

Insight into Family Functioning & Communication in a Sample of Asian YMSM

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Background:

Healthy Young Men's Study

Five year study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health (R01 DA015638–03).

PI – Michele D. Kipke, PhD

- Longitudinal cohort study with YMSM
- Follow-up interviews every six months for two years
- Mixed method research design, with multiple waves of quantitative and qualitative data
- Audio-computer assisted data collection (ACASI)
- Active community participation
- Wave 1 data collection began February 2005

Asian Young Men's Study: Specific Aims

- Characterize the concerns, fears, and perceived barriers with respect to Asian YMSM's participation in HIV-related research
- Examine HIV risk/protective behaviors among Asian YMSM within the context of their social and sexual networks
- Better understand the role that ethnicity and culture -- cultural norms, values, and expectations – play with respect to alcohol and other drug use, same-sex sexual encounters and relationships, sexual orientation, and involvement in HIV risk and protective behaviors

Introduction

- Parental expectations and mental health
- Communication challenges in Asian families
- Sex and sexuality not talked about
- Among Asian men who have sex with men, challenges in bridging two identities
- Limited research with Asian young men who have sex with men

Methods

- Total of 84 18-24 year old Asian YMSM recruited from gay-identified venues over a 5-month period
- Mixed methods research with ACASI survey and qualitative interview
- Total of 24 completed the qualitative interviews on family dynamics

