

ASSESSING ROMANTIC ATTRACTION IN ADOLESCENTS ACROSS EUROPE: Health correlates and practical considerations

Dr András Költő and Professor Saoirse Nic Gabhainn

 @KoltoAndras, @SaoirseNG

Health Promotion Research Centre,
National University of Ireland Galway

International MAG Convention – “The Image of the Self”

Lviv, Ukraine, 27 June 2018



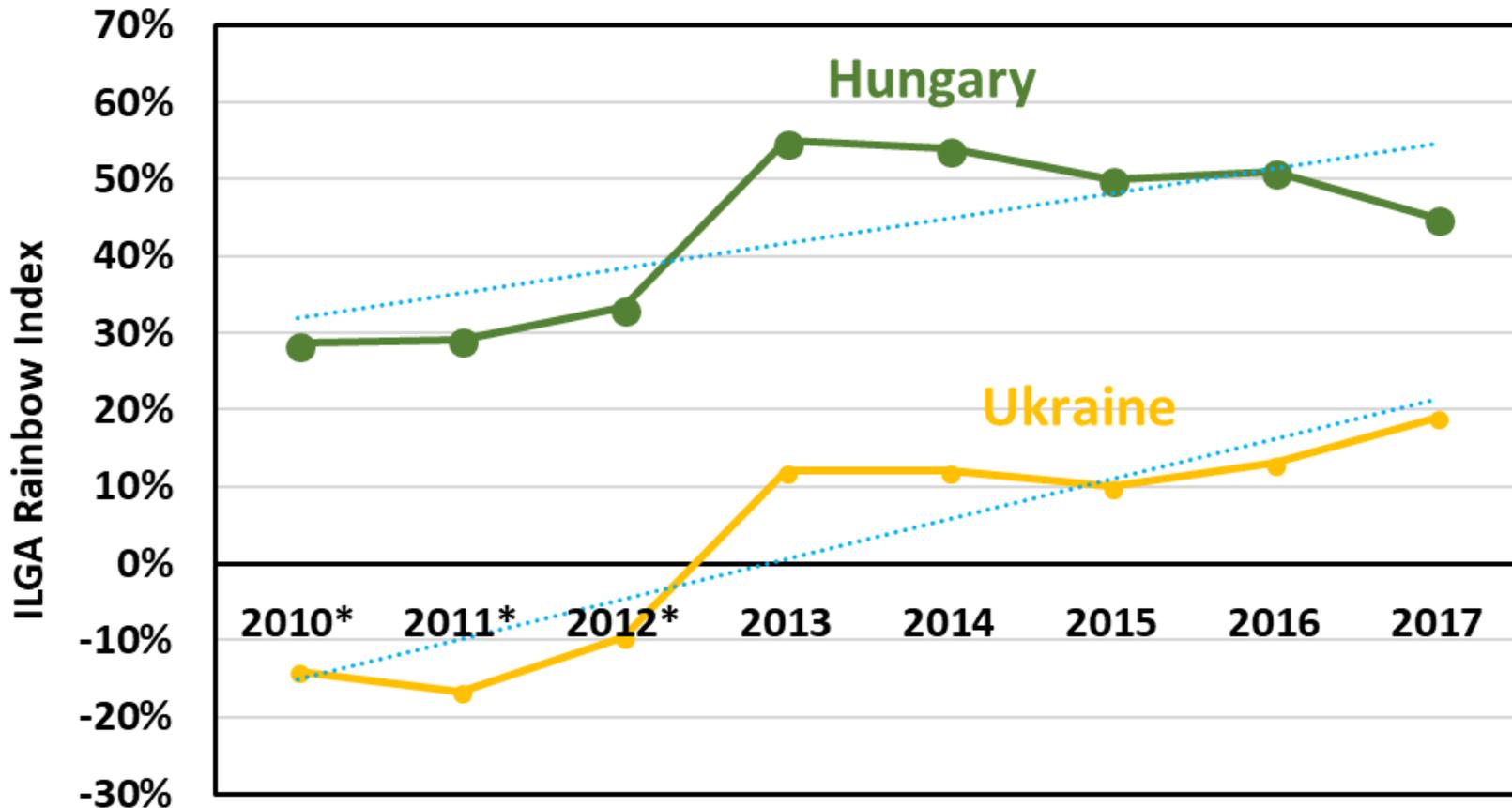
Outline

- Growing acceptance towards Gender and Sexual Minority (GSM) individuals ↔ stagnating or worsening health inequalities: **The LGBT+ Health Paradox**
- **Minority stress** in GSM adolescents
- The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (**HBSC**) study
- Assessing sexual health and **romantic attraction in HBSC**
- **Love and dating patterns** in the international study
