



THE IMPACT OF FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG LGBT+ MILLENNIALS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Shannon Trecartin, PhD

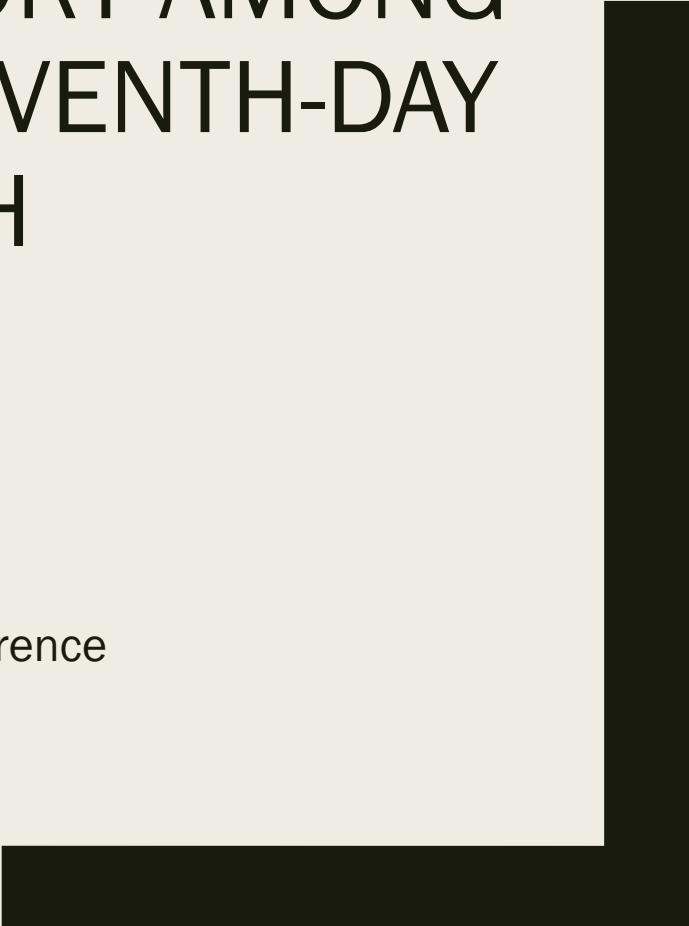
Curtis VanderWaal, PhD

David Sedlacek, PhD

Adventist Human Subjects Research Association Conference

Loma Linda, CA

May 17-20, 2017



Purpose and Sponsorship

- Andrews University Taskforce on Teen Homelessness
- Student stories of rejection and heartache
- Family Acceptance Project at SFSU – Mormon church initiative
- Encouragement from GC and NAD Family Ministries
- Support from various SDA LGBT+ groups
- First LGBT+ denominational study we are aware of
- Confidentiality of data

Survey Construction

- Family acceptance/rejection questions
 - *Family Acceptance Project – Caitlyn Ryan discussion & materials*
 - *Brainstorming categories and questions*
 - *Feedback from SDA LGBT+ students and leaders*
 - Andrews University UG and Graduate students
 - Coming Out Ministries
 - SDA Kinship, SDA bloggers, SDA researchers
- Dependent variables – standardized questionnaires
 - *Self-esteem, social support, depression, substance use, risky sex, suicidal ideation & suicide attempts*