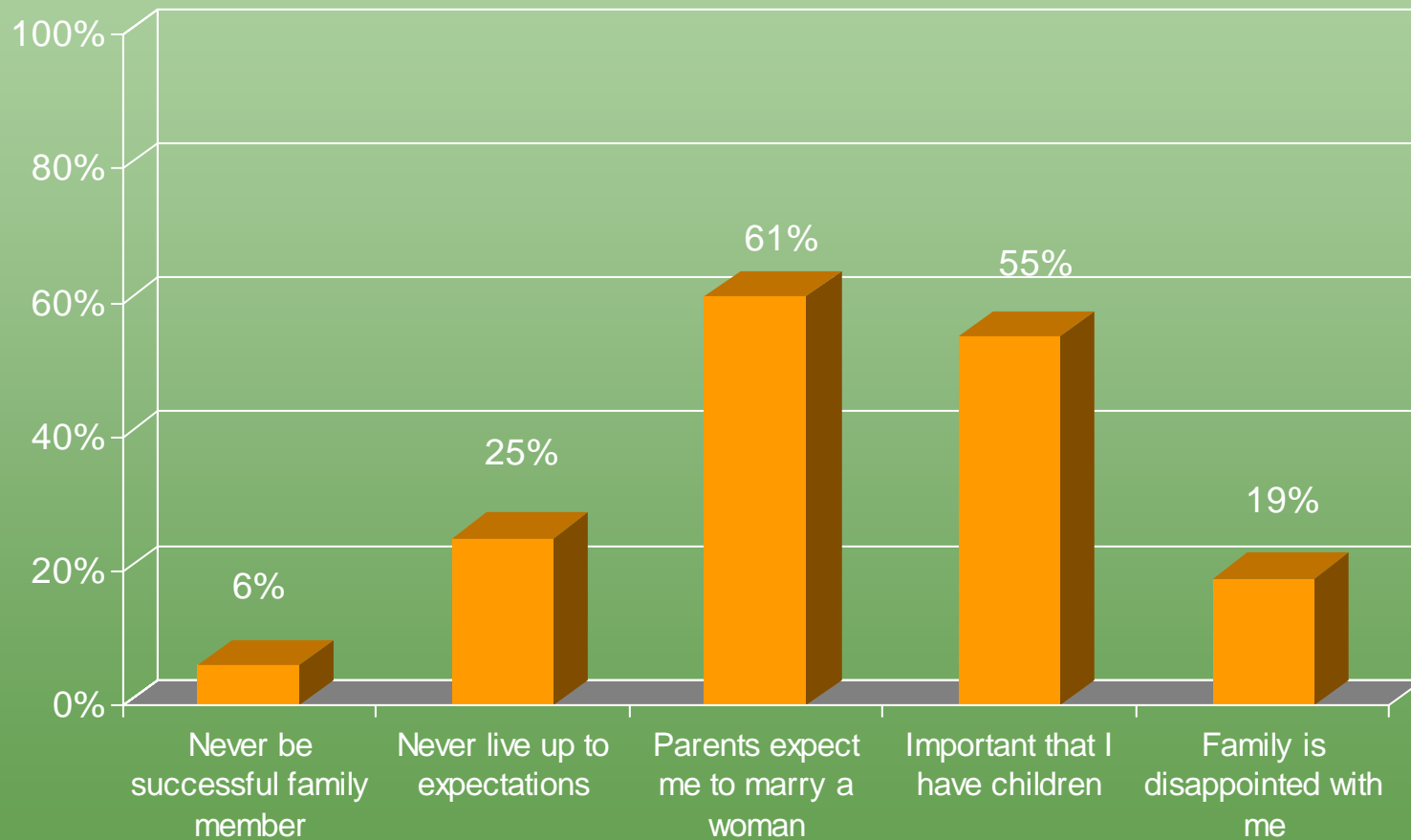
Sample Characteristics

| | Categories | n (%) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Age | 18 - 19 yrs | 23 (28) |
| | 20 - 21 yrs | 19 (23) |
| | 22+ yrs | 40 (49) |
| Race/ethnicity | Filipino | 46 (55) |
| | Chinese | 17 (20) |
| | Korean | 11 (13) |
| | Vietnamese | 7 (8) |
| | Indian | 3 (4) |
| Generation | Immigrant | 31 (37) |
| | First generation | 49 (58) |
| | Second generation | 4 (5) |
| Residence | Living with family | 40 (48) |
| Employment | In school | 19 (23) |
| | In school, employed | 31 (37) |
| | Employed, not in school | 29 (35) |
| | Not employed, not in school | 5 (6) |
| Sexual identity | Gay | 69 (82) |
| | Other same-sex identity | 5 (6) |
| | Bisexual | 10 (12) |

Family Dynamics

- Qualitative analysis identified several themes that contribute to the family dynamics:
 - Family expectations
 - Family communication
 - Perceived family beliefs about sex, sexuality and MSM

Family Expectations



Family Expectations: Marriage and Children

- Most commonly mentioned in qualitative interviews
- Some who had disclosed reported that parents still expected this
- Adoption not always seen as fulfilling these expectations

