
Family Relationships and Adolescent Well-Being in Gay and Lesbian Families

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Families Are Changing

- Increases in non-traditional families
 - Heated debate over family and child functioning in diverse families
 - Understanding these families is critical to policy decisions, meeting therapeutic needs, encouraging social awareness
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Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality

- Relationship quality is generally positive
 - Highly supportive relationships
 - High parental warmth
 - Parents report positive relationships
 - No difference in relationship quality between different types of families
 - No difference in parental warmth
 - No difference in relationship quality
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Adolescent Health & Well-Being

- Adolescents function “normally”
 - No differences in self esteem
 - No differences in depression or anxiety

Family Processes

- Positive parent-adolescent relationships predicts better adolescent well-being
 - Limited evidence about this process in families headed by gay or lesbian couples
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Understanding Diverse Families

- What do these families “look like” ?
 - Parent-adolescent relationship quality
 - Adolescent self-esteem
 - Adolescent depression
 - Is parent-adolescent relationship quality associated with adolescent well-being?
 - Self-esteem
 - Depression
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Study Procedure

- Parents were recruited and provided contact information for other family members
 - Selection criteria:
 - Cohabiting partners for at least the past 3 years
 - Parenting an adolescent at least half time
 - Adolescents completed online surveys
 - 30 adolescents with lesbian mothers
 - 11 adolescents with gay fathers
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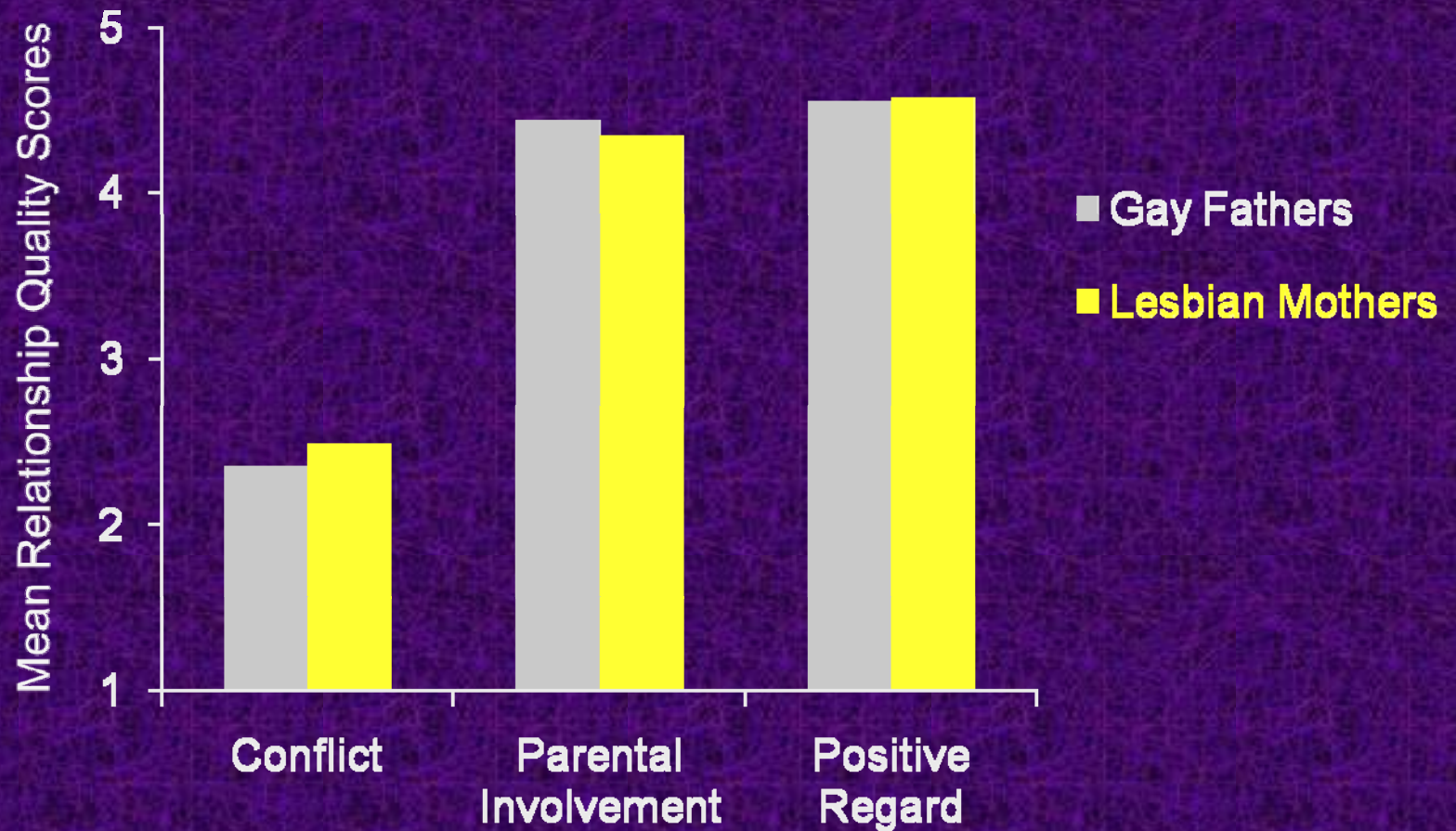
Study Measures