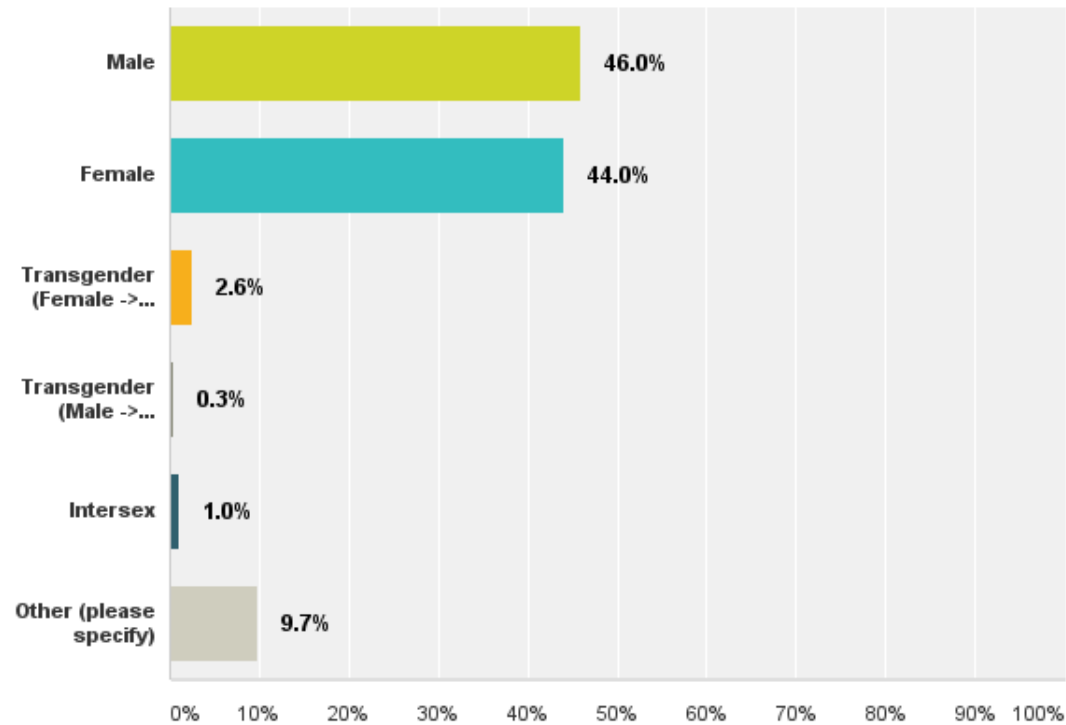
Data Collection

- Developed SurveyMonkey link
- Distributed to:
 - *SDA bloggers*
 - *SDA Kinship readership list*
 - *Adventist Today readership list*
 - *Intercollegiate Adventist Gay/Straight Alliance Coalition*
- Criteria for involvement
 - *SDA childhood background (96%)*
 - *Identify as LGBT+*
 - *Ages 18 - 35*
- N = 310 LGBT+ individuals

Gender

Q28 Tell us about your gender (use the Other box if you wish to make a response that does not fit within the selection categories)

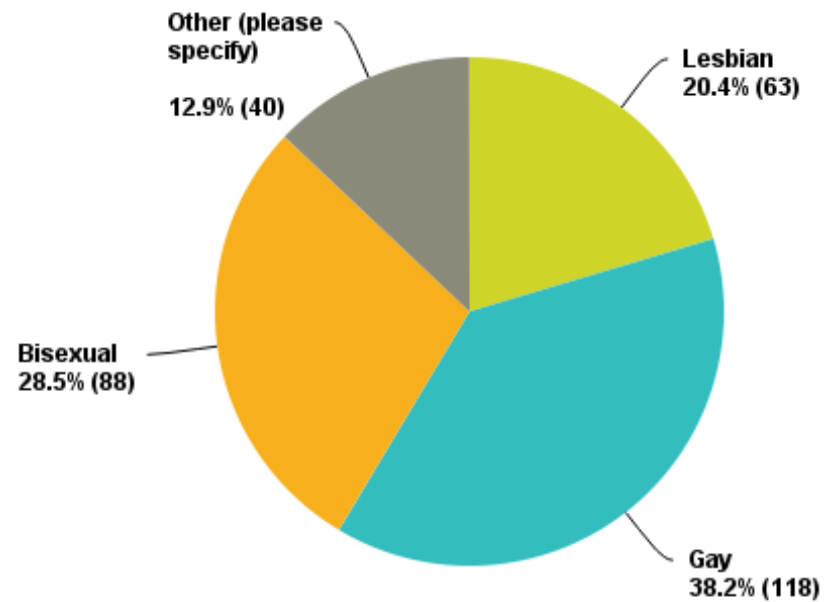
Answered: 309 Skipped: 185



Sexual Orientation

Q29 What is your sexual orientation? (we understand the challenges inherent in labeling, as well as lack of gender fluid category choices, but our analysis requires limited categories)

