

SUICIDE AND LGBT+ PEOPLE

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SUICIDE ASSESSMENT & PREVENTION

- The prevention of suicide is very difficult, for many reasons
- A lot of our knowledge comes from participants that have attempted suicide, and attempts are qualitatively different events compared to completed suicides
- Suicidal behavior is not one thing
- Determining what the various cognitive and behavioral risk factors are, and then assessing for them, is the main approach to prevention

LGBT + SUICIDE ASSESSMENT &

PREVENTION

- ▶ Much research examines the separate or additional risk factors for LGBT+ people, warranted by the increased rates
- ▶ A 2015 nationally representative study found that roughly one-third of non-heterosexual high school students reported attempting suicide in the past 12 months, relative to 6% of heterosexual students
- ▶ Globally, transgender people have a 50% chance of dying by suicide or homicide
- ▶ The general consensus among researchers is that, while individual cases are complex, stigma is an overarching theme in the cause of suicidal behavior in LGBT+ people

GENDER AND BIOLOGICAL SEX

- ▶ A person's biological sex is not the same as their gender
- ▶ Biological sex refers to your basic physical make-up, and is determined by genetics
- ▶ Your gender is what you display to the world; it's the behavioral, psychological, and social gender characteristics of each person
- ▶ Both are expected in our society to fall into one of two categories (male or female) but neither biological sex nor gender identity work in a neat, binary manner

KLINFELTER'S SYNDROME & TURNER'S

SYNDROME

- ▶ Ostensibly male, but XXY (ovum had two X chromosomes)
- ▶ 1 / 700 live births
- ▶ Underdeveloped genitalia
- ▶ Tall, feminized body
- ▶ Low testosterone levels
- ▶ Low sexual desire
- ▶ Gynecomastia
- ▶ Infertile
- ▶ XO (Ovum with no sex chromosome is fertilized by a sperm with an X chromosome)
- ▶ Ostensibly female
- ▶ 1/2500 live births
- ▶ Sex organs underdeveloped

MULTIPLE SYNDROMES EXIST

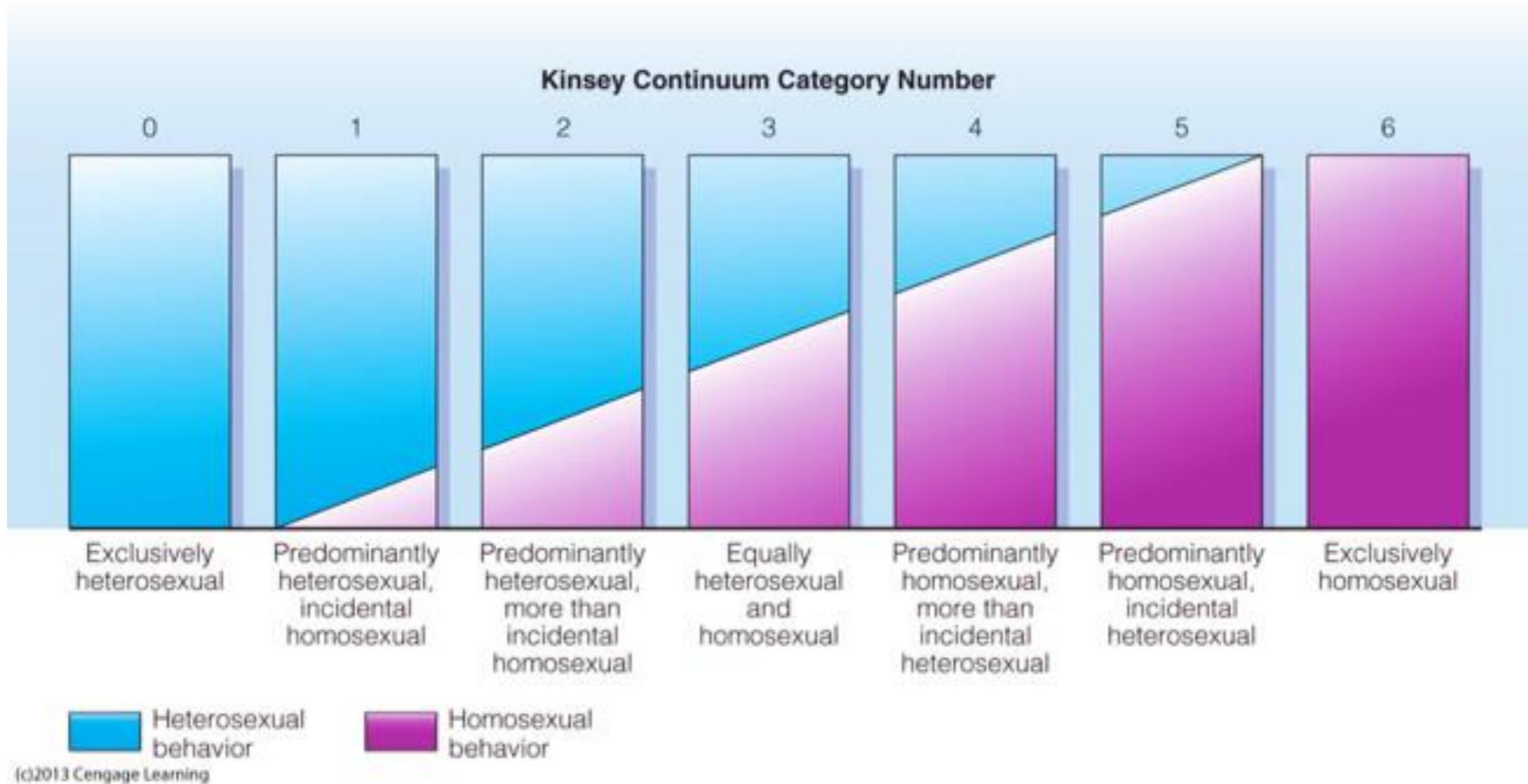
- ▶ Embryos can also develop as XXX and XYY when an extra chromosome is carried by the male gamete
 - ▶ Ostensibly male (XYY) or female (XXX)
- ▶ Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome
 - ▶ XY embryo which does not respond to the testosterone produced in utero
 - ▶ Genetically male, with a feminized body and no internal reproductive structure
- ▶ Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia
 - ▶ XX female exposed to excess androgens prenatally
 - ▶ Masculinized external sex organs

SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER, AND

BIOLOGICAL SEX

- ▶ Our basic social premise that people are either biologically male or biologically female is not correct
- ▶ A person's gender identity is separate from their biological sex, and is determined by genetic and environmental factors
- ▶ A person's sexual orientation refers to the sex or gender they are romantically and sexually attracted to, and this is also determined by genetic and environmental factors
 - ▶ E.G. Older brothers finding
- ▶ These three may 'line up' but they often do not

THE KINSEY CONTINUUM



KLEIN SEXUAL ORIENTATION PROFILE

The Klein Sexual Orientation Grid

| | Past | Present | Ideal |
|--------------------------------------|------|---------|-------|
| A. Sexual attraction | | | |
| B. Sexual behavior | | | |
| C. Sexual fantasies | | | |
| D. Emotional preference | | | |
| E. Social preference | | | |
| F. Self-identification | | | |
| G. Heterosexual/homosexual lifestyle | | | |

- 0 = other sex only
- 1 = mostly other sex, incidental same sex
- 2 = mostly other sex, more than incidental same sex
- 3 = both sexes equally
- 4 = mostly same sex, more than incidental other sex
- 5 = mostly same sex, incidental other sex
- 6 = same sex only

SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER, AND

BIOLOGICAL SEX

- ▶ Our society's common conceptions about biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are overly simplistic
 - ▶ All people are not all 'one or the other'
- ▶ Embedded into our societal practices are many things that tell people they should be one or the other in terms of gender, and that their gender identity and sexual orientation should match
- ▶ Our society also tells us which variations are preferred
 - ▶ As is the case with ethnicity
- ▶ When children and adolescents start to comprehend their LGBT+ status, they already know that it is generally unaccepted in society

FACTORS RELATED TO LGBT+ SUICIDE

- ▶ Many studies find the same factors are involved in both attempted and completed suicides by LGBT+ people, all of which are connected to the overarching concept of stigma
 - ▶ Lack of acceptance by others
 - ▶ Internalized homophobia (shame and other negative feelings about their identity)
 - ▶ Increased incidences of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse than LGBT+ people without suicidal history
 - ▶ Increased incidences of physical and sexual abuse than LGBT+ people without suicidal history

FACTORS RELATED TO LGBT+ SUICIDE

- ▶ Much work has been done to address the issues of stigma and lack of acceptance, particularly socially
 - ▶ E.g. the 'It Gets Better' project
- ▶ It is easier than ever to access information and messages that affirm LGBT+ identities, and [challenge misinformation](#)
- ▶ It is also more difficult to escape the messages that condemn
- ▶ Much recent work on bullying focuses on the prevalence of social media in the lives of younger people
 - ▶ Calling for people to kill themselves has become very popular in online bullying

STIGMA AND LGBT+ SUICIDE

- ▶ It is very difficult for us to truly comprehend what it is like to be in the position of another person
- ▶ It is also very difficult for people with majority identities to understand what it is like to be marginalized because of a core part of your identity, that you did not choose, and cannot change
- ▶ E.G. identifying as heterosexual means that you can 'come out' whenever you like
- ▶ Try imagining what it's like to have to worry about being abandoned, fired, beaten, marginalized, etc. each time

PREVENTING LGBT+ SUICIDE

- ▶ To address LGBT+ suicide, prevention needs to not only focus on the traditional elements that it would for any individual or group (e.g. alleviating depression), but also the sociocultural environment
 - ▶ Hence the recurrent recommendations that prevention strategies be implemented in various settings
- ▶ A recent study found that a 7% drop in suicide figures for LGB adolescents is directly attributable to the passing of national marriage equality
 - ▶ i.e. positive messages save lives
- ▶ No similar, national message exists for transgender people