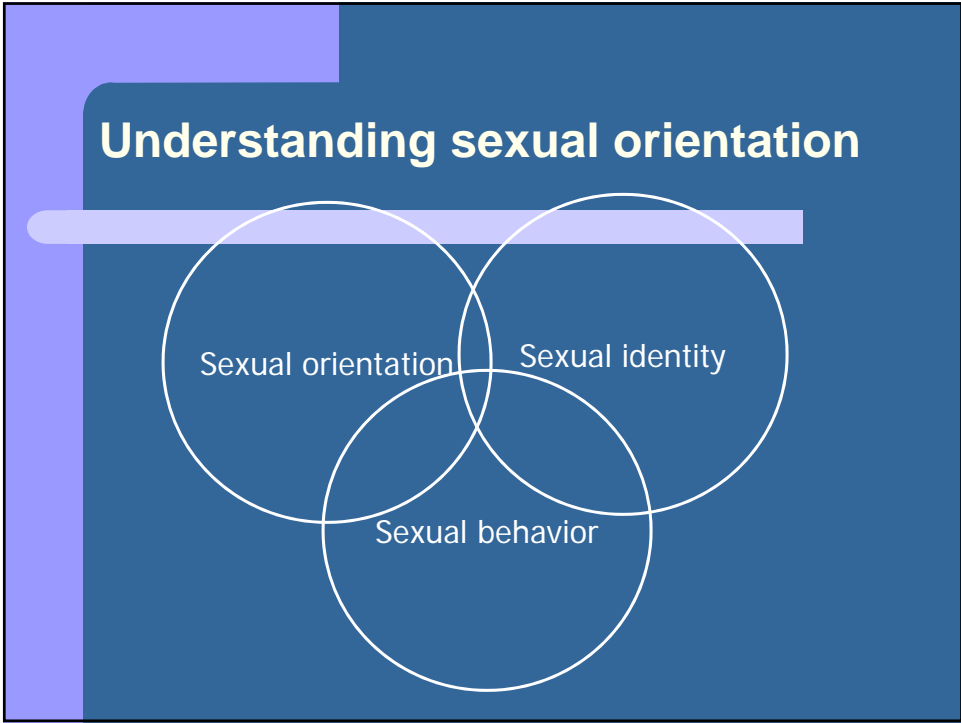
Growing up gay in the church: The role of faith in the lives of LGBT youth

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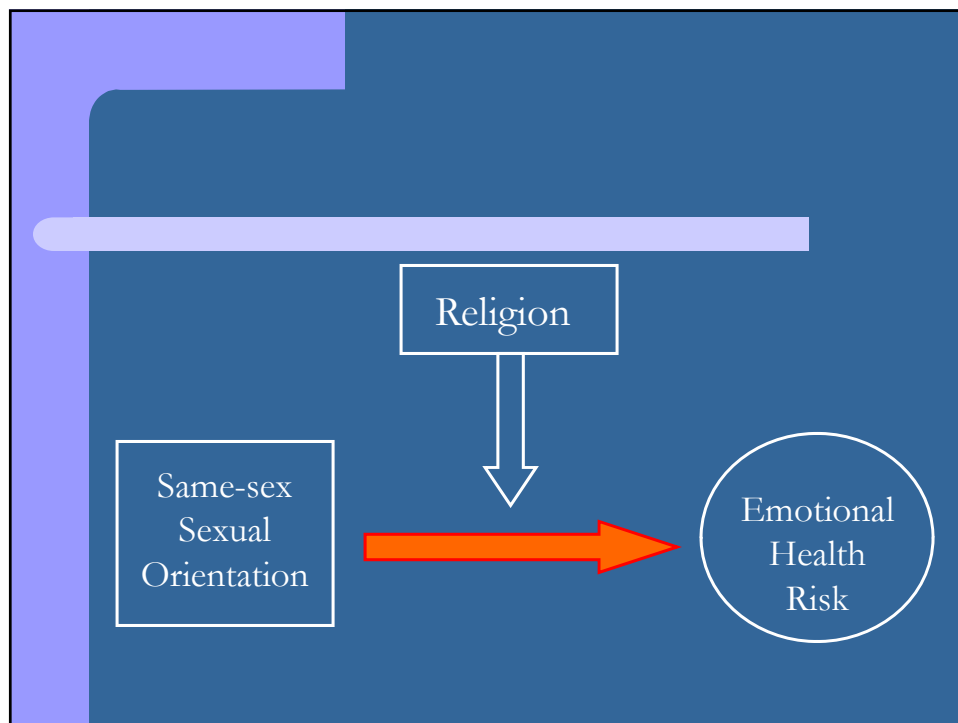
Overview