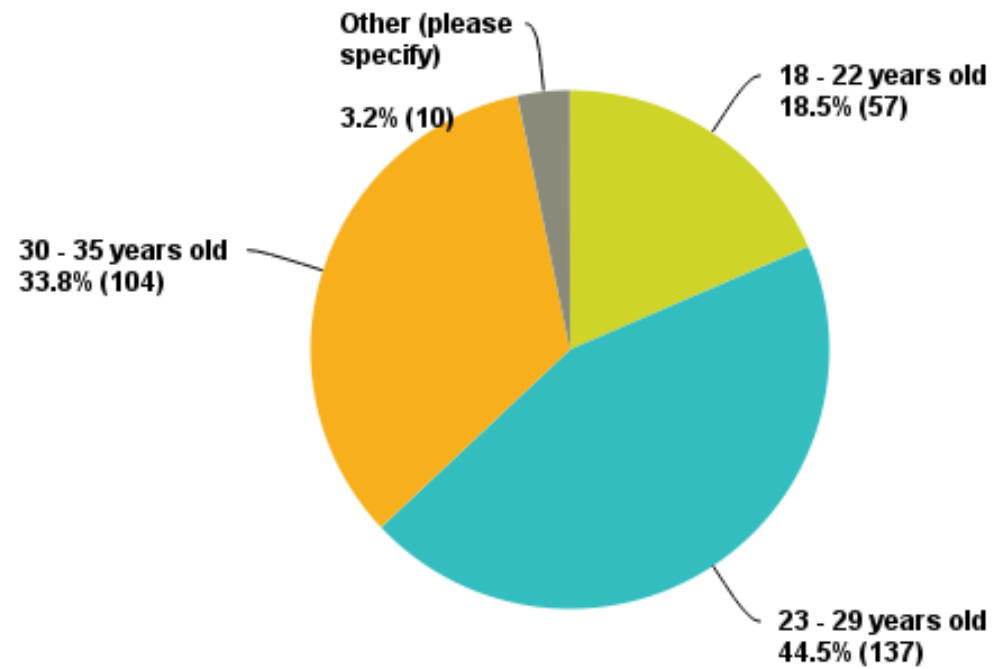
Answered: 309 Skipped: 185



Age

Q30 In what age category would you place yourself?

