

# Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth and Families

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LGBTQ+ Mental Health  
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# Conflict of Interest Statement

- No financial conflicts to disclose



# Terminology

- **Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD):** Gender identity differs from society's expectations based on sex assigned at birth
  - Binary identities (e.g., trans girl, trans boy)
  - Nonbinary identities (e.g., genderqueer, gender fluid)
- **Cisgender:** Gender identity aligns with society's expectations based on sex assigned at birth



# Researcher Positionality

- Relevant identities:
  - Cisgender woman
  - Queer/bisexual
  - White
  - Researcher/advocate
  - Parent (of an assumed cisgender child)



# Why TGD Youth and Families?

- Longstanding academic interest in gender, development, and change over time
  - Gender and Women’s Studies training (undergrad and grad school)
  - PhD in Developmental Psychology
- Responsibility as an LGBTQ+ person with relative privilege to center the experiences of marginalized members of our community



# Mental Health of TGD Youth

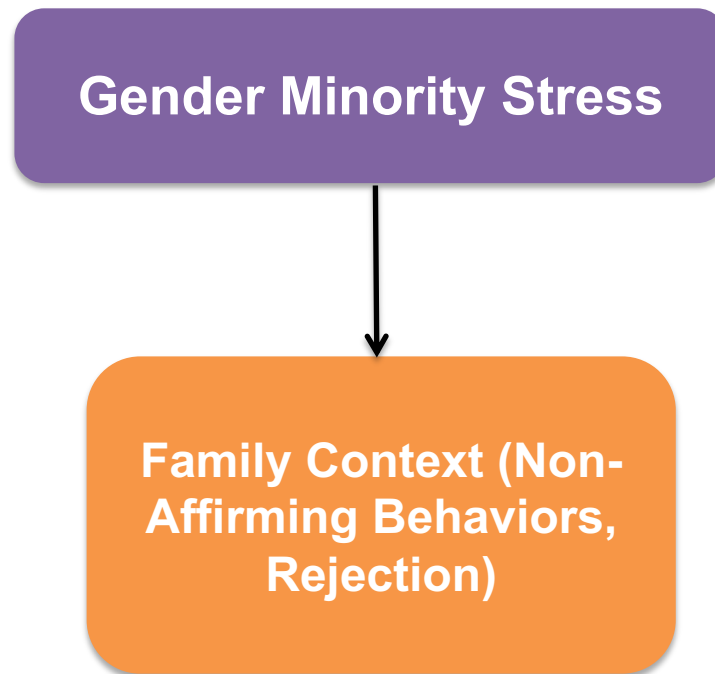
- Compared to cisgender youth, TGD youth have higher rates of mental health concerns and related risk behaviors
  - Depression
  - Substance use
  - Suicidality
  - Eating disorders
  - Self-harm
  - Riskier sexual behaviors
- Trans boys, nonbinary youth assigned female at highest risk for depression, suicidality

Connolly et al., 2016; Eisenberg et al., 2017; Johns et al., 2017; Reisner et al., 2015; Price-Feeney et al., 2020; Veale et al., 2017



# Explaining Mental Health of TGD Youth

- Mental health concerns and risk behaviors among TGD youth attributed to:



Eisenberg et al., 2017; Meyer, 2003; Reisner et al., 2015; Price-Feeney et al., 2020

# Gender Minority Stress in the Family Context

- TGD youth more likely than cisgender youth to experience child maltreatment by parents/caregivers
- Family rejection associated with poor mental health (depression, anxiety, suicidality) among TGD adolescents

Delozier et al., 2020; Pariseau et al., 2019; Reisner et al., 2014





# Protective Role of Family

- Strong family relationships support health and well-being of TGD youth
  - Buffer against stress related to stigma associated with TGD identity
  - Minimize health inequities experienced by TGD youth
- TGD youth with higher levels of family support and connectedness report better mental health

Brown et al., 2020; Katz-Wise et al., 2018; Olson et al., 2016; Saewyc et al., 2017; Simons et al., 2013; Veale et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2016



# TRANS TEEN AND FAMILY NARRATIVES (TTFN) PROJECT



**SHARE YOUR STORY**

*in the Trans Teen and Family  
Narratives Project*



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# About TTFN

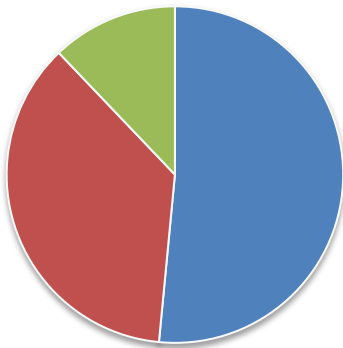
- **Study Aim:** Investigate how the family context affects TGD youths' health and well-being over time and identify types of support needed for TGD youth and families
- **Study Design and Methods**
  - Community-based approach
  - Longitudinal – 5 waves across 2 years
  - Interviews and surveys with TGD youth, siblings, caregivers



