

ABSTRACT

Through analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) and supplemental in-depth interviews of young adults, I propose to investigate how variation in heteronormativity within high schools impacts the well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) self-identified young adults and the construction and disclosure of sexual identity in young adulthood. While initiatives have been undertaken to make schools safer for sexual minority youth and to study the impact of LGB organizations within schools, less research has been aimed at understanding the subtle yet pervasive influence of heterosexist norms within our social institutions on the repression and stigmatization of sexually marginalized feelings and identities. Such research has implications for the health and well-being of all youth, regardless of sexual identity or orientation. I plan to build on my prior analysis of Add Health data, which found that levels of heteronormativity within schools moderates the relationship between adolescent same-sex attraction and well-being. This study has the potential to bring attention to the power of socializing institutions such as schools to reinforce or undermine the reproduction of stigmatizing beliefs and practices.