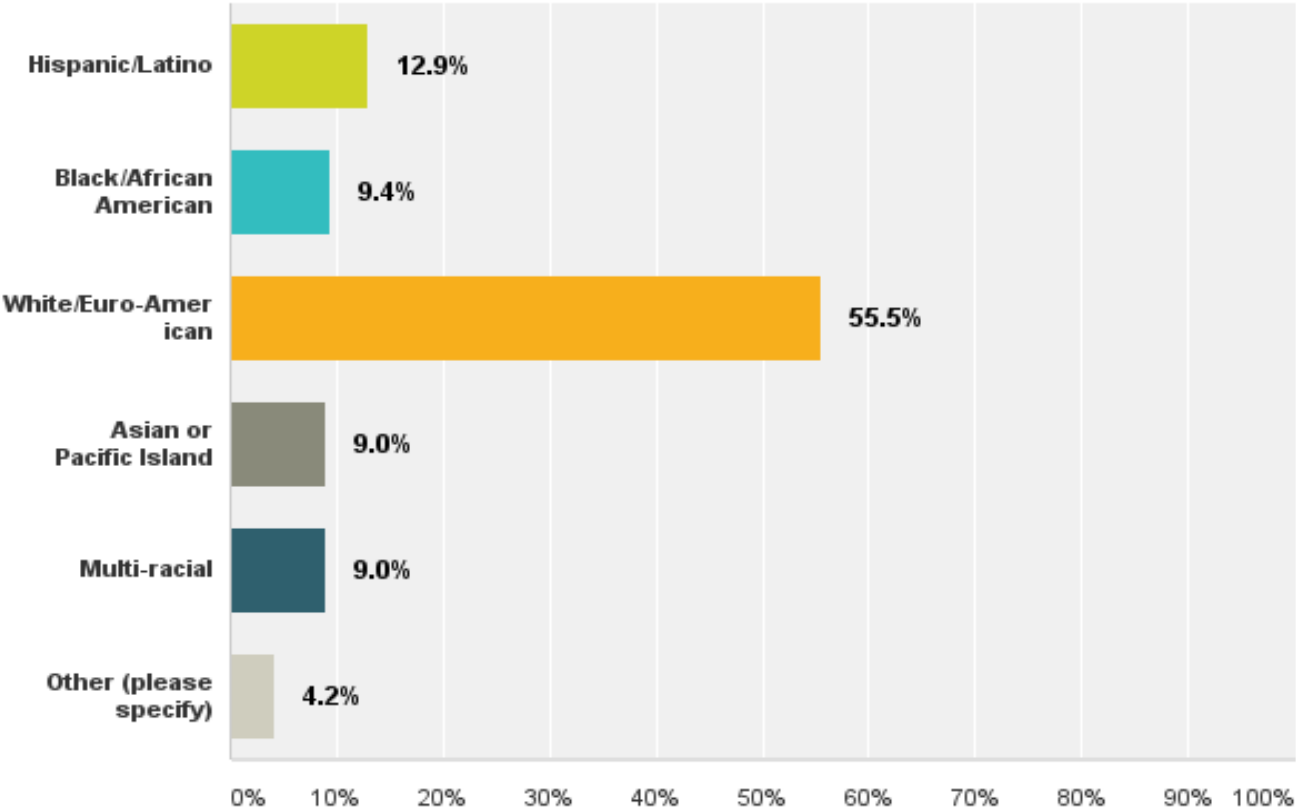
Answered: 308 Skipped: 186



Ethnic Background

Q31 What is your ethnic background?

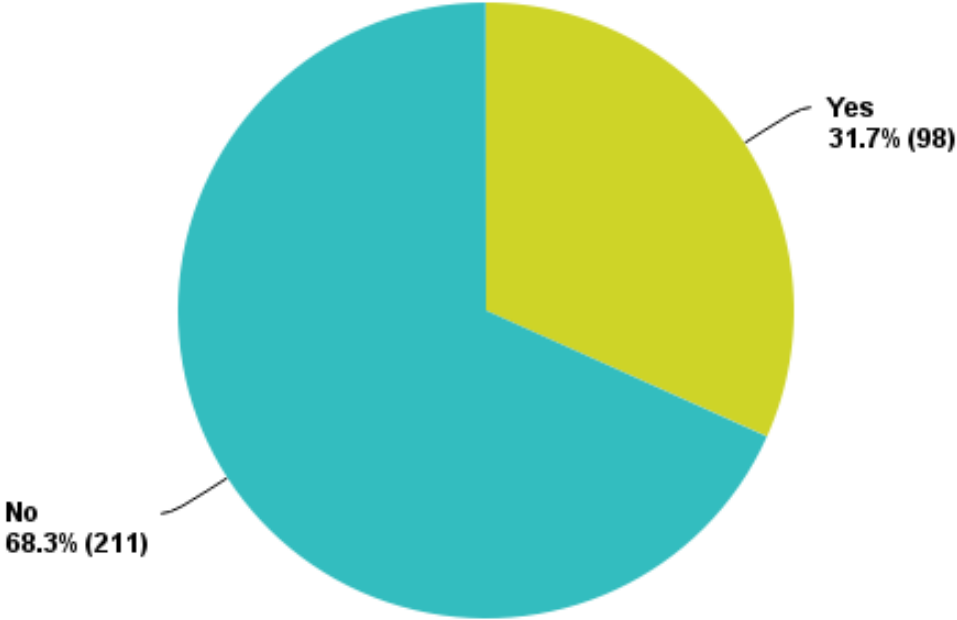
Answered: 310 Skipped: 184



Suicidal Ideation

Q19 During the past six months did you have any thoughts of suicide or thoughts of ending your life?

