



# The Effects of Proposition 8 on



# Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Californians

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## Background

The passage of Proposition 8 in California provided researchers with a rare opportunity to explore the impact of public devaluing voices on LGB community members. By a margin of roughly 52% to 48%, the voters stripped LGB Californians of their marriage rights.

The frameworks used to examine the impact of anti-gay legislation are minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) and identity devaluation (Beals & Peplau, 2005).

Processes and outcomes of minority stress are as follows:

### Minority Stress Processes:

- Internalization of commonly held negative attitudes
- Anticipation of negative actions by others (e.g. prejudice and discrimination)
- Experiencing prejudice and discrimination
- Concealing LGB identity and coping strategies such as the creation of alternative communities with their own acceptable norms

### Links Between Processes and Outcomes:

- Higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse (Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009)
- Increased risk of depression, anxiety and suicide (Herek & Garnets, 2007)
- Increase in domestic violence (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005) and negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Mohr & Daly, 2008)

### Identity Devaluation:

Research has shown that LGB individuals who perceive that their identity is devalued by those around them tend to experience effects on their health and well-being (Beals & Peplau, 2005; Lewis, Derlega, Berndt, Morris, & Rose, 2001; Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004).

### Current Study:

We examined the public voice of a state-wide campaign and it's relationship to a number of psychological outcomes.

## Hypotheses\*

### Hypothesis I

There will be a decrease in life satisfaction after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis II

Participants will report lower self-esteem after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis III

Participants will report greater internalized homophobia after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis IV

Participants will report greater perceived stigma after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis V

Participants will report lower collective self-esteem after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis VI

Participants will report higher affiliation with the gay community after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis VII

Participants will report lower affiliation with the straight community after the passage of Proposition 8.

### Hypothesis VIII

Participants will report a change in relationship commitment.

## Participants

### Gender

Male: 39%  
Female: 59.7%

### Self-Identified Orientation:

Lesbian: 35.4%  
Gay: 37.5%  
Bisexual: 19.3%  
Other: 7.9%

### Ethnicity

White: 62.3%  
Latino: 14.9%  
Asian: 8.1%  
Other: 14.7%

Age:  $M = 32$ ,  $SD = 11.9$

## Method

Data was collected with an online survey

Participants were recruited via advertisements posted on various internet community sites (e.g. craigslist.org and LGB Listservs).

Study was conducted in two phases:

### Phase 1 (n = 196)

Two weeks prior to November 4th election

### Phase 2 (n = 186)

One week following the election

### Survey scales included:

- Satisfaction with Life
- Perceived Stigma
- Collective Self-Esteem
- Straight Community Affiliation
- Gay Community Affiliation
- Internalized Homophobia
- Relationship Commitment
- Personal Self-Esteem

## Results

Researchers conducted independent samples *t*-tests to determine whether there were significant differences from before the election to after the election.

Significant differences emerged following the passage of proposition 8 for the following measures:

### Decrease in Life Satisfaction

$t(378) = 2.57, p = .01$

### Increase in Perceived Stigma

$t(378) = -2.368, p = .018$

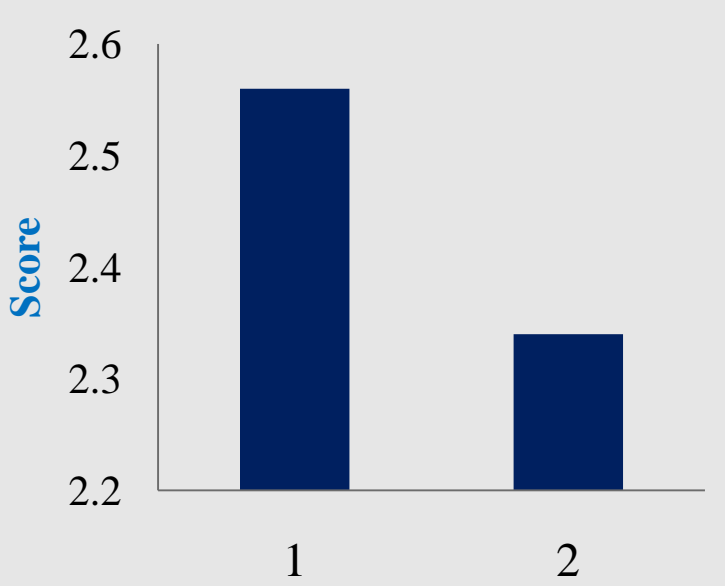
### Decrease in Collective Self-Esteem

$t(378) = 1.74, p = .08$

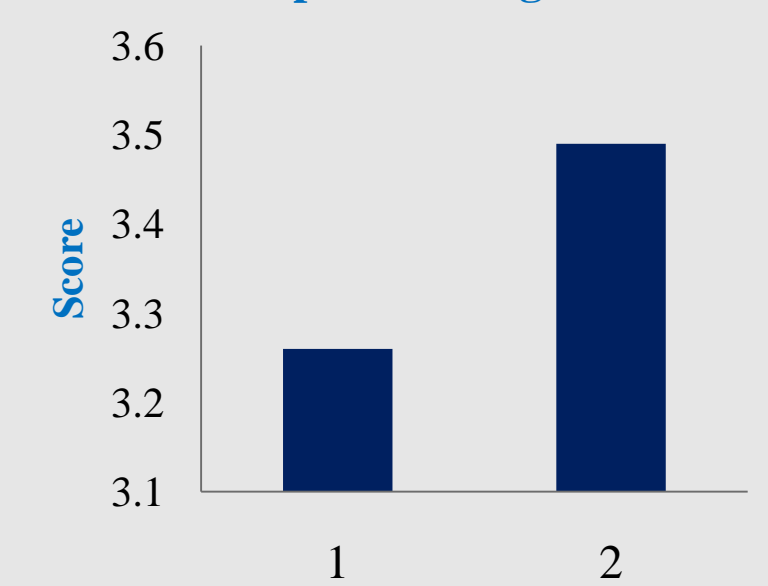
### Decrease in Straight Community Affiliation