- Self-esteem, depressive mood, suicidality, psychosomatic symptoms, and romantic attraction in **Hungarian adolescents** aged 13–17
- Positive approach and practical **suggestions**

**LGBTQQIP2SAA..... (...) = LGBT+
Gender and Sexual Minorities**

Changes in the ILGA Score in Ukraine and Hungary, 2010–2017

www.ilga-europe.org



LGBT+ Health inequalities in adulthood

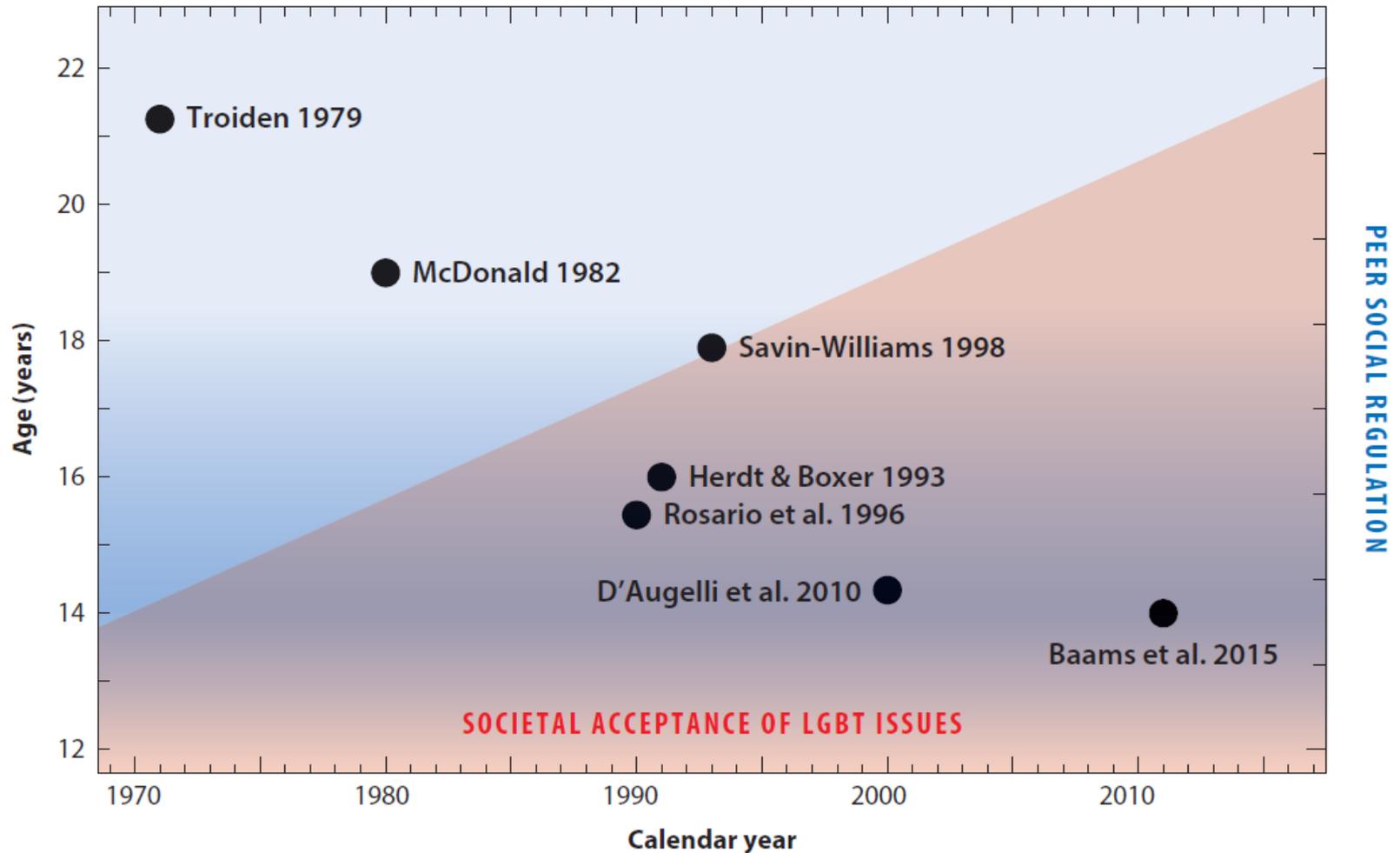
- **Depression and mood disorders** (Bostwick et al. 2010, Cochran et al. 2007)
- **PTSD** (Hatzenbuehler et al. 2009)
- **Alcohol consumption and abuse** (Burgard et al. 2005)
- **Suicidal ideation, attempts and suicide** (Cochran et al. 2003; Gilman et al. 2002)
- **Psychosomatic and physical diseases** (Cochran et al. 2007)
- **Drug abuse psychiatric comorbidity, ...**