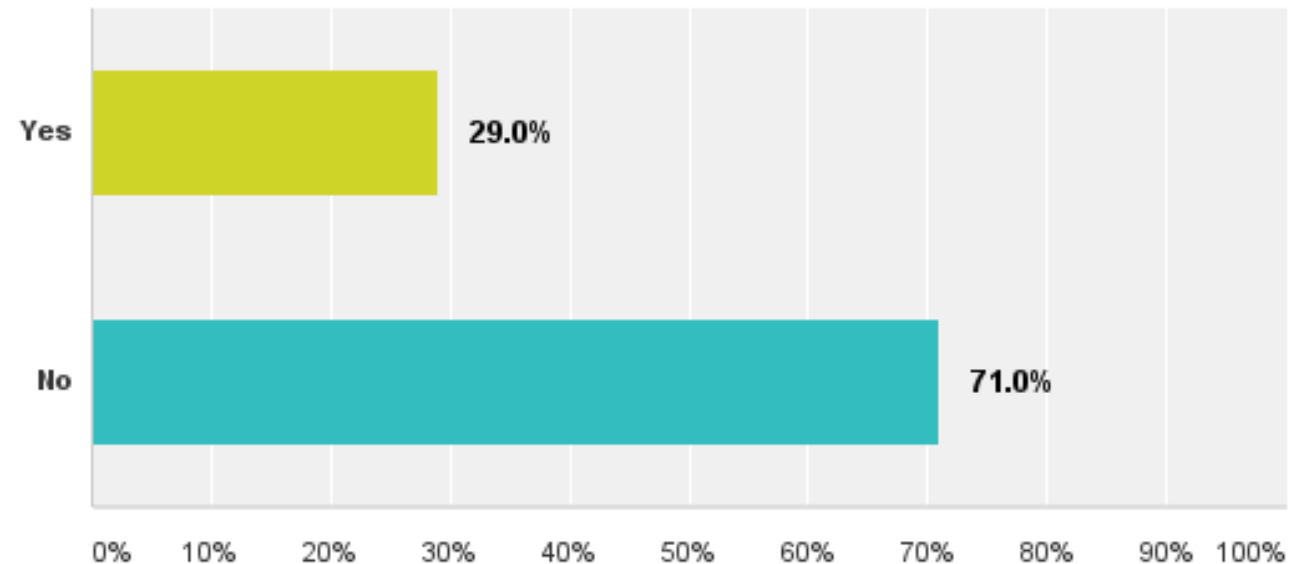
Answered: 309 Skipped: 185



Lifetime Suicide Attempts

Q20 Have you ever, at any point in your life, attempted to take your own life?