- Understanding adolescent same-sex sexuality in context
- Adolescent emotional health, sexual orientation, and religion
- Results from the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*



Sexual orientation in adolescence

- Sexual orientation, identity, and behavior develop during adolescence
- Sexual minority youth are at risk for compromised emotional health
- Most contemporary religious groups are ambivalent or negative toward same-sex sexuality



Dimensions of religion

- Religiousness
 - Private: personal importance of religion
 - Public: church attendance
- Religious affiliation

Religion in adolescence

- Religion is an important personal experience and developmental context for young people
- Majority of U.S. adolescents report being religious, and that religion is important to them
- Religiousness predicts adolescent emotional health and ability to cope with life stressors
- During adolescence, important gender differences exist for both religion and emotional health

Sexual orientation and religion

Coping with religious prejudice:

- Rejection of religion in order to maintain positive self-concept
- Compartmentalization of sexual identity and religious life
- Integration of sexual identity and religious life

Adolescence, sexual orientation, and religion

- Delayed coming out among religious youth
- Important role of religiousness of parents / family
- Possible gender differences
- Potentially important role of religious affiliation

Research questions:

1. Can compromised emotional health among sexual minority youth be explained by religious experiences?
2. Does the link between religion and emotional health for same-sex attracted youth depend on religious affiliation?

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)

- Funded by NICHD & 17 Federal agencies
- Wave 1, 1995; Wave 2 18 months later; Wave 3 available this spring
- Sampling frame: grades 7 to 12 ~ all high schools in the U.S., largest feeder schools (middle or junior high school)
- Audio - CASI (audio computer-aided self- interview) to collect sensitive information.
- Total in-home sample (n=20,704)
- Parent survey (Wave 1)

Add Health: Measures

Romantic attractions:

- “Have you ever had a romantic attraction to a male?”
- “Have you ever had a romantic attraction to a female?”

	Females	Males
Romantic Attraction	10,226	9,959
Neither sex	10.92%	12.90%
Other sex	83.75%	79.9%
Same sex	5.33%	7.15%

Add Health: Measures

- Public religiousness
 - Frequency of attending religious services
 - Frequency of attending religious youth groups
- Private religiousness
 - Importance of religion
 - Frequency of prayer
- Born again (asked only of Christians)
 - “Do you agree or disagree that the sacred scriptures of your religion are the word of God and are completely without any mistakes?”
 - Think of yourself as born again

Add Health: Measure of religious affiliation

Liberal Protestant	3.8%	786
Mainline Protestant	7.9%	1,640
Evangelical / Conservative	4.9%	1,022
Catholic	25.8%	5,351
Baptist	21.7%	4,505
Other Protestant	13.5%	2,807
No religion	12.2%	2,526

Add Health: Measures

- Liberal Protestant
 - United Church of Christ
 - Congregational
 - Episcopal
 - Presbyterian
- Mainline Protestant
 - Friends/Quaker
 - Lutheran
 - Methodist
 - National Baptist
- Evangelical / Conservative Protestant
 - Adventist
 - Assemblies of God
 - Holiness
 - Pentecostal
- Other Protestant
 - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 - Other Protestant

Add Health: Measures

- Mother's religiousness:
 - Private religiousness
 - Born again

Analysis plan

- Sexual orientation differences
 - Religion
 - Emotional health
- Research questions
 1. Can compromised emotional health among sexual minority youth be explained by religious experiences?
 2. Does the link between religion and emotional health for same-sex attracted youth depend on denominational affiliation?