The problems usually appear first in adolescence
(Fish & Paisley, 2015; Needham, 2012; Ueno, 2010)

LGBT+ health inequalities in adolescence

- Emotional distress, anxiety and mood disorders, self-harm, health compromising behaviours (Eskin et al. 2005; Fergusson et al. 2005; Fleming et al. 2007; Marshal et al. 2011)
- **Suicidality** among LGBT+ adolescents is threefold compared to their heterosexual peers (Marshal et al. 2011)
- Exposition of **bisexual / both gender attracted youths** is even higher than those of gay and lesbian / same gender attracted
- **Multiple minority status** (GSM and ethnic, religious, geographical etc.) – intersectionality

Coming out and adolescent social regulation intersect with each other (Russell & Fish, 2016)



Minority stress

(Meyer, 1995, 2003)

Distal



- **External stressors**

Prejudice, discrimination, direct aggression (bullying) and victimisation

- **Anticipating exclusion, harassment and aggression**

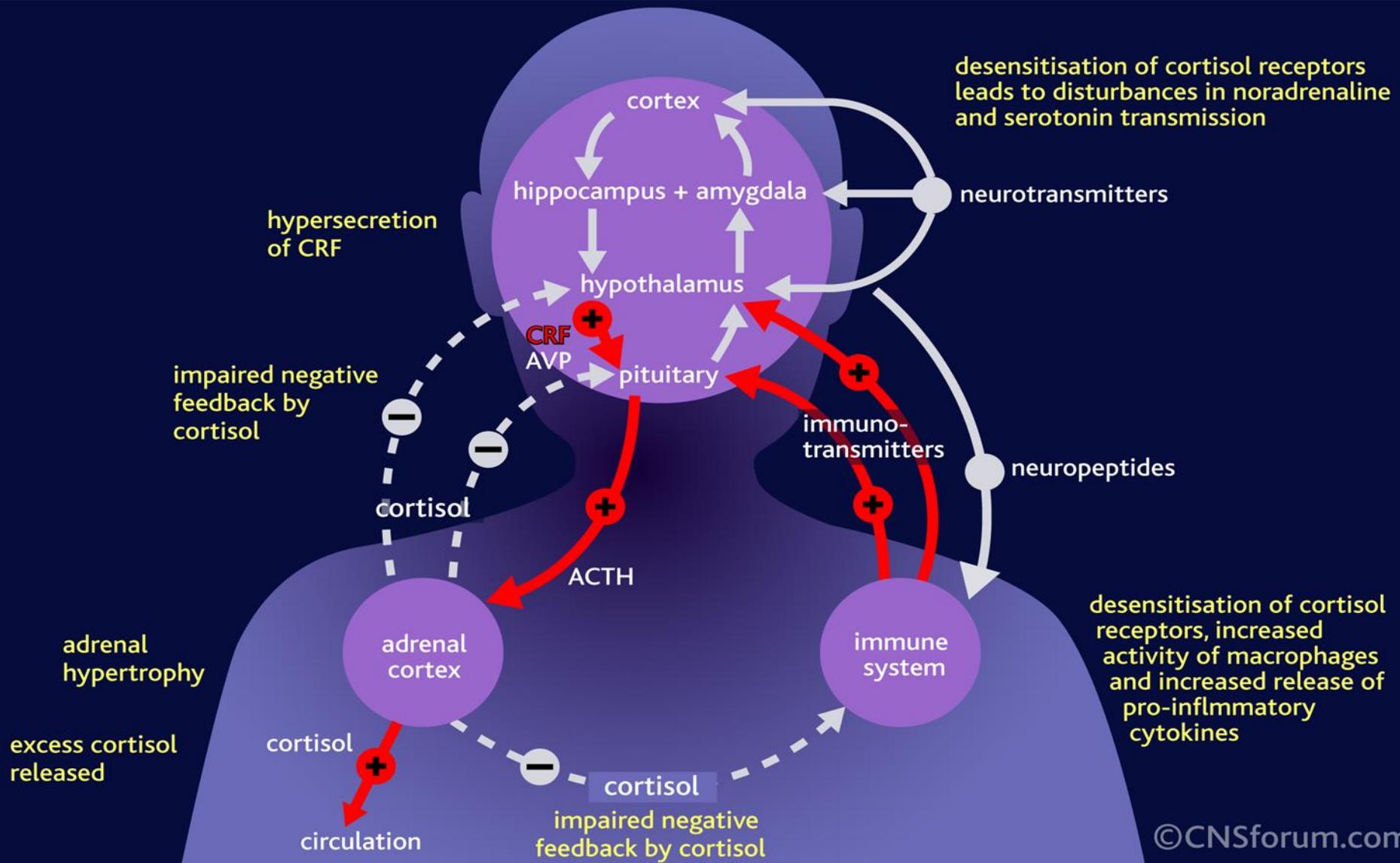
Constant alertness

- **Embracing negative societal/peer attitudes**

Internalised homophobia

Proximal

Stigma, exclusion, bullying – Stress – Psychosomatic symptoms – Chronic disease



Health Behaviour in School-aged Children, (HBSC), a WHO collaborative cross-cultural study

- **Healthy and risky behaviours** and their **psychosocial background** in 11–15-year old school children
- In 2018: **48 countries**
- **4 year data collection cycles**: last completed data collection in 2013-2014