- Relationship quality (PEQ; Elkins et al., 1997)
 - Parent-child conflict *“My parent and I often argue”*
 - Parental involvement *“I share concerns with him/her”*
 - Parent regard for child *“My parent is proud of me”*
 - Depression (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)
 - Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)
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Adolescents report positive relationships



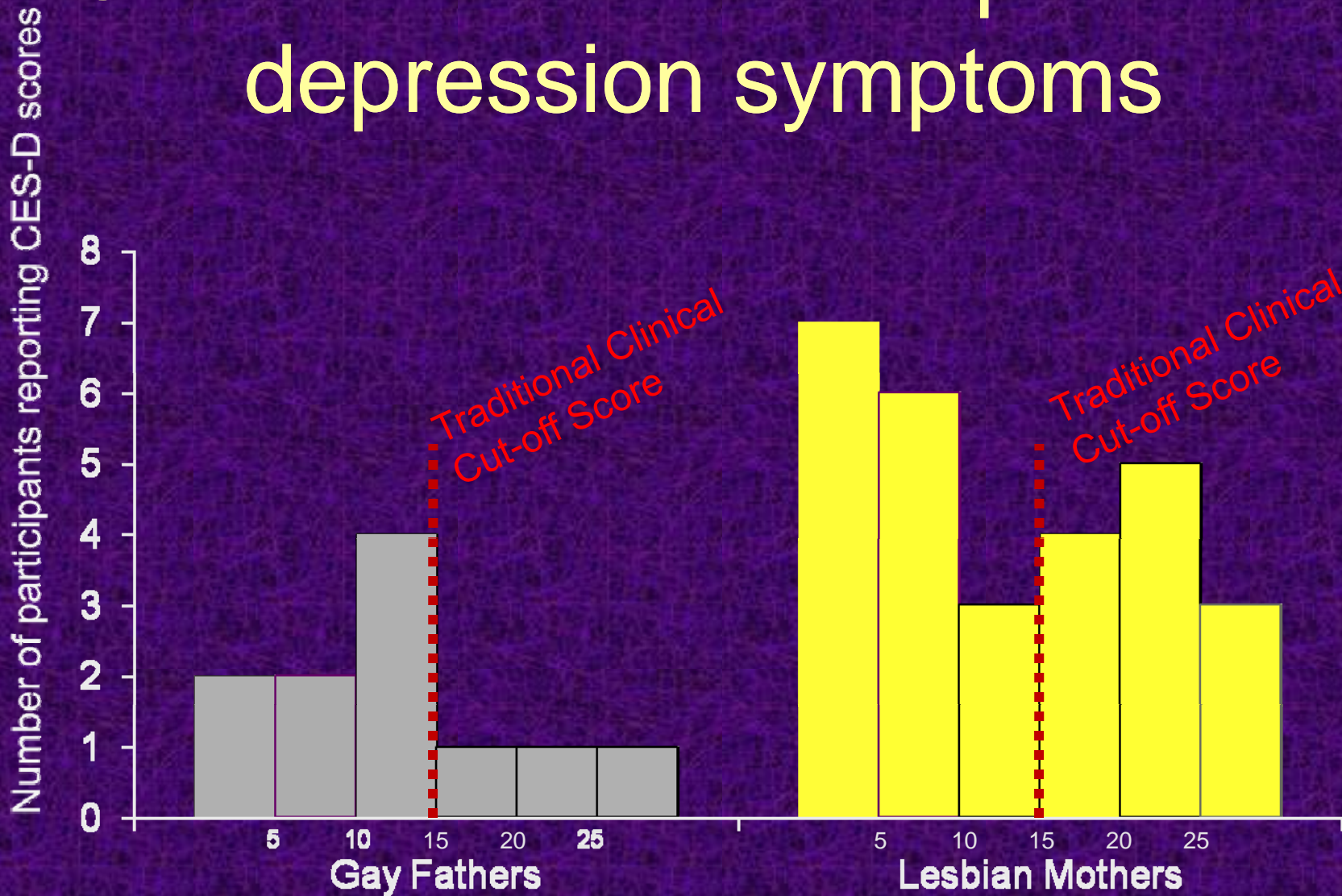
****These results are preliminary and should not be used or distributed without permission****

