

The impact of transphobia on HIV risk behaviors among male-to-female transgenders in San Francisco

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Background

- Male-to-female transgenders (MtF TGs) are at high risk for HIV infection due to their unique social context.
- Transphobia, akin to homophobia, is defined as discrimination against TGs from individuals and society, and is often perpetrated against MtF TGs.
- Experience with transphobia can contribute to TGs' risk-taking behaviors.

Methods

Study 1

- Seven focus groups with 48 MtF TGs.
- All participants were African American, Asian/Pacific Islander (API), or Latina.
- Topics addressed included transitioning experience, sexual behaviors, substance use, and social services.

Study 2

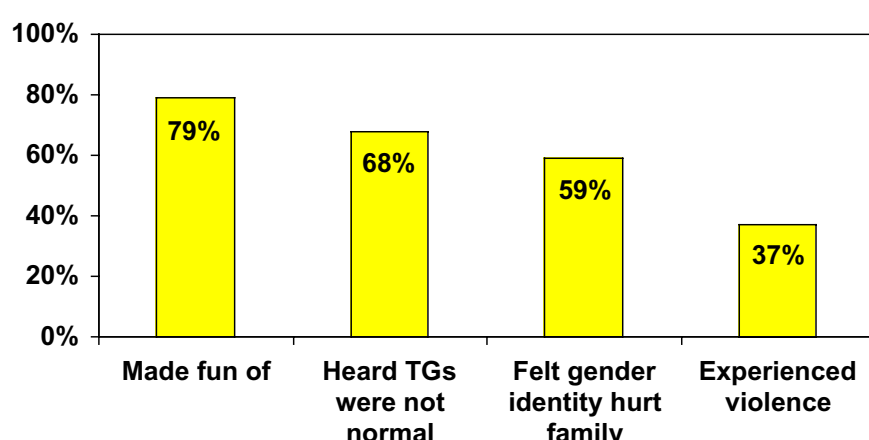
- Cross-sectional study with 332 MtF TGs.
- All participants were African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Latina.
- Analyzed questions relating to transphobia and HIV risk

Demographics

| | Focus groups N = 48 | Cross-sectional N = 332 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Mean age (range) | 35 years old (19 — 55) | 34 years old (18 — 60) |
| Ethnicity | 33% African Am. 31% API 25% Latina 10% Mixed/other | 34% African Am. 33% API 33% Latina |
| Birthplace | 50% U.S.-born 48% foreign-born | 42% U.S.-born 58% foreign-born |
| Highest education level | 27% < than HS 27% HS grad 46% > than HS | 37% < than HS 22% HS grad 41% > than HS |
| Sexual orientation | 54% Heterosexual 27% Homosexual 4% Bisexual 2% Asexual 2% Lesbian | 85% Heterosexual 10% Homosexual 5% Bisexual |
| Commercial sex work history | 89% ever 46% currently | 100% ever 36% currently |

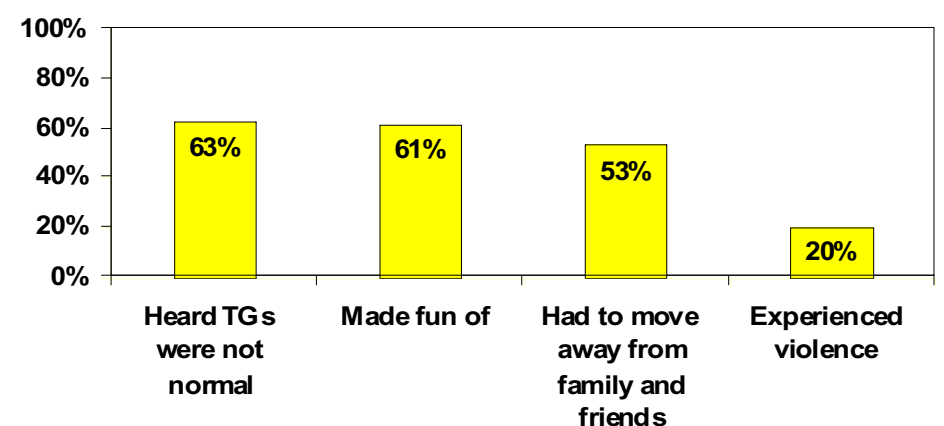
Transphobia as a child

- *“And I was more comfortable playing with girls than boys. I can't identify myself playing with boys. My mom tried to spank me, 'You're not a girl.' I stick that into my mind.”*
- *“My mother, she had heard everything, you know, 'well I heard that you were wearing women garments,' and all that. So what she did, she made me go upstairs and get totally dressed...and come back downstairs so the whole family could see. And I've never been so humiliated in my life.”*