- Anonymous, **paper-pencil/online** survey
- **Nationally representative samples** – a minimum of 4,650 pupils per country

<http://www.hbsc.org/publications>

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>



hbsc
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Romantic attraction in HBSC

Have you ever been in love with someone?

- Yes, with a girl or girls
- Yes, with a boy or boys
- Yes, with girls and boys
- No, never

Have you ever been going out (dating) with someone?

- Yes, a girl or girls
- Yes, a boy or boys
- Yes, girls and boys
- No, never

JOURNAL OF RESEARCH ON ADOLESCENCE, ***(*), 1–7

Love and Dating Patterns for Same- and Both-Gender Attracted Adolescents Across Europe

András Költő 

National University of Ireland Galway

Honor Young

Cardiff University

Lorraine Burke

National University of Ireland Galway

Nathalie Moreau

Université Libre de Bruxelles

Alina Cosma

University of St Andrews

Josefine Magnusson

University of Hertfordshire

Béat Windlin

Addiction Switzerland

Marta Reis

Universidade de Lisboa

Elizabeth M. Saewyc

University of British Columbia

Emmanuelle Godeau

*UMR 1027, Inserm – Université Paul Sabatier,
Rectorat de Toulouse*

Saoirse Nic Gabhainn

National University of Ireland Galway

Open access at

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jora.12394>

International findings

Distribution of love and dating patterns in adolescents from eight European countries