Adolescent self-esteem is high



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Some adolescents experience depression symptoms



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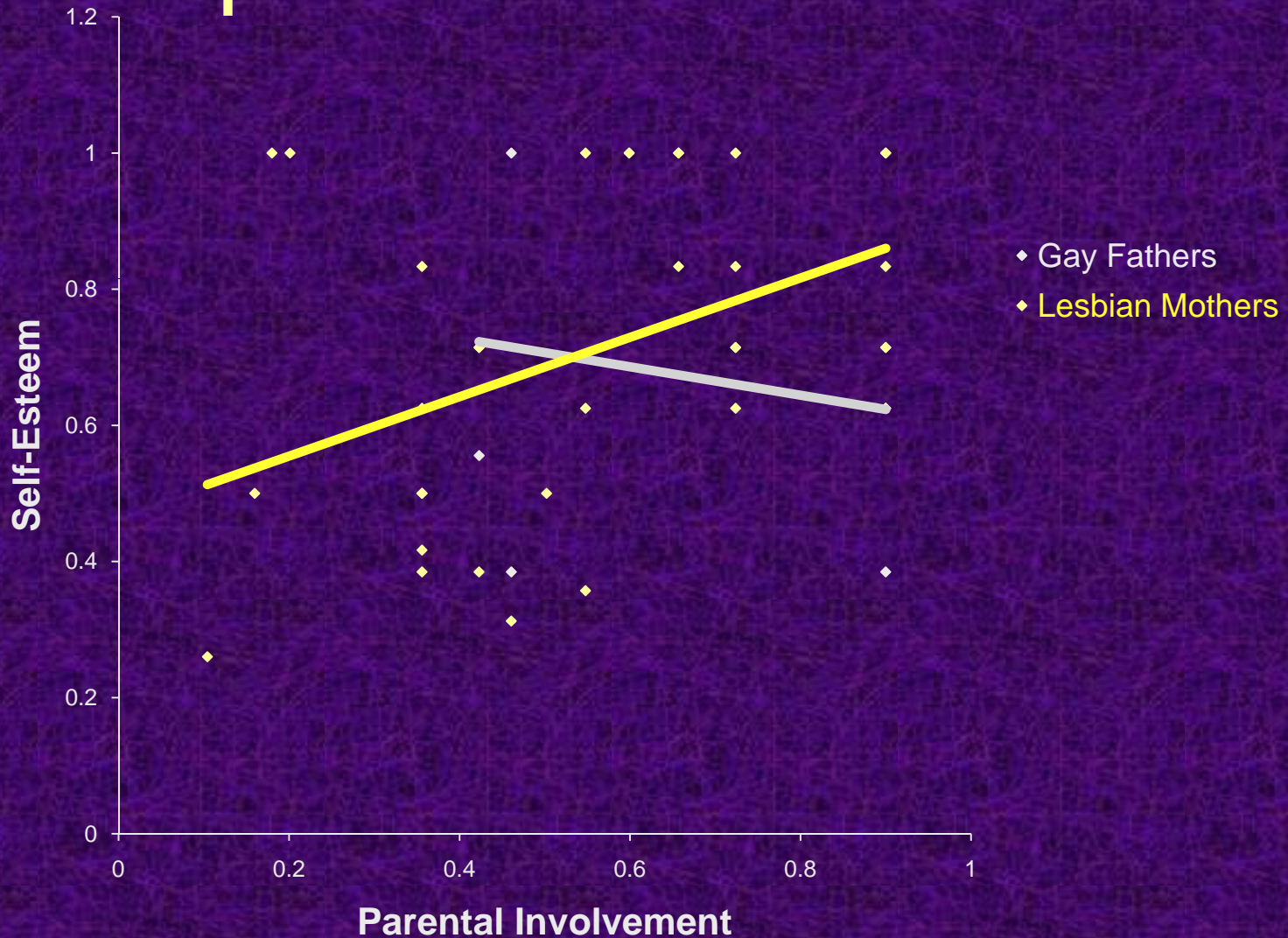
Predicting Self-Esteem