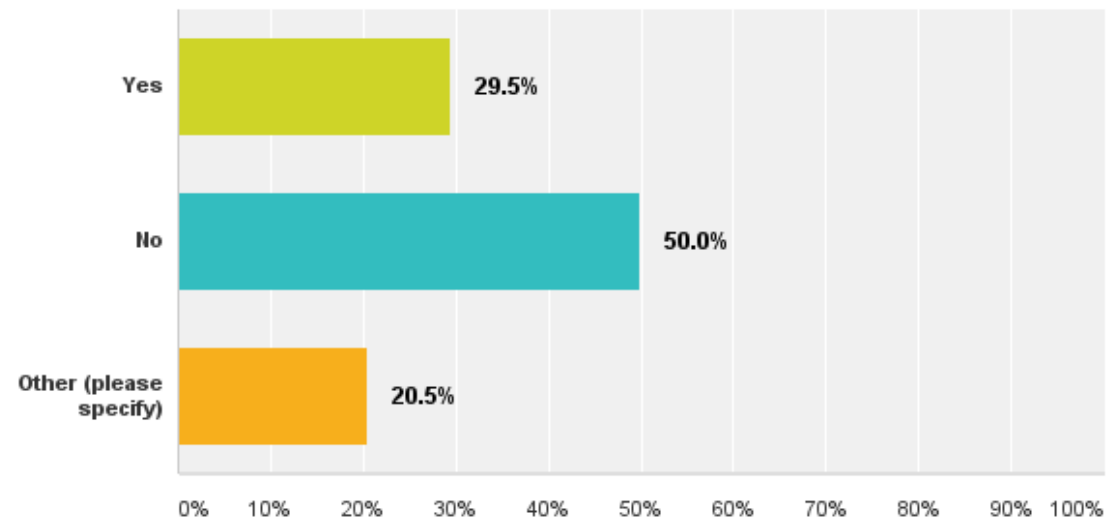
Answered: 310 Skipped: 184



Suicide – Connection to LGBT Orientation/Identity

Q21 If you answered 'yes' to questions 19 or 20 above, do you see the thoughts or attempt(s) as related to your sexual orientation and/or gender identity? Feel free to comment in the 'Other' comment box if you wish to explain your answer further.

Answered: 224 Skipped: 270



All of Shannon's data slides

Implications for the Church

- This study, if taken seriously, could move the church administrators beyond simply making theological statements to the development of resources for LGBT+ persons, their families, and the congregations in which they worship. Such resources would help family members, friends, church members and pastors to be more supportive as we walk this journey with our LGBT+ youth and fellow churchgoers.
- The SDA Church would do well to proactively address the needs of its LGBT+ members and their families. Many of our churches are not prepared to welcome with graciousness either one of their own or a member of the community who is same-sex attracted or transgender.

Implications for the Church

- Leaving families and young people to figure out how to deal with this major life event alone without the faith community's support and love is counterproductive for all.
- Beginning steps might include learning to listen without judgment, addressing our own fears about sexuality, exploring resources that can help LGBT+ persons and their families, providing the same generous, unconditional welcome that Jesus did with the outcasts of his day, and providing spaces for honest, humble conversations about this difficult issue.
- Another possibility is sponsoring a conference in which persons from all sides of the LGBT+ question would come together to humbly listen and learn from one another and begin to outline the types of resources that would be helpful to church administrators, pastors, local churches, families, and LGBT+ persons.

Limitations

- Rolling convenience sample (appropriate for exploratory analysis)
- Smaller sample size for factor analysis (meets minimum requirements)
- Only generalizable to SDA Millennials
- Can't generalize to other faith populations

Next Steps

- Conduct more rigorous data analysis (chi squares, odds ratios, regressions, etc.)
 - *Level of family rejection as it relates to dependent variables (depression, suicidality, risky sex, self esteem, substance abuse, etc.)*
- Compare rates of various outcomes with national data
- Continue to publish and present findings in national journals and conferences
- Future research with parents?

Publications and Presentations

- Sedlacek, David and VanderWaal, Curt. “Supporting LGBT+ Youth in Seventh-day Adventist Homes.” Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice, Berrien Springs, MI. July 22, 2016.
- Sedlacek, David, VanderWaal, Curtis, and Lane, Lauren. “The Impact of Family Rejection or Acceptance among LGBT+ Millennials in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” North American Association of Christians in Social Work Annual Conference 2016, Cincinnati, OH, November 18, 2016
- VanderWaal, C., Sedlacek, D., and Lane, L. (2017). The Impact of Family Rejection or Acceptance among LGBT+ Millennials in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Social Work & Christianity, Vol. 44, No. 1&2, 72-95.
- VanderWaal, C., Sedlacek, D, Carbonell, N. and Trecartin, S. (2017). The Ties that Bind? Exploring the Impact of SDA Family Response to LGBT+ Children. Spectrum, Vol. 45, Issue 1.