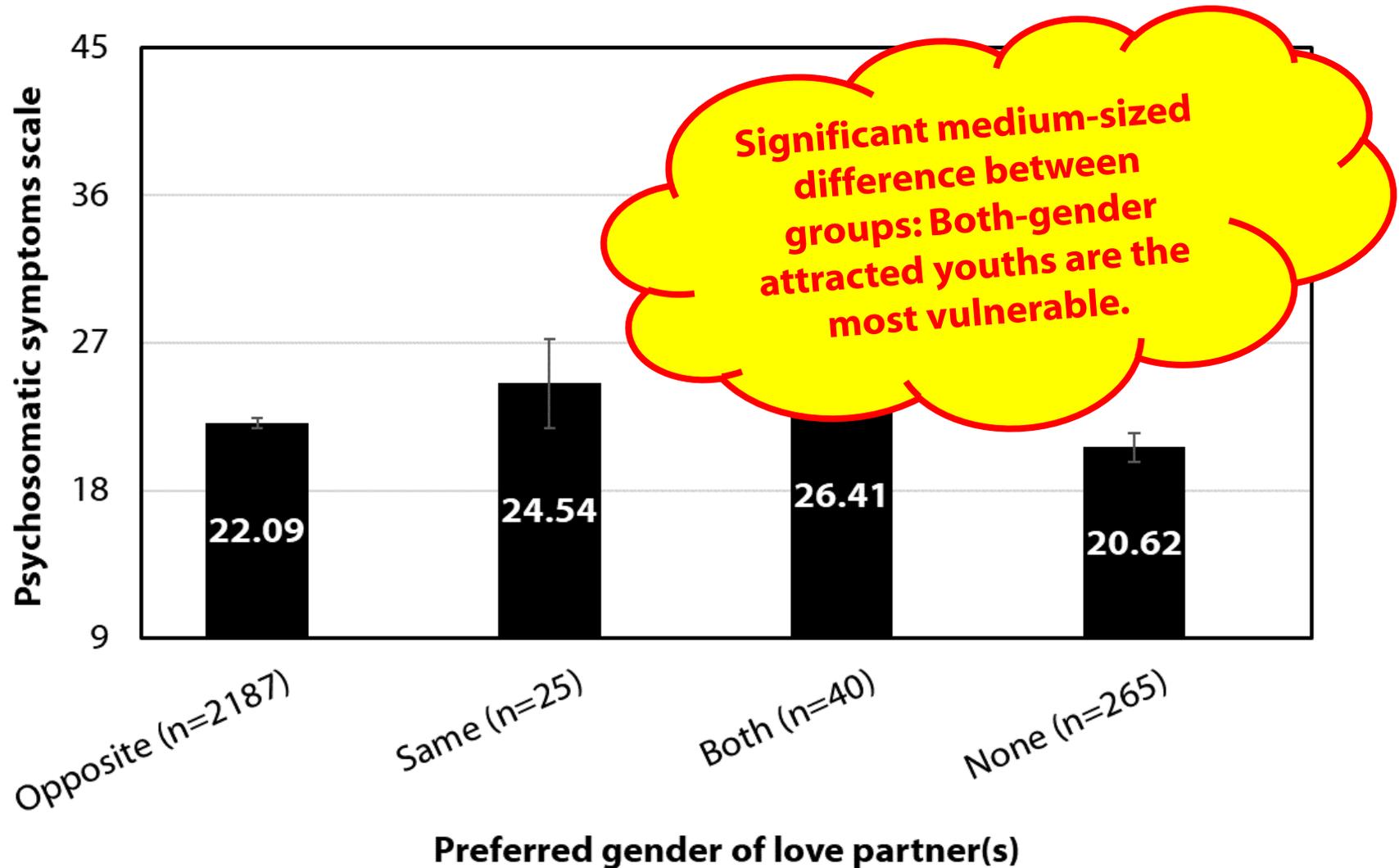
	Love	Dating
BOYS	<i>N</i> = 7241	<i>N</i> = 4904
Attracted to girls	85.6%	71.1%
Attracted to boys	1.6%	1.4%
Attracted to girls and boys	1.2%	1.2%
Never / None	11.6%	26.2%
GIRLS	<i>N</i> = 7246	<i>N</i> = 4938
Attracted to boys	80.7%	67.8%
Attracted to girls	1.8%	1.7%
Attracted to boys and girls	2.7%	1.8%
Never / None	14.7%	28.7%