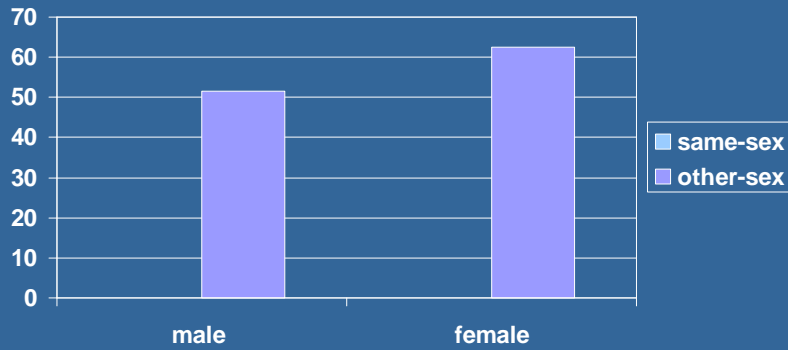
Sexual orientation group differences: Religious affiliation

- Few strong differences except for girls, those with no religion are more likely to report same-sex attraction

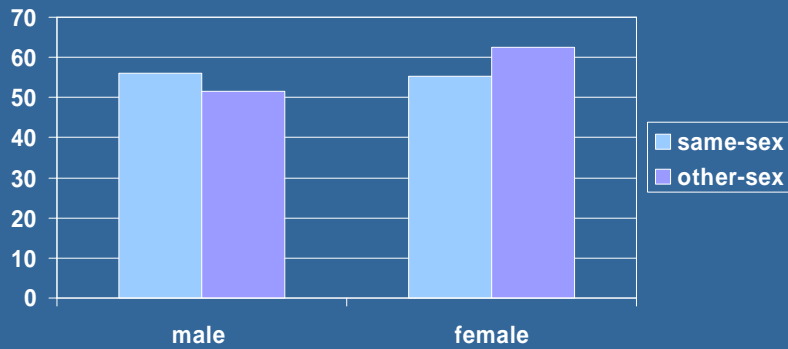
Sexual orientation group differences: Public religion

- No sexual orientation differences

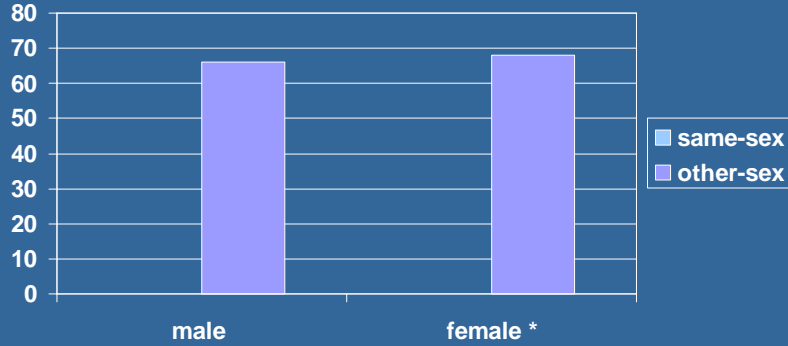
Sexual orientation group differences: Private religion