# TTFN Sample

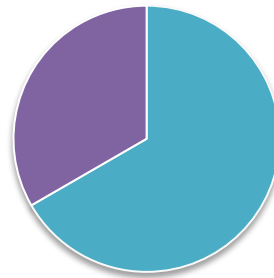
- 33 families (96 family members)
- 73-92% White, 40% caregivers had graduate degree

**TGD Youth  
age 13-17 (n = 33)**



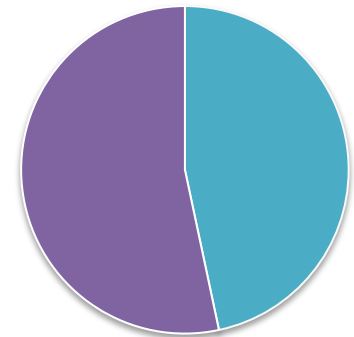
■ Trans boys ■ Trans girls  
■ Nonbinary

**Cisgender  
Caregivers  
age 37-69 (n = 48)**



■ Women ■ Men

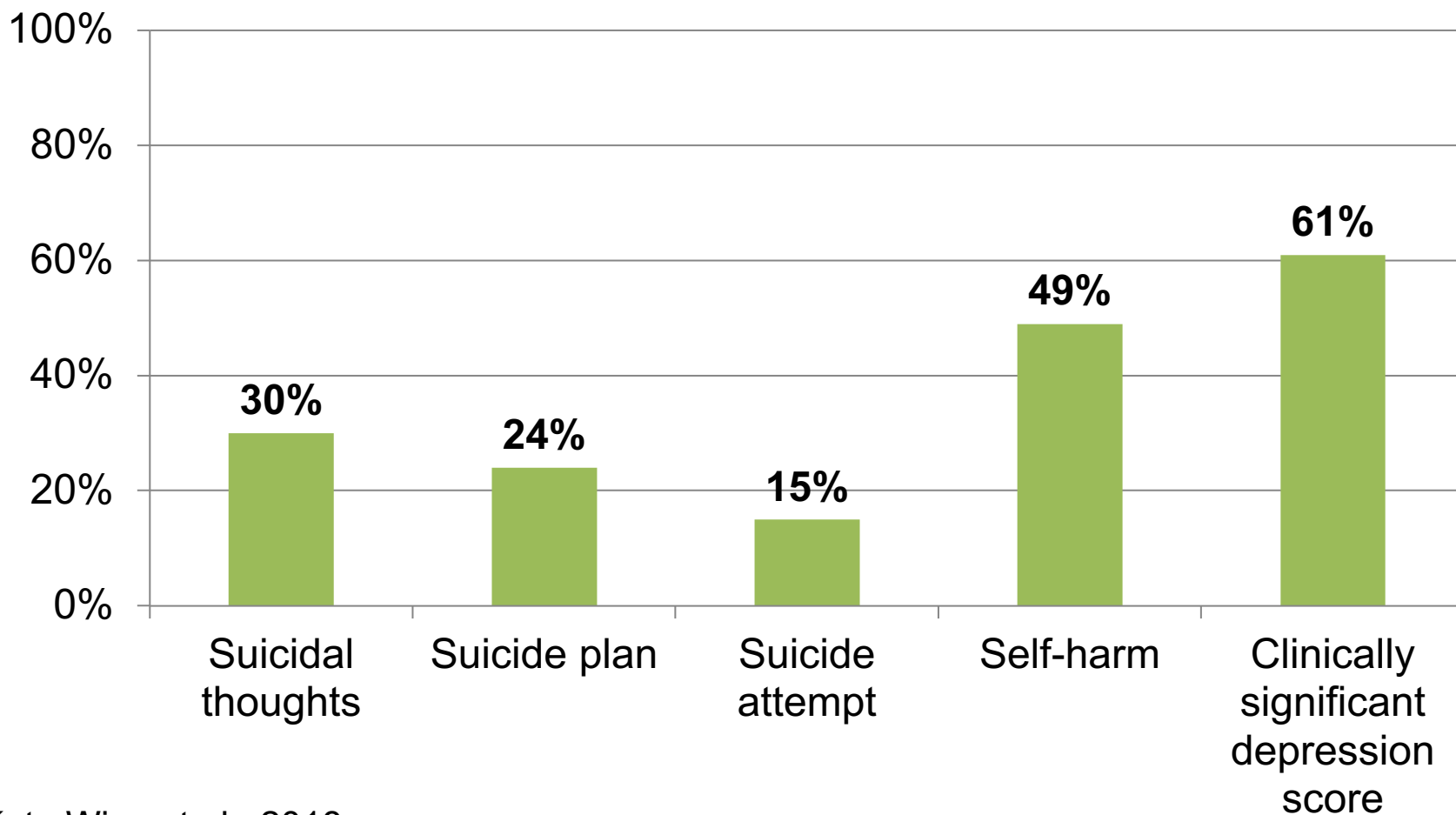
**Cisgender Siblings  
age 14-27 (n = 15)**