Belgium (French), Bulgaria, England, France, FYR Macedonia*, Hungary, Iceland*, and Switzerland (*Just administered the item on love)

Hungarian findings

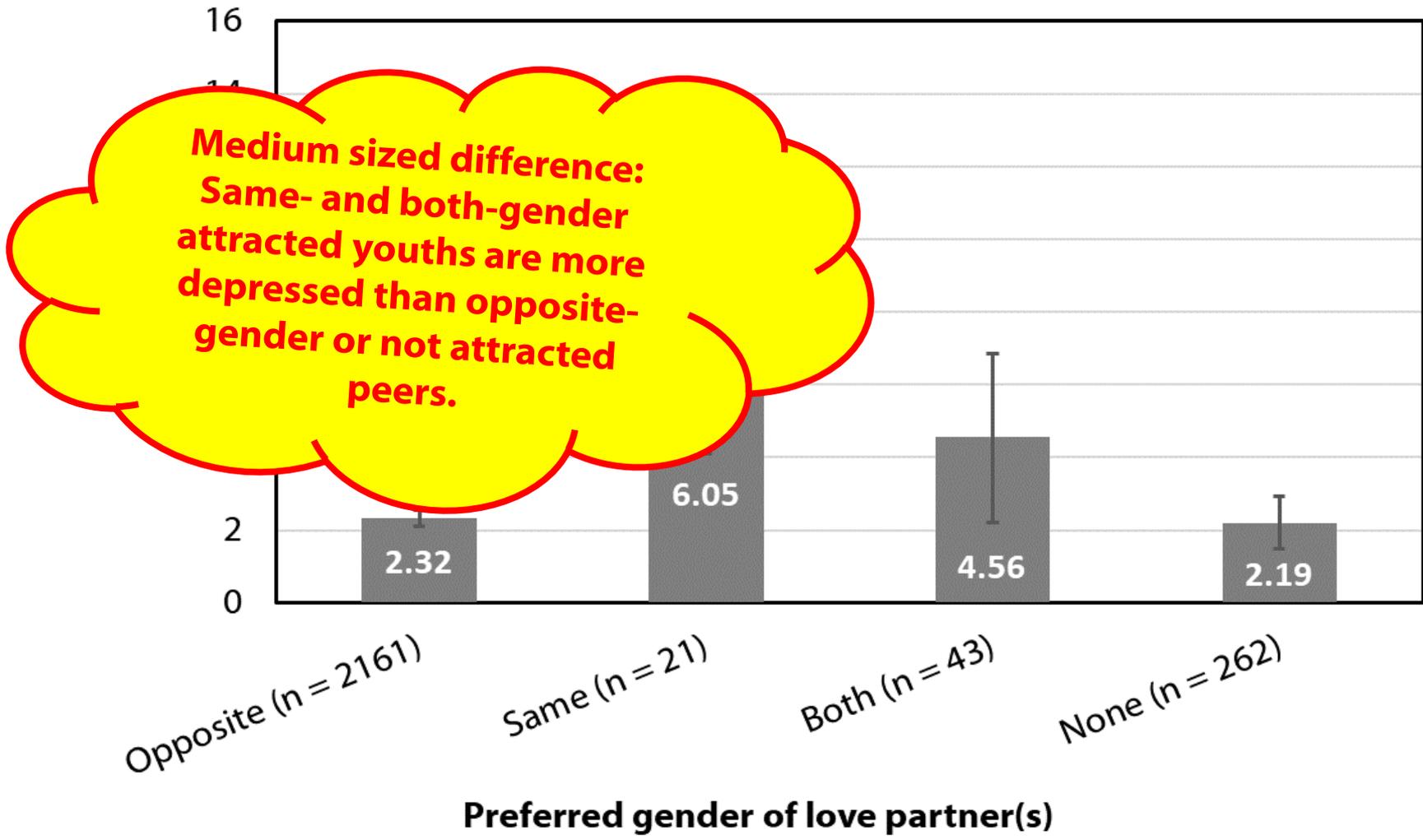
Psychosomatic symptoms and love ($N = 2517$)

