Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

Angela Irvine, Ph.D.
Ceres Policy Research
Survey Design

- Collaborative between major partners (Youth Law Center, NCLR, Legal Services for Children, JDAI Practitioner)
- Surveys were piloted with LGBTQ and straight youth in Santa Cruz County
- Surveys were reviewed and modified by the Annie E. Casey JDAI management team
Methods

• Short survey to parallel JDAI work on gender
• Six sites representing a range of regions (south, midwest, west) and size (small, medium, large)
• 2000 surveys completed anonymously, sealed in envelope, placed in lock boxes, sent to Ceres for entry and analysis
• Surveys analyzed using SPSS statistical analysis
Respondents

• Age ranged from 11-21, with an average age of 15.7 years old.
• 81% boys, 19% girls, .2 transgender
• 18% White, 1.6% Asian, 29% Latino/Hispanic, 36.5% African American. 3.5% Native American, 11% other
Respondents

- 87% have a straight sexual orientation;
- 8% have a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning sexual orientation, a transgender identity, or report being attracted to the same gender;
- 5% reported that they had been kicked out of their home or run away for their sexual orientation or gender identity; or been bullied or harassed at school for their sexual orientation.
Gender Differences in Disclosure Rates

- 6% of boys and 17% of girls report LGBQ sexual orientations, transgender identity, or same sex attraction.
- These figures jump to 11% of boys and 23% of girls when you include youth who report being kicked out, running away, or harassment due because of their sexual orientation or transgender identity.
Countering Gender Norms

- When asked whether youth had ever been bullied or harassed at school because people don’t think you are masculine enough or feminine enough, 3.8% of straight boys, 5% of straight girls, 25% of LGBTQ boys, and 29% of LGBTQ girls said yes.
- Additional statistical analyses were run to see if youth perceived to be countering gender norms have different outcomes.
Home Removal

• LGBTQ and counter-gender normative respondents are more likely to be removed from their home because someone was hurting them when compared with straight youth.
Percent of Respondents Removed from Home

- str girls
- ns girls
- not fem girls
- str boys
- ns boys
- not masc boys

% respondents removed from home
Foster or Group Home

• LGBTQ and counter-gender normative respondents are more likely to have lived in a foster or group home.
Percent of Respondents with Foster or Group Home History

- str girls
- ns girls
- not fem girls
- str boys
- ns boys
- not masc boys

% foster or group home
Homelessness

• LGBTQ and counter-gender normative respondents are more likely to have been homeless as a result of being kicked out of their home or running away.
Percent of Respondents with a History of Being Homeless
Detained for Running

• LGBTQ and counter-gender normative respondents are more likely to have been detained for running from home or placement.
Percent of Respondents Detained for Running

- str girls
- ns girls
- not fem girls
- str boys
- ns boys
- not masc boys

% detained for running
Prostitution

- Incarcerated LGBTQ and counter-gender normative youth are more likely to be detained for prostitution when compared with straight youth.
Percent Detained for Prostitution

- str girls
- ns girls
- not fem girls
- str boys
- ns boys
- not masc boys

% detained for prostitution
Violent Crimes

• Girls who have been bullied or harassed for not being feminine enough are more likely to be detained for a violent crime when compared with other girls.
Percent of Respondents Detained for Violent Offense

- str girls
- ns girls
- not fem girls
- str boys
- ns boys
- not masc boys

% detained for violent offense
Summary

• LGBTQ youth represent 8-13% of the juvenile justice system.
• LGBTQ are more likely to be bullied and harassed at school, and experience conflict at home. This family conflict is seen in higher rates of home removal as well as a history of being kicked out or running away from home.
• LGBTQ youth are also more likely to be detained for two nonviolent offenses when compared with straight youth: prostitution and running from home or placement.
• Youth who are perceived to counter gender norms experience many of the same patterns of bullying, home removal, and juvenile detention as LGBTQ youth.
• Boys who are not masculine enough have higher rates of homelessness and out of home placement than LGBTQ boys.
• Girls who are not feminine enough have higher rates of homelessness and are more likely to be detained for violent crimes when compared with LGBTQ girls.