■ Girls ■ Boys



## TGD Youths' Mental Health at Wave 1 (Youth Report)

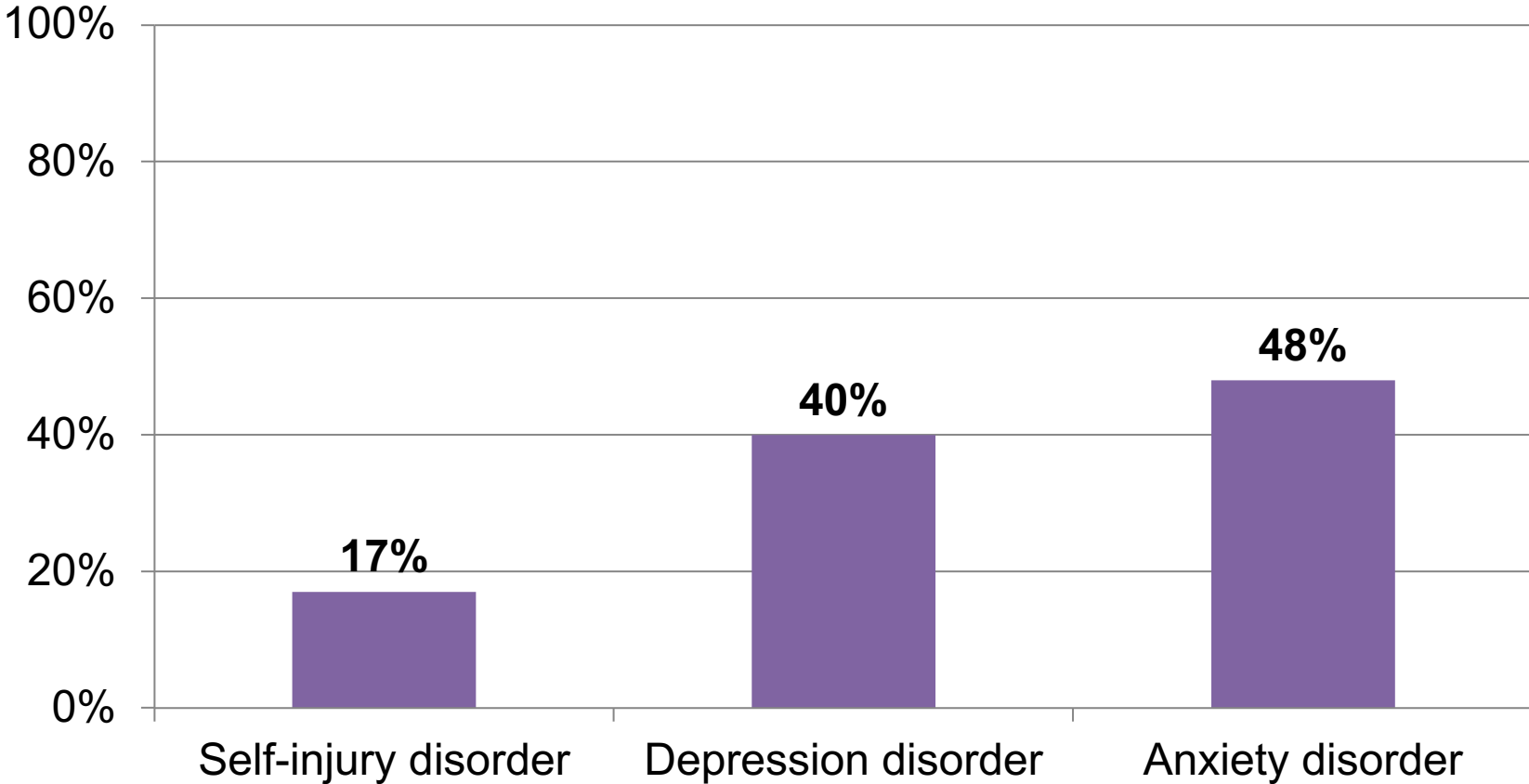


Katz-Wise et al., 2018



N=48

# TGD Youths' Mental Diagnoses at Wave 1 (Caregiver Report)



Katz-Wise et al., 2018

# Family Functioning and TGD Youths' Mental Health at Wave 1

- TGD youth who reported better family communication and higher family satisfaction had:
  - Better mental health
  - Higher self-esteem and resiliency
- Caregivers' and siblings' reports of family functioning not significantly related to transgender youths' mental health
  - Transgender youths' own perceptions of family functioning most relevant for their mental health

Katz-Wise et al., 2018



# Implications for Supporting TGD Youth and Families

- TGD youth's perception of family functioning has the greatest impact on their mental health
  - Involve whole family in supporting TGD youth, but prioritize TGD youth's perspective
- Different family members have different perceptions of family functioning and support
  - Support for TGD youth, caregivers, siblings should be specific to each type of family member





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- TTFN advisory board, community partners, consultants, research staff
- TTFN participants!



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# Thank you!

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