- Relationship factors predicted self-esteem
 - Conflict
 - Parental involvement
 - Positive regard
 - Family type x Conflict
 - Family type x Parental involvement
 - Family type x positive regard
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Only one interaction was a significant predictor

- Relationship factors predicted self-esteem
 - Conflict
 - Parental involvement
 - Positive regard
 - Family type x Conflict
 - **Family type x Parental involvement**
 - Family type x positive regard
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Correlation between self-esteem and parental involvement



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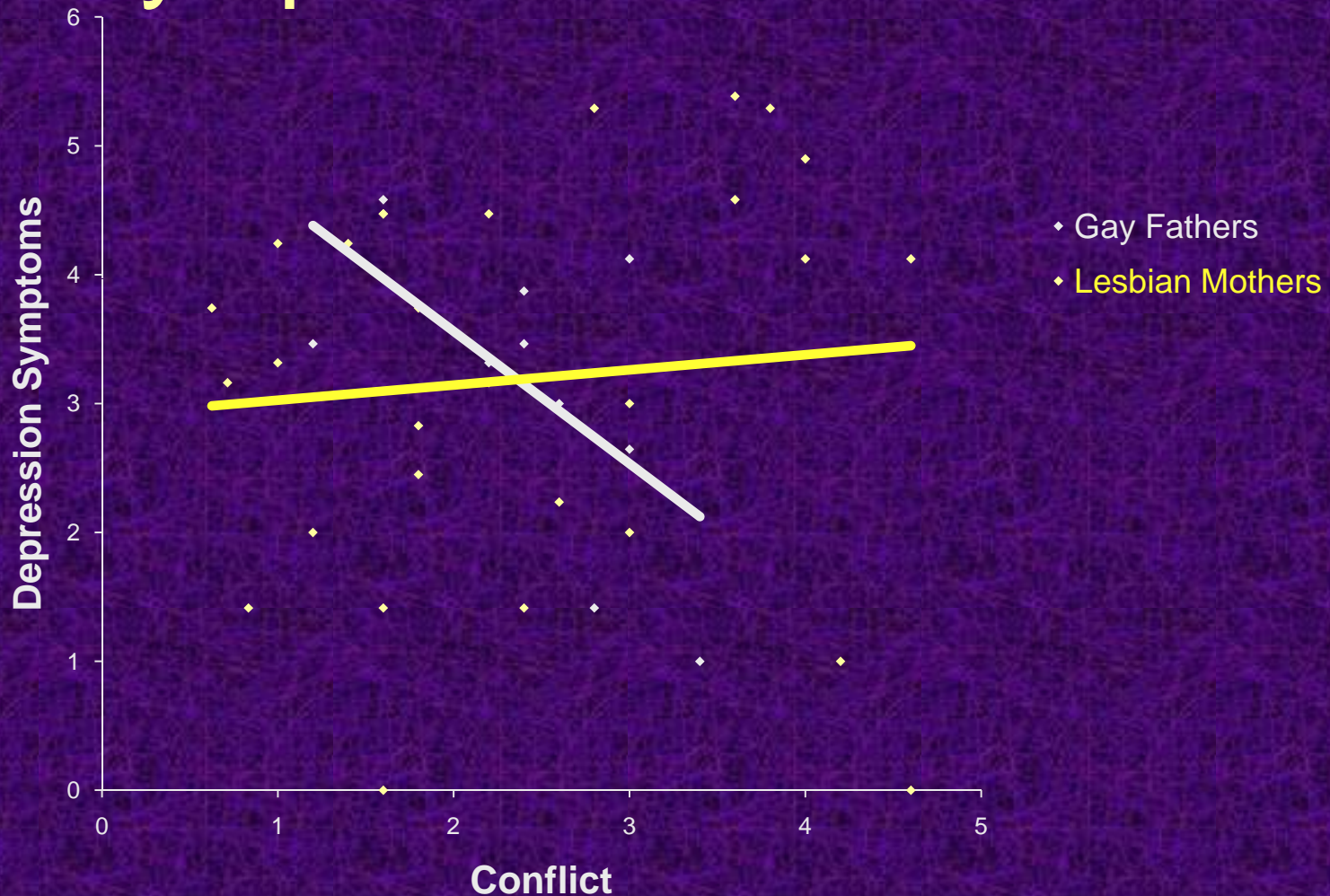
Predicting Depression

- Relationship factors predicted depression symptoms
 - Conflict
 - Parental involvement
 - Positive regard
 - Family type x Conflict
 - Family type x Parental involvement
 - Family type x positive regard
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Two interactions were significant predictors

