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The research justification for HIV prevention programming for lesbian and bisexual females

Michele L. Ybarra MPH PhD, Center for Innovative Public Health Research

Kimberly J. Mitchell PhD, Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire

*Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting CiPHR for further information.

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Decoding how technology influences and can improve public health



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Study motivation

HIV prevention programming that is tailored to lesbian (as well as bisexual) adolescents is practically **non-existent**.

This may be because there we **assume** that lesbian females are at low risk for HIV and STIs...



Image from: <http://www.aterellen.com/sugar-rush-comes-to-the-states/01/2009/>

Study motivation

Data from regional studies suggest, however, that adolescent females who self-identify as lesbian (or queer) are more likely to:

- Get pregnant,
- Engage in anal sex, and
- Engage in inconsistent condom use

compared to heterosexual adolescent females.

[Sawyc EM, Bearinger LH, Blum RW, Resnick MD.](#) Sexual intercourse, abuse and pregnancy among adolescent women: does sexual orientation make a difference? *Fam. Plan. Perspect.* 1999 May-Jun;31(3):127-31.
[Herick AL, Matthews AK, Carofino R.](#) Health risk behaviors in an urban sample of young women who have sex with women. *J. Lesbian Stud.* 2010;14(1):80-92. doi: 10.1080/10894160903060440.
[Stevens PE, Hall JM.](#) Sexuality and safer sex: the issues for lesbians and bisexual women. *J. Obstet Gynecol Neonatal Nurs.* 2001 Jul-Aug;30(4):439-47.

Study motivation

How these data translate to national samples (as local samples may not necessarily be representative of the larger population) is not well understood...

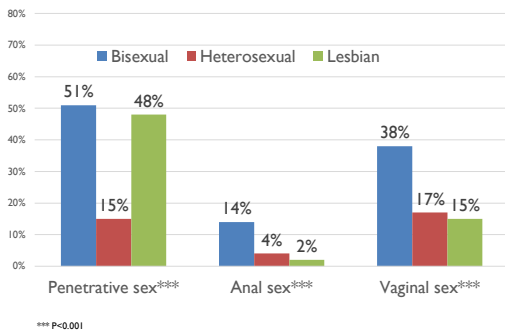


Image from: <http://www.drwendyschwartz.com/Los-Angeles-Marriage-and-Family-Counseling/category/teens/page/2/>

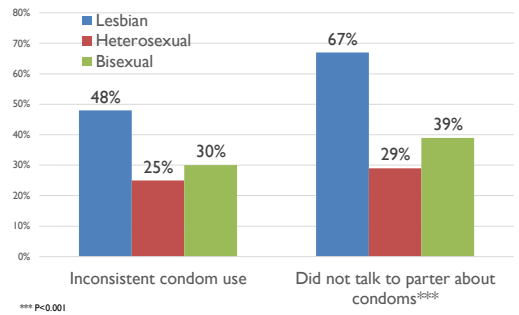
Teen Health and Technology survey methodology

- A national survey of 5,542 13-18 year olds (3,011 of whom were female) was conducted in August 2010 – January 2011
- Included an oversample of LGBT youth
- Data were conducted online.
- Data were weighted to approximate a representative national sample of U.S. adolescents.
- Measurements of sexual activity:
 - Consensual vaginal sex was asked with the following question: "Have you ever, when you wanted to, had sex where a penis went into a vagina?"
 - Receptive anal sex was queried: "Have you ever, when you wanted to, had sex where someone's penis went into your anus?"
 - Penetrative sex was queried: Have you ever, when you wanted to, had sex with another person that involved a finger or sex toy?"

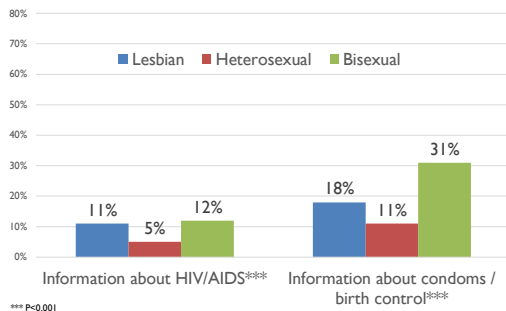
Ever sexual experience (n=3,011)



HIV risk behavior among females who have ever had sex



HIV protective behavior: Using technology to search for health information (n=3011)



Limitations

- As with all self-report measures, some youth respondents may not have accurately disclosed sensitive topics.
- The representativeness of the sample is based upon the weighting. Findings should be replicated.
- Sexual identity is fluid in adolescence. It is possible that lifetime rates of sexual activity include some youth who first self-identified as and engaged in sexual behavior consistent with a heterosexual identity; and subsequently identified as lesbian.

Conclusions

- The current findings add to the negligible literature documenting HIV risk and protective behavior among lesbian and bisexual females.
- More needs to be done to ensure that lesbian and bisexual youth have the specific, necessary information they need to make healthy sexual choices.
- Given their use of the Internet to access sexual health information, technology-based HIV prevention programs (i.e., those delivered online, via text messaging, or a combination of the two) seem likely feasible and acceptable to deliver healthy sexual education to lesbian and bisexual females.