$t(375) = 4.93, p < .001$

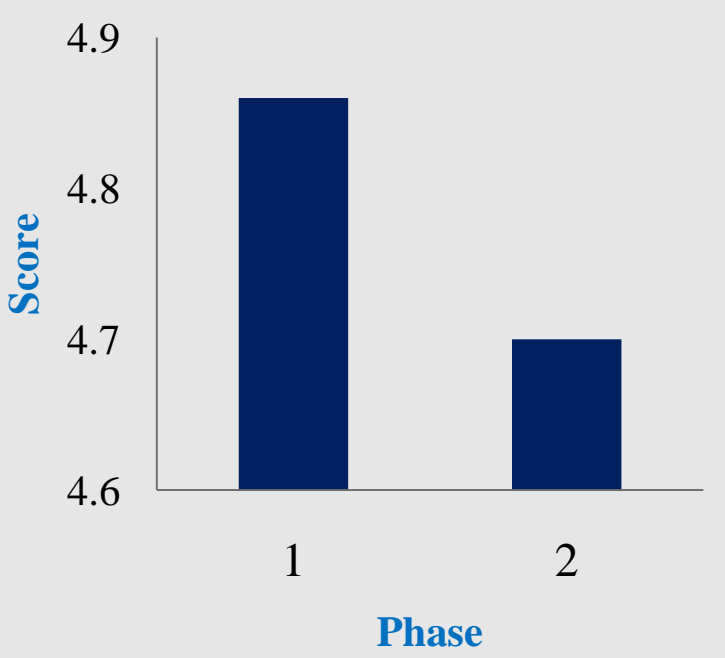
### Life Satisfaction



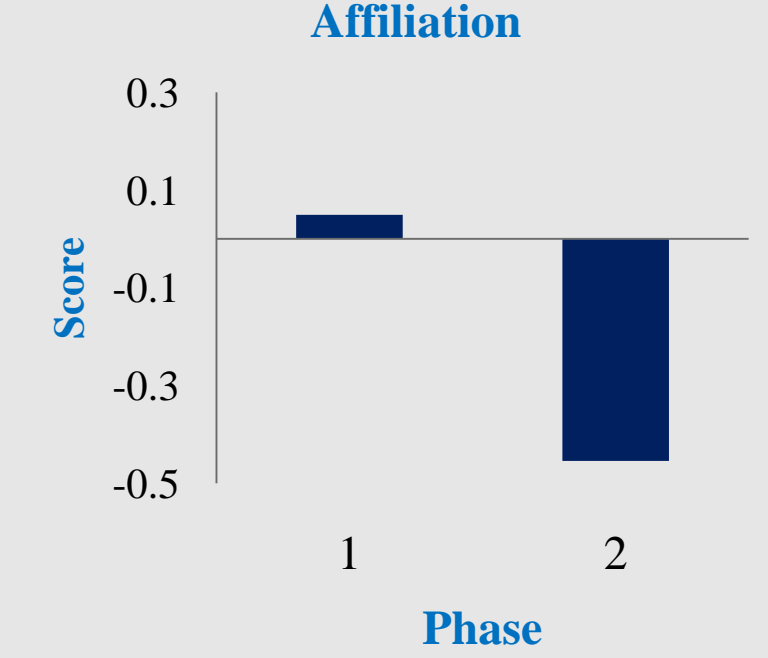
### Perception of Stigma



### Collective Self-Esteem



### Straight Community Affiliation



### Non Significant Decrease in Gay Community Affiliation

$t(378) = .569, p = .570$

### Non Significant Increase in Self-Esteem

$t(377) = -.490, p = .624$

### Non Significant Decrease in Relationship Commitment

$t(250) = .990, p = .323$

### Non Significant Increase in Internalized Homophobia

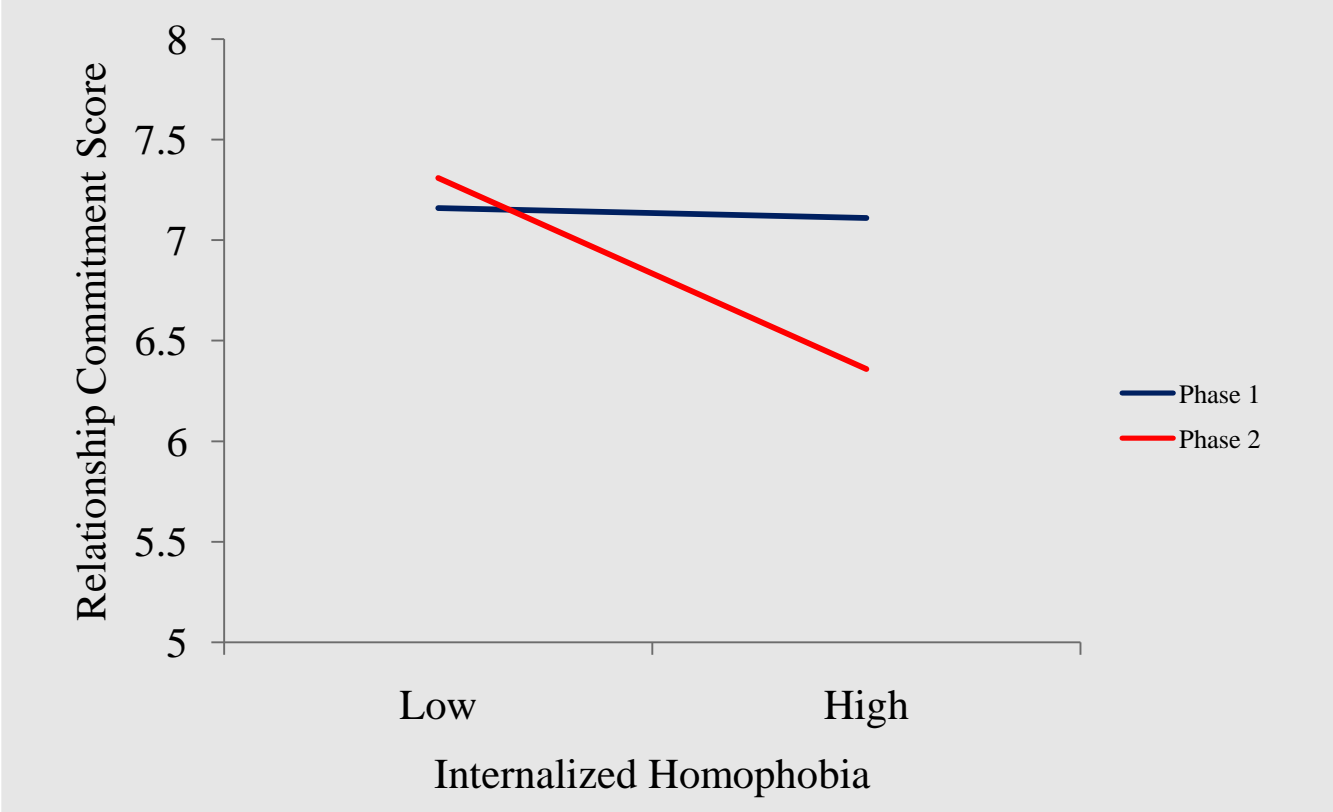
$t(378) = -.204, p = .839$

### Exploratory Analysis

Additionally, participants who scored high in internalized homophobia (IH) did not differ significantly from participants low in IH on their commitment to their romantic relationships before the passage of P8. However, following the passage of P8, participants high in IH were **significantly less committed** to their relationships than those low in IH.

$t(125) = -3.337, p = .001$

### Internalized Homophobia Level and Relationship Commitment



## Discussion

These data indicate that overall the public voice does have a detrimental effect on measures of well-being in the LGB community. This very public devaluation extends itself into the personal and social lives of LGB individuals in a way that threatens their well-being, sense of identity, and equality in society.

Participants did not report a significant increase in gay community affiliation following the passage of P8. This may be due to the heightened gay community affiliation of these particular samples prior to the election.

### Directions

Further research regarding the relationship between anti-gay marriage legislation and relationship commitment for LGB individuals is of interest to these researchers.

Research further exploring anti-gay legislation campaigns and LGB participation in them, relationship quality outcomes and both physical and mental health and well-being is recommended.

Research regarding the possible effects of these campaigns on individuals high in internalized homophobia is also of interest.

## References

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Swim, J. K., Mallett, R. K. & Stangor, C. (2004). Understanding Subtle Sexism: Detection and use of sexist language. *Sex Roles, 51*, 117-128



\*...in contrast to earlier times, our state now recognizes that an individual's capacity to establish a loving and long-term committed relationship with another person and responsibility to care for and raise children does not depend upon the individual's sexual orientation, and, more generally, that an individual's sexual orientation — like a person's race or gender — does not constitute a legitimate basis upon which to deny or withhold legal rights. We therefore conclude that in view of the substance and significance of the fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship, the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right to all Californians, whether gay or heterosexual, and to same-sex couples as well as to opposite-sex couples. — California Supreme Court 5/15/2008