

# **Affirmation, risk, and resilience: Messages from the research with LGB and T youth**

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## **Ritch C. Savin-Williams**

- Same-sex-attracted youth are characterised as healthy, resilient, and mature; able to integrate their attraction to members of the same-sex with their emergent identities

Savin-Williams, R. C. (2005). *The new gay teenager*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

## **California Healthy Kids Survey**

**(7.5% bullied because of actual or perceived sexual orientation)**

## **Matched-Pairs Study**

(Rivers & Noret, *in press*)

- **Sample drawn from a study of 2,002 school pupils (aged 13-15 years)**
  - 53 pupils who indicated a same-sex attraction were matched with 53 pupils who indicated an opposite-sex attraction

### **Matching criteria:**

age (mean: 13.8 years); sex (36m/17f); ethnicity; socio-economic status; family and home life; presence/absence of boy-friend/girl-friend; exposure to bullying (victimisation, perpetration & observation).

## **Key Messages**

- The pupils in our study are not “out”;
- They remain vulnerable;
- They are concerned about their sexual orientation (they have not integrated it into their being);
- They will seek someone outside the family to confide in (e.g. school nurse)

Rivers, I. & Noret, N. (2008, in press). Well-being among same-sex and opposite-sex attracted youth at school. To appear in *School Psychology Review*

## **We did the same analyses (using a matched pairs design) on children raised by lesbian couples**

Rivers, I., Poteat, V.P., & Noret, N. (2008, in press). Victimization, social-support, and psychosocial functioning among children of same-sex and opposite-sex couples in the United Kingdom. To appear in *Developmental Psychology*.

### **Resiliency & Protective Factors**

- **What do we know?**
  - School is “gay sensitive” (Blake *et al*, 2001);
  - Support from other LGB peers and pre-adolescent sense of being “different” (Anderson, 1988)
  - Successful “coming out” to at least one parent (Savin-Williams, 1989a)
  - Positive attitudes towards sexual orientation (Savin-Williams, 1989b)

### **Resiliency & ‘Coming Out’: Current research**

- Psychological factors
  - inductive and deductive reasoning;
  - understanding social, familial and cultural perspectives;
  - understanding ‘conditionals’  
e.g. “if ‘A’ then ‘B’”.

#### **Understanding Decision Making**

- **Conditionals:**
  - goals/consequences
  - reward/punishment;
  - cooperation/non-cooperation;
  - promise/threat;
  - positive/negative affect