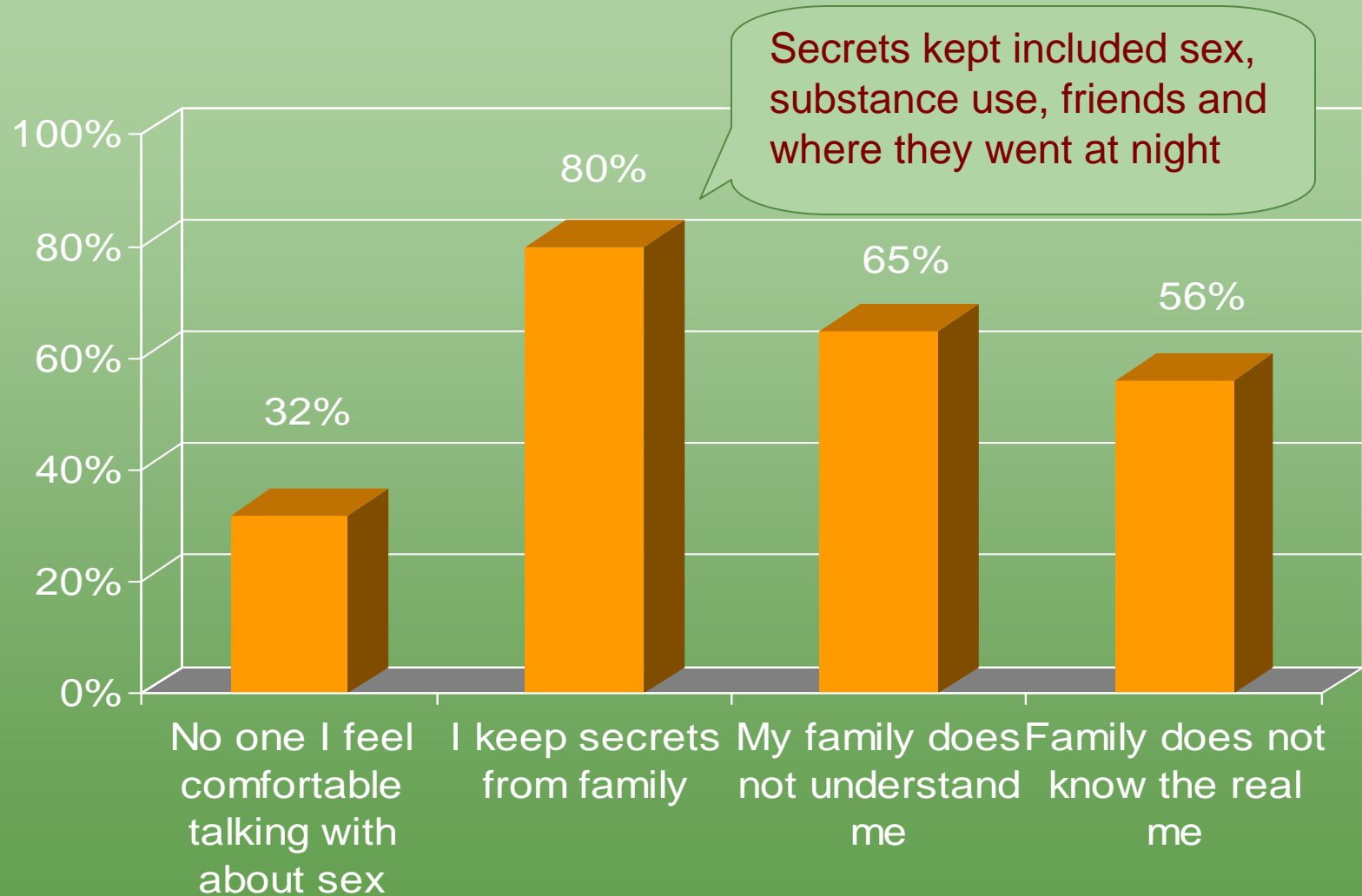
Family Expectations: Education, Career, Financial Success

- College important due to later financial success and prestige
- Parents highly involved in career choices
- Respondents felt career choices were about parental goals not happiness
- Financial stability – related to fulfilling the “American Dream”

Reactions to Family Expectations

- Sense of shame and guilt about not being able to fulfill expectations
- Some tended to overcompensate on those expectations they felt were more in their control
- Sense of stress and pressure – some took on family expectations as their own
- Sensed heterosexist undertones in some messages – making disclosure more difficult

Family Communication



Family Communication: Common Topics

- Described as “business-like” and were similar to family expectations – school and work
- Rarely discussed personal issues
- Gossip about other family members
- Differentiate between topics discussed with mother and those with father