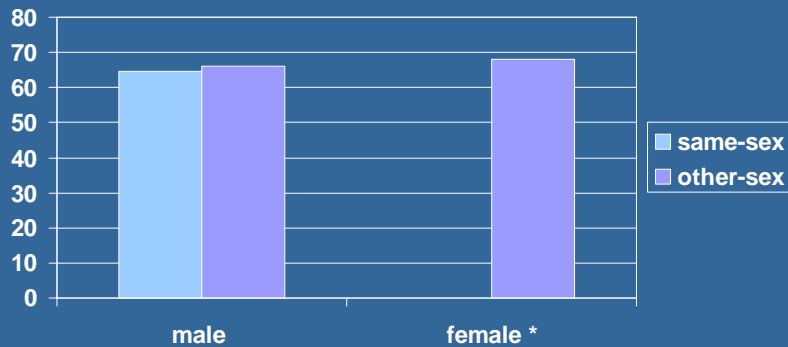
Sexual orientation group differences: Private religion



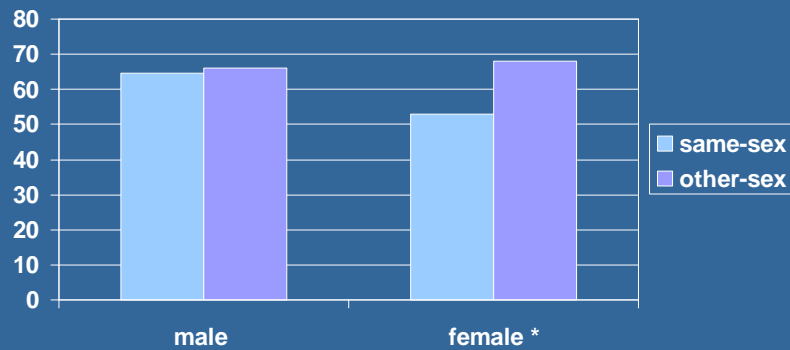
Sexual orientation group differences: Percent that are born again



Sexual orientation group differences: Percent that are born again



Sexual orientation group differences: Percent that are born again



Sexual orientation group differences: emotional health

- Same-sex attracted youth report higher anxiety and depression
- Same-sex attracted girls report lower self-esteem

Religion and emotional health: sexual orientation group differences

	Other-sex attracted		Same-sex attracted	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Depression	Affiliation	Attendance (-)	--	Attendance (-)
Anxiety	Born again (-)	Born again (-)	Affiliation	Affiliation
Self-esteem	Private (+)	Private (+) Born again (+)	Affiliation	--

The role of religion in the emotional health of sexual minority youth

1. Can compromised emotional health among sexual minority youth be explained by religious experiences?

Religious experience (religiousness or affiliation of adolescent or mother) does not fully account for sexual orientation differences in emotional health.

The role of religion in the emotional health of sexual minority youth

2. Does the link between religion and emotional health for same-sex attracted youth depend on religious affiliation?

For sexual minority boys, emotional health risk varies across faith groups.

For sexual minority girls, the effect of religiousness on depression is somewhat dependent on affiliation.

Results for boys:

- SELF-ESTEEM
 - Affiliation: Catholic sexual minority boys report lower self-esteem
- ANXIETY
 - Affiliation:
 - Liberal Protestant boys report lower anxiety
 - Catholic boys report higher anxiety
- DEPRESSION
 - Affiliation: mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Baptist sexual minority boys report higher depression
 - Born again sexual minority boys report higher depression

Results for girls:

- DEPRESSION
 - Public: frequent attendance associated with lower depression for sexual minority girls
 - Affiliation:
 - Catholic and Baptist sexual minority girls report higher depression
 - Mainline protestant sexual minority girls report less depression if they frequently attend services

Summary

- Religiousness does not fully account for sexual orientation differences in emotional health
- The influence of religiousness does not depend on religious affiliation (except for mainline protestant sexual minority girls)
- The compromised emotional health of sexual minority boys is concentrated in several religious affiliation groups (particularly Catholics)

Summary

- Religious affiliation matters for understanding the emotional health risk of sexual minority boys
- Does religion matter less for sexual minority girls, and if so, why?

Conclusions

- Where are we headed?
- What is / should be the role of supportive faith communities?

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