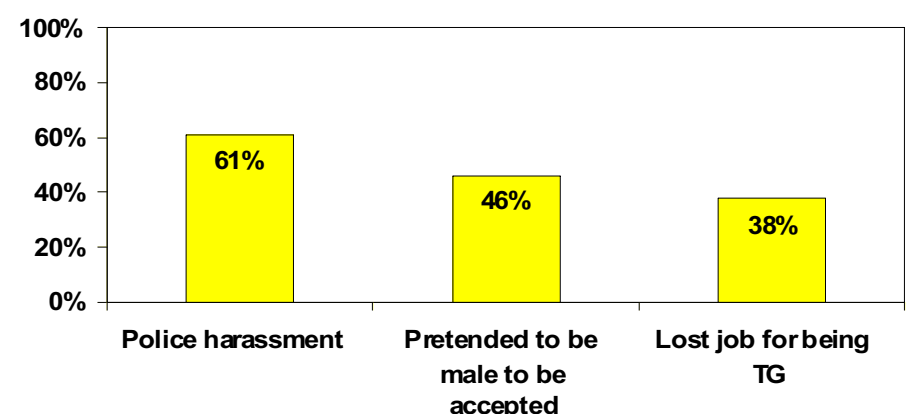


Transphobia as an adult

- *“When they get something on TV about transgenders, they try to make a joke out of it, like it's funny.”*
- *“I'm transgender, so I have to take this guy that thinks less of me and wants to beat me up and hit and hurt me and all that stuff. Because you have to stop and wonder, why is he with me...if he can't get a woman and can't get a man.”*



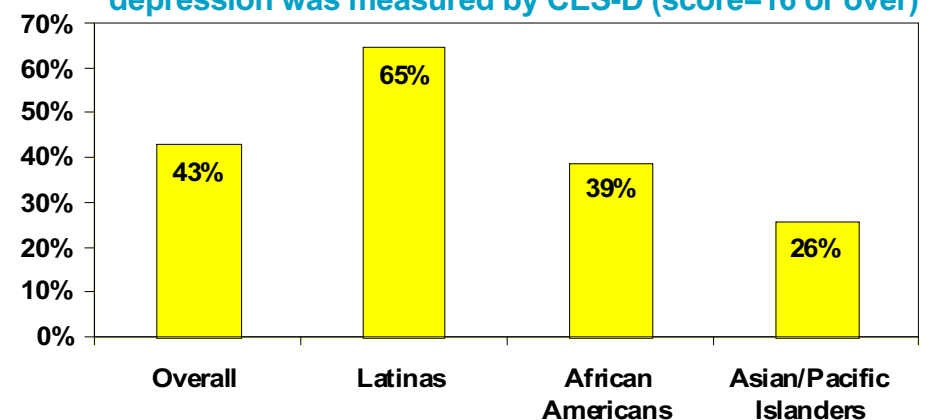
- *“They (the police) always treat you as a man and they take you with the rest, and when you're at the Sheriff's Department, you arrive and it is all about laughter with them all.”*
- *“If we have...a regular job where we won't be discriminated, or we'll have an equal opportunity to fight for a position, I don't think most of us (would) end up in this particular kind of profession (commercial sex work).”*



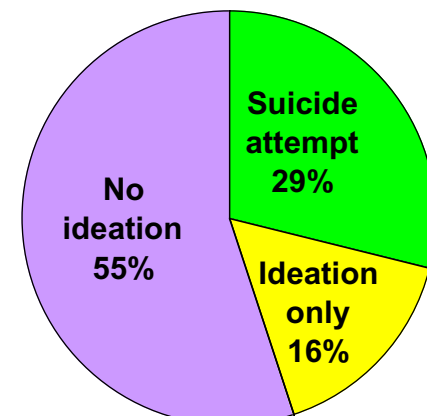
Mental Health

- *“The reason I tried speed was because I was depressed. And I combined speed and marijuana and alcohol.”*
- *“I can't force him to love me because he doesn't really care about me. As far (as) sex, I don't use protection. Sometimes I allow him to penetrate me because I love the guy.”*
- *“At first I thought everyone committed suicide, until about seven years ago. We've seen a lot of girls take their own lives, so I thought that suicide was common.”*

Prevalence of depression, by race or ethnicity, current depression was measured by CES-D (score=16 or over)



Suicide



Recommendations

- Future research with MtF TGs should include interventions addressing the relationship between transphobia and drug use and or HIV risk behaviors.
- To minimize transphobia, education should have multi-dimensional approaches (e.g., in the classroom, via the media, through policy and legislation).

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