$F(\text{bootstrap}) = 8.510; p < .001; \eta^2 = .010$.
Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



Depressive mood and love (N = 2487)

$F(\text{bootstrap}) = 26.48; p < .001; \eta^2 = .031.$
Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



Suicidal ideation and love (N= 2580)

χ^2 (bootstrap) = 109.52; $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .146$ [.092-.230]

Suicidal thought	Opposite (n =2242), 86.9%	Same (n=23), 0.7%	Both (n=43), 1.7%	None (n=272), 10.5%
Have not thought on killing myself	1610 71.8%	9 39.1%	16	21 3%
Thought on killing myself but I wouldn't do it	577 25.7%			
I would kill myself right now				7%

Medium sized difference in suicidal ideation: same- and both-gender attracted youths are the most vulnerable, while not attracted are at the lowest risk.

Ethical note

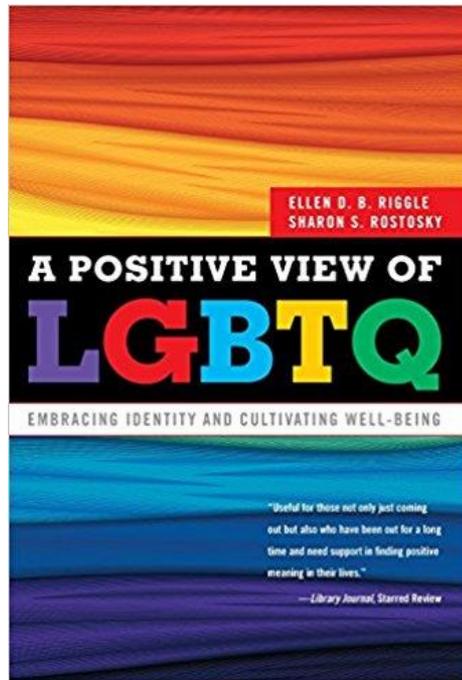
- The Hungarian HBSC 2014 study was approved by the **National Healthcare Council's Research Ethical Committee**. A key point of the ethical review was the examination of **suicidal thoughts and intent**.
- Although we could not provide direct help to vulnerable young people, **an email address was given** at the end of the questionnaire, and youths were encouraged to share any thoughts or requests with the researchers who maintained links with **psychiatrists** and **clinical psychologists**.

How to help GSM young people

- **Non-judgmental approach, training and learning**
- **LGBT+ sensitivity training**
- **LGBT+ inclusive sexual education**, anti-bullying programmes
- LGBT+ sensitisation and trainings for healthcare and psycho-social care services
- **Introducing and monitoring** Gay-Straight Ally programmes.
NB! Introducing GSA programmes in Canada reduced the risk of suicidality in heterosexual boys too (Saewyc et al. 2016)
- **Personal examples**
- As researchers: **trans and non-binary gender identities**, emphasis on **both-gender attracted/bisexual** youths, and **interszekcionalita** (ethnicity, religion, race, immigrant status etc).

A positive view of LGBT

(Riggle & Rostosky, 2013)



- Authenticity
- Self-knowledge and introspection
- Flexible gender roles
- Close emotional bonds
- Unique view of life, and compassion to marginalised people
- Model role, mentoring, activism for social justice
- Belonging to the LGBT+ community
- **Coming out growth:** equivalent with post-traumatic growth

Summary

- **Despite growing societal tolerance**
- **LGBT+ means higher risk for physical, mental and psychosomatic health**
- **One reason might be chronic stress and alterations in the HPA axis in adolescence**
- **Evidence from HBSC: same- and both-gender attracted youths are more vulnerable to psychosomatic symptoms, depressive mood and suicidal ideation (but not having lower self-esteem) than their opposite-gender or not attracted peers**
- **Inclusivity and antibullying programmes in education, health and psychosocial care services**
- **Positive aspects of LGBT+**

A large rainbow flag is shown waving against a clear blue sky. The flag's colors are vibrant and the fabric has a visible texture. The flag is attached to a pole on the left side of the frame.

Thank you for your attention

andras.kolto@nuigalway.ie