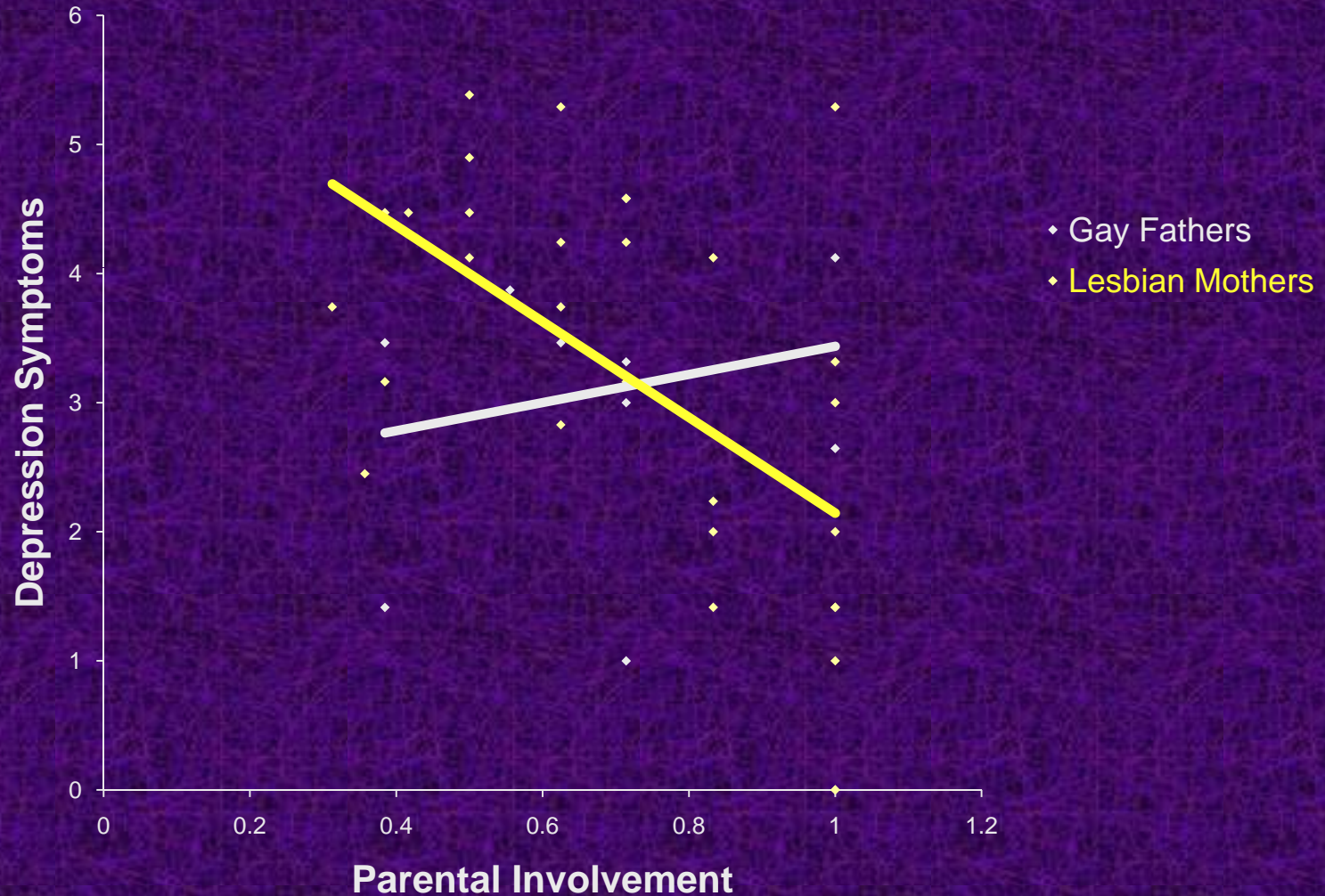
- Relationship factors predicted depression symptoms
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Correlation between depression symptoms and conflict



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Correlation between depression symptoms and parental involvement



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What do we know?

- Initial evidence about these diverse families
 - Positive parent-adolescent relationships
 - High self-esteem
 - Some experiencing depression symptoms
 - Different processes may be occurring
 - Parental involvement was associated with outcomes for adolescents with lesbian mothers
 - Conflict was associated with outcomes for teens with gay fathers
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Study Limitations

- Preliminary results
 - Small sample size
 - Convenience sample, recruited through parents
 - No consideration of other family characteristics (e.g., blended family adoptive family)
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Implications

- Moving the field forward
 - More research is needed!
 - Reaching niche populations
 - Focus on maternal involvement
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Thank you!

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