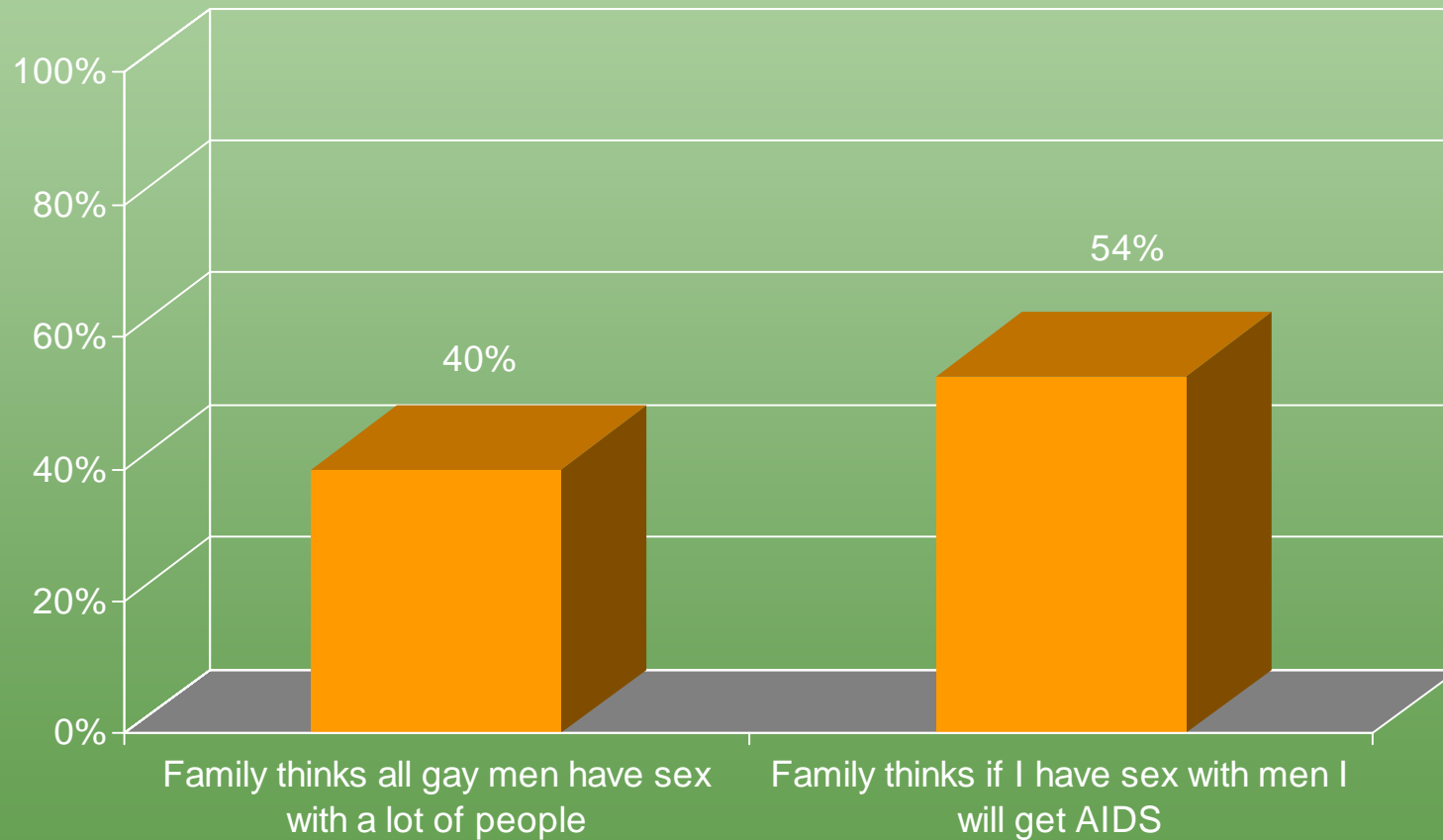
Family Communication: Topics Avoided

- 53% of total sample reported it is “not at all acceptable” or “not acceptable” to discuss romantic/sexual attractions with family members; confirmed qualitatively
- Desired closer relationship with parents

Family Communication: Topics Avoided

- Sex and sexuality – even after disclosure
- Parents described as “conservative” or “old-fashioned” – often related to cultural beliefs
- These traditional beliefs seemed to preclude a closer relationship with parents

Perceived Family Beliefs about MSM



Perceived Family Beliefs about MSM

- Belief that being gay is a choice and/or “curable”
- These beliefs created additional barriers in communication
- Fear that knowledge of sexuality would bring shame to family or “lose face”

Discussion

- Sense that there may be stress and anxiety in relation to family dynamics (e.g., expectations, communication)
- General API adolescent populations generally report higher levels of depression, are more socially isolated, report lower levels of friendship support, and lower self-esteem
- Similarly, anxiety, depression are common among YMSM

Next Steps

- Consider opportunities for larger studies – focusing on mental health
- Engage community partners in additional discussions

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